

Ties that Bind: Immigrant Social Capital and Adaptation among Moldavian Foreign Wives

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this MA thesis is to explore the pattern of social adaptation and integration among Moldavian migrant wives in the country of their spouse through the concept of *social capital*. The main focus of this thesis is to analyze how is migrant wives' social capital mobilized in the process of social integration and for what dimensions of social adaptation is it utilized. Taking in consideration the fact that marriage migration presuppose an entrée into the native spouse social network of the immigrant society, migrant wives have the opportunity to utilize the husband social capital to advance her social integration and social position. By researching the topic of marriage migration of Moldavian women to Hungarian and Italian men in the last 20 years time framework, I argue that the migrant women's ability to consolidate their own ambitions and aspirations with their husband's social capital preconditions a higher social position in the immigrant society. Similarly to Coleman's argument, in my study I will argue that the migrant women's assimilation to the new society is facilitated mostly by strong ties within their spouse's social network that opens a broader perspective of possibilities (Coleman, 1988). Empirical material from 14 semi-structured interviews with Moldavian female migrants in Hungary and Italy supports my argument. Overall, I aim to contribute to Moldavian research on migration studies by bringing a gender dimension to the topic of marriage migration of Moldavian women and transnational family formation in the post-soviet Moldavian context.

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INTRODUCTION

The topic of transnational family formation and mixed – nationality marriages¹ in the context of post-Soviet migration trends from Moldova have been rarely studied by scholars. As the political and economic transition in the beginning of 90s caused new migration patterns, so the level of mixed – nationality marriages with citizens of new immigrant countries have become a new increasing phenomenon in the region. Nevertheless, the Moldavian research on migration studies tend to largely focus on the economic determinate of migration that drives the large flows of labor migration (Andersson, 2008; Bodolica & Spraggon, 2008; Gudim, 2004; Ghencea & Gudumac, 2005; Petru, 2004) and give less attention to the rising trends in marriage migration. Although in the Western sociological research there have been an increasing interest in the matter of mixed-nationality marriages and migrant spouse adaptation to the new society, in the context of Moldovian research on migration this subject has not yet gained such large attention (Breger & Hill, 1998; Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2006; Gorny & Kepinska, 2004; Roer-Strier & Ben Ezra, 2006). By researching the topic of marriage migration of Moldavian women to Hungarian and Italian men in the last 20 years time framework, I wish to explore the pattern of social adaptation and integration among Moldavian migrant wives in the country of their spouse through the concept of *social capital*. Hence, I aim to contribute to Moldavian reaserch on migration studies by bringing attention to the topic of marriage migration of Moldavian women and transnational family formation in the post-soviet Moldavian context.

¹ By 'mixed-nationality' or 'cross-cultural' marriages, I refer to the marriage between two people of different linguistic, cultural, religious, or ethnic groups or nations (Breger & Hill, 1998: 7).

Exploring the patterns in migrants adaptation through the concept of social capital, I would like to analyze how is migrant wives' social capital mobilized in the process of social integration and for what dimensions of social adaptation is it utilized. Taking in consideration the fact that marriage migration presupposes an entrée into the native spouse social network of the immigrant society, the migrant wife has the opportunity to utilize the husband social capital to advance her social integration and social position. Therefore, the adaptation pattern of immigrant wives would differ from those of regular 'single'² migrants who undertake their migration decision by themselves and need to rely on their own acquired social capital in the immigrant society. I, therefore, argue that the migrant women's ability to consolidate their own ambitions and aspirations with their husband's social capital preconditions a higher social position in the immigrant society. Similarly to Coleman's argument, in my study I will argue that the migrant women's assimilation to the new society is facilitated mostly by strong ties within their spouse's social network that opens a broader perspective of possibilities (Coleman, 1988).

Drawing mainly upon the Western research on social capital and migration studies in the context of mixed-nationality marriage, I would like to analyze whether this body of research can be applied in the context of Moldavian marriage migration patterns and migrant wives' adaptation to the immigrant society of their foreign spouses. With an insight into the Bourdieu, Coleman, Portes and Putnam's understanding of the concept of social capital, I analyze the type of social ties utilized in the adaptation process among Moldavian wives', as well as the interplay of social capital with other forms of capital (economic, cultural, human, linguistic) in the process

² 'Single' migration doesn't necessarily refer to the migrants' marital status, but rather to the process of undertaking the migration decision individually without external help, such as in case of labor migrants

of social affirmation and positioning (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2007).

In my thesis project I used qualitative research methods to investigate the migrant wives adaptation strategies and social capital mobilization in the immigrant country. The empirical material of this project consists of semi-structures interviews with 14 Moldavian migrant wives in Hungary and Italy. The interviews were conducted in the period between April 18 and May 5 2010 and gave an insight into the individual migration experience in their native spouse immigrant society.

In Chapter 1 I present a background of migration trends from Moldova, provide statistical evidence and general characteristics of female migration patterns. In Chapter 2 I give an overview of the qualitative research methods engaged in this research, the selective criteria for migrant wives participating in my research, the interpretative strategies and the possible limitation of my research. In Chapter 3 I review the existing Western literature on the concept of social capital in the context of migration studies as well as the most significant Moldavian literature on latest migration trends. Since the Moldavian literature on migration studies is often gender blind, I intend to include a gender dimension in my research by analyzing specifically the experience of migrant women. In line with other scholars, I acknowledge the assumption that migration experiences are different processes for men and women (Kanaiaupuni, 2000; Schwenken, 2008). In chapter 4 I explore the migration experiences of Moldavian migrant wives in Italy and Hungary through the concept of social capital and investigate several dimensions of social integration by analyzing how they were able to utilize the strong- ties social capital of their native spouses' kin and kith network to advance their position in the society.

Chapter 1. Women's Migration in the context of Moldova

Nowadays migration becomes more feminized – the share of women among migrants is increasing every year. The reasons of women's migration are different – work, education, refugee, marriage, etc. Within the context of marriage migration, I argue that the migrant women's ability to consolidate their own ambitions and aspirations with their husband's social capital preconditions a higher social position in the immigrant society. By researching the topic of migrant social capital and adaptation of Moldavian foreign wives to the immigrant society in the context of mixed-nationality marriages, I wish to explore how and for what migrant women mobilize and utilize their husband's social capital to obtain and advance their social position. Some broader social context of Moldavian women's migration will be given in this chapter. I will present some statistical evidence and will explore the general condition and reasons of female migration as well as the growing tendencies of marriage migration among Moldavian women.

1.1. The Feminization of Migration from Moldova

Among the newly independent states Moldova has one of the highest level of female emigration and, therefore, it represents a unique case study of the latest migration trends from non-EU Eastern Europe to the European Union. Both in 2006 and 2007 the Moldavian National Statistic Office recorded that “more women than men chose to emigrate”³ and estimates that more than 60% of the Moldavian migrants, going to the European Union countries, are female

³ According to data of National Statistics Office of Republic of Moldova, in 2006, there were 13674 female and 13011 male migrants; in 2007, 13896 female and 13276 male migrants.

http://www.statistica.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/femei_si_barbati/Women_Men_2008.pdf

migrants. The growing number of female migrants from Moldova to the European Union countries can be considered as a feminization feature of the migration trends from Moldova. Many scholars have also acknowledged the feminization nature of the new migration flow from East European countries (Morokvasic, 2004; Kofman, 1999).

The reason of migration is largely based on the economic and social situation in the country and, according to data of the Department of Migration, between 1990 and 2003 the total number of people who left Moldova for other foreign countries was about 600,000 or 37 percent of the economically active population (Petru, 2004). As a consequence of this international migration and transnational movement, there are a growing number of cross-nationality marriages. According to the public poll conducted by La Strata Organization in Moldova, 12, 9% of those who migrate abroad are the marriage migrants (2005). Despite of this relatively large number of the marriage migrants, the literature on migration trends from Moldova tend to focus generally on the labor migrants who leave the country because of the harsh economic conditions. Considering the fact that the phenomenon of marriage migration is not investigated enough in the context of Moldova, I decided to conduct my research in this field.

1.2. Reasons and Effects of the Growing Female Migration Trends

The increased transnational movement of Moldavian women as professionals, workers, domestic servants, entertainers, students, and wives during the last two decades has several explanations and reasons. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the following transition period as well as opening of the borders and the process of globalization had raised people's desire to look for better economic, cultural, social prospers and opportunities in the neighboring West European countries.

The increase in women's labor migration from Moldova to the European Union has several explanations. Since gaining its independence in 1991, Moldavian economy has experienced several crises, such as the war conflict with the separatist region of Transnistria, which made the Moldavian government lose control over the eastern part of the country. The main industrial and energy objects, the 1998 Russian economic crisis, which considerably reduced export and caused large unemployment. The fall down in Moldavian economy was greater than in other former Soviet countries and many people, overcoming the effect of unemployment and poverty, were pushed in search for financial opportunities in the Western European countries (Gudim, 2004). The post-socialist legacies of the labor market organization, where women's widespread participation in the paid labor force and at the same time in the practices and responsibilities of their household, place women in an active and powerful position within their private sphere and family (Ashwin & Bowers, 1997). As pointed by scholars, in the conditions of economic and social crises, 'women generally manage better than men under tense and unstable conditions of the daily micro-economy', the fact which causes many women to get engaged in migratory practices with the purpose of improving their family's economic stability (Remennick, 1999: 166). All major researches on migration suggest that economic differences between the developing and developed countries are the main determinant factor in the transnational labor migration from economically vulnerable countries (UNDP 2009). The interplay of the post-socialist economic, social and political background with the structures of the new immigrant countries ensures the supply-demand mechanism of the labor migration flow from Moldova.

At the same time, there is the growing number of students and professional workers migrating. Besides the economic prospects, these migrants are aspired by cultural, educational

and professional opportunities and possibilities in the immigrant societies. As it is more difficult for women even with higher education to find a job in their native country, many of them decide to migrate, hoping to realize their professional and educational potential abroad. Some scholars argue that this type of migration weakens the sending country's human resource capital, generating brain drain effects in the former soviet countries (Bodolica & Spraggon, 2008). Others argue that new skills and accomplishments obtained during the educational and professional experience abroad positively affect the women's development and advancement (Jones, 2008), which in turn also contribute to the information and technology flow to the home country and economic, cultural and social improvement in the sending country (Gudim, 2004).

1.3. Rising Phenomenon of the Marriage Migration

With the expansion of the economic, educational, professional and other migration flows, there is also the rising phenomenon of 'Love' migration occurring in the region. In some cases it comes about as a result of women's prior migration to their future spouse's country of origins, in others it is set through the mail-order bride agency or Internet based dating web-sites. The countries of origins of foreign partners married to Moldavian women are also typically the destination countries of Moldavian migrants in general. So, according to the study conducted by CBS-AXA (2005) for the UNDP program in Moldova, the destination countries of migrant women are Russia, Italy, Portugal, Greece and Turkey (see Table 2 in Appendix). Therefore, the occurrence of mixed-nationality marriages is also linked to the processes of economic and social changes, globalization and international migration. As the social connections and intercultural communication raise between the migrant sending and receiving countries, so the marriage migration becomes a more increasing phenomenon in Moldova.

Most of the intermarriage's study point out the fact that women are more likely than men to follow their foreign partner to their country of origins (Scott & Cartledge, 2009; Roer-Strier & Ben Ezra, 2006; Gorny & Kepinska, 2004). This gender aspect in the marriage migration pattern leads some scholars to conclude that because women are less attached to ceratain location and country, they compromise and adapt easier to the immigrant society (Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2006). As presented by Yuval-Davis (1997), women's indenity is more tied to the family and personal level, then to the national and patriotist level. Therefore, they are driven more then men by their personal and family aspirations when following their partern to a foreign country.

As it is also pointed out in my study, in the context of the political and social instability in the home country, women are more likely to aspire for better conditions and follow their partener. In most cases, scholars also demonstrate that the professional career of men is prioritized in intermarriges unions and women move to live with her partner in his county of origins (Scott & Cartledge, 2009; Cooke, 2001). Following this idea, another set of factors goes in line with the neo-economical approach and suggests that the socio-economic differences between the migration sending and receiving country encourage migration and the choice of the immigrant country in the mixed-nationality marriages (Gorny & Kepinska, 2004). In this regard, the rational prioritization of the economic and social benefits, perspectives and gains will influence the marriage migration flow. Because of the economic, political and social instability in the home country, the Moldavian migrant women are more often likely to follow their foreign partner. All of the above mentioned factors preconditions the marriage migration flow of Moldavian women abroad and provides the context for their further adaptation strategies in the immigrant society.

1.4. Migrant Social Capital

Migration to a foreign country entails leaving behind the usual circle of relatives, friends and acquaintances, which represent one's social capital, and moving into a new social structure, where new social capital needs to be acquired for a successful adaptation. Transposing one's social capital requires a consideration of the social setting and relations one comes from, social norms and values, the degree of trust and reciprocity established with the individuals in the immigrant society. In the case of 'single' migration, these aspects of the social capital might necessitate more efforts and time in attaining and developing new social ties in the immigrant society (Hellermann, 2006). As workers or students, migrants might be restrained by time, resources and information to construct and develop new ties. In the case of marriage migration, the migrant women enter their husband's social networks and have the advantage and privilege of their partners' social capital in the process of adaptation. This structural difference between the various migration experiences is one of the reasons that grasps my attention in this research and aspires my interest in investigating the experience of those women who migrated into new to them immigrant societies and used their husband's social capital in the process of adaptation to new environment.

Chapter 2. Methodology: Interviewing and Interpreting Migrant Wives

2.1. Data

The empirical data of my research includes interviews I conducted in the period between March and April 2010. On the whole I conducted 14 individual semi-structured interviews with Moldavian migrant women, aged between 25 and 50, who either at first migrated to Hungary or Italy with temporary purposes of employment or study opportunities and later their migratory legal status have changed as result of their marriage or who have migrated to these countries as a result of their marriage to Hungarian or Italian men.

In order to better understand the transformation that happened in their social status in the course of the migration experience, I find it important to characterize my interviewees' social status prior their migration experience and as it is now in the immigrant country. Previously to their migration to the foreign country, most of the participants of my study belonged to the middle class, held a university degree and were employed in white-collar jobs. An exception to these general characteristics of the sample constituted the social position of Alla and Elena, who did not have a higher university degree, were employed in the blue collar jobs and belonged to the below middle class level in their country of origins. Also an opposite to the above characteristics can be considered the cases of Lidia and Victoria, who both held a high social position in their home country in terms of their educational and professional involvement and, therefore, belonged to the above middle class level of the society.

As for the characteristics of the social position held in the immigrant society at present, most of them belong to the middle class or above middle class level. In terms of educational

prestige all, except one, of my interviewees had gained a higher education in the country of immigration. This was possible either by further continuing their educational involvement at the MA or PhD level or by being able to receive an accreditation for their home country educational degree. In terms of the occupational and professional involvement, most of them are employed in the white collar jobs. Exceptions to these characteristics are Elena and Vitalia, who at present are housewives, but who did not consider their social position unfavorable in comparison with the social position they held in the home country.

To get in touch with the potential interviewees I used the snowball sampling method. In Hungary, I met the first informants at the Diaspora meetings and asked if they were willing to discuss with me about their transnational practices and their intermarriage. They later introduced me to their friends and acquaintances who were interested to participate and speak about their migratory experience in intermarriages as well. In Italy, my main informants were found through friends, relatives and acquaintances as well as through Moldavian Migrant Communities Websites.

In Hungary, the interviews were conducted in the apartments of the Moldavian women or in public places like cafes, and the interviews with women lived in Italy were held through Skype. They lasted from one to four hours. I let the interviewees choose the preferable and most comfortable locations for them. Being aware of the ethical aspects, such as rights to privacy, editing, prior use and copyrights, I have informed my informants about the purpose and aims of my project to which they are making their contribution. In order to achieve a balanced relationship between the aims of the project and the diverse social and cultural perspectives of the interviewees, I have encouraged them to choose the language of the interview themselves (Romanian, Moldavian, or Russian) and respond in their own language style and manner. I have

asked their permission to record their interviews and use them for my research and further publications. For privacy purposes the names of the interviewees were changed.

The interview structure includes questions on the migrant women's perspective, views and emotions regarding their relationships with the Hungarian and Italian husbands, the intercultural issues and difficulties they face in their marriages and in the society, coping strategies with the misunderstandings and conflicts preconditioned by the intercultural differences, the meaning they construct around transnational relationships with their relatives and family and the way they perceive their position in the society. As some scholars advised, for more coherent and all-inclusive investigation the questions were grouped into four subgroups that aimed at the specific category of their migration experience in the foreign country (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

The first subgroup was mainly concerned with the period of meeting their partner and taking the decision to migrate to their foreign partner's country of origins. The questions intended to tackle their memory of how they imagined their trip and to what extent this corresponded to the issues they faced in the foreign country. The second subgroup of questions focused on the category of 'family' in the lives of the migrant women and to what extent the family relations and ties helped them to adapt to the new society. The next section of questions was concerned with the educational, professional and occupation attainment in the foreign country. This section tried to understand how the educational and occupational position they hold in their home country transformed in the immigrant country and what factors and network ties contributed to these changes. And the last section focused on the meaning of 'home' in the transnational settings and to what extent their social position is influenced by their relations with

the country of origins. It also sought to understand the role of their spouse at the each stage in the adaptation to the new society through support and help offered.

2.2. Methods of interpreting the interviews

For conducting the interviews I used field notes and a digital voice recorder. The collected data were processed in several stages. At the first stage I transcribed the conducted interviews that were done either in Romanian (Moldavian) or Russian languages, then the most interesting parts of the interview were translated into English. At the next stage I read, coded and identified the relevant themes for further consideration. In order to examine the diversities and complexities of ‘experiences’, I find it important for my research to include “verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, and an ethic of caring, political praxis, multivoiced texts, and dialogues with subjects” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: 5). Using the method of *narrative analysis* to investigate the migrant women’s positions, motivation behind their thoughts and justification of the actions; I intend to present a *descriptive and interpretative thick description* of the analyzed interviews, which organizes and presents the narratives not only as the individuals related to them, but which emphasizes a deeper, more interpretive and analytic meaning of the ‘stories’ (Denzin, 2001: 113). I find *grounded theory* of analysis as an objective and constructive method to distinguish the thematic frames of the narratives and how the diverse characteristics presented in the ‘stories’ interact with each other, thereby revealing meanings and understanding of their subjectivity.

I find it crucial to be conscious of my position as a researcher and problematize the biased relationship between me as a researcher and the interviewed migrant women by being aware of the difference in understandings, experiences and background, and avoiding being self-

reflecting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: 3). The position of the researcher in this perspective, as suggested by Denzin (2001: 114), is to 'listen' to the meanings of the words. In a similar way, Reinharz (2002: 426) states that the method of listening and hearing women's voices and language means to '*approach women as actors in the world rather than objects of other people's actions.*' Therefore, I apply gender analytical approach in investigating the experience of the migrant women and consider that there is a difference in the men's and women's transnational experience (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002: 336; Morrison, Schiff, & Sjoblom, 2007: 240).

2.3. Limitations

Several limitations of my research project have to be acknowledged. First, since the number of my interviewees is limited it prevents me from concluding that the findings of my research can be applied to the immigrant experience of other Moldavian women married to foreign men. The presented findings in this research can be considered only a small portion of Moldavian migrant wives' life experience and therefore, it doesn't allow subtracting 'grand generalizations' from the given sample (Stake, 2003: 156). This might be considered problematic in a way that I might risk essentializing the migrant women's experience and failing to recognize the diversity of experiences and feelings faced by Moldavian migrant wives in cross-nationality marriages.

The choice of only two migrant destination countries is a second limitation of my study. My selection criteria were solely governed by the geographical proximity and time constraints factors. Since, this research was conducted in the course of my MA program at the Central European University in Budapest; I first of all tried to get in touch with those Moldavian migrant women that live in Hungary, visiting the Diaspora meetings at the embassy of the Republic of

Moldova. However, since Hungary is not in the list of the Moldavian migrants' primary destination countries, I considered that the choice of Italy will balance this selection criterion. According to the study for UNDP conducted by CBS-AXA (2005), Italy is the destination of 28,4 % of all female migrants from Moldova (Table 2). Therefore, I assumed that a consideration of the female marriage migrants from Italy should be also taken in consideration. The fact that I accessed the potential interviewees through the Moldavian Migrant Communities Websites and at the Diaspora meetings allowed me to approach different and unrelated with each other interviewees. On the other hand, the fact that only a part of them agreed to participate in my research can constitute a bias in itself, as the reasons and experienced of the other potential interviewees remained unclear.

However, in line with Stake R. E., I consider that a small number of case studies might constitute a suggestion for "further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability" (2003: 156). Since the topic of the marriage migration is not well investigated in the context of Moldavian migration trends, my study in a way constitutes a suggestion for the future study on a larger sample of female marriage migrants not only in Italy and Hungary, but also in other Moldavian migrants' destination countries.

Chapter 3. Contextualizing Migrant Wives' Adaptation Strategies through the Concept of Social Capital

This thesis examines how Moldavian women's marriage migration can be understood through the concept of social capital. By analyzing the migrant women's experience in the country of their partner, I look at strategies and complexities of mobilizing and accessing the available social capital in the process of their integration in the host country. In order to understand this process, I will firstly present the major theoretical and empirical academic review of the concept of social capital and then I will investigate the relevant research on social capital in the context of migration trends from post-soviet Moldova. The last section will examine the gender dimension of the social capital within the framework of migration studies. Along the presented sections of this chapter, I will outline the theoretical and empirical implication of my research within the broad academic field of social capital and migration studies.

3.1. Social Capital

In the last few decades, the concept of social capital have been extensively debated and investigated in the diverse fields of social science (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 2003; Putnam, 2007). It has been studied and applied in various contexts, spheres and disciplines and it has shown to be a useful tool in understanding elements and aspects of social organizations and constructions. Despite its popularity, some scholars have also pointed out that the core idea behind this concept is at times very complex and ambiguous in conceptualizing and recognizing the social structures and features that precondition the formation of the social capital (Portes, 1998, Hellermann, 2006). There are various interpretations and understandings of this complex concept and before placing my research topic

in the broader theoretical framework of social capital, I would like to present the most influential and major theoretical and empirical research in this domain.

The first attempt to develop and systemize a theoretical framework in analyzing the concept of social capital was made by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1986). Departing from the Marxist conceptualization of social structures, Bourdieu differentiates three forms of capital that individuals possess: economic, cultural and social. In this theoretical framework he points out the idea that social capital is closely linked to the cultural and economic capitals, which individuals invest in accumulating, constructing and mobilizing the social ties in the society. To put it simply, the larger is one's cultural capital in terms of language knowledge or educational attainment, the more opportunities are to construct social ties outside the close network of relatives, friends and acquaintance, and, therefore, to develop and advance one's social capital (Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2008).

In my research, I find the Bourdieu's framework of social capital relevant in analyzing the interplay between various forms of capital and how in the migration experience migrant women utilize the existing cultural and economic capital in obtaining and advancing their social capital. The notion of *social capital* is defined by Bourdieu as 'the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of durable networks of more or less institutionalized relationship of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu, 1986: 249). In this sense, the network of social capital mobilized and possessed by individuals is depended on the size and type of the network of connections one can effectively utilize and access. The Bourdieu's conceptualization of social capital suggests that the larger and more influential are one's social ties, the more resources and information one can attain in the society. In my study, I would like to examine the extent to which the presence of the social support network from the

immigrant women's husband as well as the type and nature of this support assist and advance the social capital and social position in the immigrant society.

In the course of migration studies the Bourdieu's theoretical insight into the concept of social capital gives an analytical tool in understanding the process of migrant's adaptation to the immigrant society. By taking into consideration the interlink between various forms of capitals migrants possess, mobilize and utilize in constructing social ties and getting access to resources, knowledge and benefits, scholars have been extensively analyzing the mechanisms behind the immigrants' adaptation and integration in the immigrant society (Hellermann, 2006, van Meeteren, Engbersen, & van San, 2009, Allen, 2009). In this perspective, some interpret the notion of social capital in terms of benefits and information derived and acquired from the social network of migrants (van Meeteren, Engbersen, & van San, 2009, Allen, 2009). The sense of social networks in this context becomes somehow identical to the notion of social capital. However, other researchers go further in their analysis by arguing that social capital is not identical to the individual's social networks, but rather social capital is a tool in accessing and mobilizing one's social networks (Hellermann, 2006). In other words, the economic, cultural and social capital invested in accessing and connecting to the social networks in the immigrant community will influence the degree of adaptation and sense of belonging to the new society and social networks. In order to understand the interlink between the economic and cultural capital possessed by migrant women prior migration and the acquired social capital in the immigrant society, as well as how these impact the integration in social networks of the new society, I also consider that a differentiation between the social network and social capital should be made in my analysis. In this sense, we can get a better comprehension of how the acquired social capital from their husband facilitates migrant women's integration in social networks.

Although, the Bourdieu's understanding of the concept of social capital provides a valuable theoretical insight in analyzing the social transformations and changes that take place in the migration process, in the literature on migration studies and social capital scholars refer to a larger extend to the works of such theoreticians, as Coleman J., Portes A., Putman R. D., and Woolcock M. in analyzing the migrants' social capital. Similarly to Bourdieu, Coleman conceptualizes the notion of social capital as a part of social structures based on *rational choice* of individuals and defines it as a resource 'embodied in relations among persons' (1988: 119). Conceptualizing the social capital from the rational choice theory can give us an insight into factors and principles that drives the decision of the marriage migration and adaptation to the new society. Following this sequence of thoughts, Coleman makes a paraller connection between the social capital and human capital as interelated to each other and determinant to the individual's embededness in social structures. He also points out the important role of strong-tied network connections with family, friends and religious institutions in building and developing social capital and argues that individuals obtain greater support and resources from strong-tied connetions. In my research Coleman's analysis of social capital both in terms of the suggested connection between social capital and human capital as well as in terms of the significant role of strong ties for individuals integration in the society provides an important analytical and interpretative tool in understanding the course and practices of immigrant wives' adaptation to the immigrant society. The fact that migrant wives migrate into an already established social network of their spouse, the support that is provided by their husbands' strong tied connections in obtaining various benefits and resources showed to be an important consideration in my research. Also, the interlink between the immigrant's human capital obtained and developed in

the home country and the attained social capital in the immigrant country plays an important function in the affirmation and adaptation process for immigrant wives.

Another important contribution in the concept of social capital was made by Portes, who defines social capital as ‘the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures’ (Portes, 1998: 6). Although, this definition doesn’t give a clear differentiation between the social capital and social network formation, it suggests that social capital is grounded in the structure of interpersonal relations. By this virtue of inter-relationship with other individuals within the social networks, one obtains and mobilizes the available social capital to advance and develop the social position in the society (Portes, 1998: 7). Similarly to many researchers, Porter differentiates between several characteristics that preconditions the social capital formation: *trust, common values, reciprocity and solidarity*. These characteristics are important dimensions in understanding the social ties creation in the process of adaptation to the new society and I find it useful in my further analysis.

Building *trust* between members of the immigrant society and immigrant wives are often embedded in the sometimes sceptic attitudes towards the migrant women and their intentions behind the marriage migration. Considering the fact that the majority of migrants from Moldova are labor migrants, immigrant countries tend to view the immigrant group as migrating for a economic gains only. Attaining a level of trust influences the societal acceptance and the further development of the social capital in the society. Having an understanding of *norms and values* of the immigrant society that might differ in a way from those in the home country predetermines the level of adaptation and integration in the new society and the capacity to mobilize and utilize the available social capital. The level of *reciprocity* as a source of social capital influences the extent to which one can maintain the social ties by the mutual exchange of resources and knowledge.

And the *solidarity* within the social group might also act as a way of social support in obtaining necessary resources. In analyzing the migrant women's assimilation and adaptation strategies, I find these dimensions of social capital useful in characterizing the nature of issues and difficulties faced by migrant women in their experience.

Similarly, in Putnam's understanding of the social capital, the 'social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness' preconditions the social capital formation (Putnam, 2007: 137). In other words, social capital theory suggests a link between social connectedness, social trust and civic engagement (Pieterse, 2003: 8). Although this might be relevant factor to the level of local communities and associations, in my understanding of social capital I refer primarily to the level of trust and connectedness within the individual's social networks through which economic, social and psychological gains and benefits can be obtained.

An understanding of the structure and dynamic of social ties construction within the new immigrant community can be gained from the Woolcock conceptualization of social capital (Woolcock, 2003). He differentiates between *bonding*, *bridging* and *linking* social capital. The bonding social capital refers to the close ties between people who share similar characteristics (family members, close friends and acquaintances) and can provide emotional or physical support. Bridging social capital consists of people who do not share similar characteristics, but who are somehow connected to each other (colleagues, far friends and acquaintances) and can give an instrumental support. Linking social capital denotes the ties with people in an influential social position, which can advance one's access to resources and knowledge. In my research, I find this distinction in the forms of social capital important in the further analysis. However, I take a slightly different framework of analysis by subdividing social capital into *social support* and *social leverage* (Kleinhans, Priemus, & Engbersen, 2007). Social support is the strong social

links with family members and friends, whose support can range from emotional, instrumental, informational and other kind of support. Social leverage is acquired from the weak social links with the individuals surrounding us in the society, such as indirect acquaintances and friends. Although this distinction is very similar to Woodcock's typology, I find the latest distinction more applicable and suitable for the purpose of analyzing the experience of migrant women married to foreign spouse, because it allows differentiating and analyzing in a more coherent way the effect of strong social ties and weak ties in the adaptation process. Similarly to Coleman's argument, in my study I will argue that the migrant women's assimilation to the new society is facilitated mostly by strong ties within their spouse's social network that opens a broader perspective of possibilities.

3.2. Social Capital and Migration from Post-Soviet Moldova

The focus in the literature on social capital and migration studies is to a large extent placed on the economic determinants and the immigrant social network patterns of international migration decision, employment opportunities, settlement and adaptation to the immigrant society (Faist & Ozveren, 2004; Andersson, 2008). These studies point out the importance of the role of the immigrant social networks and communities played by them in providing social capital and support for immigrants. Previous studies particularly on the East European and Moldavian labor female migration have been arguing that due to the insufficient or ambiguous social capital acquired in the immigrant communities and society, migrate women tend to lack social support and, therefore, undergo a downgrade in their social status at various stages in their migration experience (Hellermann, 2006: 1136; Bodolica & Spraggon, 2008: 552). In this assessment and judgment the concept of social capital and its relation to women's status, the

focus is placed on a larger category of migrant women who take individual decision to leave their country primarily for economic reasons by taking temporary jobs that do not correspond to the level of their human capital and professional status in the country of origins. These are women who migrate alone and who have to rely on their individual strength and ambitions to justify and rationalize their status in the society. Although these findings offer a valuable insight into the social transformations that take place in the process of labor migration of Moldavian women, they omit to consider those groups of women who migrate for reasons other than economic gains and who, therefore, might represent an exception to this statement.

In my research, I would like to investigate the category of migrant women who migrate mainly as a result of their marriage to foreign men and whose migration experience therefore differ from that of labor migrants. Interviewing Moldavian migrant women of different socio-economic backgrounds, who migrated for various reasons (such as study possibilities, professional opportunities, income improvement, marriage to a foreign spouse) but continued their migration experience as result of their marriage to a foreign spouse have shown that when their professional and educational ambitions are supported and facilitated by their husband's social capital, they identify their migration experience as empowering and offering them more possibilities on various social dimensions.

The quantitative study conducted by Bodolica and Spraggon about the work experience of the Moldavian migrant women in Italy argues that migrant women self-actualizing their migration experience depending on the stage of migration adaptation to the immigrant society and on the personal attitude towards their social position. Authors make an attempt to look at the adaptation and integration process through the prism of four stages of migration experience: *imaginary trip, frustrating encounter, identity consolidation and final stage of self-actualization.*

Depending on the stage of their migration experience, they will tend to view and actualize their social position differently. The adaptation approach will be influenced by the way they position and view themselves in the immigrant society. In this sense, authors distinguish two types of migrant woman: *conformist type*, who adopts a passive and submissive attitude towards her self-growth and actualization in a foreign country and the other, is the *rejuvenator type*, who through accepting her new status, actively challenges and negotiates her position by putting all efforts into self-development possibilities to attain the desired advantages and define her position in a foreign country. The authors point out that despite of the factor that may cause them take one or the other approach towards the process of self development and actualization in the new society and which might push them to integrate or to be left out of the society in a marginalized position, the economic needs and scare conditions in the home country in this case will be a decisive reason for staying and justifying their foreign experience (Bodolica & Spraggon, 2008: 550). This study investigates the experience of those migrant women who migrate alone and therefore often lack the social support from their strong ties connection. In accessing the necessary resources and information, these immigrant women mainly have to rely on the weak ties connection within the immigrant network. Because they are often restrained by their economic situation, limited time and resources to access and develop a social capital in the immigrant society, they are more vulnerable and isolated from the immigrant society. Taking into consideration the points brought in Bodolica & Spraggon's study of Moldavian working migrants, in my study I would like to analyze to what extent the personal attitude and position of those women who migrate to marry conditions their integration in their spouse's host country. Considering the fact that those women who migrate in their husband's social network might be

in a more favorable social position, I am interested in understanding the factors that preconditions their strategies in utilizing the social capital.

Another similar study on the work experience of East European women migrating alone in Portugal have shown that the migrant social network are ambiguous and contradictory in their function because besides of offering partial access to certain information and resources, they also exercise a degree of control and constrain over women's agency and actions over her position in the society (Hellermann, 2006: 1146). This is embedded in the societal skeptical attitude and mistrust about women's occupation in a foreign country as single women. They are often labeled as 'prostitutes' both by their compatriots, as well as by the immigrant society. This makes them distance from the existing social networks and prevents the future accumulation of social capital. Also, as the author argues, in the case of work migrants the social capital is primarily linked to economic capital, especially at the earlier stage of migration. They need to invest economic resources to get access and build their social capital, such as for example pay for the information about employment opportunities in the immigrant country. The fact that their economic resources are constrained, as well as that the societal mistrust preconditions a conflicting relationship within their social network makes them lack social support on various levels and limit the opportunities for improving the social position in the immigrant society. My study has shown that a different dynamics could be followed in case of the marriage migrants, who channel their social capital through the social network of their host country partner and therefore have access to the necessary immigrant resources and information. I consider that this structural difference allows recognizing a different pattern of social integration among migrant women who migrate to marry, which will be addressed in my further analysis.

However, the predominate focus in the literature on post-soviet migration trends and social capital transformations tends to be placed at largest extent on the economic determinants of migration and does not tackle the experience of those migrant women that migrate for reasons other than economic gains. It tends to portray migrant women in unfavorable and downgrading social position. Although in many cases these are true realities, there is a category of women who are able to consolidate their personal ambitions and the available social capital in obtaining a better social position in the immigrant society. Therefore, the aim of this research is to identify the core determinant factors that underlie the strategies and complexities of utilizing and mobilizing the necessary social capital in the adaptation process among those migrant women who migrate to marry and therefore represent a different category of migrants from Moldova.

3.3. Social Capital, Migration and Gender Dimensions

The United Nation Human Development Report on Human Mobility and Development suggests that gender perspective is a significant factor in understanding the causes and consequences of the current international migration (UNHD Report, 2009: 37). Other authors also suggest that despite of increased ‘feminization’ trends of migration in past decades, the literature on migration and economic development is at times gender-blind in analyzing the current situation (Morrison, Schiff, & Sjoblom, 2007: 240). It is argued that men and women perceive their migration experience differently and are led by diverse reasons when undertaking the decision to migrate (Jones, 2008; Schwenken, 2008). In the context of migration studies, a gender consideration of social capital and migration practices is more often focused on social network determinants that facilitate and influence the process of migration (Curran, Garip, Chung, & Tangchonlatip, 2005; Leach, 2009). In implementing gender dimension in the migration

studies, most of the researches have been conducted by qualitative methods (Salaff & Greve, 2004; Hellermann, 2006; Bodolica & Spraggon, 2008; Scott & Cartledge, 2009), some others by quantitative methods (Kim, Kim, & Cha, 2007; Furtado & Theodoropoulos, 2009)

The gender research in the field of migration have been extensively concerned with the effect of transnational movement of women on the adjustment and adaptation to the new immigrant society and on women's sense of social position (Bodolica & Spraggon, 2008; Friedman-Kasaba, 1996; Hellermann, 2006). The gender framework offers a different perspective to the topic of migration by listening to those subjects which have not been listened to enough and challenging the normative migration research which views women only within the framework of family, as dependent and passive actor in the migration flow.

Understanding the migration processes within the gender framework permits to examine and understand the experience and meaning migrant women have of their transnational movement and reveal how in this process the definition of self (as worker, wife, mother, etc.) and belonging is internalized personally. With this approach, Friedman-Kasaba by analyzing the migration experience of Jewish women from East European countries and Italy to America at the beginning of the last century, looks at the ways in which migrant women 'imagined, defined, or identified themselves as somehow apart from the larger collectivities into which others had defined them' (Friedman-Kasaba, 1996: 11). She points out the fact of how migrant women in pursuing a level of authority and autonomy as a 'foreigners', as workers, as mothers, as community members, develops a more self-defined identity which is an indication of a sense of empowerment and extended meaning of self as a social category. Although a century later, my study of the Moldavian migrant women settled in Italy and Hungary have pointed to a similar pattern of self-identification. Despite of the diversity in their socio-economic profile, most of the

interviewed women have identified their migration experience as foreign wives empowering and advancing their social position in terms of the social security, various professional, educational and economic possibilities that were obtained in their partners' country of origins. The presence of the social support from their foreign partners was a factor that made them perceive their migration experience as more favorable and secure than of those migrant women who self-initiated their migration journey without external support.

Departing myself from the Roer-Struer and Ben Ezra's studies of the intermarriage between western women and Palestinian men, my study similarly has shown that the presence of the native spouse's social support, as well as the kin and kith network facilitates the integration process of the foreign spouse to the social and cultural context of the immigrant country. As argued by these authors:

The extended family, especially the in-laws, assumes the role of familiarizing the newcomer with the local culture. It is also the primary agent for conveying local values and practices and for defining what is expected both from a man and, in particular, his foreign wife. (Roer-Strier & Ben Ezra, 2006: 52)

In this sense, the ability to access, mobilize and utilize the social capital of the partner's kin and kith networks influences the adaptation process of the immigrant spouse.

In regards to the gender determinants of migrant social capital, scholars point out the fact that because men and women have different migration behaviors and experiences, they also are affected differently by the acquired social capital (Curran, Garip, Chung, & Tangchonlatip, 2005). These studies suggest that because migration represents a risk in itself, migrant women's social capital is more influential and useful when it is based on strong ties and trustworthy connections, where as the men's social capital is more powerful and instrument when it is based on expansive and broad social ties. As also implied by Kanaiaupuni's study of Mexican women

and men's migration pattern, family strong ties and networks are more significant and reliable in the process of migration and adaptation of women to the immigrant country (2000).

Hence, taking into consideration this factor explains the experience of migrant wives, who by utilizing their partner's social capital can easier access the necessary resources and information to advance their social position and feel more secure in the immigrant society. On the other hand, the fact that the migration resources are channeled through their husbands' social capital let other scholars to speak of a 'power perspective' in the family gender relations (Burt, 1998). Because of the unequal power relations when the migrant partner is more dependent and reliant on the social capital of the dominant group partner might cause the migrant women to 'piggyback' on their husbands social networks in obtaining the necessary information and resources, which as a result constrain their development and agency in the immigrant society. Therefore, the analysis of migrants' adaptation into the immigrant society should take into consideration such an important factor as gender as it stipulates different approaches and scenarios in the adoption process. In other words, the effects of migrant social capital on the adaptation process are shaped by the gender relations in the sending and receiving society context.

At the same time I consider that it is also important to differentiate between the types and dimensions of the social support that was provided through the assistance of their husband's social capital in the process of integration in the immigrant society. Taking as a point of reference the Schaefer's typology of the perceived social support (as cited in Ryan, Sales, Tilki and Siara, 2008: 674), which distinguishes between instrumental, emotional and informational support, in my research I have also identified similar features of the support that the immigrant women obtained through their spouses' networks of social capital. Likewise, I differentiate the

following categories of social support: emotional, logistical, informational, socializing and legal support. By *emotional support* I refer to the personal and intimate relationship between spouses, building a level of trust and support with the foreign partner and combating various fears, misunderstandings and difficulties that might arise in the adaptation process. It also refers to the husband's emotional encouragement and assistance of the wife's ambitions to advance her social position, as well as the spiritual support to prevent the feeling of homesickness and loneliness that she might face in the immigrant society. *Instrumental support* denotes the level of all organizational arrangements, such accommodation to the new surroundings, housing, medical system, and search for an occupational or educational involvement that are first of all sought and accessed with the husband's help. *Informational support* represents the necessary knowledge about the customs, traditions and way of living in the new society that can be quicker learned from the foreign partner, or for example the basic understanding of how and where to set an appointment with the doctor without or with limited language skills. *Socializing support* is setting a social network of contacts, friends and acquaintance for leisure and recreational purposes. *Legal support* is the legalization of one's immigrant status that assists and contributes to obtain social benefits from the welfare system.

All of the above mentioned dimensions of social support refer to values and benefits that can be attained and accessed through the means of the available social capital. In this sense, the migrant women arriving in the husband's country find herself into an already established social network of her spouse's social capital. The meaning of social capital in this context represents the access to people, knowledge, information and resources that the migrant women themselves do not possess yet in the foreign country. They need to obtain and develop their new social capital concomitantly with their adaptation and integration in the new society.

Most of the literature on the concept of social capital omits to consider the gender dimension and differentiation of how women acquire their social capital differently from men. As gender is a decisive variable in the study of migrant social capital, in my study I would like to focus on the experience of migrant women and the social integration strategies by analyzing how they mobilize and utilize their husband's kin and kith networks in this process. By showing the peculiarities of women's adaptation to the new environment and the role of husband's support in it, I aim at bringing a gender dimension in migration studies and social capital transformations.

Chapter 4. Strategies and Complexities in Utilizing Social Capital and Mobilizing Social Integration

This study examines how the women's marriage migration experience can be understood through the concept of *social capital*. Interviewing women of diverse social backgrounds who migrated to marry foreign men in Hungary and Italy, I specifically analyze how the fact of the marriage to a foreign partner and migration to his country of origins preconditions the directions and ways migrant women access, mobilize and utilize their husbands' social capital in the immigrant society to facilitate and advance the new social position and integration in the social structures of the society. To assess the integration level, I analyze the level of employment opportunities, educational attainment, and knowledge about the country, culture and language that preconditions the level of adaptation to the new country and assured an equal membership in the society.

All the women participating in my research had different migration experience in terms of the social acceptance, husband's family approval and attitude, educational and employment advancement, family gender relations and expectations from their foreign husband. However, despite of this diversity in their experiences my respondents have pointed out that the presence of social support networks from their husband in the country of immigration gave them a degree of empowerment, self-confidence, freedom and agency over their new social status and position in the immigrant society. Following this sequence of findings as well as taking into consideration the academic research about the significance of social capital attainment in the process of migrant's self-actualization and status transformations in the immigrant society, I argue that a differentiation should be made between the experience of those migrant women who migrate

alone as labor migrants and predominantly are linked to the immigrant community social network without direct external support and of those who migrate to marry into an already established social network of their husbands and , therefore, have the possibility to take the advantage of a larger social capital.

Considering the role of the spouse and family relations in the immigrant country as the category of social capital and support for women's agency, my research have shown that in cases when the social support from their husbands provides an emotional, informational and instrumental context for adaptation to the new immigrant society, it might offer new possibilities and opportunities for obtaining access to a higher social position (legal, professional, educational, cultural). At the same time I show that many of the women in my study possess various degree of capacities (such as certain level of educational and professional background from home, ambitions, organizational and socializing capacities) that facilitates their active participation in certain kind of voluntary organization, educational attainment and professional involvement through which they further advance their social status and increase their social capital in the process of the integration in the immigrant society. Their husband's social capital as well as their own active efforts and capacities to utilize the obtained resources significantly maximize one's access to social capital and facilitates the process of social integration. Therefore, I argue that the migrant women's ability to consolidate their own ambitions and aspiration with their husband's social capital preconditions a higher social position in the immigrant society.

Drawing upon the content analysis of the interviews conducted with Moldavian migrant women, this chapter will present and discuss the empirical evidences supporting my argument. It will explore the ways in which migrant women make use of the social support from their

husband's kin and kith relations to develop their social capital and self-actualize their status in the new society. The empirical evidences from the 14 interviews conducted in my research had revealed several dimensions and strategies of utilizing the husband's social capital by migrant wives in advancing their social status and adapting to the new immigrant society. Building new social ties in the immigrant society is a complex process for migrant women. It involves different dimensions of integration in the social spheres of the society, such as learning the language, finding a new job, authorizing the value of university diploma from home, acquiring a new education, legalizing the immigrant status in the new country and many others. Through these dimensions of integration one can enlarge its social capital building further networks of acquaintances and friends. In the process of integration the main supportive component for the migrant wives are the social support obtained and received directly from their husbands and close family members and friends. Through this social support they are able to further gain access to other network of people, who might bring them social leverage in solving and enlarging their social position by gaining access to other forms of benefits, resources and information. This chapter will discuss these dimensions and strategies by presenting the empirical evidences from the interview materials of how and for what aspects of integration migrant women were able to utilize their husband's social capital. It will explore some of practices and processes that happen at different stages of integration and give an insight into the dynamics of social ties developed in the further integration process.

4.1. Taking the Decision to Migrate and Constructing Transnational Social Ties

For the most of the women participating in my research, the decision to emigrate from Moldova and marry to a foreign spouse has undergone through several diverse stages of prior evaluation and preparations. Building a harmonious relationships with a man of a different nationality and country of origins required an appraisal and consideration of various possible doubts and fears that one might have when taking the decision to commit and sacrifice to a change and move to a new country . For some this was an easier decision, for others not. The level of social position, connections and background one had in the country of origins prior migration as well as the time and setting in which the relationships with their future husband developed preconditioned the extent to which they could get knowledgeable and informed about the country of immigration and link to the social networks of their future husband. Besides, the affections and feelings between the partners that influenced the settings in which their union was born, this also involved constructing a level of trust and kinship structures between them. The decision of marriage is already a big change and commitment in someone's life, when this decision is pared also with the need of leaving their surroundings, network of friends, family and achieved social position to move to the country of the spouse, it entails a more complex and multidimensional processes of assessments and considerations. In this process the emotional support and encouragement one had from their partner was a significant contribution in building trust and connections both with the foreign spouse as well as with his social networks in the foreign country. This, in turn, influenced the extent to which migrant women were able to transpose parts of their social capital from their home country into the immigrant society and develop a new one.

In this respect those women who had a higher educational and professional background in the home country were able to activate and organize their social capital and skills in acquiring new knowledge about their future spouses country of origin, way of living and traditions in that country. The main source of information utilized in this process was acquired through their future husband's knowledge and understanding of his country, as well as from other sources of information, such as Internet, immigrant communities in their country of origins etc.

So, in the case of *Lidia* who had a high degree of educational attainment and a prestigious occupational position in Moldova as a bank manager met her future Italian husband in one of the business conferences in Moldova. Being born in the local setting of Lidia's home country, their relationships mostly developed in the transnational space between Italy and Moldova with occasional short rendezvous in between. As the affections between them grew and the complex decision and search for means of being together either in her home country or in his country, the evaluation of all social, economic and cultural factors brought the choice of migration to her partner's country. However, leaving the high social position she already managed to acquire in the home country necessitated a longer period of preparations and calculations of at least partially transposing the social capital she hold in the home country. '*Paving the road to Italy*', she engaged various strategies of building her social capital in the immigrant country already from the home country (Lidia, 2010). As both Lidia and her partner were involved in a similar professional sphere of international banking and foreign investment, she was able to build further professional contacts in Italy through her husband who was providing her with the information about the labor market and professional opportunities in his home country. Through these professional contacts she was later able to find an employment opportunity in Italy. At the same time supported and assisted by her future husband, she was developing connections with her

husband's social network of friends and parent by visiting her partner in Italy and further keeping transnational ties with some of his friends through means of Internet. The decision and preparation to leave her home country was both supported and assisted by her husband in providing informational, emotional and socializing support in the transnational setting as well as by Lidia's active position and ambition to mobilize and utilize all the social capital available to her.

Although, as it will also be presented later, the case of Lidia can be characterized as a successful story of immigration and integration in her husband's home country, in my study there were also other types of women who had different strategies and positions in their immigration and marriage decision. That group of women who had developed less educational and professional attainment in the home country also tended to have a smaller social capital prior their migration, primarily linked to their close relatives, friends and acquaintances. Their decision to marry and migrate also involved a more affectionate and emotional character and was perceived as *'life changing... bringing new horizons of opportunities and new beginnings'* (Alla, 2010). Such is the story of *Alla*, who met her Hungarian husband at a relatively young age of 18 years while working as a shop assistant in one small town in Moldova. Her social position in the home country was preconditioned by a dramatic setting of her family situation and position. Losing her mother at the age of 15 and having her father in jail she had to leave the school and start working to be able to support herself and her younger brother and sister. Meeting her foreign husband was perceived by her *'as an escape from the hard situation'* she had at home (Alla, 2010). The emotional support developed in the intimate and close relationships with her future husband encouraged her to aspire for a change and made her perceive the migration to her

husband's country as a crossing line to a 'new beginning'. With her husband's assistance she received supported with the logistical arrangements.

'I didn't really know where I was going; I trusted and followed my husband because there was nothing that held me in Moldova. Coming to a new country was a chance for me to start something new, a new life, make new friends, and have a chance to get an education. For once in my life I didn't have to do it all by myself, I could lean on the support from my husband. And then you know little by little I could obtain what I didn't have means and time for in Moldova' (Alla, 2010).

Alla's decision to migrate and marry relied mostly on her husband's social capital and trust in him. Since, her social position, social capital and skills prior migration were not as advanced she had to depend on the largest extend on her husband's support to adopt and integrate in the new society by obtaining those resources and knowledge that were not accessible for her in the home country.

Of course Lidia's and Alla's cases are two opposite extreme and different stories of the same cause – mixed-nationality affection and marriage. Both of these stories are unique and special in themselves. Although their social position and social capital prior migration were different and the settings and circumstances that preconditioned the birth of their relationships with their future husbands were also different, the dynamics and connection with their partners in both of these unions had a similar character. It facilitated and preconditioned their decision to migrate and helped them to utilize and mobilize their or their husband's social capital in a way that further supported them and opened new possibilities and opportunities for adaptation to the new society.

4.2. Overcoming the Stereotypes and Being Accepted in the Immigrant Society

Family and friends' acceptance and approval of the immigrant spouse were a theme often mentioned by all the immigrant women in my study. Being accepted in the new social networks affects one's social capital further developed and acquired in the new immigrant society. As pointed in Hellermann's research, 'single' female migrants are often faced by harsh prejudices and are labeled as prostitute, which distances them from the societal and immigrant social network and limits their social capital (2006). In my study of female migrant married to native partner there was also a degree of stereotyping and skeptical attitude towards migrant women connected to the belief that East European women marry only for economic and legal benefits. The existing stereotypes prevent a fair evaluation of migrant women's potential and, therefore, the creation of social capital. However, in this case the presence of their husband helped them overcome these attitudes and contributed to being accepted by the kin and kith social networks, as well as in the society.

A more vivid example in this context would be the circumstances of those women who were at first disapproved and stigmatized by the spouse's family that, therefore, made their adaptation to the new society more complex and problematic than in other cases. The reason of family's disapproval was, first of all, skeptical and stereotypical attitudes towards Moldavian or East European women in general. Such stereotypes were linked to their fears and concerns about the migrant women's intention to marry and migrate to a wealthier country and conditions. The family disapproval of the foreign spouse was mentioned by migrant women as the most problematic and complex difficulty that impacted their situation, dignity and well-being at the first stage of their adaptation to the new society. This, in turn, partially complicated the way they were able to access, mobilize and utilize the social capital to gain the necessary resources,

information and knowledge needed in their adaptation process. However, the fact that they were supported and assisted by their husbands helped them to overcome those difficulties and gradually build trust and a rapport with the family members and friends. In this sense the emotional support provided by the husband was a significant contribution to the adaptation to the new society and realization of the desired goals.

Such is the story of Valentina, who when first arrived with her husband in Italy and expressed the wish to go to study, was faced with her husband's family disapproval and attack. She found herself in a *'traditional southern Italian family where women sat home since the beginning of their kind and cooked, knitted and cleaned'* (Valentina, 2010). Having different aspiration and ambitions in her life, she was left with the choice to either accept these gender roles and adapt to the new circumstances or negotiate her aspirations and goals with the support from her husband.

'In his family I was I think the first women who went to university, when I first came from a small EE country, what I wanted the most is to learn this language and to be able to apply for an university degree. His parents thought I only came here to make career, to make money, to get an Italian citizenship and leave him. But that wasn't like this at all... and my husband knew this very well too. And, so, yes, it was actually him too who wanted me to go study. He encouraged me in that at that point in time, and now when I am almost finishing the university, they [parents] don't think of me that way anymore I think.' (Valentina, 2010)

The emotional support from her husband in encouraging and assisting her in the goal to study helped her to affirm the social position and advance her further social capital. The strategic negotiation between her aspirations and family's skeptical attitude about her intention to migrate was empowered by her husband's support and encouragement. Later in her interview, she identified the effort of her husband to claim and negotiate his kin's approval and acceptance of his foreign spouse as the most significant in her adaptation process.

When we had our child and his parents saw that I am a good mother, they gradually changed their attitude towards me [...] my husband always tried to accentuate that I am

a good mother and wife, and they could see that I am not only for career and money here, but for family first of all. (Valentina, 2010)

The accent on more traditional patriarchal gender roles (viewing a woman as a wife and a mother) in the family relations in this case balanced her educational and professional aspirations and assured the deconstruction of the existing stereotype.

Both for those women who migrated to the country of their spouse as a result of their marriage, as well as for those women who met their husbands while being in his country of origins, the societal acceptance and entrance into the native partners' kin and kith network gave them more possibilities to acquire the social capital and develop it quicker. That category of women, who migrated as students, professionals or labor migrants and prolonged their immigration status because they met their foreign spouse while being abroad, had already a level of an established social capital in the immigrant country prior meeting their husband. However, by becoming spouses of native men, they were able to extend their social capital and obtain access to other forms of benefits, resources and knowledge. The journey to their spouse's country occurred under different circumstances than in the case of those women who went after their husbands. As students or labor migrants, their social networks in most of the cases were linked to a different circle of friends and acquaintances, and when meeting their foreign spouse they had to enter a new social network of their spouse's friends and relatives. This preconditioned a 'journey' into new social surroundings and relationships, where they had to affirm their social position, gain acceptance and approval by the new circle of acquaintances, friends and relatives. In some cases they were accepted in the new social networks easier, which allowed them to adapt faster to the new settings. In other cases they were also faced by different prejudices and stigmatization from the husband's close family and friends. In both cases, these migrant women have also noted the role of their husband in facilitating and supporting them.

Such as, *Rodica* acknowledged that a ‘big part of how his friends and parent’s attitudes towards me is now and how they accept and help me is preconditioned and depended on my husband’s efforts to make it in this way’ (Rodica, 2010).

In some other cases, the presence of the husband’s kin network helped migrant women to learn how to avoid the typical stereotypes assigned to the migrant groups. Being familiar with the existing stereotypes in the society, they could lead the migrant spouse to bypass them and therefore, avoid the frustrating encounters that the ‘single’ migrants might not be aware of. As mentioned by Veronica, her husband’s family performed the role of ‘*protecting*’ her from such possible prejudices.

At first I was telling everyone that I am Romanian thinking that like this I will be better perceived in the society. I didn’t know that in Italy Romanians don’t really have such a good image as they do in Moldova. My father in law told me that it’s better if I say that I am Russian, because Russians have a better image here. And they were telling everyone jokingly that their daughter in law is Russian. (Veronica, 2010)

The tactical use of national identity and cultural background in her case was encouraged by family’s attempt to improve her image in the society for being better perceived by the immigrant society. Although problematic in its approach, this tactic shows how the family’s social capital and knowledge of the social stereotypes can be involved in the process of her adaptation to the new society.

4.3. Accessing the Cultural Capital – learning about culture, norms and language

The concept of social capital is closely interlinked to an individual’s cultural capital. Acquiring new social capital preconditions the attainment and access to the new cultural capital in the immigrant society. An important theme that came out from the interviews with the migrant women participating in my research was the complicated process of understanding and getting used to the new way of living, traditions, culture and norms in the immigrant country. For an

immigrant coming alone in a new country the process of grasping and learning a new culture, mentality and norms that could be different from those in their home country is very much linked and dependent on the level of language knowledge one possesses as well as on the people who surround them and from whom they can gain valuable information about the order of things in the society. Such information could be related to various things starting from basic survival information of how to arrange an appointment with the doctor to more complex things about the holiday's traditions and customs in that particular country. A migrant wife who gets involved particularly in the social network and surroundings of her husband could face much more various combinations of practical and cultural matters, which makes her aware of the differences between the cultures, mentality and norms of their countries. Also, as the marriage migration assumes the factor of permanence and connection to the other country and society, a migrant woman is expected to adapt, compromise and learn these differences in the way of thinking and doing things in the new society.

The process of acquiring the knowledge and understating of the immigrant society culture, norms and values enriches one's social capital and makes the adaptation to the new society possible. Differently from the regular migrants, migrant wives have access to this information directly through their foreign spouse. She, first of all, adapts her understanding of these differences through the prism of her husband's views and of his close network of friends and family. The presence of the family and friends' network is fundamental in discovering the social and cultural norms for the immigrant wives. So, for many migrant women, for example, in the case of Eugenia the family network of her husband helped her learn the culture and traditions of the new society:

There were many things I didn't know about when I first came here. I am Orthodox, he is Catholic. We have different holidays; we have different traditions and customs. At first I was very worried about it. Like when we had our wedding, I didn't know how to behave at a Hungarian wedding, we didn't know how to combine the Moldavian and Hungarian traditions and I thought that would be a real problem. But at the end, his mother was really nice to me and I became good friends with his sister too. They explained to me all about wedding, about words I have to say in the church, about everything. It all went well! (Eugenia, 2010)

With acquiring a status of a foreign wife, she also acquired the husband's family protection and guidance into the cultural code of behaviours. The close ties connection with her husband's family social capital acts as the primary facilitating aspect of social integration and adaptation.

Similarly, the presence of close ties social capital facilitates the language acquisition as a main factor of cultural and social integration. Many migrant women participating in my study have mentioned the husband's role in helping to learn the immigrant country's language, for example, through the means of arranging the language courses, assist and explaining the meaning of the spoken language and other. The close kin and kith social networks in some cases, therefore, catalyse and support the process of learning the foreign language, acting as direct 'teachers'. As mentioned in the interview with Vitalia, although she went to a language school, the fact of her husband's presence motivated and facilitated the process of learning the language the most.

'my Italian, well I knew it at a certain level to be able to speak, but when I arrived in Italy I understood that what I thought I knew was not enough to really become a part of this society... because you know it's one thing to know some grammar and words and another thing to understand the deep meanings to express yourself to be understood.. I started little by little speaking with my husband, we would read news together or watch Italian TV and he would explain the words I didn't knew [...] He practically was my main teacher and motivation to speak this language.' (Vitalia, 2010)

Going to a language school, as well as having the presence of her husband helped her to learn the language quicker, break the language barrier and further develop social capital. Concomitantly with learning the language, she was also able to build contact with other immigrants of different nationalities in the language school. She started keeping and developing ties with people of other

origins and the primary reason that linked her with these people was the common aim of learning the language of the country, as well as the fact that all of these people were migrant like her. She started socializing with migrant women like herself, who came to Italy for the same reason as her. They constructed their social ties based on common interests and situation. Through these relationships, she was able to obtain socializing and emotional supports from her newly built social ties, as well as from her husband social network of friends. Almost all of the interviewed women identified the knowledge of the countries language, being able to express themselves and being understood, as the first and most crucial obstacle for their acceptance and integration into the new society. The language knowledge acts, therefore, as the main component of acquiring the further social capital in the new society. In this respect the support from the husband facilitates and advances the process of acquiring the foreign language as in the case of Vitalia.

The socializing support as a component of social capital is one of the many factors that facilitate the access to the cultural capital and further social integration. This aspect might constitute different process for ‘single’ migrants and for marriage migrants. Coming as ‘single’ migrant for work or study purposes, the socializing support as a part of social capital is often constrained by the available economic and cultural capital, that permits obtaining and investing in further social capital. They might be restrained by time, knowledge and resources to construct social ties in the manner of reciprocity and mutual values. A different process might take shape in case of the marriage migrants are surrounded by the husband’s social capital and therefore, do not need to put as much effort in developing other social ties. The close family social ties support the socializing process as mentioned in the interview with Victoria.

My husband’s friends eventually became my good friends too and they made me feel part of this society, we were talking about politics, history and about how things are done differently in my country and here [...] In this sense if I compare myself with some of my Moldavian friends who

came here alone... they had to make new friends here, make sure they are trustworthy, cause you never know... it was much harder for them I think. (Victoria, 2010)

The presence of trustworthy social capital of the husband made her cultural and social integration easier than in case of her 'single' migrant friends. Talking about politics, history and cultural differences with her partner's friends made her aware and familiar with the cultural, political and social context in the immigrant society. As in other cases, the strong ties social capital facilitates the adaptation of the migrant wives.

4.4. Obtaining a Job or an Education

There are several aspects in which marriage to a native country partner could enhance and facilitate the obtainment of employment or educational possibilities. The native-born husband of the immigrant women could advance the knowledge of the job market, employment opportunities and educational possibilities in the immigrant society. As in other cases, Carolina was able to get information about the job market offers through her husband, who was familiar with the availability of different types of job, recruitment companies, and labour market conditions also guiding her about employment possibilities.

I had some ideas about the job I would possible want to do, but I didn't know if I could do it in Hungary, because I didn't knew the language. My husband had friends working for a multinational company in Budapest, so he gave them my CV to pass to the HR department and a week later they invited me for an interview. I got the job! Hungarian was not a requirement for that position. (Carolina, 2010)

Not being aware of the job marker possibilities in Hungary was a reason for her concern and worries at the beginning, however through close ties connection of her husband's friends she was able to obtain the information and access to potential job offers. The social support from the close network gradually allowed her to obtain social leverage that could influence and help to obtain the job in the husband's country.

In some cases, the evidence from my fieldwork show the Moldavian university diploma is not valued in the European Union countries as the ones of the native country universities. This at times causes difficulties in obtaining a job that corresponds to the level of previous occupation and education in Moldova. Some interviewees have mentioned that they were able to obtain information or entrée for their first job through the husband's friends or family network. Valentina pointed to the effort of her husband to arrange the first employment by involving the help from his friend's network.

I got my first job with the help of my husband. His friend had a tourist company and they needed someone to do the administrative job for 3 months. He asked him to take me for a start. With my diploma from Moldova no one wanted to hire me anywhere else. So it was something for me at that time. Obtaining this first job, I could later show my skills and knowledge and improve in the position. (Valentina, 2010)

Similarly, other migrant women in my study have mentioned that their first job in the immigrant society did not correspond to the level of their previous job experience. Nadejda, who also could obtain her first job with the help of her husband, have pointed out the fact that even though this job position was lower than the professional involvement she had in her home country, she could use her knowledge and skills to improve her position later. Once obtaining the social support from the close ties network of husband, she could further turn the obtained capital in social leverage that facilitated the upward movement on the job ladder.

It was a job that Italians didn't want to do, but it was a start for me. They [company] needed someone who will sort out the archive documents. I had 3 months to do all the work and I finished in 1.5 months. I was implicating myself in the work of the firm. I had very good computer knowledge; I was familiar with the type of the job and I was consulting my colleagues a lot. I showed them that I know the job, because otherwise who would have done that for me. My husband knew me and he could help me at the beginning, but further I had to show what I know by myself. (Nadejda, 2010)

Her first job could have been regarded as a downgrade in her social position at the first stage of immigrant experience. However, the social support as a form of social capital and the ambitions to move upward influenced her further improvement in the social position. As also pointed out

by other studies, Moldavian migrant women tend to obtain occupations that do not correspond to the level of their previous education background and job experience (Bodolica & Spraggon, 2008: 540). According to the typology of migrant's attitudes towards their social position presented in this study, in my research, most of the migrant women can be characterized as rejuvenators types, that is who accept the new social position by mobilizing all the efforts and social capital into positive and necessary outcomes (Bodolica & Spraggon, 2008: 552). Although, at first they might obtain an occupation that does not corresponded to the previous educational and work qualification, the ability to utilize the self capacities and skills, as well as being supported by the husband in cases when the wage level does not allow obtaining the necessary resources for further development encourage further growth and expansion of the economic and social capital.

For those migrant women, who came to the country of their spouse without prior educational or professional experience, the presence of the close ties social network allowed them to pursue an educational attainment in the foreign country. The opportunities and possibilities gained when being encouraged and assisted by the husband to continue the education can be considered as the further advancement in the social position and social capital. As in case of Alla, whose unfavourable social position in the home country did not permit to fulfil her further upward educational and occupational aspirations, the migration to the foreign country constituted an improvement for her in the sense of self-affirmation and actualization on the educational and professional background.

At home I had to take care of myself and of my brother, I had to go to work at a young age, I was a shop assistant. I couldn't finish even my high school. If I would have stayed there I probably still would have worked in that shop. Now I have already two master degrees. Who could have thought about it 10 years ago? (Alla, 2010)

Her migration to the foreign country gave the possibility to express and develop her intellectual potential. The instrumental and informational assistance from the husband allowed her to access those categories of social integration that were not accessible to her in the home country. In this respect and similarly to other women, Alla's ambitions and efforts to engage and mobilize the existing social capital from her husband social support allowed her to advance and improve her social position in the immigrant society.

4.5. Obtaining a Legal Status

The social status in the immigrant society is closely linked to one's legal status. Obtaining a legal status ensures the attainment of the immigrant's social capital and the possibility to enhance the social integration in terms of job prestige or various social benefits. The status of a foreign spouse gave them more social securities and protections than in case of the 'single' migrants who had to rely primarily on their employment or educational status to obtain the legal residence. In this sense, the acquirement of the legal status is a prerequisite for attaining the social capital in the immigrant society and it has an instrumental purpose for the further advancement.

Entering the immigrant country with the status of a foreign spouse assured the legal membership in the society and improvement of their image in the immigrant country, which positioned them in a better social position. Comparing those immigrant women who have a citizenship of their spouse country and of those who do not yet possess it, there is an apparent difference in the way they perceive their social position and membership in that society. So, Olga who does not yet possess the citizenship of her partner's home country experiences feelings of exclusion and frustration at times when faced with legal matters, like obtaining a new resident permit or understanding the legal documents in the foreign language.

They always make so much problems at the immigration office, I bring million of different papers from work, from the landlord, from tax office, and with all this package they still treat me like I am nothing here. (Olga, 2010)

For those women who migrated to the country of their spouse prior meeting their future partner, one of the aspects that constituted a change in their migrant status after marrying the native born spouse was the ‘purely instrument’ possibility to change their legal status and acquire a citizenship of the immigrant country. Many of those women connected the change in their social position with the acquired legal status in the immigrant society. In this sense, changing the immigrant status from the work or student visa to the spouse visa constituted an advancement in one’s social position and gave a larger possibilities for acquiring further benefits and securities in the immigrant country.

Obtaining the citizenship of my husband’s country had a purely instrumental purpose [...] it makes life easier for our family. As a foreign spouse I am also under the protection of this state and I have more benefits as I did before. The attitude towards me in the society changed a lot after we got married. (Carolina, 2010)

For other migrant women, the marriage to their foreign partner even constituted a possibility to legalize their status, which allowed them to obtain better employment opportunities. Such was the case of Veronica, who coming to Italy on a tourist visa at first was not able to legalize her status through the governmental apparatus. Marrying her Italian partner permitted to acquire the status of a foreign spouse, which concomitantly with the fact that she was able to obtain the work permitted her to gain a better employment opportunity.

My tourist visa was going to expire in couple of months and I didn’t want to become clandestine in Italy, ... marrying him I was able to legalize my stay quicker than it would have been otherwise with the governments regulations. I didn’t really want to marry only for the purpose of staying there, to become legal only through marriage. But at the end that was the only possible way to obtain a decent status and job... (Veronica, 2010)

The legalization of the immigrant status, as well as the acquirement of benefits and securities permitted these immigrant women to improve their social position in the immigrant society and enrich their social capital through the new gained opportunities.

4.6. Transnational Social Capital

Transnational family creation involves the modification or acquisition of the capital (social, cultural, economic, human, or linguistic) which is necessary in the process of adaptation to the new society. An important part of this process might be the feeling of homesickness and nostalgia for the 'homeland'. Getting used to the new society and new surrounding might involve a range of melancholic feelings of loneliness and of not belonging. At this stage the role of a husband was also distinguished as very significant in encouraging and supporting the immigrant wives emotionally. Keeping ties with the relatives back home becomes part of the transnational social capital that can also bring valuable support, resources and assistance in between the space of two countries. Most of the migrant women noted the role of husband in helping them keep transnational ties as very important and considerable in their foreign wives' immigrant experience.

Keeping the transnational ties with the close ties network back home is at times an essential aspect of the psychological and individual well-being in coping with the social and cultural changes occurred as a result of migration. Nadejda, as many other interviews have noted that her husband's support and understanding of her need to keep connection with the friends and family back home.

I can call my parents, friends whenever I want and need, I spend a lot of time on skype talking with people back home. He [husband] never said anything bad about this. He knows that this is very important for me... Because it is a part of me and he is supportive about it. (Nadejda, 2010)

Coming from a rich and intense social network of friends and acquaintances, migration abroad makes them aware of what they miss and lack. Although, the new social networks in the immigrant society might provide the material or informational resources needed for the social integration, the emotional fulfillment is preconditioned by good relations with their spouses and their support to keep the connection with the friends and family from home.

With the emotional benefits and well-being, there is also a degree of instrumental and economic benefits that is supported by the transnational ties. The transnational social capital in this sense extends the level of information, resources and knowledge obtained from these ties on both sides. Such, as Vitalia acknowledged the initiative of her husband to keep the connection with her parents, provide information and economic resources to them when needed.

Sometimes he [husband] would call my parents back home and I wouldn't even know about this. He sends them [parents] presents, money sometimes. He saw that sometimes life is not so easy for them economically in Moldova and when there is an occasion he would always do something for them. (Vitalia, 2010)

The role of the husband in supporting the transnational ties with the wife's family back home is an expansion not only of the wife's social capital, but also of her family. It increases the social benefits for both the foreign wife, who has the means to enlarge her social capital by obtaining new possibilities in the foreign country, as well as for her family, who can advance their social capital by attaining new recourses and information from abroad.

In many cases of those women who participated in my research, the desire and ambition to further affirm and justify their social status made them actively channel all the energy and efforts into obtaining better position. Beside the professional and educational involvement, some of the migrant women participating in my study were active participants in other voluntary organizations and initiatives. So, Victoria formed the Moldavian Diaspora organization in Hungary, Lidia became politically involved in the Moldavian immigrant communities, and Olga

became the editor of the Moldavian newspaper in Rome. The voluntary activities was considered by them in some cases as *'way to affirm and develop'* (Olga, 2010), *'do something for Moldova'* (Lidia, 2010) or *'connect and get to know more people like me'* (Victoria, 2010). Building social ties with people of similar background in this sense becomes a way of further strengthening and empowering their social position and enriching the social capital in a foreign country. In most of the cases, they were encouraged and helped by their husbands to organize the Moldavian migrant meetings in the immigrant country, arrange a place through his channels, finance some of the activities or simply promote a good image of the Moldavian culture within his social networks. So, Victoria husband's active participation in the Diaspora meeting in Budapest helped her to find the resources and ambitions to keep the connection between the Moldavian immigrants, which advanced her social accomplishment in the husband's country.

You saw it yourself... every time we have a meeting with the Diaspora he [husband] is here with us too. We bring the kids and we sing the Moldavian songs together with the family when we have our little concerts at the embassy. So, yes, he is very supportive and involved in keeping the connections with people of my nationality too. It's for the soul. (Victoria, 2010)

The *'soul'* well-being is indisputably an important aspect of social integration. Creating new social ties, as well as maintain ties with native social networks preconditions the level of accomplishment in a foreign county for immigrant women. As acknowledged by migrant women participating in my research, when their spouses get implicated and involved in helping them to create new social ties or maintain the previous ones with the native community and home it facilitates their integration and emotional well being in the immigrant society.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have explored the dimensions of social integrations among Moldavian migrant wives in Hungary and Italy through the concept of social capital. Drawing upon the empirical evidences from semi-structured interviews with 14 Moldavian migrant women, I have analyzed how the mixed-nationality relationship migrant women mobilize and utilize their native born spouses' social capital to advance their social integration and position in the immigrant country. I have argued that the presence of partner's kin and kith social network support, as well as their personal ambitions and aspirations enable them to easier adapt to the immigrant society and obtain a higher social position to a much larger degree than other types of migrants.

In this respect, six dimension of social integration are critical in considering when analyzing the ways and directions in which they were able to utilize their spouse's social capital. First, the transnational social ties construction when the decision to migrate takes place. This process involves the preparation phase of building trust with their future spouse, acquiring information and knowledge about the immigrant society and developing connection with the kin and kith network of their foreign spouse. The partner's involvement and participation in assisting the migrant woman with the necessary information and resources considerably facilitating the migration preparation process and reduces costs and risks other types of migrants might endure. Second, overcoming societal stereotypes towards the migrant group in the immigrant society that might assign to marriage migrant women skeptical attitudes is an important prerequisite in further developing one's social capital and being accepted in the society. In this respect, the native partner's efforts to oppose the prevailing stereotypes within his social networks, as well as migrant woman's ambition to advance their social position is essential in the adaptation process.

Third, accessing the cultural capital, such as learning about culture and norms, as well as acquiring the language knowledge is facilitated the most by the strong ties social capital through the partner's kin and kith network effort to introduce the migrant spouse to the social and cultural structures of the society. Forth, obtaining a job or an education is critical in one's social integration and the native partner's knowledge of the job market, employment opportunities and educational possibilities might enhance the process of job or education attainment for the immigrant spouse. Firth, obtaining a legal status is a prerequisite for acquiring the social benefits and securities in the immigrant society. Sixths, keeping the transnational ties with the migrant woman's family and friends enriches their social capital and at times ensures the emotional well-being for them. Alongside all these dimensions, native spouse social capital acts as key aspect and gateway to the social adaptation of the migrant wife. It offers access to the social, economic and cultural capital, resources and information about the immigrant society.

Social capital as concept has been rarely applied in the context of marriage migration from Moldova. By bringing the attention to the topic of mixed-nationality marriages and transnational family formation through the pattern of social adaptation and social capital transformation, this thesis has opened up the possibility for a further research and discussion on the matter of marriage migration trends from Moldova. It also aimed at highlighting the importance of analyzing the migrant social capital and family relations from the perception of social actors and gender.

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Appendix

Table 1. **Characteristics of the Sample**

Name	Age	Nr. Of Children	Initial Reason for Migration	Country of Residence	Origin of the Husband/ Partner	Length of Residence	Prof. Status in the immigrant country	Family Status
Victoria	40s	3	Love Migration	Hungary	Hungarian	17 years	Language Teacher, PhD	Married
Elena	40s	1	Love Migration	Hungary	Hungarian	3 years	Housewife, Secondary School	Married
Rodica	20s		Education	Hungary	Hungarian	6 years	PhD student	Married
Carolina	20s		Education	Hungary	Hungarian	8 years	Team Leader in a Multinational Company, BA	Married
Eugenia	50s	2	Love Migration	Hungary	Hungarian	19 years	Manager, Family Business, MA	Married
Alla	30s	2	Love Migration	Hungary	Hungarian	12 years	MA student	Married
Aurica	50s	2	Education	Hungary	Hungarian	21 years	Language Teacher, MA	Married
Alexandra	30s		Education	Hungary	Hungarian	4 years	Senior Program Officer, MA	In relationship
Vitalia	30s	1	Love Migration	Italy	Italian	5 years	Housewife, BA	Married
Nadejda	50s	1	Labor	Italy	Italian	10 years	Language Teacher, BA	Married
Veronica	30s	1	Labor	Italy	Italian	5 years	Restaurant Administrator, BA	Married
Lidia	50s	2	Labor	Italy	Italian	10 years	Manager, MA	Married
Valentina	30s	1	Love Migration	Italy	Italian	15 years	Event Organizer, MA	Married
Olga	30s		Labor	Italy	Italian	7 years	Journal Editor, MA student	In relationship

Table 2. **Moldavian Migrants International Destination Countries by Gender**

	Distribution of migration by destination			Gender distribution of migration by country of destination		
	Overall (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	% male	% female	Total
Italy	16.3	9.3	28.4	36.5	63.5	100.0
Russia	61.9	72.2	43.7	74.3	25.7	100.0
Turkey	2.1	1.0	3.9	32.2	67.8	100.0
Portugal	4.5	4.8	4.0	67.9	32.1	100.0
Greece	2.5	1.2	4.8	29.6	70.4	100.0
Ukraine	2.2	2.2	2.2	63.2	36.8	100.0
Other countries	10.5	9.3	13.0	-	-	100.0
Total	100	100	100	65.9	34.1	100.0

Source: CBS-AXA 2005: 15

Interview Questions:

Where imagination meets the reality: Crossing the borders and arriving into a new country.

1. Tell me about your story how you decided to leave Moldova and to go to another country.
2. What were the reasons of your migration?
 - if migration to marry – How did your husband contributed and supported your adjustment to the new society?
 - if migration with the purpose of work/education/other – Who did you find support from in adjusting to the new conditions and to what extend this support was relevant for you at that stage?
3. What issues/ problems were you faced with upon your arrival into the new country?
4. To what extend the imagined expectations for the new country corresponded to the real – life conditions in that country?
5. Were you concerned with the financial difficulties? Were these difficulties you were faced with expected to come? How did you solve it?
6. To what extend and how did the initial aims and aspirations you had about your migration became realized and possible in the new country of immigration?

Category of ‘Family Status’ and the Role of the Husband

1. How did you meet your Italian/Hungarian/etc. husband/partner and how did he perceived the fact that you are Moldavian?
2. What qualities in him attracted you the most and was he anyhow different from the men in the home country? If yes, how?
3. How did his parents and friends perceive you and how would you characterize your relationship with them?
4. How is your marriage with an Italian/Hungarian/French/German man perceived in your home country by your parents, your friends, your relatives, etc.?
5. In your opinion, are there any cultural, social or other differences between you and your husband? And if yes how are these differences affecting the quality of your relationship? How do you solve these issues?
6. To what extend is your husband participating in your social integration and development?
7. In your opinion, what are the qualities that your husband appreciates in you?

Category of ‘Profession’/ ‘Occupation’ / ‘Job’

1. How did the qualifications and job experience that you had in the home country corresponded to the job you found in the new country?

2. If comparing Moldova with Italy – What in your opinion were you able to obtain professionally in Italy/ Hungary/France/Germany that you could never have obtained in Moldova?
3. How did your immigrant life changed you if comparing yourself to your friends and relatives that are in your home country?
4. What qualities of yours helped you obtain the social and professional status you have now?

Category of ‘Home’ and belonging

1. How was it leaving behind your country / friends / family and go into a new country?
2. How do you cope with distance? How often do you visit your home country? Call your friends and relatives back home?
3. To what extend and how is your husband/partner supporting and helping you to keep your contact with your ‘Home’ country?
4. What is like being a Moldavian woman abroad?
5. What do you call ‘HOME’ now?