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Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine

Department of Psychology

ACCULTURATION, PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS, AND FAMILY ADJUSTMENT
AMONG RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

By Eugene Dunaev

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of Psychology

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PHILADELPHIA COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Dissertation Approval

This is to certify that the thesis presented to us by Eugene Dunaev
on the 17 day of May, 2012 in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Psychology, has been examined and is
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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the effect of acculturation differences on psychological distress and family functioning in non-Jewish Russian immigrant families. Potential mediating effects of social support and parenting style and moderating effect of the child's gender were investigated using regression analysis. The sample consisted of 80 Russian immigrant mother-child dyads residing in the northeast region of the U.S. The study included independent assessment of acculturation to American and Russian cultures. Results confirm the presence of associations between acculturative differences, psychological distress, and family problems. A mediational role of social support and parenting style on the impact of acculturation differences was not found; however, the child's gender moderated the impact of acculturation differences on psychological distress. In addition, the child's gender partially moderated the link between acculturation differences and greater mothers' psychological distress. The findings suggest that acculturation differences have deleterious effects on mental health and family functioning of Russian immigrants.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the problem.

In the past, acculturation theory assumed that acculturation was a unidirectional process: acquisition of the new culture and loss of the native culture (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Theorists contended that this cultural divergence produced psychological distress until individuals resolved the conflict by successfully replacing their culture of origin with the acquired culture. More recently, Berry's (1990) bi-dimensional model of acculturation established that the retention of ethnic identity and behaviors is independent of the development of a new cultural identity. This model does not assume a unilateral transition from one culture to another; instead the two cultures may diverge, converge, or come into conflict (Birman, 1998). This shift in theoretical thought should have implications for how acculturation is measured and how acculturative differences are operationalized.

When it comes to investigation of Russian immigrants' process of acculturation, literature on their experiences is sparse (Birman & Tyler, 1994; Kisselev, 2005). The most frequently studied aspects are gender, age at the time of arrival, and length of time spent in the United States. Little or no attention is paid to the dimension of ethnic identity (Persky & Birman, 2005).

Ethnic identity in psychological literature refers to an individual's sense of self in terms of membership in a particular ethnic group (Phinney, 1990). Ethnic identity has been defined in a variety of ways: an individual's group affiliation, or sense of inclusion in and commitment to a group; values and attitudes shared by an individual's ethnic

group; and cultural manifestations such as language, behavior, values, and knowledge of group history (Nesdale & Mak, 2003; Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997). It appears that self-identification, in terms of a sense of belonging, pride, and commitment, is found in all ethnic groups (Phinney 1990).

Interestingly, in the literature on Russian immigrants, acculturation psychology is silent on the interaction of elements of ethnic identity with adaptation to American culture (Birman, Persky, & Chan, 2010). This occurs because the ethnic backgrounds of various peoples from the former Soviet Union (e.g., Slavic Russians, Asiatic Russians from Siberia, Jewish Russian, and Muslims from the Caucasus and Central Asia) are re-defined after their resettlement in the United States. According to Persky and Birman (2005), in the case of Slavic Russian (non-Jewish) and Jewish Russian immigrants in American society, it is their Russian cultural and linguistic background that separates them from the dominant culture. For these reasons, acculturation researchers relied on a narrow, geographically and language-based perspective in their investigations of the relationship between acculturation and psychological adjustment (Birman & Trickett, 2001a; Birman, Trickett, & Vinokurov, 2002; Birman & Tyler, 1994). Ironically, in the former Soviet Union, Jewish citizens were not considered to be Russian and were officially registered as ethnically Jewish; one's ethnicity was defined not by nationality but by biological descent, similar to the concept of race in the United States (Persky & Birman, 2005).

Gitelman (1982) referred to this classification as acculturation without assimilation. According to this model, Russian Jewish citizens adopted the cultural norms and values of the Soviet society in which they lived without undergoing ethnic

assimilation into that society. This repeats a historical pattern in which Jews were socially and politically excluded at many levels. According to Vinogradov (2011), Russian Jewish citizens of the former Soviet Union existed in a state of instability, with their social acculturation in tension with their state-defined Jewish ethnicity. In consequence, they came to identify themselves more with their Jewish ancestry than their participation in Soviet society.

To this day, only one published study (Persky & Birman, 2005) has included the component of ethnic identity (e.g., American, Russian and Jewish) in an analysis of the psychological adaptation of Russian immigrants. The data reported was collected as part of an extensive study examining psychosocial and work-related adaptation of Soviet Jewish refugees in Maryland. The results indicated that for Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union, it was their Jewish ethnic identity, not the more commonly studied Russian and American identifications, that was most prevalent among these immigrants. That result supports prior research indicating that Jewish immigrants and refugees who immigrated to United States from the former Soviet Union in last three decades of the twentieth century had a strong sense of being Jewish (Birman & Tyler, 1994; Gold, 1994). The findings are also consistent with literature on Soviet Jewish immigrants in Israel, who reported that it was their Jewish identity not their Russian and Israeli identities, that was most important to their sense of self (Ben-Rafael, Olshtain, & Geijst, 1998).

Unfortunately, no investigation of the influence of Russian ethnic identity in non-Jewish communities on acculturation has been undertaken. Instead, most researchers treat Jewish and non-Jewish Russian immigrants as one population (D. Birman, personal

communication, June 18, 2012). This is a problematic assumption, because there are significant differences between these two groups on many cultural levels (Birman, Persky, & Chan, 2010). One of the reasons for the lack of research is that the concept of ethnic identity in Russian Americans and Jewish Russian Americans has been used interchangeably with such concepts as nationality, race, religion, and culture (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Birman, 1994; Oppenheimer, 2001; Phinney, 1996). As a result, a reliable and valid measure of the ethnic identity of Russian (Jewish and non-Jewish) immigrants that clearly differentiates the two groups has thus far failed to be devised.

The absence of such research is also attributable to the commonly held view of Russian immigrants (Jewish and non-Jewish) as an adaptable, upwardly mobile, and financially successful immigrant subgroup (Chiswick, 1993). Russian immigrants exhibit a high degree of mutual support; reliant on themselves, family members, or friends, they tend to avoid seeking mental health services (Kishinevsky, 2004; Green, 2004). However, this mutual support does not imply that Russian immigrants are immune to acculturative stress. Ironically, one of the most prevalent dilemmas that acculturating Russian immigrant face is family discord (Birman, 2006a). There are cultural reasons for this underutilization of mental health care services, including the stigmatization of mental illness during the Communist era, as well as a lack of information about resources available outside the circle of family and friends in the US (Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Yakushko, 2006).

Acculturation stressors, such as communicating in a new language, coping with discrimination, forming new social bonds, and seeking adequate employment that emerge after immigration to a new country negatively affect lives of most immigrants (Berry

1980). William and Berry's (1991) investigation into acculturation aftershocks documented higher rates of mental and physical illness in immigrants in comparison to native-born Americans. Stressors encountered by Russian immigrants may lead to problems in different aspects of their lives; however, issues such as lack support from family and social networks have proved to have specific negative effects on their psychosocial functioning (Birman, 2006a; Kwak, 2003). This is partially attributable to children and their parents having qualitatively different experiences of immigration and acculturation (Grizenko, 2002).

Not all groups and individuals engage in the process of acculturation in the same way. Weintel's (2005) study of Russian immigrants revealed that children and adolescent immigrants are challenged by the struggle to fit in, so they tend to focus on adjusting to their new host country. Parents, on the other hand, were more concerned with economic security of their family, an adaptive strategy carried over from the native culture. These variations have been called *acculturation strategies* (Berry, 1980). As a result, the difficulty facing younger immigrants is balancing the demands of their new environment with the demands of their native-oriented parents. According to acculturation research, this divergence in acculturation strategies fosters the development of intergenerational differences, which tend to cause manifestations of individual distress and family dysfunction (Landau, 1982).

In contrast to the literature noted above, other investigations concluded that immigrant families (including Russian populations) facing various acculturation stressors do not experience psychological stress and dysfunction. For example, when specifically focused on conflict, a meta-analysis of multiple samples concluded that no clinically

significant relationship existed between acculturation and family discord (Moyerman & Forman, 1992). Another study suggested that parent-child acculturative differences can, in principle, be a source of family solidarity and an opportunity to increase self-efficacy and a sense of personal importance (McQuillan & Tse, 1995).

Failure to establish a consistent link between parent-child acculturative differences and psychological ailments or family dysfunction in Russian immigrants makes it difficult for clinicians to design and implement an effective clinical intervention for this population. To make matters worse, little research has been performed to identify specific mediating and moderating variables between acculturation and psychological distress in individuals and families (Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 2001; Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, Jaakkola, & Reuter, 2006; Phinney & Chavira, 1995). Consequently, the field of acculturation psychology is in dire need of additional data that can clarify and add to our understanding of the complex interactions described above. More importantly, further research is needed to analyze other factors complicating the relationship between levels of acculturation and psychological distress.

Purpose of the study.

The present study investigated the influence of Russian ethnic identity on acculturation in non-Jewish Russian immigrant communities. It reports on acculturative differences between parents and children, and their correlations with psychological distress and family maladjustment among Russian American immigrants. The specific aim of this study is to determine whether a significant association exists between mother-child acculturative differences and psychological distress or family dysfunction in Russian immigrants. The study (a) assessed acculturation of parents and children independently; (b) employed a bidirectional model of acculturation that assessed attachment to the old and the new culture; (c) utilized a comprehensive battery of questionnaires on psychological distress and family function; and (d) tested for mediating and moderating effects of social support and parenting style on family function. A combination of a correlation and regression analysis was conducted, with parent-child acculturation levels as the independent variable and psychological distress and family dysfunction as the dependent variables.

In the target population, the study assessed whether social support and parenting style partially mediated the relationship between mother-child acculturative differences and psychological distress or family dysfunction. In addition, this study used the gender of the child as a moderator to explore any anomalous evidence in the relationship between mother-child acculturative differences and immigrant family function.

Relevance to goals of the program.

Every year, more and more immigrants enter the United States seeking a better life. Each population brings its own unique set of cultural beliefs and practices. The

population evaluated in this study consisted of non-Jewish Russian immigrant families. Just as do other immigrant populations, upon resettlement Russian immigrants undergo an array of personal and environmental stressors. The literature (Birman, 2006b) maintained that these stressors may lead to various mental health problems. Furthermore, many of these immigrants either choose to forego or have no access to professional mental health services. Considering that PCOM seeks to produce practitioner-scholars who are able to identify and understand matters of individual and cultural diversity, this study was undertaken in the hope that it would provide a richer understanding of factors conducive to a healthy acculturation process for Russian American families. This investigation also intends to contribute to a growing body of knowledge that will be the basis for empirically supported, cognitive-behavioral approaches to diagnose, assess, and treat psychological problems among Russian American immigrants in multidisciplinary settings.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Definitions.

An *immigrant* is a person who comes to a country where they were not born in order to establish a new residence. Immigrants do not immigrate for the same reasons, and those who chose to move voluntarily do so in a calculated fashion (Bornstein & Cote, 2006). It is very likely that they may have visited the destined land of immigration in the past (Kishinevsky, 2004). Many voluntary immigrants have sufficient financial means and are aware of various social networks within their new homeland. The majority of these networks include other immigrants (of various generations) from their native land (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994).

Although immigrants from the Soviet Union constitute a very diverse group of people, prior investigations of Jewish and non-Jewish Russian immigrants in the U.S. have described Russian immigrants as culturally Russian (Gold, 1996). Russian immigrants are perceived to be a homogeneous group because of their connection to the Russian language and culture (Persky & Birman, 2005). In addition, Russian Jewish immigrants are referred to as “Russians” by Americans in the United States (Birman & Trickett, 2001a), regardless of their ethnic identification. As a result, the literature cited in this study did not differentiate the identification of Russian immigrants based on their ethnic identity.

Bornstein and Cote (2006) referred to the native culture as the *society of origin* in which a combination of political, economic, and demographic conditions being

collectively faced by individuals lead them to develop a comprehensive set of languages, values, customs, beliefs, and behaviors.

Bornstein and Cote (2006) referred to the new culture upon immigration as the *society of settlement*, which has its general orientations toward immigration and cultural pluralism. More importantly, this society also possesses a complex hierarchy of its own languages, values, custom, beliefs, and behaviors. According to Berry and Kalin (1995), some societies are accepting of cultural pluralism, where immigrants can find support for the continuation of their native culture. Accordingly, this position represents a positive multicultural philosophy.

Immigrant groups typically develop four different kinds of *ethnic identity*, depending on which acculturation strategy immigrant groups prefer: assimilated identity, separated identity, marginalized identity, and integrated identity (Berry, 1980). Phinney and Ong (2007) suggested that an individual's ethnic identity is created progressively through time, and so not only is it influenced by individuals' experiences, but also by the choices they make in life. As a result, ethnic identity is a dynamic construct and is subject to ongoing change, depending on the time and various sociocultural and political contexts (Phinney, 2002). Moreover, Phinney and Ong (2007) suggested that ethnic identity is influenced by the dynamic process of exploration and learning.

Acculturation refers to the changes that follow immigrants' contact with people of a different cultural background (Bornstein & Cote, 2006). In general, the dominant group does not undergo many changes, yet the immigrant group undergoes an array of complex changes. Of particular importance are the behavioral changes, which for the minority group may include culture shedding, culture learning, and culture conflict (Berry, 1998).

Not all individuals adjust to the new culture in the same way. It has been noted that children acculturate at a faster rate than their parents (Birman & Trickett, 2001b; Cheung & Chudek, 2011), learning the new language and participating in the new culture particularly quickly. In contrast, adults tend to retain aspects of their native culture, and their acculturation is slower (Liebkind, 1996). As a result, *acculturation differences* are thought to develop over time between parents and children.

Immigrants undergo a considerable amount of acculturative stress; many are subject to prejudice and discrimination. These interpersonal difficulties can independently contribute to poor self-rated health. Ritsner, Modai, and Ponizovsky (2002) defined *psychological distress* as a reaction of an individual to external and internal stressors characterized by a mixture of psychological symptoms, such as poor self-esteem, hopelessness, helplessness, confusion, sadness, anxiety, as well as various subjective body complaints.

Olson, Sprenkle, and Russel (1979) suggested that the premier model of *family functioning* consists of three primary dimensions of family behavior that are crucial to its functioning: *flexibility*, *cohesion*, and *communication*. The flexibility dimension of family functioning refers to the “the quality and expression of leadership and organization, role relationships, and relationships rules and negotiations” (Olson & Gorall, 2004, p. 5) and highlights how families balance stability with change. This dimension is directly related to the acculturative stress that families undergo in their initial stages of adaptation. The second dimension of cohesion represents “the emotional bonding that couple and family members have toward one another” (p. 516) and focuses on how families balance individuating and the coming together of family members. The

third dimension of communication is seen as a facilitator that allows families to move along the flexibility and cohesion dimensions. Overall, as families' environments change, it is often necessary for them to adjust their flexibility and cohesion in order to maintain a healthy level of family functioning (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1980).

Literature review.

Process of acculturation.

For immigrants around the world, acculturation has been an ongoing process for almost a century. Upon arrival in the new country and during the initial stages of adaptation, immigrants tend to undergo "confusion, deprivation, anger and even mourning, which is also known as culture shock, resulting from the need to cope with the new culture and its demands" (Kishinevsky, 2004, p. 6). According to Bornstein and Cote (2008), early examinations of acculturation focused on how immigrants' identities changed following the immigration process; however, current trends (Sam & Berry, 2006) are examining how ethno-cultural groups relate to each other. There is also increasing interest in examining whether some of these immigrant populations change in response to coming in contact with other groups (Bornstein & Cote, 2008).

In the 1960s, theoretical approaches equated the process of immigration with assimilation. At the time, complete integration into the American society was seen as something to be desired, as well as something that was inevitable for every immigrant (Berry & Kalin, 1995). Gordon (1964) theorized that assimilation occurs sequentially, first with language and behavioral acculturation to occur, followed by structural assimilation, which is measured by the immigrants' ability to integrate socially and economically into the new society. Early approaches (Graves, 1967) believed that as

immigrants' assimilation process reached its final stage, they abandoned the identification of their native culture as they identified with the new culture. Thus, early acculturation theory assumed a one-dimensional approach, which is often called an assimilation model or bipolar model (Nguyen & von Eye, 2002). The cultural values of the native culture were either obsolete or incompatible with the values of the new host culture, which then resulted in a cultural conflict, producing psychological and interpersonal distress in the individuals who are going through the acculturation process until they completely assimilated to the new culture (Ramirez, 1984). The major criticism of this model is that it does not allow immigrants to have bicultural identities, although many ethnic minorities describe themselves as such (Nguyen & von Eye, 2002).

Within this paradigm, a theoretical conceptualization of an acculturation gap was based on the speed of children's acculturation compared to their parents' (Ramirez, 1984). As a result, individual differences within the acculturation process were ignored. However, as more data (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990; Phinney, 1990) were collected, it became evident that this one-dimensional model did not account for individual acculturation differences.

Later models of acculturation have abandoned this one-dimensional approach (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991) in favor of one that asserts the potential of an orthogonal relationship between acculturation to the culture of origin and the host culture (Birman, 1998; Cortes, Rogler, & Malgady, 1994; Nguyen, Messe, & Stollak, 1999). Within this system, the process of immigration to a new culture involves both acculturation processes, which involve acquiring a new repertoire of skills, and "deculturation," where individuals unlearn certain elements of their original behavioral

and cognitive strategy data bank (Kim, 2001). Similarly, Birman (2006a) pointed out that strides toward cultural competencies occur across qualitatively different domains. For example, the acculturation process with respect to both the new and the native culture has been shown to heavily rely on dimensions of language, identity, and behavior. As a result, this multidimensional view of the acculturation process implies that immigrants may not undergo uniform changes with regard to the culture of origin and/or the host culture (Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989).

Berry (1980) described acculturation as a two-dimensional process in which immigrants exhibit four different acculturation styles. Similarly, Berry, Trimble, and Olmedo (1986) have shown the possibility that acculturating individuals may either embrace both or be uncomfortable in both cultures. In more concrete terms, Berry's (1980) acculturation styles consist of two components: attitudes (individual preferences of acculturation style) and behaviors (fulfill the desired attitudes) (Berry et al., 1989). In turn, Berry's (1993) orthogonal model was the pivotal point in acculturation research because it provided the theoretical framework for future acculturation models that could consider many acculturation variables, such as language, behavior, and identity, between the native and the new host culture.

At the individual level, four acculturation strategies have been derived from an interaction between two issues, which are the need to hold on to one's heritage culture and identity and a survival drive to learn values of the new host culture in order to feel like a participating member. According to Berry (1980), when individuals do not want to maintain their cultural identity and seek full absorption of the new host culture, then this is called the assimilation strategy. In contrast, when immigrants believe that survival of

their original culture is of extreme importance while interaction with the new culture is unnecessary, this is called separation strategy. However, if there is an interest in both preserving one's heritage (or original culture) while willing to interact with the host culture daily, it is called integration strategy. Finally, when immigrants are unable to or lose interest in maintaining their cultural heritage while having little interest interacting with the new host culture, this is called marginalization strategy. This model has been supported by the literature, which has shown that immigrant individuals vary in the extent to which they strive to maintain traditions and values from their culture of origin, as well as the extent to which they adopt features of their new culture (Birman & Trickett, 2001a; Cortes, Rogler, & Malgady, 1994; Nguyen et al., 1999).

As acculturation research moved forward in parallel with the new wave of immigrants from the 1990s to early 2000s, a slightly different, yet similar approach to understanding acculturation strategies arose focusing on the concept of cultural identity. This concept refers to a complex set of beliefs and attitudes that individuals have about themselves in relation to their cultural group membership (Phinney, 1990). Berry (1996) believed that this intricate web of thoughts and ideas is particularly important in acculturation when immigrants come in contact with the new host culture. Just as acculturation is seen as a set of strategies stemming from an interaction between cultural heritage maintenance and involvement with the other cultures, research has found that how immigrants think of themselves is also constructed along two dimensions (Berry, 2001). The first dimension deals with identification with one's heritage, while the second deals with the identification with the new host culture. However, another major factor in acculturation is also political affiliation. As a result, simultaneously maintaining ethnic

(native and/or new) and civic identities (based on sociopolitical beliefs) has become more accepted in multicultural policies across the western world (Berry, 2003).

Previous research on former Soviet Union Immigrants in the United States.

From the early 1990s through the beginning of the 21st century, immigrants to the United States from the former Soviet Union have numbered over 400,000 (Lashenykh-Mumbauer, 2005). Similar to the previous wave of Soviet refugees in the late 1970s, the vast majority of more recent arrivals are highly educated professionals (Chiswick, 1993) from the urban areas of the former Soviet Union (Persidsky & Kelly, 1992). Although these immigrant families come with “cultural capital” (Jones & Trickett, 2005) they enter a cultural context quite different from their own, specifically with respect to schooling and parent-child-school relationships (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Horowitz & Kraus, 1984). For various reasons, Soviet immigrants are expected to have an easier time assimilating into the American culture than other minority immigrant populations (Birman & Trickett, 2001a). The adults are highly educated, with the majority possessing a college degree (Birman & Tyler, 1994; Gold, 1992) and having been employed in professional occupations prior to migration (Simon & Simon, 1982). They also have white skin, which gives them an opportunity to blend into the mainstream in the United States in a way not clearly available to non-White immigrants or ethnic minorities (Hurh, Kim, & Kim, 1978; Rumbaut, 1994). Fong (2004) reported that the ex-Soviet immigrant population is an extremely diverse group of people. “The diverse cultural, religious, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds of these immigrants contribute in some instances to a positive adaptation to the United States, and in others to a less successful adaptation” (p. 291).

Soviet immigrants have a tendency to be strongly attached to Russian culture and have pride in the accomplishments of the former Soviet Union (Birman & Trickett, 2001a). Losing their homes as well as their familiar cultural support system is extremely difficult for the new immigrants. In fact, one study on Russian-speaking refugees in San Francisco's mental health clinic reported that 68% of the clients develop severe depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues within 1 year of arrival in the United States. The primary causes for this are related to feelings about losing their culture and home (Zinchenko, 2001). The data also suggest that immigration stress has a greater negative impact on elderly Russian immigrants because they tend to be less flexible during acculturation. The younger population, on the other hand, is much more resilient and is able to adapt to different social and economic arrangements present within the U.S. (Cheung & Chudek, 2011).

One of the explanations for this division revolves around issues of language acquisition. Language functions as a communicative device that tends to bring certain groups of people together. For example, in one study, a Russian woman stated: "Although I know that life is better here in America, I miss many aspects of life such as my language, music concerts, movies, the availability of Russian newspapers, and even Russian TV!" (Fitzpatrick & Freed, 2000, p. 12). In Russian culture, language has a rich history of creating and maintaining a sense of a very close, friendly communal way of life (Center for Health Disparities, 2008). Neighbors, for example, are taken into the home as family friends. Warm gestures and hellos between strangers are common occurrences on the streets. How do Russian immigrants feel about American communication styles? Some studies on cross-cultural differences document that Russians see American

ritualized exchanges of greetings as phony and indirect. In fact, “a typical stereotype of Americans as being insincere is evident in some cases” (Kartalova, 1996, p. 82). This inability to communicate and connect with the new host country increases the sense of social isolation, feelings of loneliness, and low self-worth. Due to this isolation, adult Russian-speaking immigrants living in the U.S. tend to “develop high rates of depression, demoralization, and somatization when compared to the general population” (Flaherty, Kohn, Golbin, Gavirin, Birz, 1986, p. 157).

Language is also a very important factor in the acculturation process because it is connected to the Russian immigrants’ cultural identity and behavior. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of Russian immigrants agree that their language is very unique and that there are many things that they can say easily in Russian that they could not possibly say in English. For example, one common problem that many immigrants encounter is when Russian humor is translated into English the message becomes lost, which makes it very difficult to maintain friendly conversations. Dimitrov’s (2005) study of the relationship between cultural values and social behaviors of Russian immigrants during the acculturation process suggested that the largest number of friendship and workplace disagreements occur because of language issues. Further, Dimitrov (2005) reported that about 84% of the miscommunication occurs when Russian immigrants try to communicate with Americans, while only 16% of miscommunication occurs when they converse with other Russians. Overall, the above evidence suggests that language plays a large role in the process of acculturation.

Some research (Stodolska, 2008) has suggested that younger immigrants are not only more resilient and motivated to overcome these communication barriers, but they

are also more resilient when encountering negative ethnic stereotypes. One of the explanations for this revolves around issues of language acquisition. Parents typically have less opportunity to learn the new language due to their employment circumstances and less culturally diverse social networks (Birman & Trickett, 2001b). However, unlike their older counterparts, children and adolescents are typically immersed in English with the help of the American school system. Additionally, they also have many opportunities to practice their new language inside and outside of the classroom (Szuber, 2007). This means they may speak English at school, with their peers, in their neighborhoods, or at home with siblings and parents.

Another explanation suggested that younger immigrants overcome their communication barriers with ease because they have open attitudes toward integration and maintenance of multiple ethnic identities (Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdrzalek, 2000). By maintaining their multiple ethnic identities, they secure successful adaptation techniques present in the two different cultures. According to anecdotal evidence, one of the strengths acquired from the Russian culture would include a strong work ethic, while the strengths acquired from American culture would include independence and free will. The integration of strengths from both cultures allows them to function at a healthier mental state when compared to their older counterparts. Furthermore, they are also very flexible in their interactions with people from both native cultural and American social networks (Kang, Shaver, Sue, Min, & Jing, 2003). Berry (2003) conceptualized these behaviors under one general strategy of integration. In fact, Berry et al.'s (2006) investigation of 5,000 immigrant youth who settled in 13 countries found that the largest number of subjects were in the integrated cluster. This is

defined as “preference for integration of positive ethnic and national identities, ethnic and national language knowledge, and a friendship network that included youth from both cultures” (Bornstein & Cote, 2006, p. 23). Although this seems to be an advantageous strategy, many young Russian immigrants often find themselves rapidly assimilating (Berry, 1980) to the American way of life, which creates many problems in family dynamics.

Prior research with other immigrant groups (Dinh, Sarason, & Sarason, 1994; Kwak, 2003) suggested that family conflicts often occur because of the adolescents’ overadjustment to American culture. The problems arise because overadjusting tends to accentuate an obvious separation of cultural values between the older and the younger members of Russian American families, particularly with respect to the familial values (Birman, 2004). As the children and young adults move toward full assimilation, they soon begin experiencing a disjunction between life inside and outside of their family. Overall, literature on Soviet immigrants suggests that cultural differences are reflected in the degree of stress associated with immigration (Galperin, 1988; Mirsky, 1997; Slonim-Nevo & Sheraga, 1997; Yaglom, 1991). According to anecdotal evidence, American schools play an especially important role in magnifying this disjunction for young Russian American students. As American teens progress through the school system, Russian parents have no choice but to allow individuality and autonomy. After all, these traits are crucial to success in America; however, because this also presents a move away from the collectivistic family, Gelfand (1989) believed that feelings of separation anxiety and unmet expectations begin to dominate family relationships.

One interesting limitation identified in the literature regarding the adjustment of Russian-speaking immigrants to the United States is that it tends to focus on Jewish immigrants and refugees. Considering that the majority of Russian-speaking immigrants are of non-Jewish descent, with Jews accounting for only around 0.2% of the total Russian immigrants (Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, 2006), they encounter challenges that might be somewhat different than that of their Jewish counterparts. According to Kozulin and Venger (1995), there has been more research relating to former Soviet Union (FSU) immigrants to Israel than to the United States. Recently, the research has shifted to focus on the characteristics of non-Jewish FSU immigrants (Dimitrov, 2005; Lashenykh-Mumbauer, 2005). This small number of studies suggests that the majority of FSU immigrants come to the United States without the assistance of their friends or family, which makes them qualitatively different than Soviet Jewish immigrants. Additionally, most of these immigrants do not receive government benefits or financial support from any religious community. As a result, they often struggle with their transition to the United States because they receive little or no outside support (Lashenykh-Mumbauer, 2005). In general, little is known about this increasing population of immigrants, presenting a challenge to the field of mental health counseling (Brod & Heurtin-Roberts, 1992).

Russian mothers.

Binyon's (1983) investigation reported that in Russian society, women serve a more important role than is often found in other countries. "Partially this is because Russian women have traditionally been the backbone of the nation" (p. 34). In terms of family life, the family circle of a child consists mainly of women, e.g., mother, sister,

grandmother. Having such a strong attachment to their children, Russian women are able to maintain a traditionally strong role and a life-long influence on their children (Engel, 1986; Hubbs, 1988; Remennick, 1999). Pilkington (1996) reported similar findings; most of her participants agreed “that they had spent far less time with their fathers than their mothers because their fathers had been so involved in their work” (p. 148). In summary, Russian mothers are influential family figures and therefore crucial to healthy acculturation processes because they “hold families together” (du Plessix Gray, 1990, p. 84).

Language, identity, and behavior.

As the notion of ethnic identity gained growing support in the field, its multidimensional framework consisted of the three well-researched dimensions of behavioral acculturation, language preference, and identity (Birman, 1994; Gordon, 1964). Behavioral acculturation is most often assessed in terms of such areas as language and media use and food consumption (Bhugra, Hilwig, Desai, & Baldwin, 1999a; Nesdale & Mak, 2003; Persky & Birman, 2005). It is based on the interaction of an individual’s skills and preferences with opportunities to engage in daily cultural activities in within the new host culture.

Language competence, or the ability to speak and understand the language, has been identified as another component of cultural identity. While some research (Cortes et al., 1994; Negy & Woods, 1993) has indicated that language competence is central to cultural identity formation, Birman and Trickett (2001b) suggested that language competence may be related to situation demands rather than actual competence. In contrast, they asserted that language preference is a better reflection of one’s identity.

However, because both language use and preference are crucial to language competence, competence remains as an integral component of ethnic/cultural identity formation. In fact, many studies concurred regarding the centrality of language in acculturation (Buriel, Perez, De Ment, Chavez, & Morgan, 1998; Jones & Trickett, 2005; McQuillan & Tse, 1995).

Finally, cultural identity has been measured in a variety of ways by both acculturation and ethnic identity researchers (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1994). Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, and Vedder (2001) classified ethnic identity as identification with the culture of origin and linking national identity to the identity as a member of that individual's new host country. Schwartz, Montgomery, and Briones (2006) argued that one's social and cultural identity underlies the acculturation process, and personal identity can help to ground immigrants during cultural transition and adaptation to the new culture. Furthermore, ethnic identity has been associated with various psychological variables, such as self-concept, self-esteem, and psychological adjustment (Phinney, 2003). Consequently, assessing the identity dimension of acculturation from a bidirectional point of view would include an assessment of ethnic and national identities of immigrants. The Language, Identity, and Behavior (LIB) Acculturation Scale (Birman, Trickett, & Vinokurov, 2001) has been shown to be particularly accurate in assessing identity acculturation, using parallel items with respect to both ethnic and national identities of Russian American immigrants.

Despite the proliferation of multidimensional models and methods of acculturation, the directionality of the acculturation process is remains highly debated. In fact, the unidirectional and multidirectional constructs divide today's field of

acculturation psychology (Fulgini, 1998; Trimble, 2002). Independent measures of Russian American immigrant adults (Birman & Trickett, 2001b), Central American immigrant adolescents (Birman, 1998), Puerto Rican adults (Cortes et al., 1994), and Vietnamese youth (Nguyen et al., 1999) suggested that the longer immigrants reside in their new homeland, the more their degree of acculturation toward American culture increases, while the association with the native culture decreases. This serves as evidence for the absence of an independent relationship between the new culture and the culture of origin and for the presence of an assimilation model or bipolar model (Nguyen & von Eye, 2002).

However, proponents of multidirectional constructs criticized the acculturation model because it assumes mutual exclusion of the two cultural identities (Rogler et al., 1991). For example, in a Latino college sample, Felix-Ortiz, Newcomb, and Myers (1994) found that despite an inverse relationship between acculturation to American culture and Latino culture, there was no significant relationship to preferred Latino affiliation. Furthermore, Hurh's (1998) assessment of adult Korean immigrants reported an increase in the rate of acculturation to American culture, but failed to find a decrease in acculturation to the Korean culture, suggesting an integration strategy of acculturation rather than assimilation. Birman and Tyler (1994) reported that an increase in behavioral acculturation was associated with length of residence in the United States for male Soviet Jewish refugees. Finally, Berry (2003) noted that across diverse samples, an integration acculturation strategy is most frequently found. Overall, this strategy implies a positive correlation between ethnic and host cultural identification, which is inconsistent with the linear model. Consistently, a positive correlation is sometimes found when host and

ethnic orientations are assessed independently as continuous variables (Liu, Pope-Davis, Nevitt, & Toporek, 1999).

Based on the preceding review of the literature and consistent with emerging theoretical perspectives on acculturation, this study adopted an orthogonal (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990) and multidimensional conceptual framework of acculturation. Therefore, acculturation was assessed independently and along the three dimensions salient in the acculturation literature (e.g., Birman, 1994; Gordon, 1964): behavioral acculturation, language competence, and cultural identity.

Divergence in strategies.

There are many reasons for such a disparity in the findings of research on acculturation strategies. One set of factors affecting both the level of acculturation to the new culture and the degree of retention of the culture of origin involves age at migration, as well as the proportion of one's life spent in immigrant status (Cortes et al., 1994; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000). Adults tend to maintain their original cultural value in their new environments, thus slowing down their acculturation process (Liebkind, 1996). In contrast to parents, immigrant youth have been shown to be more flexible and thus are more capable of quickly picking up the new language and cultural behaviors and traditions. This is because unlike older immigrants, whose identity has been consolidated, children and adolescents continue to form a sense of self in the context of both acculturation to the new host culture and enculturation within their own ethnic culture (Weinreich, 1999). In individualistic countries, flexible and active identity formation has been associated with greater identity coherence and adaptive outcomes, such as greater internal locus of control, goal-directedness, and self-motivation (Serafini

& Adams, 2002). Furthermore, Schwartz (2005) suggested that a more flexible personal identity may help to prevent or alleviate psychological distress, particularly for young people. As a result, younger immigrants might look toward the new culture as an opportunity to integrate and extract various survival strategies. Research on immigrant families indicated that a divergence in acculturation strategies created a discrepancy in the acculturation rates between the two generations. This discrepancy is referred to as dissonant acculturation disparity (Tardif & Geva, 2006), or acculturation gap, and is a major source of potential conflict in parent-child relationships and youth distress in immigrant families (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996). For example, it is not uncommon for Asian American high school or college students to report feelings of confusion, anger, and frustration attributable to relationship difficulties with their more traditional parents (Lee, 1997; Thompson, 2003).

Parent-Child acculturation differences as related to adjustment.

The concept that acculturation differences lead to intergenerational conflict and tension has received increasing attention in the literature on acculturation and adjustment (Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2003; Kwak, 2003). However, despite the growing relevance of the topic, studies that documented acculturation differences in immigrant families and assessed its relationship to family cohesion are only beginning to emerge (Buki, Ma, Strom, & Strom, 2003; Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002). Buki et al. (2003) reported that in a study of 100 Chinese immigrant mothers, larger acculturation differences were associated with greater difficulty communicating with their children and less confidence in their own parenting behavior. Tardif and Geva's (2006) study on a sample of Chinese Canadian immigrant mother-adolescent dyads, for example, showed that acculturation

disparity was associated with more conflicts. Lee and colleagues' (2000) investigation of 153 Asian American college students suggested that perceived parents' level of acculturation and the interaction between students' and parents' acculturation scores were associated with greater family conflict. Further analysis indicated that that family conflict is lowest when both children and parents have high acculturation scores and highest when parents and children have different levels of acculturation. Similarly, investigations by Birman (2006b), Dinh and Nguyen (2006), and Farver et al. (2002) have all found that acculturation differences were associated with family maladjustment.

However, despite growing evidence indicating an association between acculturation differences and a greater degree of tension and parent-child disagreement in immigrant families, one limitation has been noted. It appears that the majority of acculturation research has investigated family adjustment from an unidirectional point of view, by either using the parent's perceptions (Buki et al., 2003) or the child's (Lee et al., 2000). One potential problem with this approach is that children and parents may overestimate or underestimate each other's level of acculturation.

Psychological consequences of acculturation.

Currently, there is consensus in the field of acculturation psychology surrounding the factors that link the acculturative process with mental health. It is suggested that relocation and acculturation may disrupt social and communal ties, which often serve supportive functions for families (Beiser, Hou, Hyman, & Tousignant, 2002; Oppedal, Roysamb, & Sam, 2004). Interpersonal relationships that establish social support in terms of information exchange, reliance on others, and empathetic exchanges promote health by imparting feelings that one is being cared for, which leads to an increased sense

of belonging to a reciprocal network (Cauce, Mason, Gonzales, Hiraga, & Liu, 1994; Scales & Leffert, 1999). Oppedal et al. (2004) suggested that these feelings also lead to an increase in self-esteem.

Children and adolescent immigrants.

Support is also included as an alleviating factor in models of acculturation stress (Berry, 1990). For young immigrants in the process of acculturation, supportive communications within own ethnic and new host culture networks may be crucial to the development of culture-specific competencies (Kim, 2001). However, few studies have examined the combined effects of acculturation and social support on mental health in adolescents. Despite acculturation's central role in identity formation, research has failed to adequately investigate the association between acculturation and changes in mental health. Considering the developmental changes and potential psychological issues, such as depression, that occur during this process (Angold, Costello, & Worthman, 1998; Oppedal et al., 2004; Piccinelli & Wilkinson, 2000), acculturation research has done a particular disservice to younger immigrants.

In light of theories that assert that children may be particularly vulnerable to the stress of migration, Fuligni (2003) noted that, at least in the United States, immigrant children and adolescents show remarkably good adaptation, ranging from good school adjustment to having few problem behaviors. Similar findings of good psychological adjustment have been also reported in recent years in other countries, such as Sweden (Virta & Westin, 1999) and Norway (Virta, Sam, & Westin, 2004).

However, Mirsky (1997) suggested that the assumption that immigration and acculturation are easier for youngsters due to their ongoing identity development is

incorrect. In fact, research has indicated that immigrant adolescents experience greater psychological distress than their nonimmigrant peers (Turjeman, Gustavo Mesch, & Fishman, 2008). Harker (2001) believed that this could be due to the fact that uprooting and relocation are very likely to expose the individual to negative attitudes of the local population, which in turn might unfavorably affect immigrants' self-esteem and sense of identity.

Oppedal et al. (2004) suggested that once environmental stability is compromised, acculturation no longer remains a separate developmental process and in fact becomes an integral part of it. As a result, any acculturation changes experienced by young immigrants are also considered developmental changes; these changes have been associated with overall mental health. For example, Mirsky, Slonim-Nevo, and Rubinstein's (2007) review of community studies of former Soviet Union immigrants living in Israel indicated that adolescents displayed statistically significant higher scores on the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI). Even more intriguing are the findings that the adolescents also expressed their distress in impairment of interpersonal functioning and in increased antisocial behavior. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of 773 former Soviet Union immigrants to Israel, Turjeman et al. (2008) reported that acculturation was more strongly associated with depression in older children than in the younger group. This suggested that depression maybe related to identity development, which is a part of the acculturation process, as reported by Oppedal et al. (2004).

Adult immigrants.

Immigration in later life is an even more stressful process for uprooted immigrants readjusting to a linguistically and culturally different socioeconomic

environment (Mui & Kang, 2006). Changes in cultural norms and social conditions are particularly difficult for elderly immigrants because they have no preparation for this major change in their lives. Pumariega, Rothe, and Pumariega (2005) suggested that in dealing with and resolving their emotional and cultural conflicts in their new, reconfigured society, adults may experience many stressors. A unique characteristic associated with immigrant health that affects a fairly large number of immigrants is language barrier. Linguistic problems pose barriers to access and utilization of health services and may reduce outreach to medical and public health assistance, as well (Aroian, Khatutsky, Tran, & Balsam, 2001).

In a study comparing immigrants to U.S. citizens without a language barrier, immigrants with a language barrier reported having poorer health (Aroian & Norris, 2001). Similarly, Mui and Kang's (2006) investigation of the common stressors of elderly Korean immigrants demonstrated that discrimination, language issues, and lack of social and financial resources were associated with low socioeconomic status, feelings of not belonging in the host society, and a sense of generalized anxiety. Previous studies have reported that similar stressors experienced by adult immigrants directly impacted their mental health (Hovey, 2000; Lee, Crittenden, & Yu, 1996). Lee (2007) indicated that the most serious psychological problems reported by the immigrants included depression and suicide.

A deficit in structural qualities of family life has also been linked to negative mental health outcomes. For example, in a study of immigrant families from the former Soviet Union, it was emphasized that a gender-based hierarchical familial power structure was not functional in the United States (Aroian, Norris, & Chiang, 2003). Considering

that authority is vested primarily in males and females are assigned caretaking and housekeeping duties, when wives/mothers are employed, males may become demoralized, angry, and at risk of depression (Lashenykh-Mumbauer, 2005). In addition, Hundley and Lambie (2007) indicated that restructuring of traditional family roles may promote marital strain.

In the adult population, this stress has also been associated with health problems, such as an increase in psychosomatic and psychological symptoms. Corresponding disturbances in well-being have been found in nonclinical immigrant populations (Baron-Epel & Kaplan, 2001; Ritsner & Ponizovsky, 1999), in which immigrants typically complained of headaches, sleep disturbances, fatigue, and exhaustion (Sundquist, Bayard-Burfield, & Johansson, 2000).

Although some research (Berry, 1990) asserted that acculturation is a gradual process, and that as successful acculturation approaches completion, psychological distress is lessened (Trickett & Birman, 2005), recent investigations have yielded contradictory results. In fact, some immigrants reporting high levels of acculturation actually reported low psychological functioning (e.g., higher indexes of depression) (Harker, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994). In addition, Ding and Hargraves's (2008) results indicated that immigrants are more likely to continue reporting poor health within the first 10 years of living in the U.S. This directly challenges Berry's (1990) theory, which assumed that progressive acculturation leads to better mental health outcomes. As a result, more research is needed to analyze factors intervening in the relationship between the acculturation level and psychological distress.

In general, it seems that research regarding acculturation's effects on emotional functioning is mixed. Some researchers have suggested that the acculturation process has a negative impact on immigrants and increases their psychological distress (Escobar & Vega, 2000; Liebkind, 2006; Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005), while others reported that acculturation is related to improved psychological well-being (Flaskerud & Uman, 1996). Recently, Sam (2000) examined family values, acculturation strategies, and social group identity as predictors of mental health, life satisfaction, and self-esteem in 506 adolescents from immigrant backgrounds. The three predictors accounted for between 12% and 22% of the variance in the dependent measures.

Self-Esteem.

Based on the above consensus, acculturation psychologists believe that stress is inherent in the acculturation process. As a result, depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic disorders are the most frequently identified mental health consequences among acculturating individuals (Sam, 2000). A central theme in acculturation research is that the duration of residence in the U.S. and English proficiency have a strong impact on the development of self-esteem among immigrants (Jackson & Lassiter, 2001). As noted earlier, English proficiency is one of the components of the Language, Identity, and Behavior (LIB) Acculturation Scale (Birman & Trickett, 2001a), which measures overall cultural identity. Some evidence suggested that self-esteem is a reliable indicator of mental health status, especially for immigrant populations. It is highly likely that low self-esteem is related to certain unpleasant emotional states and negative psychological adjustment, such as dissatisfaction with life (Rosenberg & Owens, 2001).

Immigrant ethnic minority adolescents tend to face challenges of successful psychosocial adjustment to the new social environment (Choi & Dancy, 2009). They are expected to keep a balance between valuing and maintaining their heritage while learning another language quickly in order to adapt to the new society. For instance, Rhee (1996) and Ying (1998) reported that immigrant Asian parents tend to reinforce this difficult task by emphasizing obedience and conformity (Asian cultural values) while also recognizing the importance of academic and social success (American cultural values) of their children. This intersection of family and acculturative stressors experienced by ethnic minority adolescents has been shown to negatively impact their self-esteem and life satisfaction (Asakawa & Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Bornstein & Cote, 2006).

There has been increasing research into adolescents' adaptation and acculturation and their general psychological well-being. The amount of research on minority adolescents over the past two decades has also increased steadily. Several studies have shown that the level of acculturation has a dramatic impact on the development of self-esteem and that self-esteem is a significant predictor of general psychological well-being in ethnic minority adolescents (Escobar & Vega, 2000; Flaskerud & Uman, 1996; Phinney et al., 1992). Phinney and colleagues (1992) explored the relationship between the attitudinal aspects of acculturation and changes in self-esteem. It was found that developing a bicultural identification predicted higher levels of self-esteem. Flaskerud and Uman (1996) examined acculturation, social support, education, ethnicity, and self-esteem in 491 women from various Latin American countries at baseline and 1 year later. One of the most significant findings was that the Latinas experienced a linear increase in both level of acculturation and self-esteem.

In an examination of factors related to psychosocial adjustment among immigrant adolescents from the People's Republic of China, contrary to expectations, Chinese adolescents who preferred English to Chinese (higher level of acculturation) reported more social adjustment difficulties (Florsheim, 1997). The explanation is that English-speaking Chinese youth identify less with Chinese culture, which makes them more isolated from their Chinese peers. In similar fashion, Rhee, Chang, and Rhee (2003) examined level of acculturation and many other variables, including self-esteem, in Asian immigrant adolescents. Higher levels of American acculturation were associated with higher levels of self-esteem among Asian adolescents. As suggested in other studies (Phinney et al., 1992), this means that immigrants who have internalized American values are more likely to experience better adjustment in school and the community than adolescents who have retained more traditional beliefs; the former were also more likely to evaluate themselves in a positive light (Rhee et al., 2003). The variability in findings suggests that there are numerous factors present that may influence the relationship between acculturation and psychological functioning in immigrants.

Consequences of divergent strategies and widening of acculturation differences.

Although some researchers (Rumbaut, 1994) have proposed that acculturation-induced psychological stress tends to be short lived, this conclusion oversimplifies the dynamics behind the process of acculturation. For example, one study (Kirkcaldy et al., 2005) revealed that if immigrants adapt superficial strategies of acculturation while holding a low level of interest in contact with the host culture, this can be detrimental to their mental health. This may be especially true for adult immigrants because of the

growing differences between the level of discomfort associated with the original culture and the new host culture (Mirsky, 1997).

Considering that acculturation differences have been associated with family cohesion problems (Birman, 2006b; Kim & Chen, 2009), it is important to focus on the adaptation of both children and their parents to this acculturative familial tension. Generally, the greater the discrepancy between sociocultural values in the native and the new culture, the higher the stress level (Berry, 1993). For example, when immigrants from collectivistic cultures (e.g., the former Soviet Union) immigrate to a more individualist culture (e.g., the United States), they are confronted with a cultural value system in which the construction of a family system differs from that in their culture of origin. According to Birman and Trickett (2001a), since children and adolescent immigrants have more competence in the language and knowledge of their new culture, they assume a unique role of helping their parents navigate the new culture and language (Jones, 2008). As a result, they have been shown to embrace the role of *cultural brokers* for their older family members (Buriel et al., 1998; Jones & Trickett, 2005). Bornstein and Cote (2006) reported that cultural brokering allows the younger immigrants to act as cross-cultural intermediaries between their parents and grandparents and the world outside the family. Through their role as language and culture brokers, young immigrants transmit important cultural information to the older members of the family.

A series of studies of former Soviet Union (Jones & Trickett, 2005) and Vietnamese immigrants (Trickett & Jones, 2007) confirmed the cultural brokering phenomenon and highlighted parental acculturative delays to the American culture as the most relevant predictors of brokering behavior. In a study of 147 families from Vietnam

(Trickett & Jones, 2007), recent immigrant children whose parents were more attached to their native culture reported a high level of culture brokering behavior. Although literature on this topic is somewhat scarce, it suggests that children's engagement in cultural brokering ultimately leads to negative consequences for the family, as well as individuals within that family system (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

From a parental point of view, the increased parental dependency on the child can ultimately undermine the normative power relationship between parents and children. In a qualitative study of 25 Cuban refugee families, Puig (2002) asserted that cultural brokering activities led to adultification of children and to subsequent negative parental feelings about the family role reversals. Puig (2002) concluded that immigrant children's engagement in cultural brokering activities was associated with serious intrafamilial power conflicts and psychological distress of children and parents. Bornstein and Cote (2006) confirmed these findings and attributed intrafamilial power conflicts to the reduction in the perceived importance of the cohesive family unit.

Not only do acculturation differences undermine the family system, the cultural broker role also changes the children's roles inside and outside the family. According to Jones and Trickett (2005), when children and young adolescents are given authority to assume more mature family roles, they are also forced to adapt to and internalize the deeper content of family matters, which has been linked to increased emotional distress. For example, Bray, Adams, Getz, and Baer's (2001) investigation across various ethnic groups suggested that parent-child conflict is associated with the development of a wide

array of adolescent adjustment problems, including substance use, high-risk sexual behavior, and emotional, interpersonal, and academic problems.

A study of Russian immigrant adolescent-mother dyads suggested that cultural brokering also carries costs in terms of decreased time spent with peers, problems with friends, and reports of family disagreements at home. Weisskirch and Alva (2002) found that the higher levels of cultural brokering were associated with children's low levels of comfort performing the brokering duties and psychological distress. Jones (2008) further argued that with time, children engaged in cultural brokering may become overburdened with their duties, which can lead to feelings of resentment toward the parents.

Considering the acculturative and developmental turmoil that children experience, Vinokurov, Trickett, and Birman, (2002) suggested that it is only a matter of time until certain families experience emotional and interpersonal breakdowns.

In contrast, some research has suggested that cultural brokering may positively contribute to family functioning (Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003). For example, McQuillan and Tse (1995) reported that doing chores or fulfilling other family responsibilities may, in principle, be a source of family solidarity and an opportunity to increase self-efficacy. Over half of the adolescents in some studies experienced cultural brokering as a primarily positive experience (Jones & Trickett, 2005). However, Weisskirch and Alva (2002) reported that a significant number of young immigrants viewed cultural brokering as an embarrassing, interpersonal burden.

Due to the recency of this concept, there have been few attempts to examine conflicting findings on the association between cultural brokering and psychological distress. One study of Latino adolescents reported a positive relationship between levels

of child culture brokering, academic performance, and social self-efficacy (Buriel et al., 1998). In contrast, in their study of Latino fifth graders, Weisskirch and Alva (2002) found no relationship between extent of cultural brokering behavior and their feelings of self-concept; however, the same children also reported higher levels of discomfort in engaging in interpretative behavior. Finally, Jones and Trickett's (2005) study involving former Soviet families reported that after controlling for acculturation and demographic factors, higher levels of cultural brokering did not relate to school performance, but did relate to lower feelings of school membership, higher levels of child emotional distress, and more family misunderstandings.

Given the evidence above, it seems that the acculturation literature is continuing to uncover many contradictions in the relationship between the dynamic process of acculturation, psychological distress, and family functioning. The current research does not provide a solid understanding of the various mediating variables that enable immigrants to protect themselves from the negative outcomes of acculturative stress (Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 2001; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006; Phinney & Chavira, 1995).

Mediating factors of psychological distress and family functioning.

Even though the acculturation process may be a stressful life experience (Berry, 1998; Berry & Sam, 1996), it also can be beneficial in expanding world views, cultural competence, and adaptability to multiple cultural contexts. As affirmed by Cross (2003), culture is a resource and a great asset for healing and mental wellness. Thus, to have a better understanding of acculturation's effects on the health of immigrant families,

investigators should shift their focus to the strategies that immigrants use to overcome their well-documented acculturative struggles.

Yeh and Inose (2002) studied cultural adjustment difficulties and coping strategies in a sample of 274 Chinese, Japanese, and Korean adolescent immigrants and reported that the most common problems across all three groups related to communication difficulties. Korean students tended to rely on religious practices as a coping strategy more than did Chinese and Japanese students. Finally, Dina Birman, a professor at the University of Chicago, believes that communication styles can also have a mediating effect between acculturation and psychological distress and family functioning in Russian immigrants (D. Birman, personal communication, February 10, 2010).

Social support networks/social connectedness.

Although several leading acculturation theories underline the importance of social context (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Oppedal et al., 2004), few empirical studies have examined neighborhood contextual influences on the acculturation and adjustment of immigrants. The people who comprise a neighborhood create a collective, living and breathing environment that shapes interpersonal relationships, and for this reason, cultural neighborhood makeup may be a key variable in the way immigrants learn to adjust to the challenges of living in a new country. In fact, immigrants who settle in neighborhoods with different cultural ratios have been shown to experience different socioeconomic and cultural environments (Birman et al., 2005). In addition, the ethnic backgrounds of nonimmigrant neighbors may also have an effect on acculturation. Thus, a neighborhood's ethnocultural makeup may lead to different trajectories of acculturation

and adaptation and consequently to different mental health outcomes (Bhugra & Arya, 2005).

A more common set of immigrant resettlement strategies focuses on initial settlement in an urban ethnic environment, which usually consists of individuals living in a lower socioeconomic neighborhood where large numbers of people from the same ethnic background reside (Chiswick & Miller, 2005; Chow, Jaffee, & Snowden, 2003). This pattern has been identified in groups that immigrate in relatively smaller numbers than the more predominant immigrant communities, such as Latinos. This may be particularly true for immigrants from the former Soviet Union, who began entering the United States during the latter part of the 1990s (Miller et al., 2009). Mazumdar, Mazumdar, Docuayan, and McLaughlin (2000) suggested that this occurs because ethnic communities provide immigrants to the United States with an opportunity to reconnect with their cultural values, native people, and the language that they left behind. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996) referred to this phenomenon as “place referent continuity or continuity via places that have emotional significance for a person” (p. 208). Living in these ethnic enclaves (Abrahamson, 1996) provides access to ethnic foods, newspapers, social networks, and other resources that foster immigrants’ positive psychological adjustment through shared culture and language (Finch et al., 2010). Another benefit of living in ethnic enclaves appears to be a greater number of ethnic grocery stores and pharmacies, which also provide social exchange of information for highly collective cultures (Small & McDermott, 2006).

More importantly, highly homogeneous immigrant concentrations might also provide an opportunity to maintain a positive identification with one’s own culture,

which has been shown to be associated with higher levels of self-esteem. Yeh and Inose (2003), who studied cultural adjustment difficulties and coping strategies in a sample of 274 Chinese, Japanese, and Korean adolescent immigrants, found that the most frequently reported coping strategy for acculturation stress was the use of local social support networks, indicating that help was sought from family members and friends, instead of professionals such as counselors.

Safdar, Lay, and Struthers (2003) reported that utilization of these social support networks is associated with a reduction of acculturation's negative effects. Furthermore, throughout his research, Berry (2006) emphasized social support as one of the protective factors against potential acculturative stress. Yeh and Inose (2003) found that being connected to and satisfied with a social support network contributed to 18.3% of the total variance of international students' acculturative stress. Thomas and Choi (2006) also investigated the relationship between social support and acculturative stress in Korean and Indian immigrant adolescents. Their findings suggested that social support activities reduced the level of acculturative stress. Additional research on Korean immigrants indicated that social support partially mediated the relationship between acculturative stress and mental health symptoms (Kim, Han, Shin, Kim, & Lee, 2005).

One of the reasons social support within the community is such an important coping resource is that it provides immigrants with a sense of connectedness. According to Lee, Draper, and Lee (2001), social connectedness strengthens an individual's perception that he/she has a deep and interpersonal closeness with the immediate social world. Recent research within the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community suggested that social support provided access to less threatening environments and greater opportunities

for developing positive self-appraisals (Kertzner, Meyer, Frost, & Stirratt, 2009).

Considering that social connectedness and social support have been defined as interpersonal resources (Fraser & Pakenham, 2009), it is assumed that both variables will represent a common pool of various coping strategies. Consequently, for the purpose of the present study, both variables will henceforth be used interchangeably.

Having established the potential mediating effects of social support in the acculturation process, it is important to delineate the various communities of support/connectedness available to the typical immigrant. Given that the process of acculturation involves the interactions of two cultures, Williams and Galliher's (2006) view of social connectedness is particularly important because it is represented as a global construct, comprised of mainstream and ethnic communities. Yoon, Lee, and Goh (2008) supported this definition by uncovering the presence of both ethnic and mainstream communities in social support networks. Furnham and Bochner (1989) reported that by living in an ethnically concentrated community, an ethnic minority member may develop a sense of connectedness with his or her ethnic community, which may lead to a decrease in occupational and mental health problems. In addition, Robinson (1995) reported that as children gain more autonomy and their social networks expand during adolescence, American friends gain more salience as sources of support, in addition to the family. As a result, adolescent immigrants discover that the majority community can also function as a social support system. Similarly, in a study of adult Indian immigrants, Mehta (1998) showed that access to non-Indian social support networks within the American community is associated with lower levels of psychological distress. In summary, it is evident from this data that social support is

indeed a global construct, and so it can be utilized as an effective strategy in insulating immigrants from the shock and stressors of acculturation.

Is one type of support better than another?

Within ethnic communities, the processes underlying support are built upon direct and indirect exchange of social interactions. Therefore, it is probable that immigrants living in these communities might also use this readily available resource to help them deal with the issues concerning intergenerational acculturation differences. As has been stated, since conflict is highest in families who exhibit acculturation differences (Kwak, 2003), immigrants, in particular those who have been raised in collectivist cultures, might utilize this strategy more often than immigrants from more individualistic cultures. For instance, an investigation of immigrants living in Norway suggested the presence of a relationship between social support, self-esteem, and mental health in collectivistic family environments (Virta, Sam, & Westin, 2004). This is congruent with Oppedal, Roysamb, and Sam's (2004) findings indicating that social support partially mediated the relationship between acculturative stress and the overall health of immigrant families. Immigrants living in collectivistic communities are more willing to use and have easier access to social support because their respective ethnic community members are willing to share resources with other in-group members (Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). Similarly, Miller et al. (2009) suggested that immigrants who may not have access to social support in their respective native ethnic communities become more vulnerable to feelings of disconnectedness. Furthermore, they may also feel as if they are not able to master their family life (Miller et al., 2009).

Recent research indicates that more and more immigrants are foregoing settlement in their respective homogeneous ethnic communities, thus settling in neighborhoods with diverse immigrant and nonimmigrant populations (Clark & Patel, 2004). Unfortunately, some studies reported that immigrants who choose this settlement strategy maybe limiting their access to familiar cultural norms and social networks, which can shield them from acculturative stress, isolation, and depression (Litwin, 1997; Weine et al., 1998). At this time, it is unclear whether American social support is qualitatively similar to the support present in ethnic communities. In general, it seems that living in homogeneous ethnic enclaves might at least initially act as a mitigating factor against feelings of despair, hopelessness, stress, anxiety, anguish, familial tension, or demoralization, all of which are fairly common during the uprooting and resettlement processes of immigration (Miller et al., 2009). Social support networks have proven to be directly beneficial for an individual's well-being in general and for immigrants' adjustment in particular (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2006; Shen & Takeuchi, 2001).

Parenting styles.

The quality of the parent-child relationship has been shown to be an important factor in psychological outcomes (Lim, Yeh, Liang, Lau, & McCabe, 2009). Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) asserted that it may serve as a protective factor from acculturative stresses, thereby improving psychosocial adjustment. A crucial factor in parent-child relationships is how parents choose to raise their children in the new host culture. Previous research on parenting styles suggested that the variation in parental strategies can be attributed to two important dimensions, warmth and control (Lim et al., 2009; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). A comparison of Western and Asian families indicated

that these dimensions are conceptualized in different ways (Lim & Lim, 2004). The dimension of control presents unique challenges to researchers, especially when it is applied to immigrants from collectivistic cultures living in individualistic cultures. Control can take the form of unwanted domination; however, it can also be helpful in maintaining order and limit setting (Lim et al., 2009). According to Parker (1983), overprotection has been defined as intrusion, excessive contact, and prevention of independent behavior. McGarvey et al. (2010) reported that a parenting style characterized by low care and high overprotection was associated with adolescent problem behavior. Conversely, Shucksmith, Hendry, and Glendinning (1995) suggested that in order to achieve the best family functioning and adolescent well-being, parenting must consist of care and empathy and not excessive intrusion.

However, this view of child-parent interactions ignored the cultural context of family interactions (Sprott, 1994). Consequently, Rohner (1984) argued that any assessment of the relationship between parenting style and self-esteem that does not take into account cultural context is inadequate. For instance, various studies have observed that Asian parents scored lower on the warmth dimension and higher on control than their Western counterparts (Dinh, Sarason, & Sarason, 1994; Hertz & Gullone, 1999). Despite these findings, Szapocznik and Kurtines (1993) reported a lack of evidence for an association between the higher prevalence of an affectionless-control parenting style and lower levels of psychological well-being in collectivist cultures. Furthermore, Lim et al. (2009) believed that as immigrant families become more acculturated, it is likely that they increasingly adopt the parenting practices and attitudes of the host culture. Lui's study (1990) of an Asian American sample showed that higher levels of acculturation

were associated with less controlling and more nurturing styles of parenting. However, as with other acculturation outcomes mentioned previously, this relationship is not so straightforward. Lim et al. (2009) reported that within immigrant communities, as parents become resistant to acculturation, they also become more controlling of their children in an effort to maintain traditional values and to discourage their children from becoming acculturated to Western values.

Although a parenting style that is low in warmth and high in control may be appropriate in the Asian collectivistic cultures, it can clash with what is expected in American culture. Within a Western social context, excessive parental control over adolescent decision-making and autonomy can be experienced as infantilization (Lim et al., 2009). For example, research on Chinese and Vietnamese immigrant families (Dinh et al., 1994; Hertz & Gullone, 1999) showed that a parenting style characterized by low empathy and high overprotection is linked with both depressive symptoms and psychological symptoms of somatization. Similarly, Yau and Smetana's (1996) study on Chinese families indicated that adolescents' reports of lower parental warmth and greater control were related to frequency and intensity of conflict. Finally, a study exploring the relationship between parenting styles and internalizing/externalizing problems in Moroccan immigrant youth living in the Netherlands suggested that higher levels of warmth and affection were associated with lower levels of problem behavior; higher levels of discipline were associated with higher levels of problem behavior (Stevens, Vollebergh, Pels, Crijnen, & Alfons, 2007).

These findings are important for several reasons. First, although they emphasize that an operational definition of parental control may vary from one population of

immigrants to another, Park (2009) suggested that an association between parental attachment and psychological distress is consistent across cultures. Studies of adult and adolescent populations in Canada (McFarlane, Bellissimo, & Norman, 1995), Norway (Pedersen 1994), Australia (Cubis, Lewin, & Dawes, 1989), Israel (Canetti, Bachar, Galili-Weisstub, De-Nour, & Shalev, 1997), and Japan (Sato, Sakado, & Uehara, 1997) suggested that an interaction between high parental control and low emotional care was a strong predictor of psychological distress. More importantly, this provided an operational definition of ideal parenting style, comprising levels of high warmth and low control, for the present study.

This parenting style is therefore believed to be partially mediating the association between mother-child acculturation differences, psychological distress, and family functioning. Hertz and Gullone (1999) agreed with this operational definition and suggested that with the shifts in values, it is likely that parenting characterized by higher levels of warmth and lower levels of overprotection is associated with better immigrant parent-child outcomes. However, while Lee (1997) acknowledged that in collectivistic cultures, a traditional affectionless parenting style can also be a source of strength and resiliency in immigrant families, Rohner (1994) believed that these cultures may be engaging in warm parental care and acceptance of their children in implicit as opposed to explicit ways. Therefore, it is possible that while on the surface, certain parenting styles may be seen as affectionless, in certain sociocultural contexts, they can be identified as warm and accepting. This further reaffirmed the notion that parenting characterized by higher levels of warmth and lower levels of overprotection is associated with better parent and child outcomes.

Gender as a moderator of psychological distress and family functioning.

Another important factor within the overall family dynamics that may partially mediate the relationship between acculturation differences and psychological functioning is parent-child gender interactions. Unfortunately, given that the majority of current research examined data from only one parental figure, acculturative investigations of gender effects have been scarce and difficult to explore. For example, in one study, Birman and Taylor-Ritzler (2007) investigated family adjustment of 115 adolescent refugees from the former Soviet Union and their parents. The findings suggested that the gender of the adolescent was a significant predictor of disagreements, with parents of boys reporting greater disagreement than parents of girls. However, despite the findings, the author cautioned against generalization of the results to other immigrant populations because the data were based on parental self-reports. As a result, the current study sought to gather new evidence on how gender affects the association between acculturation differences, psychological distress, and family functioning.

Summary of literature review.

Overall, the literature has identified a shift in how the field of psychology defined the process of acculturation. In the earlier models, acculturation was described as a unidimensional construct. More precisely, scholars believed that acculturation occurs along a linear continuum. The advocates of the more recent models viewed acculturation as a multidimensional construct. They suggested that immigrants undergoing acculturation hold two independent levels of acceptance of the host culture's norms and their native cultural beliefs. More specifically, based on the multidimensional model, there could be four different acculturation stages, assimilation, separation, integration,

and marginalization. This model acted as a framework for development and utilization of orthogonal models of acculturation to host and conational communities. One measurement scale that uses the multidimensional construct of acculturation is the Language, Identity, and Behavior Scale (LIB; Birman & Trickett, 2001a). The LIB (1995) has been standardized on the first generation of Russian immigrants ranging in age between 10 and 65.

Increasingly, researchers have been interested in measuring the correlation between the process of acculturation and psychological distress among diverse immigrant populations.. The majority of the literature reported that acculturative stress was an important factor in determining the overall mental health status of immigrant families. Furthermore, some studies have underlined a strong association between the level of acculturation and psychological stress. Other research has pointed to a relationship between the process of acculturation and level of immigrants' self esteem; however, the findings have been inconsistent. Research using multidimensional models suggested that immigrants who reported greater American acculturation tended to have lower self-esteem, while other investigations have found that greater American acculturation was associated with high self-esteem. The latter results speak directly against the popular notion that integration is the most adaptive strategy.

At the familial level, the acculturation processes for parents and their children are often not similar. In fact, parents in immigrant families are more likely to retain the values and norms of their native culture, while their children are more ready to accept the values and norms of the new country. This generational acculturation disparity (Tardif & Geva, 2006), or acculturation gap (Birman, 2006b), is postulated to be a major source of

potential conflict in parent-child relationships and youth distress in immigrant families. However, other investigations reported that parent-child acculturation differences were not associated with parental conflict and poor family cohesion. This underscores the general trend in the field of acculturation psychology, wherein inconsistent data made it difficult to generalize findings to other immigrant populations.

There is a noticeable absence of sufficient understanding of the role of the mediating and moderating variables in the acculturation gap phenomenon. To some extent, this reflects the undeveloped scope of knowledge regarding interaction of other variables with the acculturation process in general. For example, some investigators have reported that social support can protect the immigrant populations from the processes of acculturative stress; however, other researchers suggested that a parenting style consisting of high level of warmth and low level of over-protectiveness was associated with less parent-child conflict. Finally, findings suggested that gender differences might also play an important role in moderating the association between acculturation differences, psychological distress, and family functioning.

Above all, the majority of these investigations have been conducted almost exclusively on Latino and Asian populations. Other rapidly growing populations, such as those from the former Soviet Union states, have been generally ignored by researchers. Immigrants from this region represent very diverse populations, varying in culture, ethnicity, and religion. If utilized properly, the data from these populations could significantly enrich the field of acculturation psychology.

Chapter 3

Research Questions and Hypotheses

To understand the relationship between acculturation and various psychological outcomes in families, the following research questions were generated.

Research question 1.

Do larger differences in the levels of acculturation between mother and child predict higher levels of psychological distress for both mother and child?

Rationale for research question.

First, it is important to mention that this study focused on mother-child dyads instead of father-child pairs because of the strongly matrilineal family structure that is typical for Russian families. Having a strong attachment to their children, Russian women are able to maintain a traditionally strong role and a life-long influence on their children (Engel, 1986; Hubbs, 1988; Remennick, 1999). As a result, the traditional family structure remains relatively intact after immigration (Kishinevsky, 2004).

Furthermore, since current immigration policy indicates that this immigration will continue to occur indefinitely, multicultural psychologists will devote an increasing amount of attention to this dynamic and influential process. Of particular interest is a line of thought that continues to support a relationship between acculturation, conflict, and misunderstanding between generations in immigrant families (Kwak, 2003). Since acculturation is the process of cultural change, it has been noted that children acculturate to the new environments at a faster rate than do their parents (Cheung & Chudek, 2011). In contrast, older immigrants tend to retain their original cultural values. This makes their acculturation slower than that of their children (Birman & Trickett, 2001a). Despite

these different strategies, the family unit continues to function as a whole. As a result, this question explored whether a wide divergence in these adaptive strategies contributed to significantly more psychological distress in both the mother and child.

It was hypothesized that a greater difference in the levels of acculturation (Russian vs. American) between mother and child would be associated with higher levels of psychological distress.

Research question 2.

Do greater differences in the levels of acculturation between mother and child predict poorer family functioning?

Rationale for research question.

Kwak's (2003) review of the literature on immigrants' family relations reports that, although studies generally found good family relations and cohesion, many disagreements tended to emerge over issues of autonomy. Since autonomy is adaptive for getting ahead in the U.S., many younger immigrants choose to internalize this cornerstone of American cultural value. As a result, this strategy can lead to an obvious separation of cultural values between the older and younger members of Russian American families. In fact, in the eyes of older immigrants, their children are overadjusting to the American way of life, which then creates many problems in family dynamics (Ho, 2010). As their worries over separation anxiety and unmet expectations increase, the emotional stress leads to an increase in family tensions (Gelfand, 1989). However, it is important to note that children and adolescents also experience a great deal of distress in the process. In this role, younger immigrants mediate the relationship of their elderly family members with the local community as well as with other adults.

These activities may involve translation of various documents, handling of phone calls, arranging for various appointments, or simply explaining their new environment to their parents (Jones & Trickett, 2005). Tse (1995) reports that a significant number of young immigrants view these activities as an interpersonal burden. As a result, Jones and Trickett (2005) found higher levels of child emotional distress and family misunderstandings. Taken together, Jones and Trickett (2005) show strong support for a relationship between familial acculturation disparities and increased family conflict. As a result, this question explored whether a wide divergence in acculturation levels contributed to poor family functioning.

It was hypothesized that a greater difference in the levels of acculturation (Russian vs. American) between mother and child would be associated with higher levels of family dysfunction.

Research question 3.

Does the availability of and access to social support (social connectedness) partially mediate the relationship between mother-child acculturation differences, psychological distress, and mother-child cohesion and conflict?

Rationale for research question.

Recent immigration patterns suggest that residential mobility is initiated with settlement into urban ethnic gateway communities, which are usually located in low-income areas with large numbers of immigrants of the same ethnic background (Chiswick, Lee, & Miller, 2005). Studies have shown that immigrants who lack access to familiar social networks are at high risk for acculturative stress and isolation (Litwin, 1997; Weine et al., 1998). Essentially, these communities provide an opportunity for the

immigrants to use familiar aspects of preimmigration as a bridge in order to develop new ties and identities (Mazumdar, Mazumdar, Docuyan, & McLaughlin, 2000).

It was hypothesized that availability of and access to social support from the Russian immigrant community would mediate an association between greater mother-child acculturation differences, high psychological distress, and poor family functioning.

Research question 4.

Does mother's parenting style partially mediate the relationship between mother-child acculturation differences, psychological distress, and family functioning?

Rationale for research question.

The many difficulties that immigrants encounter in trying to ensure both cultural continuity and compatibility in the host country have been clearly established. For parents of young children and adolescents, this can be particularly challenging. Balancing collectivistic notions of collective identity, emotional dependence, and in-group solidarity with Western ideals of autonomy makes for at times an impossible task (Triandis, 1995). However, Stevens et al. (2007) suggest that families aspiring to achieve a fusion of empathy and reasonable autonomy are characterized by low levels of interfamilial problems.

It was hypothesized that a parenting style dominated by high levels of warmth and low levels of overprotection would mediate an association between greater mother-child acculturation differences, high psychological distress, and poor family functioning.

Research question 5.

Does the gender of the child partially moderate the relationship between mother-child acculturation differences, psychological distress, and family functioning?

Rationale for research question.

Given the scarcity of data on gender effects in mental health outcomes of immigrant families, this investigation was based on new research in the field. Birman and Taylor-Ritzler's (2007) research states that parental reports of Russian immigrant families suggest a greater number of disagreements in families consisting of boys rather than girls.

As a result, it was hypothesized that families consisting of mother-son dyads would experience significantly more psychological distress and lower levels of family functioning than families consisting of mother-daughter dyads.

Chapter 4

Methods

Participants.

Participants in the study were children (between the ages of 12 and 18) and their mothers. Subjects were recruited from a convenience sample from the community. The principal investigator recruited subjects from weekly, biweekly, and monthly church meetings, social/cultural events, community centers, and local organizations in New Jersey and New York. After contacting the subjects, they were asked to sign parental consent and adolescent assent forms. Once data collection began, a snowball technique was used to recruit other families. Subjects included immigrants seeking mental health services, as well as individuals who were not seeking mental health services. Participants were entered into a raffle from which three families were randomly chosen to win \$50.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The population recruited included non-Jewish Russian mother-child immigrant dyads. Mothers were chosen instead of fathers because in Russian families, mothers have the primary role of caretaker (Vishinevsky, 2004). All participants were born in Russia. There were no exclusion criteria for duration of residence in the U.S. in order to include a diverse group of acculturating identities. Furthermore, there were no exclusion criteria for gender or socioeconomic status for children. However, there was an exclusion criterion for ethnic identification as Russian Jewish immigrants because the purpose of the current study was to investigate acculturation as influenced by Russian ethnic identity in non-Jewish communities. In addition, there has been a limited number of studies on Russian ethnic identity in Russian immigrant communities (Persky & Birman, 2005). As

a result, the only available measure appropriate for this study was the Language, Identity, and Behavior Acculturation Scale (LIB; Birman & Trickett, 2001a). The LIB directly assesses immigrants' Russian and American ethnic identities. However, a dimension measuring Jewish ethnic identity was not incorporated into the scale.

Measures.

The measures used in this study assessed acculturation, psychological functioning, family functioning, social support, and parenting style. Each measure included an English and a Russian version professionally translated from English to Russian, then back-translated by an independent translator. The outcome measures were the acculturation levels of mother-child dyad, psychological distress, and family functioning. The potential mediation effects of parenting style and social support/connectedness were also measured. Mother-child pairs were randomly selected from various locations.

Demographics questionnaire.

At the beginning of data collection, a demographics questionnaire was used to obtain descriptive information. Participants were asked to indicate their gender, age, religion, educational level, immigration status (immigrant or refugee), year of and age at immigration to the U.S., and place of origin in Russia, number of children in the family, and whether either parents was employed.

Assessment of acculturation.

Acculturation levels within the mother-child dyads were measured with the Language, Identity, and Behavior Scale (LIB; Birman & Trickett, 2001a), a two-dimensional orthogonal measure that assesses acculturation to American and Russian

cultures separately. This scale consists of three separate subscales that measure language competence, behavioral acculturation, and ethnic identity. The overall scale is partially based on the Behavioral Acculturation Scale (Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines, & Arandale, 1978). Within this framework, the measure yields six separate acculturation scores (language, identity, and behavior of Russian or American cultures) for each mother and child/adolescent in the study. It yields an overall American Acculturation Index (AAI), Russian Acculturation Index (RAI), and separate subscales that assess language, identity, and behavioral acculturation. Higher scores represent higher levels of acculturation. In a recent sample, alpha reliabilities for the overall AAI and RAI were .90 and .94, respectively (Birman, 2006b).

The Language Acculturation subscale (Birman & Trickett, 2001a) is adapted from the Multidimensional Scale for Latinos developed by Birman and Zea (1996). It consists of nine items asking subjects to rate their written and oral fluency in Russian as well as their fluency in English. Questions ask how well respondents speak and how well they understand the language with friends and family, in public, with strangers, and in other social situations. Ratings are on a 4-point, Likert-type scale, ranging from “not at all” to “like a native.” According to Birman and Trickett (2001a) alpha reliability coefficients for the Russian and American language subscales are .95 and .90, respectively. The validity of this subscale is confirmed by significant partial correlations with verbal Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, controlling for quantitative SAT scores ($r = .54, p < .001$), collected from school records for 65 students who had taken these tests (Birman & Trickett, 2001a).

With respect to Russian language competence for adults, prior research (Birman & Trickett, 2001a) reports that assessing Russian language competence yields almost no variability among this population. Data analysis suggests that the majority of Russian parents select the “very well” or “like a native” option for each question (overall mean 3.98). A high average score is expected because older immigrants tend to maintain command of their native language well into their senior years (Birman & Trickett, 2001a). As a result, this study replicated procedures from previous research (Birman, Trickett, & Vinikurov, 2002) and used an abbreviated version of the Russian language competence subscale with mothers, containing only two questions (“How well do you speak Russian?” and “How well do you understand Russian overall?”), using the same 4-point scale.

The Identity Acculturation subscale (Birman & Trickett, 2001a) is adapted from the Multidimensional Scale for Latinos (Birman & Zea, 1996), based on seven of the eight items of the American Identity Questionnaire (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). For this subscale, subjects rate seven items assessing the extent to which they consider themselves Russian/American based on various ethno-cultural introspective evaluations. However, considering that prior research (Birman, Trickett, & Vinikurov, 2002) reports that an abbreviated 4-item version of this dimension yields similar reliabilities to the complete version, the present study used an abbreviated version of the identity subscale. The items assess both the degree of identification with each culture (“I consider myself American,” “I consider myself Russian”), and the extent to which respondents regard this identification positively (“I am proud to be American,” “I am proud to be Russian”). Ratings are on a 4-point, Likert-type scale, ranging from “not at all” to “very much.”

Previous research (Birman & Trickett, 2001a) reports that alpha reliability coefficients are .94 and .88 for American identity and .89 and .89 for Russian identity for adolescents and parents, respectively.

Nine parallel items assessed behavioral acculturation to each culture in terms of behaviors, such as “How much do you eat Russian/American foods?” and “How much do you socialize with Russian/American friends?” Items are rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from “not at all” to “very much.” According to Birman and Trickett’s (2001a) original study on acculturation of first-generation Russian immigrants, reliabilities are .77 for the American subscale and .85 for the Russian subscale, respectively.

Psychological distress.

Levels and symptoms of emotional distress will be assessed using the Talbich Brief Distress Inventory (TBDI; Ritsner, Rabinowitz, & Slyuzberg, 1995). The TBDI asks a subject to answer the question “How much discomfort has that problem caused you during the past month?” in relation to depression (seven items), sensitivity (four items), obsessiveness, hostility, anxiety, and paranoid ideation (each with three items). Responses are scored on a 5-point scale (from “not at all” to “extremely”), with higher ratings indicating greater intensity of distress. The TBDI was used because it yields both global scores (Distress Index, average of 24 item scores; range, 0 to 4) and six symptom dimension scores. The normative sample (Ritsner et al., 1995) consisted of 966 non-psychiatric Russian Israeli immigrants aged 18 to 87. Participants were from typical places of immigrant socialization (e.g., schools, temporary accommodations at hotels, social services agencies for immigrants); their average age was 39.3 years ($SD = 12.9$

years). The mean length of stay in Israel was 1.04 years ($SD = 0.65$ years). The male:female ratio was 1:1.4. Approximately 67% were married, 12.8% single, 19.3% divorced or widowed, and 1% unknown. Approximately 79.4% were university graduates, 13.4% were graduates of vocational training, 5.0% were high school graduates, and 2.2% had grade school education.

Previous research conducted by Ritsner et al. (1995) also examined correlation of the TBDI scale scores with the Psychiatric Epidemiology Research Interview, Demoralization Scale (PERI-D) and the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) scores of respondents. Findings indicated that the TBDI correlated very highly with the PERI-D ($r = .93$) and with the BSI ($r = .82$). Similarly, Ritsner and Ponizovsky's (2003) investigations suggest that reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alphas) of the TBDI dimensions range from .79 to .95 (except paranoid ideation, which had a reliability of .55).

Family functioning.

This dimension was assessed with several instruments, which were filled out individually by mothers and their children. However, the children only filled out the satisfaction with parents subscale.

Information regarding the scope and intensity of family disagreements was collected from mothers and their children using the 27-item Problem Solving Checklist (Rueter & Conger, 1995). Using a 5-point, Likert-type scale, mothers and their children rated how often they disagreed or were unable understand one another about a variety of social and personal issues, including but not limited to money, school grades/homework, friendships, and time management. The measure can be scored to examine both the number of topics and the relative intensity of conflict (D. Birman, personal communication, January 17, 2010). A recent study reports that when accounting for the frequency of problems, the alpha reliabilities are .89 for adolescents and .88 for mothers. When accounting for the intensity of issues, the alpha reliabilities are .92 for adolescents and .90 for mothers (Jones & Trickett, 2005).

This study employed the Satisfaction with Parents subscale of the Adolescent Family Life Satisfaction Index (Henry, Ostrander, & Lovelace, 1992). This 7-item subscale asks adolescents to respond to the statement “I am satisfied with. . .” different aspects of their relationships with their parents (e.g., “the amount of freedom my parent(s) give me to make my own choices”). Responses are on a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

The 18-item Family Adjustment measure (Birman, 2006b) was created from the Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos & Moos, 1981). It consisted of a Cohesion and

Conflict subscales. Moos and Moos (1981) define cohesion as the degree of commitment, help, and support family members provide for one another. The Cohesion subscale included nine true/false items (e.g., “there is a feeling of togetherness in our family”). The Conflict subscale consisted of nine-items which measured the amount of openly expressed anger, aggression, and conflict among family members. Moos and Moos (1981) report the subscale internal reliability coefficients of .78 for cohesion and .75 for conflict, based on a sample of 1,067 nonclinical respondents. Two-month test-retest reliabilities ($N = 47$) for the same dimensions are .86 and .86, respectively, while the 12-month test-retest reliability of the Conflict subscale yields a coefficient of .76. Furthermore, a recent study suggested that the Conflict subscale has an alpha reliability coefficient of .73 for adolescent populations (Birman, 2006b). Overall, the research suggests that the Cohesion and Conflict subscales of the Family Environment Scale yield acceptable levels of test-retest reliability over intervals of 4 to 12 months (Moos & Moos, 1981).

Parenting style.

Qualitative recollections of the mother-child relationship were measured using the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI; Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979). Although a Russian language version is not currently available, the English version of the PBI was professionally translated into Russian, as described above. The PBI consists of 25 items assessing two main dimensions of care and protection/control, which assess the youth’s relationships with the mother. The PBI was normed on an adolescent population ranging from 12 to 18 years of age. The care dimension involves two distinct scales to assess affection, empathy, and closeness or indifference and neglect (e.g., “My mother spoke to

me in a warm and friendly voice” versus “My mother seemed emotionally cold to me”). Similarly, the protection dimension measures two polarized styles of intrusiveness and control or encouragement of autonomy (e.g., “My mother invaded my privacy” versus “My mother let me dress in any way I am pleased”). Participants responded on a 4-point scale (1, “not true” to 4, “true”). Not only has the PBI has been employed in many studies in the United States, where high test-retest reliability was identified (Wilhelm & Parker, 1990), it has also been successfully used in international samples (Arrindell et al., 1989). These studies report that the Cronbach’s alpha is approximately 0.89 for maternal bonding.

Social support.

The quantity and quality of social support and connectedness to others were measured using the 20-item Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R; Lee et al., 2001). Respondents rate their level of agreement with each item on a 6-point scale (1, “strongly disagree” to 6, “strongly agree”). Scores are summed and can range from 20 to 120, with higher scores indicative of higher levels of social connectedness and belonging. The SCS-R has good internal reliability, as well as convergent and discriminant validity. The Cronbach’s alpha in a college student sample was .92.

Procedure.

After contacting the subjects through previously selected sources, they were asked to sign parental consent and adolescent assent forms. The subjects were then asked to complete the series of questionnaires in their homes according to the instructions. Participants were able to get telephone assistance from the investigator, who was available to answer questions and help translate or interpret. Subjects were instructed to

send the completed forms back to the principal investigator in self-addressed prepaid envelopes.

Data collection.

Ongoing data collection was conducted solely by the principal investigator. His Russian American immigrant status increased the participants' level of motivation and helped resolve any language- or cultural-related questions.

Data analysis.

Data were gathered and entered into a statistical analysis program (SPSS 19.0). Initially, this data underwent descriptive statistical analysis, including frequency distribution, means, and standard deviations. This helped to inspect the data for any immediate outliers and missing/omitted information. To identify clinically meaningful correlations between independent and dependent variables, several stages of analysis followed.

A correlational/regression analysis was conducted comparing continuous variables of the parent-child's acculturation differences, and various measures of psychological and familial distress.

First, the predictor (mother-child acculturation criterion) and the first criterion (psychological distress) underwent correlation analysis to test for a clinically significant association. Then, the predictor (mother-child acculturation criterion, as measured by the LIB scale) and the second criterion (family functioning as measured by family disagreements, satisfaction with parents, and the cohesion and conflict subscales) also underwent correlation analysis. Next, the predictor (mother-child acculturation) was analyzed for a significant association with the putative mediators. In this case, data

analysis tested for significant associations between mother-child acculturation, social support, and parenting style. In the next step, predictor-criterion correlations were investigated to determine whether these correlations would be attenuated when the mediator variables were entered.

Finally, to test for the presence of gender as a moderator variable, two sets of 2x3 MANOVAs were conducted using scores on the acculturation scale and scores of all the dependent measures to predict psychological distress and level of family functioning of mother-daughter and mother-son family dyads.

Chapter 5

Results

This chapter will present and discuss the results of the inferential statistical analyses conducted to test the five hypotheses included in this study. The five hypotheses focused upon in this study consisted of the following:

Hypothesis 1: A greater difference in the levels of acculturation (Russian vs. American) between mother and child would be associated with higher levels of psychological distress.

Hypothesis 2: A greater difference in the levels of acculturation (Russian vs. American) between mother and child would be associated with higher levels of family dysfunction.

Hypothesis 3: Availability of and access to social support from the Russian immigrant community would mediate an association between greater mother-child acculturation differences, high psychological distress, and low family functioning.

Hypothesis 4: A parenting style dominated by high levels of warmth and low levels of overprotection would an association between greater mother-child acculturation differences, high psychological distress, and low family functioning.

Hypothesis 5: Families consisting of mother-son dyads would experience significantly more psychological distress and lower levels of family functioning than families consisting of mother-daughter dyads.

Prior to hypothesis testing, results of the current study were compared with the normative samples to determine between-group comparability. In a recent sample (Birman, 2006b) of 130 Russian immigrant adolescent-parent dyads, 57% of the

adolescents were male, with an average age of 15. They had come from Ukraine (40%), Belarus (17%), Russia (15%), and other former republics, including Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and others. Their average length of stay in the United States was 6 years, ranging from 5 months to 11 years ($SD = 3.2$). Participating parents were on average 44 years old ($SD = 5.8$). Most were married (89%); the majority (70%) were mothers. The parents chose whether the mother or father completed the questionnaires.

In the current study, data were collected from a total of 80 Russian immigrant mother-child dyads (Table 1). Forty-six percent of adolescents were male (average age, 14), and 54% were female (average age, 15). The mothers' average age was 41 years ($SD = 4.7$); most were married (90%). The mean number of children per household was 1.90 (30% had one child, 56% had two children; 8% had three children; 3% had four children; and 1% had five children). Seventy percent of mothers identified themselves as immigrants; 30% identified themselves as refugees. Their average length of stay in the United States was 11.78 years, ranging from 1 year to 23 years ($SD = 5.2$). Mothers were fairly well educated; most had a bachelor's degree (73%), while some had earned graduate degrees (20%). Although data on the subcultural origins of the current sample were not collected, interviews conducted during assessment suggested that they came from many different cultural regions in the former Soviet Union. As a result, both samples were similarly constituted which allowed for between groups comparisons to be made.

Table 1

Demographic Data

	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Mother's age	40.76	41.00	4.74	25.00
Length of stay (years)	11.78	11.00	5.24	22.00
Child's age				
Male	13.75	13.00	1.45	5.00
Female	15.01	14.00	2.19	5.00
Number of children	1.90	2.00	0.81	4.00
Mother's years of postsecondary education (4 = college degree)	4.12	4.00	0.54	3.00

Next, a series of analyses were conducted comparing acculturation of the normative sample with the data obtained in the current study. Table 2 presents data obtained from parents with regard to all dimensions of acculturation. It includes means, standard deviations, and results of a series of independent-samples *t*-tests for both the normative and current study samples. Significant results were found with regard to

American language $t(175.713) = 2.17, p = .03$, Russian language $t(105.204) = 2.02, p = .05$, Russian identity $t(172.744) = 2.18, p = .03$, as well as Russian behavior $t(166.150) = 2.34, p = .02$. Significantly higher values were found in the current study with regard to American language and Russian identity, while significantly higher values were found in the normative sample with regard to Russian language and Russian behavior.

Table 2

Acculturation Measures for Normative and Current Study Samples: Parents

Acculturation Measure	Normative Sample		Study Sample		t-test	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t (df)</i>	<i>p</i>
American language	2.75	.67	2.955	.635	2.168* (175.713)	.032
American identity	2.25	.86	2.225	.974	.185 (156.107)	.854
American behavior	2.40	.54	2.549	.544	1.887 (169.298)	.061
Russian language	3.98	.11	3.925	.226	2.017* (105.204)	.046
Russian identity	2.95	.94	3.244	.917	2.180* (172.744)	.031
Russian behavior	3.15	.52	2.969	.539	2.340* (166.150)	.020

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 3 presents the results obtained for all acculturation measures, focusing specifically upon children. Again, descriptive statistics are presented with regard to both the normative and current study samples. Significant results in the independent-sample *t*-tests conducted were found with regard to American identity $t(170.865) = 2.34, p = .02$ and Russian behavior $t(185.889) = 4.86, p < .001$. With regard to American identity, a significantly higher mean score was found within the current study sample, while with regard to Russian behavior, a significantly higher score was found in the normative sample.

Table 3

Acculturation Measures for Normative and Current Study Samples: Children

Acculturation Measure	Normative Sample		Study Sample		t-test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t (df)</i>	<i>p</i>	
American language	3.75	.39	3.784	.416	.576	(162.928)	.565
American identity	2.82	.99	3.156	.983	2.341*	(170.865)	.020
American behavior	3.32	.48	3.447	.517	1.737	(161.826)	.084
Russian language	3.19	.76	3.056	.680	1.289	(181.156)	.199
Russian identity	3.35	.71	3.163	.906	1.545	(142.852)	.124
Russian behavior	2.68	.67	2.248	.565	4.862*	(185.889)	< .001

Note. * $p < .05$

The second series of analyses were conducted comparing outcome data of the normative sample with the outcome data obtained in the current study. The normative sample of the Talbieh Brief Distress Inventory (Ritsner et al., 1995) consisted of 966 non-psychiatric Russian-Israeli immigrants aged 18 to 87. Participants were from typical places of immigrant socialization (e.g., school, temporary accommodations at hotels, social services for immigrants). Participants were on average 39.3 years old ($SD = 12.9$ years). The mean length of stay in Israel was 1.04 years ($SD = 0.65$ years). The male to female ratio was 1:1.4. Approximately 67% were married, 12.8% single, 19.3% divorced and widowed, and 1% unknown. Approximately 79.4% were university graduates, 13.4% were graduates of vocational training, 5.0% were high school graduates, and 2.2% had grade school education. However, because the TBDI was not normed on adolescents, comparisons between groups were not made.

The Family Adjustment Questionnaire (Birman & Trickett, 2006) consisted of the Problem Solving Checklist (PSC, Reuter & Conger, 1995), the Satisfaction with Parents Subscale (Henry et al, 1992), and the 18-item Family Adjustment measure, consisting of the Cohesion and Conflict subscales, of the Family Environment Scale (FES; Moos & Moos, 1981). Table 4 and table 5 present the results of the independent-samples t -tests conducted comparing a normative sample with the current study sample with regard to measures of cohesion, conflict, and PSC. Separate analyses were conducted for parents and children. While no significant differences between the normative sample and the current sample were found with regard to children, two significant results were identified with regard to parents. Specifically, mean cohesion was significantly higher within the

normative sample, $t(157.669) = 3.12, p = .002$, while scores on the PSC were significantly higher, $t(181.247) = 3.63, p < .001$ within the current study.

Table 4

Cohesion, Conflict, and the Problem Solving Checklist Results for Normative and Current Study Samples: Parents

	Normative Sample		Study Sample		t-test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t (df)</i>	<i>p</i>	
Cohesion	.889	.247	.774	.267	3.117*	(157.669)	.002
Conflict	.285	.220	.293	.249	.242	(151.484)	.809
Problem Solving Checklist	28.160	16.680	36.213	14.951	3.625*	(181.247)	< .001

Note. * $p < .05$

Table 5

Cohesion, Conflict, and the Problem Solving Checklist Results for Normative and Current Study Samples: Children

	Normative Sample		Study Sample		t-test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t (df)</i>	<i>p</i>	
Cohesion	.732	.238	.731	.252	.029	(160.074)	.977
Conflict	.299	.239	.353	.244	1.554	(164.336)	.112
Problem Solving Checklist	35.024	20.030	35.125	16.800	.039	(189.066)	.969

Note. * $p < .05$

Parker et al. (1979) described their sample as consisting of 65 medical students, 43 psychiatric nurses, 13 college students, and 29 parents at a local school. The mean age was 25 years (71% of both females and males were 17 to 49 years old). Given the significant differences in sample characteristics (e.g., in the current study, the Parental Bonding Instrument was administered to adolescents), between-group comparisons were not made.

The sample for the Social Connectedness Scale–Revised (Lee et al., 2001) consisted of 218 undergraduate students (112 men, 105 women, and 1 unidentified) from a large, public, southwestern university. The mean age was 19.55 years ($SD = 3.32$; range 17 to 50 years). The majority of participants (80%) lived away from home in

campus dormitories or apartments. Given the significant differences in sample characteristics (e.g., the current sample consisted of adolescents who lived with their parent(s)), between-group comparisons were not made.

In order to test this study's first and second hypotheses, a series of correlation coefficients were calculated to determine whether a significant association was present between these measures. Next, Baron and Kenny's (1986) methodology was utilized to test whether mediation is present in relation to this study's third and fourth hypotheses. Finally, a series of MANOVAs were conducted to test the fifth and final hypothesis. These results are detailed in the following sections.

To test the hypothesis on acculturation levels and psychological distress, analyses of variance were utilized to determine whether significant differences existed between mothers and children on all six acculturation variables (i.e., American language, Russian language, American identity, Russian identity, American behavior, Russian behavior), which included parents' education, age, and length of residence in the United States as covariates (Table 6). Mean scores on these measures were found to be significantly higher among children in regard to American language ($M = 3.784$, $SD = .416$, $p < .001$), American identity ($M = 3.156$, $SD = .983$, $p < .001$), and American behavior ($M = 3.447$, $SD = .517$, $p < .001$). Mothers had significantly higher scores with regard to Russian language ($M = 3.925$, $SD = .680$, $p < .001$) and Russian behavior ($M = 2.969$, $SD = .539$, $p < .001$), while no significant differences were found with regard to Russian identity.

Table 6

*Analyses of Variance Between Acculturation Variables for Mothers and Children,
Controlling for Mother's Age, Education, and Length of Residence in the U.S.*

Acculturation measure	Mothers		Children		<i>F</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
American language	2.955	.635	3.784	.416	115.618***
American identity	2.225	.974	3.156	.983	41.012***
American behavior	2.549	.544	3.447	.517	138.026***
Russian language	3.925	.226	3.056	.680	126.097***
Russian identity	3.244	.917	3.163	.906	.316
Russian behavior	2.969	.539	2.248	.565	70.640***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Prior to conducting correlation analyses of independent and dependent variables, descriptive statistical analysis of dependent variables (measures of psychological distress, family functioning, social support, and parenting style) was conducted for the values obtained from parents and their children. The results are summarized below (Table 7).

Table 7

Psychological Distress, Family Functioning, Social Support, and Parenting Style

Measure	Parents				Children			
	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Family cohesion	51.40	59.00	16.25	61.00	48.88	52.00	15.43	54.00
Family conflict	47.18	46.50	11.79	37.00	50.01	49.00	11.59	42.00
Family problems	36.21	36.00	14.95	69.00	35.13	34.00	16.80	70.00
Anxiety	1.31	1.33	.87	3.00	.95	.67	.87	4.00
Depression	.98	.79	.74	2.57	.89	.64	.83	3.71
Hostility	1.02	1.00	.75	3.00	1.25	1.00	.86	4.00
Obsessiveness	1.05	1.00	.79	2.67	1.22	1.00	.86	3.67
Paranoia	.95	1.00	.73	3.00	1.04	1.00	.78	3.33
Sensitivity	.87	.75	.78	3.00	.86	.75	.82	4.00
Psychological distress	1.00	.96	.64	2.33	.98	.83	.66	2.96
Social support	90.58	90.00	13.65	67.00	90.10	92.00	16.74	69.00
Satisfaction with parents					25.53	26.00	6.52	46.00
Parental care					2.32	2.42	.48	1.92
Parental control					1.21	1.23	.52	2.62

Next, a series of Pearson's correlation coefficients was calculated to determine the extent of the association between differences in the levels of acculturation for the mother and child and the level of psychological distress for both the mother and child. These analyses served to determine the magnitude of the relation between these measures, the significance of the relationship, and the direction of the relationship. The following table presents the initial the results of the correlations conducted testing this first hypothesis. The results presented here focus upon measures of psychological distress for the mother (Table 8); two significant correlations were found.

Table 8

Correlations Between Levels of Acculturation Differences and Psychological Distress of the Mother

Levels of acculturation differences	MAI	MDI	MHI	MOI	MPI	MSI	MTI
American difference in language	.141	.119	.068	.035	-.074	-.045	.064
Russian difference in language	.121	.149	.152	.173	.139	.074	.164
American difference in identity	.008	-.048	-.065	-.133	-.037	-.031	-.050
Russian difference in identity	-.029	.063	.162	.047	.208*	.136	.127
American difference in behavior	.163	.091	.119	.117	.026	.018	.109
Russian difference in behavior	.001	.092	.196*	.104	.084	.145	.107

Note. MAI = Mother's Anxiety Index, MDI = Mother's Depression Index, MHI = Mother's Hostility Index, MOI = Mother's Obsessiveness Index, MPI = Mother's Paranoia Index, MSI = Mother's Sensitivity Index, MTI = Mother's Total Psychological Distress Index (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$).

First, the correlation between the data indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between Russian difference in behavior and mother's hostility index, $r(78) = .196, p < .05; R^2 = 3.84\%$. However, this correlation suggests a weak relationship. Next, a statistically significant positive relationship was also found between the Russian difference in identity and the mother's paranoia index, $r(78) = .208, p < .05; R^2 = 4.33\%$. Similarly, this correlation coefficient indicates a fairly weak relationship. Thus, larger differences between mother's and child's Russian behavior acculturation predicted higher levels of mothers' reported hostility. Additionally, larger differences between mother's and child's Russian identity acculturation predicted higher levels of mothers' reported paranoia.

Next, correlations were calculated for differences in the levels of acculturation and psychological distress of the child. As shown in Table 9, none of the correlations achieved statistical significance. In summary, limited support was for the first hypothesis.

Table 9

Correlations Between Levels of Acculturation Differences and Psychological Distress of the Child

Levels of acculturation differences	CAI	CDI	CHI	COI	CPI	CSI	CTI
American difference in language	.078	.013	.078	-.082	-.024	-.026	.009
Russian difference in language	.095	.138	.165	.057	.065	.168	.134
American difference in identity	-.085	-.103	-.162	-.073	-.109	-.168	-.140
Russian difference in identity	-.022	-.053	-.036	-.028	-.120	-.022	-.054
American difference in behavior	-.024	-.066	.037	.047	-.087	-.013	-.027
Russian difference in behavior	-.155	-.052	-.112	-.096	-.109	-.085	-.118

Note. CAI = Child’s Anxiety Index, CDI = Child’s Depression Index, CHI = Child’s Hostility Index, COI = Child’s Obsessiveness Index, CPI = Child’s Paranoia Index, CSI = Child’s Sensitivity Index, CTI = Child’s Total Psychological Distress Index (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$).

A set of correlation coefficients was also calculated to test the hypothesis on different levels of acculturation between mother and child and poor family functioning. Again, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test the associations, in this case between differences in the levels of acculturation for mother and child and family functioning. As shown in Table 10, a number of correlations achieved statistical significance. First, a statistically significant negative relationship was found between mother's and child's American difference in language and the mother's self-report family cohesion, $r(78) = -.207, p < .05; R^2 = 4.29\%$. Thus, larger differences between mother's and child's American language acculturation predicted lower levels of mothers' reported levels of family cohesion. Next, two statistically significant positive relationships were found between Russian difference in language and the mother's self-report of family conflict, $r(78) = .253, p < .05; R^2 = 6.40\%$, and the mother's index of family problems, $r(78) = .236, p < .05; R^2 = 5.57\%$. These results suggest that larger differences between mother's and child's Russian language acculturation predicted higher levels of mothers' reported levels of family conflict and family problems. Finally, a statistically significant positive relationship was found between the Russian difference in identity and the child's self-reported index of family problems, $r(78) = .205, p < .05; R^2 = 4.20\%$. This suggests that greater differences in mother's and child's Russian identity acculturation predicted higher levels of children's reported levels of family problems. Although the results of these analyses found partial support for the second hypothesis, it should be noted that these correlations indicate weak relationships between the variables.

Table 10

Correlations Between Levels of Acculturation Differences and Family Functioning

Levels of acculturation differences	MFCoh	MFCConf	MFProb	CFCoh	CFConf	CFProb	CPS
American difference in language	-.207*	-.055	-.057	-.010	.016	-.022	-.116
Russian difference in language	.090	.253*	.236*	.011	.182	.067	-.162
American difference in identity	-.006	-.174	.042	.170	-.120	.116	-.084
Russian difference in identity	-.172	.157	.178	-.013	.093	.205*	.053
American difference in behavior	.057	.020	.110	-.051	.117	.066	-.167
Russian difference in behavior	.065	.068	.180	.065	-.140	-.138	.080

Note. MFCoh = Mother’s Self-Reported Index of Family Cohesion, MFCConf = Mother’s Self-Reported Index of Family Conflict, MFProb = Mother’s Self-Reported Index of Family Problems, CFCoh = Child’s Self-Reported Index of Family Cohesion, CFConf = Child’s Self-Reported Index of Family Conflict, CFProb = Child’s Self-Reported Index of Family Problems, CPS = Child’s Satisfaction with Parents (* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$).

To test the hypothesis regarding the mediating effects social support, a series of regression analyses was conducted. As the focus of this hypothesis was on testing mediation, Baron and Kenny's (1986) four steps were utilized. The first step consists of conducting a regression analysis in which the independent variable is regressed upon the dependent variable to establish whether there is an effect to be mediated. Next, the independent variable is regressed upon the mediator to establish whether there is a significant relationship between the independent variable and the mediator, which is the first of two relationships involving the mediator when mediation is present. The third and fourth steps, which are contained within a single regression analysis, include both the independent variable and mediator as predictors of the dependent variable. A reduction in the standardized coefficient associated with the independent variable in this final step would indicate that mediation is present.

These relationships were found to achieve statistical significance in nine cases in total. This indicates that in regard to step 1, nine significant regressions were found, with additional regressions being conducted to test step 2, in which the independent variables were regressed upon the mediators focused upon in this hypothesis. These analyses resulted in four significant regression analyses. Next, a third set of regression analyses were conducted for steps 3 and 4, in which the independent variables and mediators were regressed upon the dependent variables. This set of analyses produced one regression analysis in which the mediator remained a significant predictor of the dependent variable.

American difference in identity and child's self-reported levels of family conflict were modeled as independent and dependent variables, whereas child's self-reported index of social support was entered as a mediating variable (Table 11). As predicted,

American difference in identity had a significant and positive total effect on child's self-reported index of family conflict ($\beta = -.220$, $t(78) = -1.994$, $p = .050$). Furthermore, the data revealed that American difference in identity was a significant and positive predictor of child's self-reported index of social support ($\beta = .277$, $t(78) = 2.544$, $p = .013$). Child's self-reported index of social support significantly predicted a positive effect on child's self-reported index of family conflict ($\beta = -.249$, $t(77) = -2.217$, $p = .030$). When controlling for the influence of child's self-reported index of social support, the previously significant effect of American difference in identity on child's self-reported index of family conflict was no longer significant. Within this set of regressions, child's self-reported index of social support (mediator) reduced the effect of American difference in identity on child's self-reported index of family conflict to a point of nonsignificance. Finally, a Sobel test was conducted to confirm whether this reduction in effect was significant. A Sobel test yielded a nonsignificant mediation effect of child's self-reported index of social support ($z = 1.671$, $p = 0.095$). The results suggest that child's self-reported index of social support does not mediate the relationship between the American difference in identity (IV) and child's self-reported index of family conflict (DV).

Table 11

Regression Analyses of American Difference in Identity and Child's Self-Reported Index of Family Conflict: Mediation

	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1: Child's Self-Reported Index of Family				
Conflict ^a				
American difference in identity	2.973	.220	1.994	.050
(Constant)	54.773	-	26.672	<.001
Step 2: Child's Self-Reported Index of Social				
Support ^b				
American difference in identity	5.399	.277	2.544	.013
(Constant)	84.262	-	28.832	<.001
Step 3: Child's Self-Reported Index of Family				
Conflict ^c				
Child's self-report of social support	.172	.249	2.217	.030
American difference in identity	2.043	.151	1.350	.091
(Constant)	40.270	-	5.886	<.001

Note. One-tailed probability level reported; ^a $F(1, 78) = 3.975, p = .05; R^2 = .048$, Adjusted $R^2 = .036$; S.E.E. = 11.377; ^b $F(1, 78) = 6.474, p < .05; R^2 = .077$, Adjusted $R^2 = .065$; S.E.E. = 16.191; ^c $F(2, 77) = 4.545, p < .05; R^2 = .106$, Adjusted $R^2 = .082$; S.E.E. = 11.102.

To test the hypothesis regarding parenting style, Baron and Kenny's (1986) methodology was utilized. The regression analysis did not establish that mediation was present.

The focus of the analysis for the fifth hypothesis was on gender as a moderator of the relationship between the variables of mother-child acculturation differences and psychological distress and family functioning. To test this hypothesis, differences in acculturation, family functioning, and psychological distress were separated by gender (Table 12). Given that differences were observed, two sets of 2x3 MANOVAs were conducted to establish whether a moderator was present. With regard to psychological distress and family functioning, single scores were calculated through the use of factor analysis. In both of these cases, factor analyses were conducted in which a single factor was specified, with the results of the factor analysis being used to calculate single factor scores for these two measures using the method of regression as the method of factor extraction. Due to the use of factor analysis, both of these factor scores were calculated such that they had a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. In the first set of MANOVAs, the independent variables consisted of acculturation differences (recoded as small, moderate, or large) and gender, while the dependent variables consisted of the measures of psychological distress among the mother and child. The second set of MANOVAs utilized the same independent variables, while within these analyses, the dependent variables consisted of the measures of family functioning. In all MANOVAs conducted, main effects were calculated for both independent variables, as well as the interaction between the two independent variables included in the analysis. The focus of

these analyses was the interaction effect, as the significance of the interaction effect would indicate that moderation is present.

As shown in Table 13, three significant differences were found. First, in regard to the Russian difference in language, the main effect of acculturation differences was significant in regard to the dependent variable of family functioning, $F(14, 136) = 1.820$, $p < .05$; Wilks's $\lambda = 0.709$. However, the interaction effect in this analysis did not achieve significance, indicating no moderation was present. The second significant finding related to the interaction between gender and acculturation differences in the context of the American difference in identity, $F(22, 128) = 1.743$, $p < .05$; Wilks's $\lambda = 0.592$. While neither the main effect of gender nor the main effect of acculturation differences achieved significance, the interaction between male gender of the child and acculturation differences was significant. This suggested that male gender partially moderated the relationship between acculturation differences (specifically, American difference in identity) and psychological distress of mothers. Finally, the effect of acculturation differences was found to achieve statistical significance in regard to the Russian difference in identity in the analysis conducted on psychological distress, $F(22, 128) = 1.597$, $p < .05$; Wilks's $\lambda = 0.616$; however, the interaction effect was not significant, suggesting that significant moderation was not present. Overall, the results of these analyses found partial support for hypothesis 5.

Table 12

Differences in Acculturation, Family Functioning, and Psychological Distress by Gender

	Male		Female	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
American difference in language	.821	.602	.985	.562
Russian difference in language	.865	.608	.872	.665
American difference in identity	1.230	.855	.954	.851
Russian difference in identity	.892	.818	.756	.805
American difference in behavior	1.023	.529	.965	.626
Russian difference in behavior	.861	.626	.763	.444
Family functioning	49.162	17.671	53.326	14.854
Psychological distress	1.432	.838	1.209	.894

Table 13

MANOVAs Testing for Moderation by Gender

Levels of Acculturation Differences	Family Functioning			Psychological Distress		
	Gender ^a	Acc. Gap ^b	G×A ^b	Gender ^a	Acc. Gap ^b	G×A ^b
American difference in language	.175	.819	.756	.163	.778	.731
<i>F</i>	1.700	1.020	1.459	.951	.777	.987
<i>Df</i>	7, 68	14, 136	14, 136	11, 64	22, 128	22, 128
Significance ^c	.062	.219	.068	.250	.375	.243
Russian difference in language	.115	.709*	.814	.143	.758	.690
<i>F</i>	1.118	1.820	1.051	.830	.863	1.186
<i>Df</i>	7, 68	14, 136	14, 136	11, 64	22, 128	22, 128
Significance ^c	.181	.021	.204	.306	.322	.136
American difference in identity	.114	.755	.837	.191	.698	.592*
<i>F</i>	1.107	1.464	.906	1.110	1.146	1.743
<i>Df</i>	7, 68	14, 136	14, 136	11, 64	22, 128	22, 128
Significance ^c	.185	.067	.277	.184	.155	.015

Note. Acc. Gap = Acculturation Gap; ^aHotelling’s T-Square reported; ^bWilks’s lambda reported; ^cOne-tailed probability level reported (**p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001).

(continued)

Table 13

MANOVAs Testing for Moderation by Gender

Levels of Acculturation Differences	Family Functioning			Psychological Distress		
	Gender ^a	Acc. Gap ^b	G×A ^b	Gender ^a	Acc. Gap ^b	G×A ^b
Russian difference in identity	.085	.803	.846	.071	.616*	.693
<i>F</i>	.824	1.127	.846	.411	1.597	1.169
<i>Df</i>	7, 68	14, 136	14, 136	11, 64	22, 128	22, 128
Significance ^c	.286	.170	.309	.473	.029	.144
American difference in behavior	.162	.883	.876	.240	.671	.695
<i>F</i>	1.576	.621	.666	1.398	1.286	1.162
<i>Df</i>	7, 68	14, 136	14, 136	11, 64	22, 128	22, 128
Significance ^c	.079	.422	.402	.098	.097	.147
Russian difference in behavior	.119	.828	.788	.129	.665	.670
<i>F</i>	1.157	.960	1.231	.753	1.318	1.289
<i>Df</i>	7, 68	14, 136	14, 136	11, 64	22, 128	22, 128
Significance ^c	.170	.249	.130	.342	.086	.096

Note. Acc. Gap = Acculturation Gap; ^aHotelling's T-Square reported; ^bWilks's lambda reported; ^cOne-tailed probability level reported (**p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001).

In sum, limited support was found for hypotheses 1 and 5, while more substantial support was found for hypothesis 2. No support was indicated for hypotheses 3 and 4, which both focused upon mediation effects. The following chapter will discuss these results in relation to the previous literature and discuss the limitations present in this study, as well as suggestions for future research.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to expand understanding of the relationship between mother-child acculturation differences, psychological distress, and mother-child cohesion and conflict. Upon finding significant correlations between the independent and dependent variables, mediators (social connectedness, or the availability of and access to social support; parenting style) and a moderator (gender of child) were investigated to determine whether these variables were partially or fully mediating/moderating the relationship. This chapter presents an interpretative summary of the research findings in relation to the hypotheses tested and integrates these results with those of previous research. This is followed by a discussion of implications for practice, methodological limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Normative sample and between-group comparisons.

According to Anastasi & Urbina (1997), “any norm, however, expressed, is restricted to the particular normative population from which it was derived” (p. 68). In questionnaires chosen for this study, an effort was made to ensure that the current sample was comparable to the population for which the questionnaires were designed. A discussion on each measure and the comparability characteristics follows.

In a recent sample using the Language, Identity, and Behavior Acculturation Scale (Birman & Trickett, 2001a) with 130 Russian immigrant adolescent-parent dyads, 57% of adolescents were male, with an average age of 15 (Birman, 2006b). They had come from Ukraine (40%), Belarus (17%), Russia (15%), and other former republics including Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Moldova, and others. Their average length of stay in

the United States was 6 years, ranging from 5 months to 11 years ($SD = 3.2$).

Participating parents were on average 44 years old ($SD = 5.8$). The choice of whether the mother or father completed questionnaires was made by the parents. Most were married (89%); the majority was mothers (70%). Thus, both samples were similarly constituted, which allowed for between-groups comparisons to be made.

First, comparisons of demographic characteristics between the current sample (Table 1) and the normative sample indicated that participants were fairly similar in terms of age, family composition, educational level, and marital status. The only notable difference between the two groups was observed for their respective lengths of postimmigration stay, with the current sample residing in the U.S. an average of 12 years, compared to 6 years in the normative sample. Given that the process of acculturation has been identified as a long-term phenomenon affecting various generations (Berry, 2005), the current sample was representative of the general Russian-immigrant population undergoing acculturation.

The data in Table 10 suggest that in the current sample, mothers were more proficient in English than the normative sample, while mothers in the normative sample were more proficient in Russian language and also engaged in more Russian behavior. There are several possible explanations for these findings. First, as noted above, participants in the current sample had a considerably longer duration of residence in the U.S. Therefore, those in the current sample had more time and opportunity to acculturate.

Empirical evidence has shown that length of stay in the new culture influences the acculturation process (e.g., Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998). In particular, a longer stay makes it easier for immigrants to become familiar with their new sociocultural context. Acculturation is also influenced by cultural knowledge, behavioral investment in the host culture, and linguistic competence (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). As a result, a longer stay allowed immigrants to develop greater socioeconomic resources. This, however, does not explain why mothers in the current sample rated their Russian identity higher than mothers in the normative study. Although there is no empirical evidence to explain this, anecdotal evidence suggested that intervening variables (e.g., characteristics of the Russian support systems, community characteristics, personal characteristics) may have influenced their will and/or desire to maintain a high level of Russian identity. For example, many immigrated with their extended family (e.g., grandmothers and grandfathers).

Given their longer period of residence, children in the current study were more acculturated (e.g., American Identity) to American society, while children in the normative study maintained a stronger attachment to their native culture (e.g., Russian behavior). In addition to the differences in length of stay, it is possible that parents who more closely identified with Russian culture exerted an influence on their children. For example, Sam et al. (2006) reported that certain immigrant families limit their children's access to American culture (e.g., American media, American friends).

In the normative sample, the family unit was reported to be more cohesive than the family unit in the current study. In addition, the current sample reported far more family problems than the normative sample. Overall, it appears that the current sample

experienced more family problems and interpersonal conflict. One possible explanation various personal or environmental characteristics (e.g., personality types, communication styles, family discord, and socioeconomic stress).

This can also be explained by comparing the lengths of stay. As noted earlier, the current sample resided in the United States for an average of 12 years, twice the number of postimmigration years for the normative sample. Given that the current study found several mother-child acculturation differences, it is possible that after a longer period, it became more difficult to maintain a healthy level of cohesion in a new country.

Balcazar, Peterson, and Cobas' (1996) investigation into length of stay postimmigration and family functioning confirmed that families undergoing a longer acculturation process experienced diminished family bonds, which led to family conflict.

Acculturation differences and psychological distress.

This study identified acculturation differences between mothers and their children, depending on the domain of acculturation considered (Table 6). For example, Russian immigrant children scored higher than their mothers on all three dimensions of American acculturation (language, identity, and behavior), as anticipated based on current acculturation research (Birman, 2006a; Birman & Trickett, 2001). With respect to Russian acculturation, mothers had higher scores than children across all three dimensions of Russian acculturation (language, identity, and behavior). Furthermore, children were fairly similar to their mothers with respect to Russian identity, contrary to prior findings (Birman, 2006; Birman & Trickett, 2001). The general pattern of findings confirms some of the firmly held assumptions in the literature on patterns of acculturation between mothers and children and suggests that whereas there is a strong Russian identity

among mothers, Russian immigrant children are focused on both maintaining their own cultural identity and extending relationships in the new dominant culture. Berry (1998) refers to this as an integrated acculturation attitude.

There are several possible explanations for why children experience less difficulty with acculturation and learning their new American culture. First, younger immigrants' language acquisition ability is qualitatively different from to their mothers'. In addition, language acquisition ability varies widely from person to person. Reasons for learning a second language can be classified according to the degree to which individuals freely choose to learn another language (Noels, 2001). From a self-determination perspective, motivation can be for extrinsic or intrinsic reasons (Ryan & Deci, 2000). To date, research has established that when comparing extrinsic (means to an end) and intrinsic (self-determined and personally satisfying) reasons, intrinsic motivation is linked to greater motivational intensity for learning (Noels, Clement, & Pelletier, 2001), self-efficacy, and proficiency (Ehrman, 1996). In terms of this study, adult Russian immigrants (mothers) may have relied on extrinsic motivation in learning their new culture and language. Anecdotally, during the interview, many Russian mothers stated that they immigrated to secure a better financial future. As a result, this attitude would also translate into utilization of more extrinsically oriented acculturation strategies. Immigrant children and adolescents, on the other hand, are more intrinsically motivated to learn the new culture. This is partly because the acculturation experience may intersect with the evolution of one's ethnic identity (Phinney, 2003; Schwartz et al., 2006). Bosma and Kunnen (2001) suggest that evolution of identity is likely to occur when individuals grow to recognize that the surrounding society's beliefs, values, and

norms are dissonant with their own. This imbalance would then motivate younger immigrants to initiate their search for ethnic identity.

It is also possible that Russian mothers adapt to the American culture at a slower rate than their children because mothers tend to withdraw into the comfort of ethnic communities created by other Russian American immigrants and to rely upon native cultural lifestyles. Portes and Schauffler (1994) found a significant negative relationship between Russian immigrant concentration of neighborhoods and American acculturation. Oppedal, Roysamb, and Sam (2004) concur that rejection of the new dominant culture in favor of preserving the culture of origin is often facilitated by immigration to ethnic communities which, according to Chiswick and Miller (2005), is a common pattern of immigrant mobility upon initial stages of resettlement. Furthermore, anecdotal evidence indicated that this resettlement strategy is quite popular among Russian immigrant families because the Russian American community functions as an important source of financial and social support.

Whatever the acculturation differences between mothers and children, significant acculturation differences generally have been associated with family conflict (Birman, 2006b) and poor psychological functioning in immigrant parents and children (e.g., Costigan & Dokis 2006; Le & Stockdale, 2008). Children in immigrant families have been observed to acculturate more quickly than their parents, which has been referred to as *dissonant acculturation* (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). These intergenerational differences have been called acculturation differences and have been associated with higher rates of psychological distress than in nonimmigrant populations (Lau et al., 2005). For example, several studies reported that parent-child acculturation differences

have been linked to children's well-being (Lee & Zhan, 1998; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993), including lower life satisfaction (Phinney & Ong, 2002), increased anxiety, lower self-esteem (Farver et al., 2002), and higher levels of depression (Kim, 2003). Within this study, psychological distress has been defined as the reaction of an individual to external and internal stressors, characterized by a mixture of psychological symptoms, such as poor self-esteem, hopelessness, helplessness, confusion, sadness, anxiety, and various subjective body complaints (Ritsner et al., 2002).

According to the results of the study, acculturation differences were only predictive of psychological distress in mothers (Table 8). First, significant differences in Russian identity were predictive of higher levels of self-reported paranoia, which is congruent with previous investigations linking acculturative stress to paranoia (Kendler, 1982; Westermeyer, 1989). In general, immigrant paranoia can be attributed to ongoing victimization and discrimination activities that the majority population engages in against their new and misunderstood immigrant counterparts. Although acceptance by the dominant culture is of importance for Russian immigrants (Morozov, 2011), U.S. immigrants across cultures often experience stress from racial discrimination, being taken advantage of, being made fun of, or being treated unfairly (Banks, Kohn-Wood, & Spencer, 2006; Lee, 2005). In turn, ethnic discrimination is viewed as a significant life stressor with adverse effects on the adjustment, identity development, and overall health of ethnic minorities. Researchers investigating the experience and effects of discrimination on immigrant populations have linked it with an array of mental health problems (Gee et al., 2007; Lee 2005; Noh & Kaspar, 2003). Birman and Trickett (2001b) note that Russian immigrants' perceived discrimination in American society

predominately stems from experiences with language problems and Russian identity stereotypes. Inadequate English proficiency, for example, makes it difficult for Russian mothers to communicate their needs and to resolve their conflicts with their American peers, who are considered by many immigrant populations to be domineering and cold (Stodolska, 2008).

Although there is no current research linking acculturative stress of Russian immigrants with paranoia, anecdotal evidence within this study indicated that Russian mothers were preoccupied with negative thoughts of losing their children to the American culture and consequently losing their family identity. During several interviews, Russian immigrant mothers expressed living in fear regarding the idea that their Americanized children were going to leave and forget them.

In terms of Russian identity, old Communist-based stereotypes have been gradually replaced by images of Russian immigrants as criminals and terrorists (Kishinevsky, 2004). As a result, it is fairly easy for American society to develop and project a negative image of the Russian immigrant population. Anecdotal evidence collected during the interviews indicated that the association with being either a Communist or a mobster has had a tremendous negative impact on Russian immigrants. If, during the Cold War era, Russian immigrants were stigmatized as being “commy bastards now they are stigmatized as being the scum of the earth” (Morozov, 2011, p. 9).

Given that the acculturation process calls for Russian immigrants to integrate new cultural values into their belief systems, acculturation also involves internalization of various attitudes that American society expresses toward Russian immigrants. This notion is supported by research on different minority groups in different host settings,

such as immigrant Vietnamese adolescents in the United States (Lain, 2005) and Ethiopian adolescents in Israel (Ringel, Ronell, & Getahune, 2005). The internalization of the negative attitudes of the host society is linked to poor psychological adjustment of the acculturating immigrant populations (Lain, 2005). Both perceived and real discrimination have a negative effect on their mental health and their success in the host society (Jassinskaja-Lahti & Leibkind, 2001; Stodolska, 2008; Trimble, 2003). In terms of this study's findings, it is reasonable to assume that Russian mothers' perceived discrimination may have led to the development of unfounded or exaggerated distrust of others. Janssen et al. (2003) and Johns et al. (2004) investigated paranoia's connection to stressful life events. Their research provided evidence for the association between perceived discrimination and onset of delusional ideation. Similarly, researchers in Toronto have linked ethnic discrimination to phobic anxiety and paranoid ideations (Dion, Dion, & Pak, 1992). As a result, Russian immigrant mothers may find themselves living in a constant state of worry and vulnerability. Hoping to reduce their stress, fear, and anxiety, Russian mothers may implement various self-protective behavioral strategies. For example, they may engage in defensive aggression or hostility toward their perceived targets of threat.

The other significant finding regarding psychological distress indicated that Russian behavior was predictive of higher levels of mothers' self-reported hostility. Unfortunately, the current research provides insufficient information on the association between behavioral acculturation and expression of hostility in Russian immigrants. However, a review of the literature shows that hostility can be an emotional and behavioral response to the experience of high levels of social anxiety that tend to arise in

ambiguous social situations. Similarly, Combs et al. (2009) have shown that social anxiety is associated with a social-cognitive bias for perceiving hostility in ambiguous social situations. Clearly, the acculturative process can be viewed as a collection of new and ambiguous situations that immigrants must navigate and make sense of. Although younger immigrants tend to be more flexible and adaptive in their new environments (Cheung & Chudek, 2011), older immigrants tend to have more difficulty in translating social and situational cues. Ponizovsky et al. (1998) compared emotional distress in three age groups of adult immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union. Overall, the highest levels of distress were linked to anxiety and hostility.

These results are intriguing because epidemiological research consistently reports that women tend to internalize their stressors and problems (higher rates of depression and anxiety). They also gravitate to coping strategies in order avoid their emotional symptoms (Stoppard, 2010; Ussher, 2010). Additionally, in contrast to the American culture of expressiveness, Russian society has a long history of being more restrictive (Eckhardt, Kassinov, Tsytsarev, & Sukhodolsky, 1995). Slonim-Nevo, Chaitin, Sharaga, and Abdelgani (1998) argue that expression of anger and hostility in Russian immigrant women may be a form of expression of bitterness toward their life experiences; however, their anger tends to be directed toward those outside of her family (the political system, other Russian immigrants in the community).

One of the limitations of studies focused on one ethnic group is that the ethnic cultural background may affect the psychological reactions of immigrants in their new homeland. Therefore, the elevated psychological distress among Russian immigrants in the U.S. may be attributed to a high baseline psychological distress prior to their

relocation. Unfortunately, no systematic and reliable data on this population's psychological condition in Russia or the former Soviet Union are available. Nevertheless, in view of the social disintegration and preceding totalitarian regime, it is reasonable to assume that the psychological well-being of Russian immigrants living in Russia was poorer than their Western counterparts'. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Russians appear to report being unhappy prior to and after immigration to the United States. Veenhoven (2001) suggested that Russian natives rate themselves as unhappy not only because of their external circumstances (e.g., poor economic conditions, poor health care, and pollution), but also because of a negative cognitive bias that affects the way they perceive their lives. Similarly, in an epidemiological study in Ukraine (culturally similar to Russia), prevalence estimates of alcoholism among men and depression among women were higher than in comparable European surveys (Bromet et al., 2005). Overall, these findings raise the possibility that psychological distress in adult Russian immigrants may be an ethnically related occurrence. Thus, future studies might find it beneficial to examine the presence of other variables (e.g., preimmigration trauma and sociocultural values) in the development and maintenance of psychological distress during the process of acculturation.

Regarding younger immigrants, unlike their mothers, Russian children's self-report of psychological distress indicated that they did not experience any symptoms of psychological distress. This finding contrasts with other research that has linked adolescent acculturation to psychological distress (Birman, 1998; Nguyen et al., 1999). These unexpected findings can be attributed to two elements, comparable mother-child Russian identity ratings (LIB Acculturation measure; Birman & Trickett, 2001a) and

younger immigrants' strong acculturation to American values (e.g., language, behavior, and identity).

In the case of the former, younger immigrants' attachment to their native culture may have acted as a protective factor against psychological distress. In the latter case, Russian children's bicultural identity may have provided them with various skills they used to develop peer relationships and navigate through stressful times. As Mistry and Wu (2010) note, biculturalism has often emerged as the most adaptive approach to acculturation. Some investigators have found that bicultural individuals are more likely to have higher self-esteem, more positive out-group attitudes, and less perceived discrimination (Verkuyten, 2011; Verkuyten & Brug, 2002).

Acculturation differences and family functioning of mothers.

As shown in Table 10, a number of correlations achieved statistical significance. First, general findings indicate that significant differences in Russian language acculturation have a negative impact on the mothers' view of family functioning. In this study, family functioning has been defined as having multiple dimensions of family, including flexibility, cohesion, and communication (Olson et al., 1979). As a result, this study supports Birman's (2006b) argument for the Russian language gap's ability to predict family disagreements, as reported by parents. Similarly, Russian mothers reported that acculturation differences in the English language were indicative of lower levels of family cohesion. Since Russian immigrant mothers and children differ in their levels of fluency in English and their native language, communication can become challenging and may lead to disputes and misunderstandings. For instance, Costigan and Dokis (2006) reported that Chinese immigrant families in which mothers were more

acculturated to their native language reported more conflicts than families without native language acculturation differences. Furthermore, the presence of multiple languages can create contradictory expectations, in which children are expected to be obedient at home, while children are expected to be assertive and independent at school (Park, 1997). This inconsistency in expectations has the potential to cause family problems and stress (Chae, 2001). As a result, mother and child are equally susceptible to being frustrated by their inability to communicate an idea in the other's primary language.

Acculturation differences and family functioning of adolescents.

Findings with respect to identity acculturation differences suggested that significant mother-child Russian identity differences have a negative impact on family functioning (e.g., higher level of family problems), as reported by adolescents (Table 10). However, further analysis reveals that mothers and children had fairly similar Russian identity ratings (Table 3). In this study, both children and mothers identified themselves as very much Russian (4/4 on the Likert scale of the LIB Acculturation subscale; Birman & Trickett, 2001a) in at least 40% of families (32 children and 36 mothers). It should be noted that average length of stay postimmigration was 11.78 years. This outcome is contrary to what would be expected based on acculturation difference theories (Berry, 1980; Kwak & Berry (2001).

There are several possible explanations for why nonsignificant Russian identity differences in this study were associated with higher levels of family problems. First, mothers and children may conceptualize their cultural identities in different ways. As pointed out by Tsai et al. (2000), the meaning of cultural identity may be different for the parents, who left their native country as adults, and children, who spent a great proportion

of their lives in the new culture. In addition, the conceptualization of cultural identity may be influenced by the qualitatively different cultural experiences that adult Russian immigrants and children have had in the two countries (Birman & Trickett, 2001b; Persky & Birman, 2005). For example, mothers' Russian cultural identification may be based on the internalized cultural content prior to immigration, which includes the Russian language, movies, history, collective experience, food, and friendships. Children and adolescents, on the other hand, may form their understanding of Russian cultural identity from information collected in their host country (America). As a result, although both parties may view themselves as Russian, in reality, they may attribute their Russian identity to significantly different sociocultural values. These results suggest a possible limitation of computing actual differences between mothers and children because the meaning of acculturation constructs may vary according to generation.

Another possible explanation deals with the very nature of the multidimensional acculturation measures. Instead of using a global index of acculturation (Cortes et al., 1994), this study utilized a measure that assessed multiple domains of acculturation, such as language, identity, and behavior of the new and the old culture (LIB; Birman & Trickett, 2001a). One drawback of using the multidimensional approach is that it ignores the dynamic nature or the interrelationships involved in the acculturative process. It is likely that these dimensions come together to create a complex constellation of cultural, racial, ethnic, and religious variables. For example, Kasparov (2003) quotes the Soviet Jewish chess master Botvinnik, responding in the following way to Israeli chess fans when asked about his nationality: "My situation is complex. By blood I am Jewish, by culture,-Russian, by upbringing-Soviet" (p. 265).

Alternative explanation.

Although this study found evidence of acculturation differences leading to psychological distress and poor family functioning, closer inspection of the coefficients of determination reveals that all mother-child acculturation differences were very weak predictors of psychological distress and family functioning (e.g., low correlation coefficients). As a result, the remaining proportion of each dependent variables (e.g., indexes of psychological distress and family functioning) variance can be explained by other variables.

During the last several decades, research (Conger, Rueter & Conger, 2000) has confirmed the negative impact of economic problems on individuals and family systems. With respect to family relations, among Latino, African American, and European American families, perceived economic hardship is associated with poor quality relationships between spouses as well as between parents and children (Gomel, Tinsley, Parke, & Clark, 1998; Ishii-Kuntz, Gomel, Tinsley, & Parke, 2010). Newfound economic stress forces many immigrant adults to settle for low paying jobs due to lack of English skills or professional training not recognized by the U.S (e.g., medical doctors, nurses, accountants, etc.). It is not uncommon to find immigrants trained as medical doctors in their countries of origin working in other, less rewarding occupations because of their limited English skills. Studies have documented that income loss through unemployment increases husbands' marital tensions, hostility, and lack of family cohesion (Conger & Elder, 1994).

Regarding psychological well-being, inability to behaviorally participate in the American culture may lead immigrant families to feel isolated and alone in their new

American culture. Mistry, Benner, Tan, and Kim (2009) found that Chinese American adolescents' perceptions of family economic stress predicted their depressive symptoms. McLoyd (1990) found that economic hardship adversely influences immigrant children's socioemotional functioning. For the parents, income loss and unstable work were associated with feelings of frustration, anger, depression, and anxiety (Brody & Flor, 1998; Conger & Elder, 1994; Hammen, 1999). Overall, the effect of economic hardship on acculturating families is extensive and wide-ranging. Although this study pooled data on Russian mothers' level of education, socioeconomic status were not assessed. As a result, it is possible that this study's sample consisted of Russian immigrants from a predominantly lower socioeconomic class.

Conversely, marital problems may have also negatively impacted overall family functioning. This is because Russian American families are characterized by high levels of family cohesion and solidarity. From a family systems perspective, when the subsystems in the family are highly interdependent, conflicts in one subsystem (e.g., marital relationship) are likely to propagate negative effects on other subsystems (e.g., relationships between other family members) (Parke et al., 2004). Results of Parke and coworkers' (2004) investigation of marital problems and family functioning in Mexican American and European American families provided support for the direct effect of marriage on family adjustment. More specifically, marital problems were associated with poor family cohesion and greater family conflict. As a result, future acculturation research needs to factor in how marital disruptions impact acculturation, psychological distress, and family functioning.

Social support as a mediator of psychological distress and family functioning.

Although social support has been shown to be a critical factor mediating acculturative stress and various family outcomes (Henly, 2002), the results of this study indicated that social support did not play a vital role mediating the relationship between acculturative stress and family problems. In another words, negative consequences of acculturative stress were not lessened in the presence of social support.

Alternative explanations.

It may be, however, that mothers and children access their respective social support networks differently. Given that the mothers in this study identify themselves as more Russian than American in terms of language, ethnic identity, and behavior, it is reasonable to assume that their social support comes from within their ethnic enclaves. Children, on the other hand, utilize their well-developed American identities to access social networks found outside of their enclaves (e.g., schools, social clubs, friends).

Alternatively, social support may increase anxiety if friends advocate attitudes that heighten cultural conflicts, psychological distress, or family problems. In general, the effects of support from peers may depend on who the peers are (Schneider & Ward, 2003) and the quality of support they provide. Such differential effects could be examined in future studies that measure the quality of peer support received and its effectiveness in reducing psychological distress. Taken together, the differing results for peer and mother support highlights the need to distinguish these two sources of support in future studies of Russian immigrant families.

Parental bond as a mediator of psychological distress and family functioning.

Given the existing literature (Lim et al., 2009), it was surprising that parental bond did not mediate psychological distress and family problems caused by mother-child acculturation differences. The lack of statistically significant support for mediation indicates that parental bond may not be as salient in predicting Russian immigrant acculturation patterns as has been previously posited. In addition, the lack of support could be due to the fact that the measure of parenting style (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979) might not have been sensitive enough to detect differences among participants in this study. A better strategy might have been to select a specific measurable variable found within parenting style. One such possible variable could be parent-adolescent communication, which has been identified as a buffer of the gap-distress relationship (Kim & Park, 2011). Effective parent-adolescent communication is especially important to Russian immigrant families because it maintains interpersonal cohesion and emotional bonds. Qin (2006) investigated communication in immigrant Chinese families, noting that a lack of open communication between immigrant parents and their children contributed to feelings of increasing alienation on both sides. Thus, it appears that open communication may have a buffering effect on the gap-distress relationship.

In addition, measuring parenting style in families through a self-report by one individual might have also skewed the results. Though there are many strengths of using self-report to measure psychological constructs, one of its limitations is that the structure of the questions influences whether the reported information accurately measures the construct that the study originally sought to measure. According to Schwarz (1999), “self-reports are a fallible source of data, and minor changes in question wording,

question format, or question context can result in major changes in the obtained results” (p. 93).

Gender as a moderator of psychological distress and family functioning.

The results of this study indicate that mother-son pairs experiencing significant American identity differences are likely to report higher levels of psychological distress than mother-daughter pairs (Table 12 and Table 13). This is congruent with Dohrenwend’s (2000) research citing gender as a potential moderator in general psychological functioning of family members. This can be partially explained by examining the process of gender role socialization, which teaches males culturally embedded standards of masculinity, toughness, aggression (Levant, 2001), the restriction of emotional expression, (Wester, Vogel, Pressly, & Heesacker, 2002), and independence and self-reliance (Kiselica, 2001).

Levant et al. (2003) found that Russian immigrants endorsed traditional masculinity ideology to a greater degree than their U.S. male counterparts. Traditional male roles may serve an adaptive function in acculturating and surviving in a new environment. Nevertheless, Russian male immigrants’ rigid adherence to traditional masculine ideology (Roshina, 1997) has been linked to such unhealthy behaviors as drinking, smoking, and not seeking medical attention for physical ailments. In explaining gender differences in mortality in the United States, Courtenay (2000) indicated that men were more likely than women to engage in behaviors that increased their risk of injury or death. The same research also proposed that an underlying cause of men’s unhealthy lifestyle behaviors is related to traditional beliefs about masculinity. As a result, it is likely that Russian young males’ endorsement of traditional masculine ideology is

associated with risky behaviors that lead to psychological distress within Russian immigrant families.

Parenting a child who is engaging in unhealthy and risky behaviors may also lead to increased levels of parenting distress. Research shows that the level of parenting stress is higher in parents of children with emotional, behavioral, and communication problems (Baker et al., 2003; Beck, Hastings, & Daley, 2004). As a result, it is plausible to assume that stress experienced by mothers may negatively impact their levels of psychological distress.

Methodological limitations.

The present study had several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design made it difficult to make causal inferences. In addition, the absence of longitudinal data also constrained understanding of whether acculturation differences are stable or dynamic in nature. As a result, the findings regarding negative psychological and familial effects are tentative.

Although the sample size of 80 was sufficient for the analyses performed, a larger sample would have yielded greater statistical power. In addition, all 80 participating families only had one child per family. Adding multi-child families would have resulted in a more balanced sample of families. It is also important to note, according to results of the correlation analysis, that all significant mother-child acculturation differences identified in the current study only accounted for 3.8% to 6.9% of the variance in reported psychological distress and family problems (Table 1 and Table 3). Furthermore, emphasis on acculturation measurements has been criticized due to psychometric problems and, as such, provides an incomplete picture of immigrant acculturation and

identity reconstruction (Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001). The complexity of acculturation differences may be better studied through qualitative methodological approaches.

Another limitation is that minimal demographic data were collected for the sample in this study. In accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010), studies involving human subjects should present certain information, which should be presented in the Method section of the manuscript (p. 17-20). Within these standards, “appropriate identification of research participants is critical to science and practice of psychology, particularly for assessing results (making comparisons across groups), generalizing findings, and making comparisons in replications, literature reviews, or secondary data analyses” (p. 18). In another words, participants should be adequately described. This is especially important when examining children’s and adolescents’ data because psychologically manifested differences have been shown to arise from developmental issues or sociocultural factors (Sifers, Puddy, Warren, & Roberts 2002). Unfortunately, this study employed a relatively brief demographics questionnaire. Thus, it is possible that the results were influenced by intervening variables that were not taken into consideration. For instance, the study could have benefited from asking the following questions:

1. Who lives in your household besides yourself?
2. How many hours a week do you work?
3. Are you currently enrolled in ESOL?
4. If Yes, do you feel you are Russian because of your (a) nationality/ethnicity, (b) religion; or (c) other?
5. Is your father of Russian or American descent?

6. Does your father live with you?
7. What language does your father speak?

Each question represents a potential intervening variable that could have influenced acculturation strategies, level of psychological stress, and family dynamics. Of particular importance would have been information regarding the size and the composition of the household (e.g., extended family members, friends), in addition to paternal information. Research has indicated that extended family, and in particular parental siblings, play important roles in the acculturation experience and family functioning of immigrant families (Tingvold, Middelthun, Allen, Hauff, 2012).

In addition, parent-child acculturation levels have been shown to be related to fathers' personal characteristics, including parenting practices (Kim, Chen, Li, Huang, & Moon, 2009). Although the study of parental involvement in acculturation has been the subject of extensive empirical investigation, less attention has been paid to immigrant fathers (Rumbaut, 1994). Instead, existing research on immigrant families in the United States has largely focused on mothers (Bornstein & Cote, 2006). This was a limitation of the present study because immigrant fathers have been shown to play an important role in the immigrant families' acculturation process (Capps, Bronte-Tinkew, & Horowitz 2010). Their parenting abilities can be influenced by stressors, such as sociocultural beliefs, unemployment, language barriers, identity confusion, and barriers to services (Shimoni, Este, & Clark, 2003).

Information regarding the father's country of origin would also have been an important variable to include in the analysis. For instance, not knowing whether Russian mothers were married to Russian immigrant men concealed any possible influence that

fathers may have had on their children's endorsement of Russian or American cultural values. If fathers and children differ in their cultural values, they may experience more areas of disagreement (Costigan & Dokis, 2006). Phinney and Ong (2002) have suggested that value discrepancies may lead to confusion in family expectations regarding how much independence children should be granted or what language they should speak at home. As a result, elevations on values of family conflict and family problems in this study may have been better explained by examining the dynamics of father-child interactions.

Although the mothers' marital status was recorded, this study did not ask whether fathers resided in the same household as their children. It is possible that despite the married status, some couples were separated and lived in different households. It is also possible that some mothers divorced and remarried someone else. This may have had a significant effect on individual psychological health and overall family dynamics. Unfortunately, data examining the interaction of these variables was not available.

Considering that the study used volunteers and relied on the snowball sampling method, two important biases related to sampling that could affect generalizability of study findings are referral filter bias and volunteer bias (Sackett, 1979). In referral bias, the selection that occurs at each stage in the referral process can generate samples that are very different from one another. Similarly, in volunteer bias, people who volunteer to participate in a study may have certain characteristics (e.g., predisposition to psychiatric illness, socioeconomic status, willingness to participate) that differ from those of nonvolunteers (Thompson, 1993). This study has identified several variables that might be common only to Russian volunteers; these variables include but are not limited to

being better educated and more social, motivated, and altruistic. The majority of participants were highly educated, having earned a bachelor's degree or higher, with a significant number of doctoral and medical degrees. A majority of participants were self-employed. These variables may have affected interest in participating. It is also reasonable to speculate that those who chose to participate may also have been better adjusted than those who did not. Finally, as is commonly the case in research data collection, some individuals may have had a desire to gain social approval from the investigator. Thus, the differences between variables shown within the sample of volunteers in this study might be quite different from the larger population.

It should be noted that the investigator, who also collected the data, is a member of one of the Russian communities from which many of the participants came. If the data collector and the subjects are from the same community, the subjects may have been concerned about confidentiality, which could have influenced their response styles. As a result, it is possible that the participants in this study did not answer the questionnaires truthfully. Being a member of the community being studied may have created biased selection of participants. Despite using the snowball technique, the investigator may have unknowingly sought participants with certain demographic characteristics not representative of the general Russian non-Jewish immigrant population. In addition, the homogeneity of the sample in terms of age and limited geographic area limits the generalizability to samples with other characteristics.

The questionnaires utilized in the study (Talbieh Brief Distress Inventory; Ritsner et al., 1995; Parental Bonding Instrument; Parker et al., 1979; Social Connectedness Scale–Revised; Lee et al., 2001) were all normed on nonimmigrant participants, which

mainly consisted of college and medical students. As a result, the current results may not be comparable to those obtained by Birman (2006b). This also presents a limitation in generalizability of results.

The current sample's prolonged postimmigration length of stay made it difficult to generalize the results to Russian immigrants undergoing acculturation for a shorter period. This is because length of stay has been linked to qualitatively different acculturation outcomes (Berry, 1990).

Finally, this study did not consider the presence of possible subcultural differences. Although many individuals labeled themselves as Russian, they may have immigrated from any of the ethnic groups currently in Russia. This highlights what Phinney et al. (2001) describe as the division between *ethnic identity* and *national identity*. While the former relates to identification with the culture of origin, the latter refers to identity as a member of one's general society. Thus, if participants were provided with a more comprehensive background information questionnaire, some individuals might have identified themselves based on their ethnic identity (e.g., Slavic, Georgian, Ukrainian, or Latvian).

Implications for practice and policy.

This study was conducted not only to gain insight into the unique acculturative process of non-Jewish Russian immigrants, but to also examine the protective factors (social support and parenting style) of Russian immigrant families. Regarding acculturative stress, it is clear that Russian immigrant families are not immune to its deleterious effects. More specifically, language seems to play an especially important role in family functioning. As a result, more recent Russian immigrants are in need of

services that target language competency. The material and symbolic importance of assisting immigrants in developing new language skills cannot be overestimated. Programs created to facilitate this process can serve the dual and complementary purposes of providing adult education and supporting integration.

Stress inoculation training (Meichenbaum, 1993) can be provided in group settings to enhance immigrants' coping repertoires and to empower them to use existing coping skills developed prior to immigration. In addition, psychoeducation groups focusing on factors of grief, loss, isolation, coping, and migration in general may help to validate their feelings and experiences. In turn, this may help to ease the transition and have an overall positive effect on their integration into the mainstream culture. Moreover, exposure to and awareness of the difficulties facing the non-Jewish Russian immigrant population has several positive outcomes. First, continual interaction with this population can build rapport, which mental health professionals can use to increase their multicultural competency in providing services to a distinct immigrant group. Second, there is still some stigma or reluctance associated with seeking help for emotional and mental health problems. Availability of mental health services in the Russian immigrant community could therefore allow families to use mental health services without fearing persecution. Given that family stress is high in Russian immigrant families, it is especially important that this population has access to quality family therapy services.

The present findings also support the importance of multidimensional assessment of acculturation. When working with Russian immigrant families, mental health care professionals should strive to delineate cultural factors of language, identity, and behavior. Taken together, these dynamic factors contribute to the family members' sense

of personal worth and feelings of satisfaction in their relationships with each other. The multidimensional approach allows professionals to assess those areas in which the family is doing well and those areas in which family members would like to grow further.

Suggestions for future research.

The findings of the current study suggest a number of implications for future research. Perhaps most importantly, the failure to confirm the mediational roles of social support and parenting style among non-Jewish, Russian immigrant families underscores the importance of taking cultural differences between immigrant groups into consideration in future investigations. One strategy to accomplish this would be to utilize qualitative methods to develop a more comprehensive understanding of acculturation's impact on non-Jewish, Russian immigrant families. Investigation of immigrants' point of views is also beneficial because unlike self-report measures, qualitative interviewing could explore everyday family dynamics.

Future quantitative studies should also utilize longitudinal methodological design. In order to get a richer picture of the emergence of acculturation differences and their effects on individuals and families, families should be interviewed through time, beginning with their initial settlement in the United States. In addition, contextual information affecting acculturation should be collected, including socioeconomic status of the neighborhood, vocational patterns, perceived discrimination, and medical history. Once the pattern of acculturation is established over time, the development and meaning of familial acculturation differences in the process of acculturation can be more readily interpreted. Finally, considering that fathers are largely underrepresented in acculturation

research, future studies should include fathers to see whether acculturation differences develop similarly when compared to mother-child pairs.

Given that this study did not find support for any mediation effects, future research is needed to establish mediating and moderating variables between acculturation differences and distress in the non-Jewish Russian immigrant population. For example, in the study by Oppedal et al. (2004), a broader range of mediating variables would provide a more comprehensive picture of the ways that different kinds of acculturation influence different contexts of functioning. Self-esteem has been a variable identified as important in mediating these relationships in other studies (Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind, 2001; Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997), and indeed native acculturation and ethnic identity may strengthen young immigrants' self-esteem, which could also impact psychological adjustment. As a result, future research should focus on other potential mediators, which could include relationships with people outside the family, as well as adaptation in other life domains, such as school (Oppedal et al., 2004).

Next, the acculturation model used in the present study focused on two identities, one being ethnic identification with the culture of origin (Russian) and the other being identification as a member of the new society (American). However, it is possible that many of the participants in the present study also identified themselves based on other cultural dimensions. These include national, linguistic, regional, racial, and religious identifications. For instance, several of participants in the present study considered themselves Asiatic Russians (from Siberia). This cultural subgroup has a qualitatively different history and cultural values from other Russian cultural subgroups. By gathering specific information from these cultural subgroups, we can attempt to understand the

extent to which their cultural values may impact links between acculturation stress, acculturation differences, and distress. Thus, future studies of cultural identity should examine other aspects of culture that immigrants may identify with.

Finally, given that the majority of acculturation research focuses on negative acculturation outcomes, future research should also aim to better understand the resilience and various strengths found within immigrant families (Aroian, Spitzer, & Bell, 1996). The resilience research represents a significant paradigm shift in health-related fields from focusing on problem behavior to emphasizing individual strengths, personality traits, and competencies (Michaud, 2006). Again, qualitative investigations may prove to be especially rewarding in deconstructing resilience in non-Jewish, Russian immigrant families. However, quantitative research may also be beneficial in furthering this understanding. One strategy, for instance, would involve research design that includes American control groups (Rosenthal, Ranieri, & Klimidis, 1996). This inclusion could help in comparing normal mother-child dynamics with dynamics that are largely fueled by cultural differences.

Summary.

This study emphasized the multidimensional nature of the acculturation process, in which life language, cultural identity, and behavior differences between mothers and children were hypothesized to negatively impact their psychological and family functioning within a new cultural context. With respect to Russian acculturation, mothers had higher scores than the children across all three dimensions of Russian acculturation: language, identity, and behavior. Children were fairly similar to their mothers with respect to Russian identity, which contradicts a commonly held assumption that

immigrant adolescents are always more identified with the host culture and less with the native culture than their parents (Birman, 2006b; Birman & Trickett, 2001b). Some possible factors explaining this contradiction included age, length of stay, and children's personality characteristics.

One general trend that emerged in the present study was that in terms of psychological distress, mothers reported significantly more symptoms of distress. More specifically, Russian immigrant mothers who experienced acculturation differences in Russian behavior and identity reported higher levels of paranoia and hostility. This supported the argument that adult immigrants are less flexible and therefore more susceptible to distress (Ponizovsky et al., 1998). In terms of family functioning, findings on the predictive relevance of language differences stressed the importance of Russian language differences for family disagreements, as reported by mothers. Social support and parenting style did not serve as intervening variables; gender, however, predicted greater psychological distress in families with large American identity acculturation differences.

According to the findings of this study, it is reasonable to suggest that acculturation is a multidimensional, dynamic, and ongoing process that affects every member of the family. The influences of the social context are factors that need to be taken into consideration when studying and measuring the process of acculturation. Longitudinal studies that track the process of acculturation and how various intervening variables come together to have an impact on acculturation can help to improve understanding of immigration as a developmental process. Finally, in-depth qualitative narratives of how individuals adapt to their new cultural environments are important

precursors to the design, implementation, and evaluation of community-based programs and therapeutic interventions for Russian immigrant families.

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