

2002

Immigrant Students in the Context of US School System Case Study of Russian-Speaking Immigrant Community in West Springfield, Massachusetts Based on “Bridge” Project Materials

Natalia Oleshko

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_capstones

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), and the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#)

Oleshko, Natalia, "Immigrant Students in the Context of US School System Case Study of Russian-Speaking Immigrant Community in West Springfield, Massachusetts Based on “Bridge” Project Materials" (2002). *Master's Capstone Projects*. 40.

Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cie_capstones/40

This Open Access Capstone is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Education at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.

Immigrant Students in the Context of US
School System
Case Study of Russian-speaking
Immigrant Community in West Springfield,
Massachusetts
Based on “Bridge” project materials
(Master Project)

Academic Advisor: Dr. Rossman
Graduate Student: Natalia Oleshko
Date: May 17, 2002

Table of Content

Chapter I (Introduction)	pp. 2-4
Chapter II (Literature Review)	pp. 5-10
Chapter III (Case Description)	pp. 11-20
Chapter IV (Case Analysis)	pp. 21-28
Conclusions and Recommendations	pp.29-30
Bibliography	pp. 31-32

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe Russian-speaking immigrant school students' experiences in the United States and to explore issues of self-identification and the adaptive strategies associated with schooling. The case may shed some light on complex problems of clashes in cultural values, how they might influence the choice of adaptive strategies and efforts to excel in academia. The study of the case will not be limited by school environment; rather it will explore the issues and problems of students' acculturation in a broader context that will include community, family, socioeconomic, cultural and historic factors.

The case study deals with religious refugees from the former Soviet Union that is why the questions of religious affiliation and what role religion plays in the life of this particular community will permeate throughout the paper. The study will consider whether it is possible for immigrant youth to keep the religious heritage of their families and community and at the same time be successfully engaged in the process of adaptation to the US culture; what could be major constraints here.

Historical background of the problem

After Gorbachev made his almost unbelievable announcement in 1987 that legalized emigration from the Soviet Union, thousands of people began to secure exit visas from the Soviet government. After the collapse of the USSR, the events in newly independent states took an unpredictable turn: territory conflicts that resulted in military actions, prosecution of people with different religious and political beliefs. The distortion of the Soviet system and values attributed to it disillusioned many citizens, and they started to look for other opportunities in their rapidly changing lives. The United States became an asylum for thousands of post-Soviet immigrants who fled into this country in search of better life and freedom.

Since late 80's United States accepted around 400 thousand immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The influx of post Soviet immigrants to this country hasn't been decreasing in past few years; approximately 50 thousand people from the former USSR arrives annually to the USA according to the INS 2000 statistical yearbook of the immigration. The Russian immigration of 90's became the second largest Russian wave since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Statement of the problem

The reality of starting a new life in a foreign environment could produce tremendous impact and cause unexpected difficulties for immigrant families. The socioeconomic and psychological adaptation process is painful and at times gets beyond the control of the newcomers. Adolescent immigrants experience the same reactions from the transition period (the period of cultural adjustment and resettlement), which are multiplied by the confusion of identity development period and efforts to successfully merge into the school environment.

The evidence shows that the adaptation to schooling of Russian-speaking immigrant children in West Springfield community does not receive enough attention from the side of their parents, community and school. Education opportunities are not promoted among this group of students, which in its turn decreases motivation for high academic performance. Very few students are going to pursue higher education, while the majority is going to start working right after school and aren't inspired to continue their education. Those problems in a combination with limited English proficiency post a potential threat for these students to fail for a successful acculturation into this new environment. This study will seek for explanations of such behavior and suggest some solutions for the situation.

Statement of Purpose

The research will pursue the following objectives:

- Compose a case-study that will reflect the complexity of the environment of this particular refugee immigrant community;
- Analyze the dynamics of interaction between different stakeholders of the case;
- Find relationship between the cultural heritage of immigrant students and factors that impact students' adjustment to new environment;
- Suggest strategies that will help immigrant students integrate into a larger community of high-school students and prepare them for entering postsecondary institutions

Significance of the Study

The findings of the case study will have both practical and theoretical applications. This paper will advance the educational research on Russian immigrant adolescents in transition. Problems of Russian immigrants have received little consideration in literature, and this study will enlighten several aspects of post-Soviet immigration such as religion, identity and schooling adaptation. It will also present the analysis of factors that determine the academic outcomes of Russian-speaking students in West Springfield high school. This paper might be of interest for social workers, educators who assist Russian-immigrants in their transition period as it presents some of the key concepts of Russian culture and how they influence immigrants in this country.

Limitations of the Study

The study will be limited to one refugee settlement in West Springfield. The case study method explores complexity of the problem in depth, but the research is restricted to uniqueness of individual case and context as important to understanding.

Particularization is an important aim, coming to know the particularity of the case; there is little interest in generalizing and not enough materials to conceptualize the findings. However, information obtained in this study can provide valuable insights into transition and acculturation aspects of West Springfield community.

Definition of Terms

Immigrant – a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence

Refugee - a person who flees to a foreign country or power to escape danger or persecution

Russian-speaking population – all ascendants from the former Soviet Union who share Russian language as an official language of communication

Acculturation - changes that newcomers experience as a result of adopting some of the values, beliefs, and practices of the host culture.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review and synthesize the materials presented in the research literature on a range of topics related to immigration. The section will include major frameworks on acculturation theory, concepts applied to immigrant transition and variables that influence and predict this process. The chapter will be divided into several sub-sections to make the information thematically introduced and easily comprehensible.

At the beginning general knowledge about acculturation theory, its key terms and major frameworks will be investigated. Then the sub-section on acculturation of adolescent immigrants will emphasize the particularities about this age group in transition period. It will include short overview of major works in the field and points our contemporary approach used in studying problems of immigrant youth adjustment and its academic performance.

The study of immigrant education during the transition period is complex research, which demands multidimensional approach. The purpose of the literature review is to equip my study with theoretical concepts and frameworks, which further can be applied to interpret the findings of the case study.

Basic theory and framework on acculturation

Immigration will continue to be a powerful vector of changing social, cultural and economic structure of this society. There are enormous opportunities to study different aspects of immigration. Though one of the problems in the field is that there is not enough research to be done that could address multifaceted topic of immigration and immigrants. The studies that have been done were characterized as sporadic and coherent and thus had limited values in drawing generalized conclusions.

For example, Lloyd H. Rogler states that over a 19 year period (1974-1993) in 21 primary journals out of 31,791 articles published during this time only, 390 or 1,23% were relevant to varieties of issues associated with immigration and acculturation of immigrants. Worldwide, however, unprecedented numbers of persons live in countries which are not their native ones. The current estimate of the numbers of people living outside their countries of origin is about 100 million (Russell and Teitelbaum, 1992).

This fact presents a negative relationship between the scale of issues and problems to be studies and the actual amount of research being done in the field. On one side, the lack of research in this area leaves many phenomena and issues still undiscovered; on the other side, the opportunities for new findings and subjects to study are enormous.

In the next few pages I will look at what has been already learnt about acculturation, its definition, variables and outcomes.

Acculturation refers to changes that occur as a result of contiguous firsthand contact between individuals of different cultural origins (Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits, 1936). Early research on acculturation heavily relied on medicine and psychiatry. The relationship between the adjustment process and mental health was emphasized and, for a long time, the term acculturation has been ascribed with symptoms of anxiety, despair and stress and explained by the pathological nature of the transition process.

Contemporary research on acculturation has matured beyond popular theorizing about the stages and characteristics of successful adaptation. Gone are the days of naïve reliance on Oberg's (1960) notion of "culture shock", used both as a description and explanation of acculturative stress (C. Ward, 1996). The research in recent decades brought new flavor to the essence of acculturation theory as more sophisticated approaches have been adopted, new instruments and methods invented for the study and researchers distinguished diverse groups that undergo the acculturation process. It is still problematic, however, to synthesize and integrate the extending literature on this topic due to the lack of agreement among researchers about the definition of key constructs in the field and debates on what model should be considered most appropriate to use.

The most impressive work example of research in this area has been Berry's work on acculturation and acculturative stress (e.g., Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok, 1987; Berry, Kim, Power, young, and Bujaki, 1989). In contrast to early researches that mainly concentrated on stress and coping with the stress perspective of transition period, the innovation of the new model was in recognizing other aspects of acculturation. In contrast to psychological perspectives, social learning emphasizes the role of learning in the acquisition of culturally appropriate skills. This approach has adapted Argyle's (1969) work on social skills and interpersonal behaviors to the specific domain of acculturation.

Cross-cultural researchers further extended the framework of receiving appropriate social skills and considered factors that promote a successful learning process and help to accelerate the process of cultural adaptation. On the most obvious count, general knowledge about a new culture (Pruitt, 1978), length of residence in host culture (Zaidi, 1975), amount of contact with host country nationals (Klinerberg and Hull, 1979), and cross-cultural training (Brislin, Landis, and Brandt, 1983) have been viewed in conjunction with acculturation.

Ward and colleagues later came up with a framework that incorporates stress and coping and social skills learning approaches to culture contacts and change. This integrated framework specified three domains that determine intercultural effectiveness: a) ability to manage psychological/intercultural stress; b) ability to communicate effectively in new culture; c) ability to establish interpersonal relationships.

After Ward, other researchers explained the interrelationship between psychological and sociocultural adjustment by noting that some adaptation problems maybe caused by the

lack of social competence. The causal relationship between the two domains occurs in either way, and social inadequacy can lead to isolation and psychological disturbance.

Acculturation of adolescents with immigrant background

The acculturation approaches described earlier did not take into account such variables as age of newcomers. Though as Aronowitz (1984) pointed out, models and theories developed for adults have not always been readily applicable to children and adolescents; one reason is the unclear migratory status of many so-called immigrant children and adolescents.

D. Sam (2000) introduced the three theoretical perspectives on the adaptation outcomes for a group of adolescents with immigrant backgrounds: a) family values; b) acculturation strategies; and c) social group identity. All those factors contribute to the psychological adaptation of immigrant youth.

Many young immigrants don't experience their heritage culture directly, but acquire knowledge in the process of socialization with their parents and other members of their ethnic communities. There are some aspects of heritage culture that their parents want to transmit to their children.

Researchers have suggested that, through child-rearing practices, parents nurture two significant types of cultural values in their children: a) to be assertive, independent, competitive, and autonomous or b) to be compliant, nurturing, and obedient (Berry, Poorting, Segall, and Dasen, 1992). These two styles of upbringing have been associated respectively with individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

Berry (1990, 1994, 1997) stated that one element central to successful adaptation is the manner in which they cope with two issues: a) cultural maintenance and b) contact participation. On the basis of these two issues, Berry and his colleagues suggested four acculturation strategies: *assimilation*, *integration*, *marginalization* and *separation*.

Assimilation is a strategy that devalues maintenance of his or her own cultural values with almost exclusive interaction with members of the host society; **separation** is characterized by higher value of his or her culture and minimum interaction with other groups; **integration** entails a positive attitude towards proportional interaction in both cultures and **marginalization** suggests devaluation of one's own heritage and the culture of host country. Of the four acculturation strategies described above, integration is considered to be the most adaptive, and marginalization as the least adaptive strategies.

Another factor that predicts the outcomes of the adaptation process is the degree of discrepancy between the culture of origin and culture of host country. Immigrants with a culture similar to a new culture are likely to adjust more smoothly than those whose culture has major differences in value systems and behavior patterns with the culture of new home country.

A major task for adolescents is the development of identity (Erikson, 1968). A failure to develop identity can result in role confusion, mental health and low self-esteem. Social group identity demonstrates the degree of identification with the majority culture. In addition, immigrant students face the challenge of learning to express their thoughts, develop a personality and master a foreign language.

According to the research conducted by D. Sam, social group identity, and particularly ethnic identity, had the greatest power in predicting the outcomes of adolescent acculturation process. Family values, on the other hand, showed the least predictive power with respect to the three outcomes (D. Sam, 2000). The results of this research were in line with findings of previous similar research (Phinney et al., 1997; Sanchez and Fernandez, 1993).

Immigrants in the context of school environment

It's estimated that currently one in every five children enrolled in US schools is an immigrant. Nowadays immigrant children consist the fastest growing sector in child population of this country. The diversity of the society in general and school communities particularly holds both challenges and benefits. Immigrant students bring into their classrooms new knowledge, experiences, perspectives, providing local residents with a taste of the "outside world" with no need for travel (Dilys Schoorman, 2001). Nevertheless, immigration brings into the communities the need to adapt to the demographic changes and institute support networks to equip new members of the society with language and culture-related skills so that they might have access to health care, education and employment.

The classroom environment becomes more international and intercultural. Besides effective teaching methods, one of the major tasks of US educators is to create a culturally diverse learning setting. Comfortable school environment is a crucial consideration in the analysis of the degree of immigrant youth acculturation. Eugene Garcia (1999) states "schooling is a major variable in acculturation, the process by which the members of a society are taught the elements of the society's culture" (p. 72).

With regard to the effect of US schooling, as Gibson and Obgu (1991) suggest, acculturation can be understood as either additive or subtractive, where an *addictive* acculturation – the acquisition of knowledge and skills of a new culture without rejection of the home culture; and a *subtractive* acculturation, often identified as assimilation, aimed at replacing the home culture with the culture of a host country. Very often US schools adopt the last type of acculturation, sometimes without realizing the full picture of its effects.

Another step in learning about schooling and its influence on acculturation experience would be to investigate the variables of such relationship and how they might predict the outcomes of adjustment process. Again I will draw on expertise of Obgu in his essay

about “Variability in Minority School Performance” (1987). Obgu’s works in the field of immigrant children adjustment have been known for its in-depth conceptualized and systematized nature. Obgu (1974) argues that cultural differences between home and school do not fully explore why minority students excel or fail in academia. He redirects our attention to a broader context within which the acculturation should be observed. Obgu indicates that there are three major sources that contribute to the school failure or success of the minority students, namely, society, school, and community (1987).

Another important explanation in his work about “voluntary immigrants” and “involuntary minorities” had a tremendous impact on interpreting academic performance and acculturation strategies. Obgu (1987) concludes “involuntary immigrants have persistent high rates of school failure and social adjustment because they have greater difficulty crossing cultural boundaries to an opposite identity. Their distrust makes it harder for them to accept and follow school rules and standard practices that enhance academic success” (p.334). In contrast to “involuntary” minorities, Obgu suggests that “voluntary” immigrants keep more positive attitude and desire to integrate into the mainstream culture, which give them better chances of being successful in school performance (1987).

In literature students from immigrant families of all types are often defined by the one characteristic most of them share – a lack of English fluency. To help immigrant children to fit into the U.S. school system a number of programs were designed. Their goals are to improve English proficiency of such students and simultaneously cover the content area of the curriculum. Bilingual education program, Immigrant education program and English as a second language program (ESL) are major programs administered by the Department of Education to provide assistance to immigrant students and students with limited English proficiency (LEP). Below a short distinction between these programs will be made.

Bilingual education program acknowledges and builds upon students’ ability to speak, read, and write in a language other than English. These programs usually consist of content courses in the students’ native languages, but most are designed to promote the transition to English. This is the primary program within the Department to address the needs of LEP students. In 1995, the Bilingual education program served almost 440,000 students (Department of Education, 1996). **Immigrant education program** is a supplementary educational service for schools that enroll substantial number of immigrant students. To participate in this program each school should have no less than 3% of immigrant students’ enrollment. **ESL education program** includes courses designed for students with various levels of English – beginning, intermediate, and advanced.

Because education is more vital than ever before in today’s workplace, all students should be encouraged to pursue higher education. In order to be well prepared for college study, all high school students need a secondary education that is academically challenging. Immigrant students are in equal demand for higher education with their native-speaking peers. Because many immigrants have to fight for their socioeconomic

and social status to prove to be equal members of the society, education can be a key for achieving this goal.

The research that emphasizes the relationship between the acculturation process and academic performance of immigrant students indicates ways of overcoming the influence of various factors during transition period and addresses the academic needs of immigrant students and can be of great practical value. Educators and curriculum developers can utilize the knowledge to better address immigrant students' need while developing curriculum and choosing teaching methods that would be effective for culturally diverse students.

Chapter III

Case Description

The objective of this chapter will be to introduce the reader to the case of my study, describe the methodology of the case study, its stakeholders, main issues of the case and major achievements of the “Bridge” project

Methodology:

The data for the case was collected and processed in the course of development and implementation of the “Bridge” project. Most of the data will be presented qualitatively. The methods of data collection included interviews, questionnaires, and observations. Bilingual teacher, school administration, children’s parents, social workers, community representatives and Russian-speaking students were all interviewed. Total number of interviewees consisted of 15 people: (2 bilingual teachers, 1 ESL teacher, principle of the school, 2 social workers, priest from the church, 3 parents, and 4 students). Time framework for data collection comprises falls 2000, 2001 and spring 2002.

The sample of the study was made up of 20 Russian-speaking high school students who were “Bridge” project participants. The following criteria were used in selecting the sample:

- Students had to study in high school;
- They had to arrive to the US within the last two years;
- They had to come from the former Soviet Union

When composing the structure and content of the case, I attempted to create a format that would address the main purpose:

To introduce interested persons to the problems of the case;

To explain how the study came to be: identification of the potential site, data collection and problem definition;

To document the story in a comprehensive format.

The case is built in a sequential order for answering the following questions:

1. What is the historical background of the case?
2. Who initiated the development of the case?
3. When/how did the case emerge?
4. What are the special characteristics of the groups of people involved into the case?
5. What activities have been undertaken to meet the educational needs of the community youth?

Introduction

This case was developed on the materials and personal observations from the “Bridge” project that was conducted in the West Springfield Russian-speaking community in the

falls of 2000 and 2001. The project idea was proposed by one of the CIE (Center for International Education) members who by that time had successfully implemented similar projects with the Cambodian Association of Amherst, the Vietnamese American Civic Association of Springfield, and the Somali Development Center of Boston.

The initiative was supported by a faculty member who had numerous credentials for her work with immigrants and culturally diverse populations in the area. Another important human component of the project consisted of a group of Russian-speaking graduate students. They were interested to find out how to put the theoretical framework of community development into practice and also observe how diversity influences the process of collaboration. Graduate students also learned about the reality of immigrant life of their fellow citizens in this community and problems immigrants face on the way of starting new life in the States.

The preliminary discussions of the project, its mission, objectives and action plan by interested parties shaped the network of project partners. The project initiative began to circulate within one organization (CIE) and very soon reached beyond its walls. The coordinating partners in this project consisted of the GLJ Center (For Growth, Learning and Jobs), the Center for International Education (CIE) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Mt. Holyoke College, the Lutheran Social Services of New England (LSSNE), a Massachusetts Refugee Resettlement Program serving refugees and immigrants in New England, and the West Springfield Public School District.

Case background:

The beginning of the 1990s brought new wave of post-Soviet immigration to the United States. After seventy years of isolations, the iron curtain was opened and citizens who were pursued by the totalitarian regime received an opportunity to choose their future place of residence. The reasons for people to leave their home countries could be divided into 3 major categories:

1. better economic, social and political conditions of the US;
2. fear of being prosecuted for religious or political beliefs;
3. territorial and ethnic wars

The case study deals with people who left their country because of prosecution. In the US in order to claim the status of refugees and obtain permanent residence they must establish that their persecution is due to their affiliation with a particular group, that suffers harsher discrimination than the general population in their country.

There have been some speculations recently about whether those people have really been persecuted at home. This question can't be answered directly but the investigation of the historic background of this problem might shed some light on this dilemma.

The whole history of Soviet Union before Gorbachev's era has been characterized by its antireligious policies. Before the *glasnost*' era, people known to be Christians were

persecuted at every level. Hardwick (1993) in “Russian refugees” states “school children were taken aside by their teachers and scolded for their “stupid meaningless beliefs” and later most were parted from college and university admission” (p. 127). This is just one small example of religious discrimination, but there were many more at that time.

After the collapse of the USSR this country wasn't viewed as a place of prosecution any more and Russians were no longer considered refugees in the United States. This fact and more strict immigration regulations do not stop the continuing influx of Russian-speaking population into the United States. Because it was almost impossible to receive the status of refugees for Russians recently, those who came to this country within the last few years either entered the country with a purpose of reunification of families of citizens or under the category of world's refugees who are of special interest to the United States for foreign or domestic policy reasons.

Community description

The immigrant community of West Springfield area is refugees from the former Soviet Republics, primarily Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova and Russia. The Russian-speaking refugee community began to grow in this area just a few years ago. These people are relatively new to the local community and are more recent than other immigrants who have been in this area for a longer period of time.

To the question why people come to US after receiving freedom back at home one of the parents in West Spring told:

“What if the system should fail? They had made promises before and nothing and nothing ever changed. No one in the government could be trusted. Why should we think that it will really be different this time?”

(anonymous interview, West Springfield, November 2001).

Those lines reflect a whole philosophy of the generation who came through major changes in post Soviet society in recent decade. Obsessive thoughts about their family's safety and their own well-being fill these people with anxiety. They are ready to give up all their material possessions, occupations, status, relatives and friends back home to start a new page of their lives in this country.

In return to all their sacrifices they find themselves in a situation where their skills and experiences are out of place, they cannot achieve the same status many of them had at home and they experience the feelings of disparity and disappointment. To the question whether they would come to US if they knew what hardships they were going to face in North America immigrants still responded positively. They said that they would prefer democratic society where they could be sure of the future for themselves and their families. The problems they encounter in their new home country are viewed as temporary and will be completely overcome if not by them then by their children.

As it was mentioned earlier many of Russian-speaking refugees in West Springfield had highly qualified professions and higher education in their home country. Limited

language skills is the major factor in immigrants' employment search that in many cases prevents them from getting a position that would be adequate to their occupation. It is not surprising to see a highly educated specialist performing a blue-collar job because of the language barrier and inability to adjust the knowledge and professional skills to the changing requirements of the labor market.

The immigrants of the Springfield area live with the same problems and concerns as most immigrant communities throughout the country. It is a rapidly growing immigrant community in a city that has the fourth largest urban concentration in New England, after Boston, Providence and Hartford. In the last decade, the city absorbed over 40,000 immigrants and refugees. Salaries and cost of living make this city an alternative to the high priced housing in major metropolitan areas of the northeast region (Massachusetts office for refugees and immigrants, 1997).

Support Network for Immigrants

Massachusetts annually accepts over 20,000 thousand of newcomers (the number is taken from the 1997 INS report). This fact makes many organizations of the state, both community and government-based, develop different initiatives to:

- Support the long-term integration of newcomer families and communities in the area;
- Increase local awareness of refugee and immigrant populations, their need to become self-sufficient and their potential to contribute to local communities;
- Share existing resources and bring new resources to support integration;
- Develop a newcomer integration model that can be duplicated locally or nationally.

A preliminary review of the list of settlement and transitional programs offered by the Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants in cooperation with the Department of Transitional Assistance Programs showed a wide range of activities, from primary day care, health care, food and housing to employment services and English classes. Government allocates funds to such programs that are aimed towards lessening the traumatic effects of the settlement and acculturation process.

Though with all those programs designed to serve the targeted population, some immigrant communities are still less privileged than others for receiving social and financial support during their adaptation period. The Russian-speaking immigrant community of West Springfield is one of those whose needs are not being met. To understand why that happens, it is helpful to look at the table below that lists the 12 most frequent non-English languages spoken in Massachusetts's schools in 1997 and 1998 (1).

	1997	1997	1998	1998
LANGUAGE	TOTAL NUMBER SPOKEN	PERCENT OF PLINE STUDENTS	TOTAL NUMBER SPOKEN	PERCENT OF PLINE STUDENTS
SPANISH	62,271	51.9	62,861	51.2
PORTUGUESE	11,369	9.6	11,672	9.5
KHMER	7,599	6.3	7,706	6.3
CHINESE **	6,544	5.5	7,019	5.7
VIETNAMESE	5,696	4.8	5,712	4.6
CAPE VERDEAN	4,050	3.4	4,759	3.9
HAITIAN CREOLE	3,931	3.3	4,403	3.6
RUSSIAN	2,836	2.3	2,995	2.4
FRENCH	1,998	1.7	1,833	1.5
ARABIC	1,141	1.0	1,201	1.0
GREEK	1,062	0.9	1,027	.8
KOREAN	992	.8	872	.7

1) Taken from the report of the Massachusetts office of refugees and immigrants (ORI)

Russian language is put on the 8th place, meaning that Russian-speaking students and immigrants in general don't have enough representation to claim this group of people among the largest immigrant population of the region.

Immigrant youth, problems and perspectives

The insufficient amount of state and private support to the underrepresented immigrant communities brings up the initiatives of local NGOs, colleges, private companies and fundraising foundations to make an effort in order to meet the needs of such communities.

The "Bridge" initiative suggested directing the actions towards the West Springfield community of Russian-speaking immigrants because most others don't consider them a priority. The "Bridge" project was launched as a community-based educational program that would build a BRIDGE connecting newcomer Russian-speaking refugees to higher education at the US. The reality of starting a new life in a foreign environment could

produce tremendous impact on young children of refugee families, thus it was agreed that the best and most comprehensive audience of the project would be Russian-speaking students.

Over a hundred Russian-speaking students from the community are enrolled in West Springfield High School. This is the fourth major concentration of Russian school students in Massachusetts after Brookline - 428, Newton – 409, and Westfield - 237 (Data Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, Accountability and Evaluation Services). All these students study in ESL classes because of their limited English. These students are in a big demand of improving their educational situation.

The lack of human resources in the ESL program within this community affects the quality of students' education in general. The principal of this school in a conversation with "Bridge" members confirmed that his school had a shortage of certified ESL teachers who are proficient both in Russian and English. He also told that they had immediate openings for this teaching position but there were no qualified professionals to fill them. Currently two Russian-speaking women (from Ukraine and Russia) work at this school as Russian ESL teachers for these students; they both have not been trained in ESL/bilingual methods and one of them does not have previous experience in pedagogy.

From the conversations with schoolteachers, it was found out that another problem of the ESL/bilingual program consisted of an absence of proper communication between school and parents of Russian-speaking students. For example, once a year the school organizes a parent night where a guest speaker presents information about after-school education. The meeting is conducted for the parents of all school students, though no translation services are provided for the immigrant parents with limited English proficiency. Most of the Russian immigrant parents are discouraged from attending such school meetings, as they feel lost in an English-speaking environment.

The inability to obtain full information about higher education opportunities and high school requirements brings uncertainty into the community about the American higher education system. The stereotypes about financial inaccessibility of American colleges flourish in this community. Almost nobody knows about the system of financial aid, scholarships and other sources of financial support.

"They have big families, their mothers have no time for these students, plus almost nobody knows what US higher education is all about."
(Emma, bilingual teacher at West Springfield high school)

Taking into consideration that people from this culture value education very much and are eager for their children to study, members of the "Bridge" project incorporated into the program's design educational sessions on higher education in the US.

Another issue of this community is that students who are in the ESL/bilingual program often lag behind the general curriculum. In many cases those students are not ready to take SAT and MCAS exams and receive standard high school certificates. Because SAT

is a part of the college admission process, it automatically excludes many immigrant students from college admission, leaving them the only chance of community colleges where those tests aren't required. The West Springfield school did not have any additional programs that would be focused on helping such students to catch up with the requirements of the curriculum and successfully pass all high school exams.

Besides being separated from the mainstream studies, Russian-speaking immigrant students are separated from the rest of the school community territorially also. The classrooms in which they are taught are located at the end of a long corridor and some of them are even separated from the main hall by a door. This is a small ESL/bilingual "ghetto" that doesn't mix with the rest of the school; it has its own dynamics and life, and it seems like students don't mind or maybe just don't realize the situation.

A disadvantaged position of these students in the school escalates with the adaptation feelings of anxiety and stress, and the responsibility to help their families financially. Many of the students go to work right after their classes, sometimes come home late evening and have no time to do their school assignments.

For some of them work and bringing money into their families already became the priority and those students just look forward to finish the high school and go into the world of blue collar workers. They do not seriously consider a college education since for them it seems just a waste of time when there is an immediate opportunity to start making money.

"I am going to get a job, because I want to have a car and be able to pay my bills by myself."

(Russian-speaking high school student)

The West Springfield community of immigrants is a Protestant community. This is an additional factor to keep in mind when we talk about the question of college education for the youth in this community. In an interview with one of the ESL teachers, she told that those parents who go to the church are much influenced by the opinions of the church clergy. Preaching "puritan lifestyle", they consider that exposure to the world of youngsters and "unmoral" principles of American undergraduates will spoil the religious upbringing of the children from the community.

This propaganda develops prejudice in immigrant youth's perception of college life. The majority of them associates on-campus living with violence, high level of alcohol/drug abuse and indecent sexual behavior. Most of the information they receive is from their parents and older siblings who in their turn are influenced by the speeches of priests. Such propaganda of "bad" values of student life discourages many parents and students to go to college. Parents are afraid of their children getting under the bad influence, and they prefer them to work rather than study.

“I am scared to live on campus. I know that it is mandatory during the first year but I have a lot of concerns about that. I heard just terrible stories about living on-campus”. (Russian high school student).

All described problems of school and community environment present the complexity of the dilemma between higher education and after schoolwork for immigrant youth. The gap in curriculum knowledge, limited English skills and ignorance about higher education opportunities are very serious factors that block any further consideration about education for these students.

The “Bridge” participants realized the importance of getting college degrees for immigrant youth as well as the necessity to destroy their stereotypes about American colleges. The project partners saw this youth as the future of this community, people who have to become equal citizens of this society.

The Russian-speaking population in the United States consists of tens of thousands of college students, many of whom were born in America or brought here as small children. They grew up in a bilingual environment, speak English and Russian with equal fluency and have no wish to forsake their roots. These students attend some of the most prestigious US universities, including Harvard and MIT; especially a large number of them attend Brandeis University. It is known how hard it is to study in one of those schools. And, in addition to that, most of the Russian-speaking students must work either for their tuition or their living, their parents often being not well off enough to provide for them. As Boston Globe (April 12, 1999) has noted, an average full-time student in Massachusetts works about 26 hours a week, not counting the time he or she spends studying.

This information found and combined from different sources on the web about Russian immigrants in the USA demonstrates how much academic potential the majority of students from the former Soviet Union have. If prepared well and equipped with a good command of English, they would be able to complete most of the college programs at the same level as their native-speaking college mates.

That is why the project was designed with the idea of promoting educational opportunities for the young members of the community. It was decided to concentrate on education, since we had a belief that education is a force that makes personal and social changes. We also wanted to promote a vision of higher education as a gate to better opportunities in life and a guarantee of economic stability and social equity.

Below are the goal and objectives of “Bridge” as they were articulated and agreed by the project ‘s participants.

Goal – to promote equal opportunities in American higher education for Russian-speaking immigrant high-school students.

Objectives:

- initiate and foster collaboration between UMass/Amherst, Mt. Holyoke College and West Springfield high school;

- encourage mentoring of Russian speaking students by college volunteers;
- use the system of workshops devoted to higher education in the USA as a basis for empowering and motivating immigrant students to explore their options after finishing high school.

The implementation of the program consisted of four major activities:

1). Classroom workshops exploring the options of higher education: A series of four information sessions on different topic related to higher education was presented by Russian speaking graduate students-Edmund Muskie Fellows. The sessions were taught in Russian during a bilingual class. Topics to be discussed included why higher education, Financial Aid, SAT's, application processes, navigating the system, etc. In the evaluation forms 80% of students admitted that their access to this information was limited or didn't exist at all.

According to the students' evaluation they didn't have a chance to receive full information on different aspects of college study. A lot of them were excited to learn about financial alternatives for the study. Among the 16 participants of the project, almost 90 percent expressed their desire to go to college after school.

2). Parent's Night: an open House for parents promoting and explaining the concept of higher education: Because of the language difficulties most parents cannot obtain a full and adequate info regarding college education for their children. This meeting gave them a chance to get familiarized with the peculiarities of the American system of higher education. The presence of Russian-speaking graduate students at this meeting eliminated the language problem and allowed them to ask questions and received competent answers from the University faculty and students.

3). Tutoring/Mentoring: Student volunteers from Mt. Holyoke College delivered another important segment of the project plan. They met with the Russian students weekly to receive tutoring services, i.e. computer literacy, math, science. The bilingual teachers at the high school supervised tutoring sessions.

This stage of the project is very important as it helps students to fill their gap in curriculum requirements, improve their English skills in person-to-person communication and become a better college candidate.

4). Campus Field Trip: The final activity of the project was a field trip to UMass campus. The idea was to connect the previous educational activities of the project (informational sessions and tutoring) with a real experience of University life. All the students that participated in the project were taken for a one-day trip to UMass. During this time they were immersed into university classroom environment, took a tour around campus, met with students and some faculty.

Conclusion

In this chapter, my focus was to illustrate the environment of the case, identify the complexity of different issues, and establish inner connections between different aspects of case: academic achievements of immigrant students and available resources, education and job opportunities, community values and perception of college study, acculturation process and integration into new environment, etc. Analysis and finding of this case will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter IV

Case Analysis

The purpose of this chapter will be to present the main factors affecting the process of immigrant adaptation to new a environment and their reaction to life changes. Before I go to the main portion of case analysis, I would like to present key questions that will guide the further development of the case study. Since my primary interest in this paper is the factors which influence immigrant children transition to U.S. educational system, the following questions were composed according to the objectives of the study:

- What factors influence schooling and academic achievements of Russian-speaking immigrant students? In what ways?
- What is the attitude towards higher education among high-school immigrant students?
- Are there any cultural particularities that should be kept in mind when working with this immigrant community?

To better understand what problems and obstacles newcomers may encounter in the host country, one should look at the attitude that the society at large holds in respect to immigrants. Immigration raises different public reactions ranging from moderate dissatisfaction to open dislike and protests against immigrants. A great deal of such perception of immigrants is negative stereotypes and images often presented to the public by different means of mass communication.

In the next few paragraphs I am going to show most popular statements one can hear about immigrants followed by fact comments that depict the truth. Presenting facts and real figures that destroy negative stereotypes is done with the purpose of providing readers with objective information about immigration and its true impact on the American society.

Undocumented immigrants don't pay taxes from money they earned in the States

“Undocumented immigrants pay five to ten times more in taxes than the costs of services they use”. (Simon, Julian, *How do immigrants affect us economically?* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Universtiy, 1985).

Immigrants drain the social service system

“Immigrants collectively earn \$240 billion a year, pay \$90 billion a year in taxes, and receive \$5 billion in welfare” (1986 RAND/1984 Weintraub and Cardenas).

Immigrants have a negative economic impact

“The overall economic contributions of immigrants exceed their economic liabilities. There is no observable negative effect on earnings and unemployment by immigrants. Moreover, immigrants create jobs through spent earnings and new businesses opened”. (Simon, Julian, *How do immigrants affect us economically?* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown Universtiy, 1985).

Immigrants are not educated and have poor command of English

The aggregate educational profile of immigrants is similar to that of the native born population. Linguistic assimilation is evident in the fact that only 12% of the second generation reports speaking English poorly. (Portes, Alejandro and Min Zou, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, November 1993).

Being associated with such descriptions and perceived as intruders into American society, immigrants gained a lot of hostile attitudes from native-born people. While overt and blatant racism is today largely confined to the fringes of society, anti-immigrant sentiments seem to be more freely indulged in public opinion, policy debates, and other social forums. (Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Carola Suarez-Orozco, 2000).

Prevailing attitudes of members of the host country towards immigrants are highly relevant to the experiences of immigrant children. Furthermore, hostile attitudes and social exclusion also play a toxic role in the psychological lives of immigrant children and the way they see themselves as an equal participants of their new home country.

Later in this chapter I will look at how strong and deep the relationship is between immigrants' perception of their place in the opportunity structure of their new society and host country people's attitudes towards immigrants. The degree of interconnectedness between those two variables will be explored in this chapter when the analysis of "Bridge" case is made.

Most researchers applies a multilevel approach when investigating the phenomena of immigration in general and immigrant youth and their schooling particularly. The interdisciplinary approach shouldn't be overlooked, as single-factor studies seem doomed to reduce extremely complex processes. It wouldn't be farseeing, for example, to explain academic performance of immigrant students restricting to the fact of limited English proficiency and differences between US education system and the system in the country of origin.

The example with West Springfield refugee community illustrates Ogbu's opinion that communication styles, previous level of academic acievements and language proficiency are not enough factors to indicate smooth transition of immigrant youth into schooling. Instead the role of community and society at large influence how successful this process will be. The case study of refugee students outlined the tremendous impact of this community on immigrants and the way they perceive new environment.

In order to examine the multiple paths immigrant children are able to make for themselves in their new country, I chose an interdisciplinary and comparative study of the adaptations of immigrant children in U.S. schools devised by Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Carola Suarez-Orozco (2000). The model involves the study of the factors that are important in shaping the changing lives of immigrant children. The research was guided by a multilevel conceptual framework that takes into consideration both "incoming resources" and a variety of "host culture variables" (Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Carola Suarez-Orozco, 2000). Those

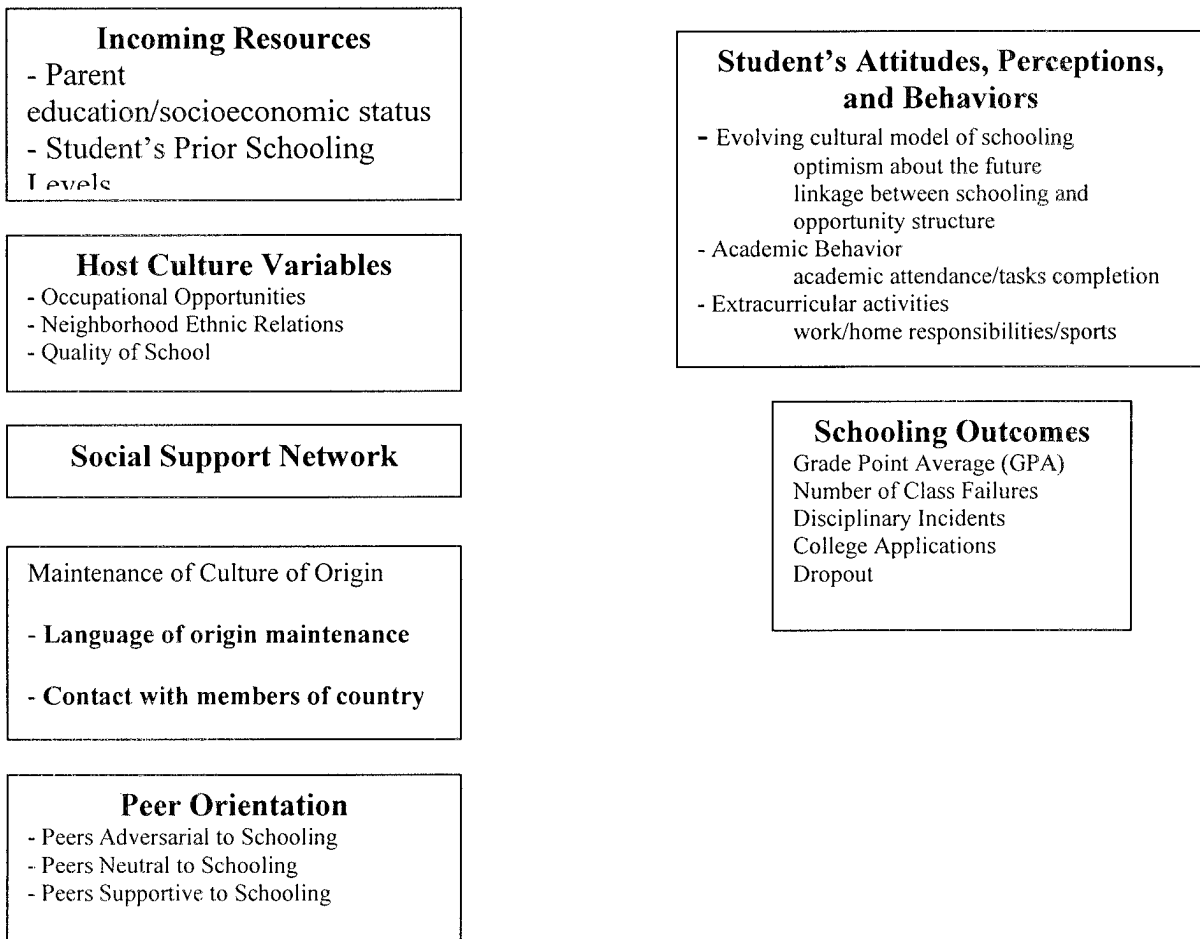
variables are the major vectors that structure the schooling experiences and outcomes of immigrant youth. These factors help mold the emerging attitudes, and behaviors of immigrant students.

When looking at the framework presented below, it's clear then, that "incoming resources" and "host culture variables" help us to understand what paths immigrant children are able to make themselves in the new country.

Under "incoming resources", Suarez-Orozco includes the usual predictors of schooling outcomes such as socioeconomic status, parental literacy, and education. Under "host country variables" Suarez-Orozco includes a series of factors known to be relevant to the schooling strategies of youth. Though those two groups of factors greatly determine the outcomes of adaptation of immigrant children to U.S. school, such factors, as social network, maintenance and peer orientation shouldn't be neglected as well.

Conceptual Framework

(adapted from Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Carola Suarez-Orozco)



In the case with the “Bridge” project, maintenance of culture of origin” plays a critical role in children’s adaptation process and the way they perceive the education and link it to the opportunity structure. The results of program evaluation along with interviews of high school immigrant children and bilingual teachers demonstrate that cultural identity and group belonging are the prominent navigators in the transition of Russian-speaking immigrant youth of West Springfield. The following responses from the interviews support the statement.

“Parents opinion is very important to these children and they definitely listen to them.”
(Emma, bilingual teacher)

“I wish I could go to Umass, but it’s far for me. I feel like I have to stay with my family.”
(Russian high school student)

On average all former Soviet refugees who come to the US are educated people (former USSR had 98% literacy). Some of them managed to achieve high positions and social status in their home communities. In their Motherland, they have been respected professionals and used to have lifestyles that reflected their merits and status.

Most of them got illusions before leaving their Motherland that they can bring all that capital to the new environment and be respected for what they have already done. The reality of coming to the US slapped many of such immigrants right into the face. They were not prepared to realize that the resources they collected over the years and hoped to use in this country were hardly adequate to the requirements of new society. The paradox was in the uselessness of available resources brought from home and the absence of wanted skills in the new situation.

Russian-speaking immigrants of West Springfield were caught in the same paradox as millions of other countrymen in US. They were forced to go to physical labor to survive and had no chance to use their qualified experience and knowledge. Another obstacle that prevents such professionals to move ahead in their careers is limited English. Those problems give immigrants the feelings of displacement and raise discouragement.

Immigrant children, who witness the frustrations of their parents and who hear the stories about who their parents were back at home and who they are here, began to understand that the knowledge and education they inherited in their country is going to be of no use in US. Family is the first place where immigrant children start to form their opinions about the new society and ways of surviving or getting ahead in it.

“I see how hard my parents work to earn their money. I don’t wan to work that hard, and I think that education can help me to get better paid jobs somewhere in the office, not at the plant”
(Russian-speaking high school student)

The success or failure of immigrant children in schools depends not only on language, culture and personal abilities of students. According to Ogbu (1987), three sources that contribute to schooling of immigrant children are school, society and community. The society at large is responsive to immigrants results in denying good education and consequently access to good jobs and positions in adult life that require good education. If we combine these reactions with negative stereotypes mentioned at the beginning of this chapter against immigrants, it can be easily predicted what feelings and anticipations immigrant children may go through in school and in their neighborhood communities.

Russian-speaking students of West Springfield shared their thoughts about how native speaking students perceive them. It was found out that American students made no attempt to socialize with immigrant youth, because they look at them as an inferior group. Such attitudes hurt immigrants' feelings.

"We don't communicate with Americans, there are no America friends among us. They treat us like inferior. Why should we talk to them then?"

"I am afraid to speak to Americans, because they will laugh at my accent. This is true! I had this experience before and don't want to repeat it."
(Russian-speaking students)

The follow-up reaction to linguistic discrimination is an unwillingness to practice English with native speakers and the fear of being laughed at. The tutoring initiative of "Bridge" project, where volunteers from Mount Holyoke College helped these students with English, can be the first step in eliminating uncomfortable feeling of communicating with native students. Russian-speaking students told that it was helpful to talk with college volunteers because they were supportive and encouraging for them; that in its turn created positive emotions and feelings among Russian-speaking youth when they spoke English.

It should be also indicated that the issue of limited English is directly or indirectly connected to major problems people from the Russian community of West Springfield come across, including school students. Unfortunately, the community itself has not enough resources and facilities to solve this problem. Especially evident is the lack of professional English teachers who are fluent both in Russian and English in high school of West Springfield.

Teachers who are currently working at this position are not trained in bilingual education methods and thus can't deliver to students adequate knowledge so they can move further in learning English. Only a few students who are in bilingual classes have been able to reach higher levels of English and move to ESL or mainstream classes. This fact demonstrates the inability of bilingual program in this school to provide immigrant students with appropriate English skills, and it can be concluded that immigrant students can't count on services provided by school in learning English.

The language problem for immigrant youth in West Springfield school has a multifaceted nature where all constructs add to the complexity of the issue. The linguistic isolation from mainstream students along with the ineffective bilingual program of the school and totally homogeneous Russian-speaking community don't bring any solutions for this problem.

After recognizing the language problem and multiple barriers on the way of solving it, it was not surprising to discover other factors that affect the picture of students' assimilations into schooling and mainstream culture in general. The problem of keeping the balance between maintaining cultural identity and adaptation to the values and norms of the new environment will be discussed further.

As it was mentioned before, West Springfield immigrants received the status of refugees who have been persecuted in their countries for religious beliefs. The community consists of several hundred of immigrants who came from different parts of the former Soviet Union. West Springfield has several churches (Baptist and Pentecostals), a social services center and couple of Russian grocery stores. Several small enterprises in the neighborhood have mostly Russian-speaking employees.

West Springfield community consists of religious believers who define their identity in connection with their religion rather than culture or ethnicity. It's worth mentioning here that Protestants from the former Soviet Union jealously watch their moral values and rigid rules about everyday life. Long decades of Soviet authority's persecution developed perseverance in defending their ethnoreligious identity. This group of immigrants views religious and cultural identities as a whole unit and believe that sustaining their religion they sustain their culture.

While cultural, economic, and social forces of American society act against preservation of Russian culture in Russian enclaves in North America, religion continues to act as an integrating counterforce. Throughout the difficult period of resettlement process, spiritual beliefs help to hold immigrant groups together. Russian church in West Springfield remains one of the most important ethnic mediating structures in the community.

Furthermore, there can be no doubt, that religious beliefs play a pivotal role in cultural maintenance in the everyday life of the community. An individual's identity as a Russian is important while one's identity, as a Baptist is even more important.

The refugees of West Springfield devoutly guard the norms of their religious community. Most attention is given to youth of the community, those students who attend West Springfield high school. Elder members and church clergy have powerful influence over young minds and thus foster youth in accordance with church norms of modesty, obedience, group interest and dependency. Churchgoers have no interest in individual decision-making and respect for individual rights within the group. This is acutely different from values inherently important to life in American society where individual freedom and free will are valued beyond anything else. The question arises whether ethnoreligious connection impede or accelerate the immigrant acculturation process in contemporary urban America?

The Russian-speaking youth of the community is right in the middle of cultural conflict. School presents the embodiment of the American lifestyle that is claimed by the church not to be righteous for Christians, while the church promotes values that parents and other elders of the community live by. Being brought up in a culture where respect for elder people,

collectivism and obedience to parents are greatly appreciated, these children have no doubt to which side of this continuum they should belong. Trust for community and church authority dominates over the influence of host country institutions in which these youth are involved.

It would be judgmental to conclude that the church community tries to alienate its youth from mainstream culture intentionally by manipulating value differences. While immigrant students experience hidden or open inferior attitude of American students, the only place where they feel secure and can express themselves without a fear of being mocked at is their ethnic community. Russian refugees cling to their religious beliefs and to each other tightly during the hardships of transition period. This community has formed social networks to help solve its members' problems of adjustment to life in North America and offer emotional support during stressful times.

As a result of such strong bonds within the community, immigrant youth prefer social scenes involving countrymen rather than inheriting the cultural patterns of interaction from mainstream group.

“My parents think that I might get under the bad influence of American youth and their culture. They say that American teenagers are immoral, they drink and behave inappropriately to Christians.”

(Russian-speaking high school students)

School is perceived from the perspective of an external institution and thus receives less attention and trust from immigrant community. One of the bilingual teachers said during the interview that parents and students have more respect and belief for church authorities than for school.

Underestimation of the power of education by children and their parents puts them in a disadvantaged position for accessing the opportunity structure. The choice of after school life depends on the conditions of the labor market in the given area. This factor can be a good variable in predicting students post school dynamics. After talking to immigrant youth, it was found out that girls were more interested than boys in going to college. Such gender distribution was explained by the fact that boys have more opportunities to find a job right after school and start earning money. The short-term goal of making immediate money clouds the vision of the long-term benefits of getting a degree and providing better economic and social conditions for your life and the life of your family.

Participants of “Bridge” project made a special emphasis in making the distinction between the outcomes of long-term and short-term goals. The idea of going to college and receiving a degree in order to become successful in a new environment was also promoted throughout the project. Higher education was introduced as a strong counterforce in the assimilation process. While immigrant students agree that a good education will open more opportunities with employment and improve material situation considerably, most of them don't recognize the role of education as a catalyst in the assimilation process.

Such obvious intentional strategy to stay away from the mainstream culture is not common for this age group of immigrants. According to the research about immigrant adolescents,

they are more likely to abandon their cultural heritage with the purpose of total assimilation into the host culture. Moreover, in many cases, immigrant children become mediators of their parents' adaptation process while teaching them English and introducing mainstream patterns of values, norms and behaviors.

Unlike immigrants of color, Russian-speaking immigrants don't face racial discrimination and negative stereotyping because of their skin color or ethnic background. Hypothetically this fact should speed up their acceptance by the mainstream culture, though it doesn't happen in West Springfield community where immigrants hold prejudice feeling about hostile mainstream attitude towards Russian-speaking community of refugees. They used to live with the thought that American society doesn't welcome them too much. Whether true or false this tale is, immigrants are not so interested to reveal. It's speculated as a convenient excuse for being separated from the host culture and a reasonable explanation of failure to integrate into this society.

The reality of this community lies in striving to prevent the dissolving of distinct religious and cultural characteristics of this group of immigrants. By limiting their communication with outsiders (work, social services, groceries, hospitals), they attempt to preserve their heritage from potential interventions by outsiders. Cultural changes are not viewed as positive steps among Russians and that's why things and orders rather will be kept the same for years than be modified. Acculturation is among such big changes that people are afraid of and have high levels of uncertainty. Immigrant youth are most likely to have the fastest psychological and emotional transition into the new society, though the question is why some successfully adapt while others prefer to stay isolated and limit their new world to the boundaries of the immigrant community.

The fact that immigrant youth prefer to follow a conservative, home country style of living in a rapidly changing texture of American neighborhood is rather unexpected than predicted. I, however, we look at this phenomenon from a cultural perspective, it becomes more logical and appropriate within the context of the particular culture. Clinging to roots and preserving religious identity is what makes this community unique; that's why it's important for people not to lose what makes them different. Since family is the core value of the culture, children are responsible for taking over their ancestors' heritage, keeping it and transferring to their children in such a way to maintain the linkage between generations. To be connected through generations and have the feeling of strong family bonds and religious affiliation is the primary task of people in this immigrant community.

The implications of the case study findings along with recommendations and strategies of working with this community will be presented in the next chapter.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The problems of immigration and immigrants have received a lot of notice by researchers from different disciplines. Research on immigrant children, however, has been more scattered and coherent than synthesized. There is some work done on some aspects of children immigrants, though there is still a lack of research on a variety of problems.

The purpose of this paper was to raise issues of immigrant children that require further investigation and attention of researchers, schoolteachers, social workers and counselors. This study particularly dealt with special topics of post-Soviet immigration, and the role of community in the transition period of Russian-speaking immigrant adolescents. I believe that the information found through the case analysis and literature review shed some light on the problems that immigrant communities and children particularly face. This chapter will wrap up with a brief summary of this study and suggest some strategies for further consideration.

Throughout the participation in “Bridge” project, interviews with local refugees, their children, school administration and bilingual teachers and later on in the process of case composing and its analysis I came to conclude that:

- West Springfield refugee community has a very distinct inside culture that clings to its antecedent religious affiliation;
- Community plays critical role in determining the youth’s strategy for schooling adaptation;
- Strong cultural and interpersonal bonds within the group creates tight social in-group network and enforces further isolation from mainstream society;
- Isolation experience of this community slows down the process of youth acculturation to schools and integration into the environment of a new home country

Based on the results of the case study, the following strategies are suggested to be implemented by future “Bridge” participants or other groups or organizations interested in collaboration with this community:

- Involve cultural liaisons that share the same cultural and linguistic background with community members. People in this community are very careful towards outsiders and mainstream members and might view them as a threat to destroy their ethnoreligious identity. That’s why this community will have trust and feel more comfortable interacting with their countrymen.
- The community should be more actively involved in projects that are aimed at youth. Culturally, these immigrant adolescents are greatly influenced by older generations and church members; therefore, their involvement and positive attitude towards educational projects like “Bridge” would increase chances to achieve the expected outcomes.

- Projects or any other activities in this community should take a regular pattern, to demonstrate personal commitment and establish a tighter bond with community members. Expressing personal interest rather than professional duty in helping the refugees would encourage more openness and desire to collaborate.

In conclusion, studies on post-Soviet immigrants are very limited due to the recent emersion of this subject. Even less has been written about refugees from the former Soviet Union. The case with the West Springfield refugee community raises many questions but so far just a few answers. It can clearly be stated, however, that religious refugees have very unique characteristics, which distinguish them from other immigrants. Due to this fact, the adjustment process of such refugees goes in a different path compared to other immigrants' experiences. The research field of refugee communities is another page in studies on immigration which needs to be further explored and conceptualized.

Bibliography

- Aronowitz, M. (1984). *The Social and Emotional Adjustment of Immigrant Children: A Review of the Literature*. *International Review of Migration* 18, 237-57
- Ben-Sira, Zeev. (1997). *Immigration, Stress, and Readjustment*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Brislin, R., Yoshida, T. (1994). *Intercultural Communication Training: an Introduction*. London: Sage Publications.
- Byram, M., Nichols, A., and Stevens D. (2001). *Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Diaz, F. Carlos. (2001). *Multicultural Education for the 21st Century*. New York: Longman
- Garcia, Eugene. (1999). *Student Cultural Diversity. Understanding and Meeting the Challenge*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Gibson, M., Ogbu, J. (1991). *Minority status and schooling: a comparative study of immigrant and involuntary minorities*. New York: Garland.
- Gricar, B. G., & Brown. D. (1981). *Conflict, power, and organization in a changing community*. Human Relations, (34) 10.
- Habana-Hafner, S., Bolomey, A., and Associates. (1998). *A cultural approach to community development*. Amherst: Center for Organizational and Community Development.
- Hampden-Turner, C., Trompenaars, F. (2000). *Building cross-cultural competence: how to create wealth from conflicting values*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hardwick, S. (1993). *Russian Refugees. Religion, Migration, and Settlement on the North American Pacific Rim*. Chicago.: The University of Chicago Press.
- Hogrefe, C.J. (1985). *Intercultural Counseling and Assessment. Global Perspectives*.
- Landis, D., & Bhagat, S. Rabi. (1996). *Handbook of Intercultural Training*. Thousands Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Understanding the culture of change and the language of the multi-cultural organization*. Retrieved December 16, 2001 from the World Wide Web:
<http://www.glsconsulting.com/sem-culturechange.htm>

- Kim, Y. (1998) *Communication and cross-cultural adaptation: an integrative theory*. Clevedon; Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Rogler, L. (1994). *International Migrations. A Framework for Directing Research*. *American Psychologist*, 49 (8), 701-708.
- Trueba, T. Henry, Jacobs Lila, and Kirton Elizabeth. (1990). *Cultural conflict and adaptataion. The case of Hmong Children in American Society*. New York: The Falmer Press.
- Trueba, T. Henry, and Bartolome, Lilla, I. (2000). *Immigrant Voices. In search of educational equity*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Sam, D. (2000). *Psychological Adaptation of Adolescents With Immigrant Backgrounds*. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 140(1), 5-25.
- Scott, W. A., and Scott Ruth. (1989). *Adaptation of Immigrants. Individual Differences and Determinants*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications
- Immigrants, Integration and Cities. Exploring the links*. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (1998).

