

Life Satisfaction, Acculturative Stress, Ethnic Identity, and Gender Role Attitudes among Armenian American Women

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Abstract

The relationships between life satisfaction, acculturation, acculturative stress, ethnic identity, and gender role attitudes among Armenian American women were explored. The convenience sample of 204 women of Armenian descent (ages 18 -77 years) residing in Southern California and in Phoenix, Arizona, completed a survey including the following measures: Demographic questions, the Armenian Ethnic Orientation Questionnaire (AEOQ-R), the Acculturation Rating Scale for Armenian-Americans-modified version (ARSAA), the Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental scale of acculturative stress (SAFE), the Traditional-Egalitarian Sex Role Scale (TESRS), and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The Multicultural Assessment and Intervention Process (MAIP) model was used as an organizing framework that identifies cultural factors related to wellbeing. In a stepwise regression analysis predicting satisfaction with life acculturative stress turn out to be the sole significant predictor. Those who scored lower on acculturative stress also tended to report higher life satisfaction, explaining 11% of the variance. Furthermore, women who scored higher on ethnic identity tended to be older, scored lower on acculturation and on egalitarian gender role attitudes, and reported higher acculturative stress. Younger women and those who were more educated tended to be more acculturated, and reported more egalitarian gender role attitudes.

Keywords: Life Satisfaction, Gender Role Attitudes, Ethnic Identity, and Acculturative Stress

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The need to provide quality mental health services to diverse clients has become more urgent due to increases in the overall immigrant population in the U.S. in recent years (Atkinson & Goldberg, 2004; Paniagua & Yamada, 2013). According to the U.S. Census (2010), an estimated 33.5 million of the U.S. population are foreign born, and of that 9.1 million live in California. The sheer numbers of immigrants living in the United States underscores the need to continue to understand their experiences, and to identify factors that contribute to their quality of life. There has been a growing body of research on mental health issues regarding diverse immigrant and minority groups (Hwang & Goto, 2009; Madrigal, 2008; Paniagua & Yamada, 2013; Sam & Berry, 2006). However, Armenians continue to be the “hidden minority” (Bakalian, 1993), and there is very limited body of literature dealing with Armenian American women and factors that contribute to their psychological wellbeing.

Immigration of Armenians to America has been historically identified in different waves that coincide with political and armed conflicts in the Middle East and Asia Minor since the mid 19th century. During the early 20th century many Armenians who survived the genocide and deportations by the Ottoman Turkish government fled to the U.S. and other countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt for refuge (Bakalian, 1993). In recent year's instability in the Arab countries and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have led to another surge of immigrant. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), there are about 385,488 Armenians living in the United States, of whom 179, 279 live in Los Angeles County. Studies demonstrate that immigrant women are likely to experience more positive acculturation experiences with the host culture if they have greater social contact with the host culture (Miller, Birman, Zenk, Wang, Sorokin & Conner, 2009; Miller, Sorokin, Wang, Choi, Feetham, & Wilbur, 2006). This contact can come in the forms of working outside of the home, involvement with their communities and religious groups, and interacting with government, school, or health agencies for themselves and their families. However, unique to immigrant women is the experience of acculturation coupled with gender role pressures (Sam & Berry, 2006). For instance, many immigrant women have to continue to fulfill their traditional roles as homemaker but also have to work outside of the home to help their families financially. These dual roles can create stress and psychological dissatisfaction among women in that they may be expected to fulfill both roles equally well, whereas their husbands may not be expected to contribute as much to the maintenance of the household or to childcare. The present study aims to explore whether acculturation factors, ethnic identity, and gender role attitudes relate to life satisfaction among Armenian American women. The findings may have implications for immigrant women from other ethnic, national and racial backgrounds.

One organizing framework that might help put these variables in a theoretical context is the Multicultural Assessment-Intervention Process (MAIP) model (Dana, 1993; Gamst, Dana, Meyers, Der-Karabetian, & Guarino, 2009; Gamst, Liang, & Der-Karabetian, 2011). The model provides a seven-step assessment guideline in the delivery of multiculturally competent mental health services. The steps represent phases in the assessment process starting with the intake contact, followed client-therapist match preferences, multicultural status assessment, provider self-perceived cultural competence, provider training, embedding of cultural components in the intervention phase, and outcome measurements of wellbeing and service satisfaction. While this model targets the examination of these factors in an applied setting (Gamst, Dana, & Der-Karabetian, 2000; Gamst, Dana, Der-Karabetian, & Kramer, 2001) different phases of the model may be extended to include other contexts where cultural factors play a role in impacting behavior and sense of wellbeing (e.g. Gamst, Rogers, Der-Karabetian, & Dana, 2006; Johnson, Gamst, Meyers, Arellano-Morales, & Shorter-Gooden, 2015). Phase three of the model, multicultural status assessment, is of particular relevance for this study. It points to the need to assess cultural variables such as acculturation, acculturative stress, ethnic identity, gender roles, and discrimination, among others, that might impact clinical interventions and outcomes as well as sense of wellbeing and life satisfaction. These are the variables that are the focus here.

Life Satisfaction

Subjective wellbeing is sometimes referred to as the overall feeling of one's quality of life or life satisfaction (Bailey, Eng, Frisch, & Snyder, 2007; Linley, Maltby, Wood, Osborne, & Hurling, 2009; Peterson, Maier, & Seligman, 1993). According to Bailey et al., a major component of subjective wellbeing is life satisfaction, generally defined as the cognitive evaluation of one's life on a universal or specific domain. Diener, Lucas, and Scollon (2006) indicate that life satisfaction is one of the three common elements of subjective wellbeing, along with happiness and positive affect. In the present study self-reported life satisfaction is used as an indicator of subjective wellbeing.

Studies have demonstrated that women's life satisfaction is related to social and economic factors, such as income, relationship status, education, and social network support (e.g. Diener, Suh, & Oishi, 1997; McQuaide, 1998). However, there are limited studies regarding life satisfaction among immigrant women in terms of their immigration and acculturation experiences. The studies that have been conducted regarding life satisfaction and immigration, in general, demonstrate that the process of acculturation and adjusting to a new culture often increases feelings of loneliness and alienation among immigrants (e.g. Felsman, Leong, Johnson & Felsman, 1990; Miller et al., 2009; Yao, 1985). Although no studies can be found that have specifically examined the relationships between life satisfaction, acculturation, and gender roles among Armenian American women, some inferences may be possible from other studies on immigrant women's experiences of distress and reported sense of wellbeing.

According to Mackin (1995), immigrant women face the demands of multiple roles (e.g., wife, caretaker, and wage earner), as well as the added stressor of shifting their roles from working inside the home (Former traditional culture) to working outside of the home (Dominant U.S. culture).

Some immigrant women may have to cope with the combined stressors of child rearing, holding full-time jobs, and caring for aging parents, which implies that they are often faced with limited time to care for themselves. Thus, it may be extrapolated that such gender role demands and acculturation experiences may negatively relate to Armenian American women's sense of life satisfaction and wellbeing.

Acculturation

Acculturation is generally viewed as a multidimensional process in which an individual's or a groups' immigration launches the process of adaptation leading to adjustment and modification of attitudes and behaviors oriented towards the host culture (Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991). Berry, Kim, power, Young, & Bjaki (1989) suggest that in order for the acculturation process to take place, it is necessary for two autonomous cultures to come into contact with each other and cause changes as a result of this contact. According to Cuellar, Arnold, and Maldonado (1995), immigrants are likely to behaviorally and psychologically respond to the host culture's values, ideologies, beliefs and attitudes. These changes often take place as immigrants attempt to find their identity in a new culture.

While there are many different theories and definitions of acculturation and the acculturative process (e.g., Atkinson, Morton, & Sue, 1989; Cuellar et al., 1995; Mendoza & Martinez, 1981; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980), Berry's model of acculturation is often cited as a prominent theoretical framework (Berry, 1986, 1999; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Berry et al., 1989). Berry et al. (1989) utilize a two-dimensional model to identify the four possible modes of acculturation: (a) assimilation, (b) integration, (c) separation, and (d) marginalization. In the Assimilation mode the individual or the ethnic group strongly denies or rejects their cultural values, identity, and overall heritage, experiencing what Mendoza and Martinez (1981) refer to as a shift in culture. In the integration mode the individual is able to effectively create and develop a bicultural orientation where the individual strongly identifies with their own native culture, but is also engaged in interacting and learning about the host culture and its environment. Mendoza and Martinez (1981), and Berry and Kim (1988) refer to this mode as the incorporation of culture, and it is often viewed as the healthiest and ideal outcome of acculturation.

Immigrants who are bicultural and manifest an integrated mode of acculturation tend to be better adjusted and psychologically better equipped to live healthier lives within two different cultures (Castillo, Conoley & Brossart, 2004; Fernandez-Barillas & Morrison, 1984; Lang, Munoz, Bernal, & Sorensen, 1982; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1980). Although there are limited studies on Armenia American immigrants and acculturation, Der-Karabetian (1980) has shown that Armenian and American identities were moderately and positively correlated among adolescents, suggesting the possible integration of the two cultural identities. And, Vartan (1996) has found that more culturally integrated immigrants had lower reported depression and anxiety and higher self-esteem. Moreover, Vartan (1996) has found that among first-generation Armenian male and female immigrants living in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, greater identification with American culture related to lower anxiety and higher self-esteem. Der-Karabetian (1981) has shown a positive correlation between Armenian identity and self-esteem among adult Armenian American immigrants, suggesting the protective role of stronger ethnic identity. Given that ethnic identity could coexist with identification with the host culture, it would be reasonable to expect that greater acculturation would relate to greater life satisfaction and wellbeing. This may come about as immigrant women internalize the cultural values and behavioral norms with greater likelihood of accessing rewarding resources and opportunities. Such a transition could also engender stress.

Acculturative Stress

Berry introduced the concept of "acculturative stress" as a substitute for Oberg's (1960) concept of "culture shock" (Berry, 1986). *Acculturative stress* refers to the problems that arise from the process of acculturation. Acculturative stress has been scarcely studied among Armenian Americans. Der-Karabetian, Berberian, and Der-Bedrossian (2007) have shown an association between higher acculturative stress and stronger ethnic identity among Armenian American adolescents. Sirin, Ryce, Gupta, and Rogers-Sirin (2013) have found that among Latino, Asian, African, and Middle Eastern immigrant adolescents, those who experienced greater acculturative stress also experienced more somatic symptoms, anxiety, and depression.

Similarly, Ahmed, Kia-Keating, and Tsai (2011) have found among a sample of Arab American adolescents an association between greater acculturative stress and greater anxiety and depression. Furthermore, Belizaire and Fuertes (2011) have shown that higher acculturative stress tends to be related to lower quality of life among Haitian immigrants in terms of physical health, psychological health, and social relationships. These consistent findings among a variety of immigrant groups suggests that less acculturative stress would be related to greater life satisfaction among Armenian American women.

Ethnic Identity

While the acculturation process maybe experienced as stressful, it may also accompany shifts in ethnic identity. Whereas acculturation refers to the process or the mode to which individuals relate to the dominant society, ethnic identity focuses on the ways in which individuals relate to their ancestral subgroup and to their co-ethnic groups (Phinney, 1992). Ethnic identity reflects both affective and behavioral affiliation to a group by an individual (Vlachos, 1968), and it tends to be inherently context and situation bound such as minority group context, family culture and school demographics (Der-Karabetian, 1981; Erikson, 1968; Phinney, 1993; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Ruble et al., 2004; Yip, 2005). Der-Karabetian (1981) has shown the context bound nature of ethnic identity among Armenian from the United States and Lebanon.

Moreover, immigrant women come with already highly achieved and well-rooted ethnic/national identities, and are challenged by the need to integrate the identity of the dominant culture that could trigger a shift in their ethnic identity. The context in which immigrants find themselves is characterized by the pull-and-push of being uprooted and the adjustments related to the challenges that accompany moving from a familiar to an unfamiliar environment with different norms, values and behavioral expectations (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). For the Armenian American immigrants connection to family (Hayrapetian, 2002; Manoogian, Walker, & Richards, 2007), and involvement in the Armenian community (Der-Karabetian et al., 2007; Der-Karabetian, 1980) help sustain a stronger ethnic identity that may play a protective role as they work through the challenges of this stressful transition time. Among first generation Armenian Americans stronger ethnic identity has been connected to higher life satisfaction (Hagopian, 1988; Kulhanjian, 1975; Mirak, 1983), and better coping skills such as ability to adopt an active role in a group, make independent decisions, and confidently interact with others (Yaralian, Der-Karabetian, and Martinez (2009). Thus, it would be reasonable to expect that stronger ethnic identity would be related to greater life satisfaction among Armenian American women.

Gender Role Ideology

Despite the fact that women constitute a large portion of the worldwide migration (Dumont, Martin, & Spielvogel, 2007) immigrant women's experiences have largely gone unnoticed and unrecognized (Andizian et al., 1983; Yakushko & Chronister, 2005). According to Kimmel (2005), Franco, Sabattini, and Crosby (2004), and Sherwood (2007) gender roles are identified as a set of socially constructed behavioral customs and attitudes associated with males and females. According to Dion and Dion (2001), immigrant women often encounter added psychological stressors as they are forced to find a balance with their gender-specific roles. Sam and Berry (2006) have found that for certain immigrant groups, such as Korean immigrant women, working outside of the home can lead to higher levels of psychological concerns (e.g., depression) if the women ascribe to the more traditional roles of the female working only inside the home (e.g., cooking, parenting and homemaking). Ascribing to more traditional roles may create tension and be at odds with immigrant women's need to work outside the home, which in turn can contribute to added stress and psychological concerns.

The process of acculturation often results in the modification of attitudes and behaviors, which often lead to changes in gender roles (Menjivar, 1999; Valentine & Mosley, 2000). Khanjian (2002) has found that among recent immigrant and native-born Armenian American women higher levels of acculturation were associated with greater egalitarian beliefs about gender roles. Moreover, regardless of acculturation levels, compared to men women tended to report stronger egalitarian beliefs about gender roles. In a similar vein Fargallah, Schumm & Webb (1997) have found that among Arab American women greater acculturation was associated with changes toward more egalitarian family roles and greater life satisfaction. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that stronger egalitarian beliefs would be associated with greater acculturation and life satisfaction among Armenian American women. Taken together, the literature suggests that cultural factors and gender-role attitudes and beliefs contribute to the psychological wellbeing of women from different ethnic and immigrant backgrounds.

Using the MAIP model as an organizing framework, the current exploratory study tests the following hypothesis: Higher acculturation level, lower acculturative stress, stronger ethnic identity, and stronger egalitarian gender-role attitudes predict life satisfaction among Armenian American women. Furthermore, the inter-relationships of acculturation, acculturative stress, ethnic identity, gender role ideology, and life satisfaction are examined, as well as the relationships of this variable to age, education, income and years in the United States.

Method

Participants

A total of 204 women of Armenian descent, ages 18 through 77 years ($M = 30.32$, $SD = 10.680$), who resided in Southern California and in Phoenix, Arizona, participated in this study. Data was collected between 2010 and 2011. Over half of the participants were born in Armenia (54.9%) and 24% were born in Iran or other countries in the Middle East. The majorities of participants were single women (55.9%) and had some college education (66.7%). Most of the participants lived in the U.S. for more than 18 years (73%).

Measures

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The SWLS consists of a 5-item questionnaire that measures participants' subjective wellbeing, expressed in terms of quality of life, with items such as, "I am satisfied with my life" and "In most cases, my life is close to ideal" (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Responses are measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*, 2=*disagree*, 3=*slightly disagree*, 4=*neither agree nor disagree*, 5=*slightly agree*, 6=*agree* and 7=*strongly agree*). Item responses are summed for a total score, which can range from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating higher levels of life satisfaction. The SWLS has good internal and test-retest reliability (Pavot & Diener, 1993). In the current study, the scores ranged from 8 to 35, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .84, indicating good internal consistency.

The Acculturation Rating Scale for Armenian-Americans (ARSAA) - Modified Version. The ARSAA is a revision of the ARMSA-II created by Cuellar, Arnold and Maldonado (1995) to assess the acculturation levels of Mexican Americans. The ARMSA-II was modified by Ayvazian (2008) for use with the Armenian Americans; for instance, the item "I speak Spanish" was changed to "I speak Armenian," and the item "I write letters in Spanish" was changed to "I write letters in Armenian."

The ARSAA includes 30-items assessing both behavior (e.g., "I write letters in Armenian") and affect (e.g., "I like to identify myself as American") relating to acculturation. Responses are based on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*not at all*, 2=*very little/not very much*, 3=*moderately*, 4=*much/very often* and, 5=*almost always/extremely often*). The ARSAA is comprised of two subscales. The Armenian Orientation Subscale (ARMOS) consists of 17 items, and the Anglo Orientation Subscale (AOS) consists of 13 items. The level of acculturation was measured by subtracting the mean of the ARMOS from the mean of AOS producing difference scores where higher scores indicate greater degree of acculturation into the mainstream American culture. In the present study, the mean scores for the ARMOS subscale ranged between 1 and 4.18, and the subscale had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .87. The mean scores for the AOS subscale ranged between 1 and 4.92, and the subscale had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .80. Both scale scores appear to have good internal consistency for the current sample.

Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental (SAFE) – Short Version. The short version of the SAFE questionnaire measures participants' levels of acculturative stress using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1=*not stressful* to 5=*extremely stressful* (Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987). Item responses were summed to yield a total score, which can range from 0 to 120. The short version of SAFE covers these areas: (1) Social, which is the quality of social life in the new culture; (2) Attitudinal, which are the attitudes toward their former culture and county of origin; (3) Familial, which are the relationships with family in the new culture; and (4) Environmental, which is the quality of life in the new culture, and reflects immigrants' experiences of racism and discrimination. The short version of SAFE has demonstrated strong internal consistency (.89; Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987). In the current study, scores ranged from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating higher levels of acculturative stress. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the SAFE in the current study was .80, indicating good reliability.

Armenian Ethnic Orientation Questionnaire- Revised (AEOQ-R). Participants were asked to complete a 15-item questionnaire to measure their ethnic orientation and identity developed by Der-Karabetian, Berberian, and Der-Boghossian (2007). This measure is a shorter revised version of the 57-item Armenian Ethnic Orientation Questionnaire (Der-Karabetian & Oshagan, 1977).

The AEOQ-R assesses participants' level of Armenian ethnic orientation, such as, "I feel good when I hear or read about the success and accomplishments of Armenians around the world" and "I believe it is not possible to remain Armenian without speaking Armenian". This questionnaire measures responses on a 6-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree*, 2=*disagree*, 3=*not sure but probably disagree*, 4=*not sure but probably agree*, 5=*agree*, and 6=*strongly agree*). Items 5, 7, 10 and 14 are reverse-scored, and the final score is obtained by summing the responses to the items. Higher scores indicate stronger Armenian ethnic orientation and identity. The AEOQ-R has shown adequate scale reliability (.71; Der-Karabetian et al., 2007). In the current study, the scores ranged from 23 to 51. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this measure in the current study was .89, indicating good reliability.

Traditional-Egalitarian Sex Role Scale (TESRS). The TESRS is a 20-item questionnaire measuring attitudes regarding gender role ideology (Larsen & Long, 1988). Of these items, some compare men and women (e.g., "women should have as much sexual freedom as men"), whereas other items are specific to gender roles (e.g., "Ultimately a women should submit to her husband's decision"). Responses on the TESRS are on a 5-point Likert scale (1=*strongly agree*, 2=*agree*, 3=*uncertain*, 4=*disagree*, and 5=*strongly disagree*). Items 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 17, and 19 are reverse-scored, and the final score is obtained by summing the responses of all 20 items to yield a single total score that ranged between 20 and 100. Higher scores indicate a more egalitarian attitude toward gender roles. The TESR scale has yielded high internal reliability and good concurrent validity using Borgan and Kutner's (1976) Sex Role Orientation Scale (Larsen & Long, 1988). In the current study the scores ranged from 52 to 99 and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for scores on this measure in the current study was .72, indicating acceptable reliability.

Procedure

The researcher contacted members of various Armenian organizations, business, and groups and asked for permission to distribute the questionnaire to their members and customers. Data were collected through convenience and snowball sampling. Participants were recruited from Armenian sororities (both alumni and current members), Armenian beauty salons, the Armenian American Mental Health Association, the Armenian American Autism Outreach Project, as well as from local family businesses run by Armenians in the Southern California area. Furthermore, existing participants were asked to recruit additional participants by asking their Armenian acquaintances. The questionnaire packet consisted of 111 questions and took approximately 35 minutes for each participant to complete. It was administered only in English. The packet included two copies of a consent form; they signed and returned one copy and kept the other. The participants were informed of the confidential nature of the study and were also notified that their participation was voluntary. Additionally, participants were given the option of entering their email address on a separate piece of paper to enter a raffle to win one of 3 prizes (i.e., Starbucks gift cards, gift certificate to a local salon). Data collection started after obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of La Verne.

Results

It was hypothesized that acculturation level, acculturative stress, ethnic identity, and gender-role ideology help predict life satisfaction among Armenian American women. The results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis yielded Acculturative Stress as the only significant predictor of life satisfaction, explaining 11% of the variance (Table 1). The model was significant, $R^2 = .34$, $R^2 \text{ adj.} = .11$, $SE \text{ of Estimate} = 5.63$, $F(1, 202) = 25.98$, $p < .001$.

To explore the relationships of the acculturation, acculturative stress, Armenian ethnic identity, gender role ideology and life satisfaction with each other Pearson correlations were conducted (Table 2). Results showed that life satisfaction was uncorrelated with acculturation, $r = .02$, and with ethnic identity $r = -.05$. However, it was negatively correlated with acculturative stress, $r = -.34$, $p < .001$, reflecting the results of the regressing analysis where it was the sole independent predictor. Results also showed that there was a low positive relationship between stronger egalitarian gender role attitudes and life satisfaction, $r = .19$, $p = .006$. Stronger egalitarian gender role attitudes tended to be related to greater life satisfaction, but it was not an independent predictor. It is interesting to note that higher acculturative stress as a predictor of lower life satisfaction was itself significantly related to lower acculturation ($r = -.26$, $p < .001$), stronger ethnic orientation ($r = .38$, $p < .001$), and lower endorsement of egalitarian gender role attitudes ($r = -.30$, $p < .001$).

These findings might suggest that the effect of acculturative stress on life satisfaction may be partially moderated by acculturation, ethnic identity, and egalitarian gender role attitudes. Not unexpectedly, the results also show that stronger traditional gender role attitudes tend to be associated with stronger ethnic identity ($r = -.33, p < .001$), and lower acculturation ($r = .42, p < .001$). In turn, stronger ethnic identity was associated with lower acculturation ($r = -.42, p < .001$), and higher acculturative stress ($r = .38, p < .001$).

The correlations of these measured variables with demographic variables were also not surprising. Older Armenian women tended to show stronger ethnic identity ($r = .26, p < .001$), lower acculturation ($r = -.40, p < .001$), and stronger traditional gender role attitudes ($r = -.26, p < .001$). Also, more educated women tended to be more acculturated ($r = .14, p < .05$), and tended to endorse more egalitarian gender role attitudes ($r = .19, p < .01$). Moreover, women who have been in the United States longer tended to report higher levels of acculturation ($r = .23, p < .001$), and lower levels of acculturative stress ($r = -.14, p < .05$). Income was uncorrelated with any of the measured variables.

Discussion

The primary aim of the current study was to explore the relationships between life satisfaction acculturation, acculturative stress, ethnic identity, and gender role ideology among Armenian American women. Acculturative stress turn out to be the sole significant predictor of life satisfaction such that those who scored lower on acculturative stress also tended to report higher life satisfaction, partially supporting the hypothesis. This finding is consistent with the MAIP model (Dana, 1993; Gamst et al. 2011) that identifies multicultural issues, including acculturative stress, as factors in impacting psychological outcomes and wellbeing. The model would have also predicted a role for ethnic identity that was not obtained here. However, higher ethnic identity was found to be associated with higher acculturative stress, which suggests its moderating effect. The finding that higher acculturative stress often negatively impacts immigrants' satisfaction and quality of life is consistent with the literature involving other ethnic groups (e.g. Belizaire & Fuertes, 2011; Hovey, 2000).

A low but positive correlation partially supported the hypothesis that higher egalitarian gender role attitudes would be associated with greater life satisfaction. Even though it was not an independent predictor, it is in line with research that indicates egalitarian gender role attitudes may be related to a higher sense of wellbeing (e.g. Khanjian, 2002; Sam & Berry (2006). It may also reflect a higher acculturation into the more egalitarian culture in the United States. Correlations showed that women who reported more traditional gender role attitudes tended to report higher acculturative stress, lower acculturation, higher ethnic identity, and tended to be older and less educated. These results are consistent with findings among other ethnic groups as reported by Dion and Dion (2001) and Sam and Berry (2006), as well as with findings reported in a study among Armenians by Khanjian (2002). It is well recognized that coming from cultures with more traditional gender role attitudes exacerbates the stresses experienced by women as they try to adjust to the more egalitarian values and behavioral expectations in the process of acculturation, and contributes to acculturative stress.

Moreover, the relationship between higher acculturative stress and stronger ethnic identity is also consistent with earlier findings (Der-Karabetian et al., 2007), and with the predictions of the MAIP model (Dana, 1993; Gamst & Liang, 2013). This further suggests that the stress associated with the acculturation process may be partially due to tension between sustaining ethnic identity and affiliation with one's ethnic community, and efforts to adjust to the new and different cultural norms and behavioral expectations. Unlike earlier research, in this sample ethnic identity was not related to higher sense of wellbeing and life satisfaction (e.g. Hagopian, 1988; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yaralian et al., 2009). While stronger ethnic identity may be associated with higher self-esteem and wellbeing among adolescents, it does not appear to be a protective factor among adult women whose quality of life and sense of wellbeing may depend on other life circumstances such as employment status, education and family cohesiveness. The findings of this study should be looked at in the light of several limitations. First, the sample was of convenience and the results may not be generalized to the general Armenian female population in the United States. Furthermore, although the majority of women were immigrants some were born in the United States (20.6%), and thus their experiences as American born Armenians would be somewhat different. Second, the acculturation measure (ARSAA) used the term "Anglo" when describing individuals from the mainstream culture. Some of the participants reported having difficulty with comprehending the word "Anglo." A third limitation of this study was that the gender role attitude measure (TESRS) was used to measure perceptions of gender role ideology and not behaviors.

Although it can be inferred that individuals who support specific gender role ideology often apply these ideologies in their gender-specific behaviors, the study would have been strengthened if it utilized a measure that also assessed for gender role behaviors. A fourth limitation of this study is that the questionnaires were not translated into the Armenian language, which could have impacted the nature and number of participants who were more recent immigrants and did not have adequate English language skills.

Keeping these limitations in mind, when working with this population it may be helpful for mental health professionals to be aware of the possible sources of acculturative stress such as strong ethnic identity, lower acculturation and traditional gender role attitudes as suggested by the MAIP model. Furthermore, in order to alleviate the stress related to acculturation it may be useful to provide immigrant Armenian women, as well as women coming from cultures with traditional gender roles, with tools necessary to cope with both cultural and gender-specific values and norms (e.g., providing culturally appropriate resources, education, etc.) (Neuliep, 2000). Moreover, research studies have shown that the relationship women have with friends and other members of the ethnic community at large are quite important for their adjustment and psychosocial wellbeing (Borzumato-Gainey, Kennedy, McCabe, & Degges-White, 2009).

To better understand the psychological concerns and wellbeing of Armenian American women, and immigrant women from other ethnic backgrounds, future research could examine other variables that may impact life satisfaction, as age of immigration, country of origin, amount and quality of social support, and gender role relationships. As the MAIP model suggests, alongside these variables it would be helpful to also evaluate gender role related multicultural competencies of service providers as an integral part of providing services in an effort to reduce disparities in health and mental health services among minority and immigrant women (Cuellar & Paniagua, 2000; Gamst & Liang, 2013; Yali & Revenson, 2004).

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Table 1: Stepwise Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Life Satisfaction Among Armenian American Women

Predictors	B	SE	Beta in	t	p
<u>Included</u>					
Acculturative Stress(SAFE)	-.109	.021	-.338	5.097	<.001
<u>Excluded</u>					
Acculturation (ARSAA)	-	-	.071	1.029	.305
Ethnic Identity (AEOQ-R)	-	-	.091	1.273	.205
Gender Role Ideology (TESRS)	-	-	.102	1.468	.144

$R^2 = .34$, $R^2_{adj} = .11$, $SE\ Estimate = 5.63$, $F(1, 202) = 25.98$, $p < .001$

Table 2: Correlations of the Measures Used Among Armenian American Women (N = 204)

Scales	Variables				Mean	SD	Alpha
	ARSAA	SAFE	AEOQ-R	TESRS			
ARSAA	-				-10	.98	.87
SAFE	-.262**	-			33.60	18.55	.80
AEOQ-R	-.416**	.376**	-		3.90	.61	.89
TESRS	.422**	-.298**	-.330**	-	76.86	11.30	.72
SWLS	.023	-.338**	-.049	.193*	25.19	5.96	.84

Notes

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$

ARSAA: Acculturation Rating Scale for Armenian Americans (Modified)

SAFE: Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental scale (Acculturative Stress)

AEOQ-R: Armenian Ethnic Orientation Questionnaire – Revised scale

TESRS: Gender Role Ideology measure (Higher scores = More egalitarian)

SWLS: Satisfaction With Life Scale

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