PERCEIVED MATERNAL AND PATERNAL ACCEPTANCE-REJECTION IN RELATION TO POSITIVE ESTEEM AND SELF-DEPRECAITION OF ARMENIAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS AND EMERGING ADULTS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements For the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology, Clinical Psychology

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my mother and to the loving memory of my father (1953-2013) who have both unconditionally loved and supported me throughout my developmental years and there forward. I will always cherish and honor them. I am forever indebted to you!
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank my committee members who supported my efforts in writing this thesis.

To my chair, Dr. Scott W. Plunkett, I am thankful for all the help and support you have given me in realizing my goals and objectives associated with my thesis. Without your guidance, expertise, and genuine kindness this thesis would have never existed. Thank you for allowing me to utilize and incorporate your previously collected data into my work; it is much appreciated. The opportunity to work with you has given me the chance to grow as an individual and as a scholar. You have been a great mentor and role model to which I am ever so grateful!

To Dr. Gary Katz, I would like to thank you for being on my thesis committee and being one of the inspirational symbols of what it means to be a clinical psychologist. The undergraduate and graduate lectures and seminars you conducted will always leave a lasting impression in my memory. Similarly, the opportunity to be part of your diagnostic psychometric assessment and evaluation clinic allowed me to personally witness and observe what it truly takes to direct and operate a successful clinic. Thank you for all the opportunities and structural feedback you gave me in further developing and enhancing my skills as a future clinician. Due to your efforts I was able to readily apply and realize clinical aspects and implication of this study.

To Dr. Andrew Ainsworth, I would like to thank you for being on my thesis committee and being one of the models of versatility and flexibility. As an undergraduate student, I was skeptical in enrolling into a cultural psychology class taught by a bona fide statistician like yourself, but you sure proved me wrong and taught me well. Thank you
for always being accepting and supportive of me throughout the advanced statistical methods class. I can proudly and confidently say that I have established a solid foundation in statistical analysis thanks to your efforts and knowledge.

In addition, I would like to bestow my gratitude onto my two brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandmother, friends, other faculty members, and to my cohort from whom I have received boundless positive regard and support.

Thank you all for believing in me and supporting me all throughout my journey!
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ABSTRACT

PERCEIVED MATERNAL AND PATERNAL ACCEPTANCE-REJECTION IN RELATION TO POSITIVE ESTEEM AND SELF-DEPRECACTION OF ARMENIAN AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS AND EMERGING ADULTS

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The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Armenian American adolescents’ and emerging adults’ perceptions of parental acceptance and rejection in relation to their self-esteem (i.e., positive esteem and self-deprecation). Self-report survey data were collected from 404 Armenian American participants: (a) 233 adolescents ranging in age from 13 to 18 years old ($M = 14.9$) and (b) 171 emerging adults ranging in age from 18 to 29 years old ($M = 20.1$). Zero-order correlations showed that (a) perceived maternal and paternal acceptance were both significantly and positively correlated with positive esteem and significantly and negatively correlated to self-deprecation, (b) perceived maternal and paternal rejection were both significantly and positively correlated with self-deprecation and significantly and negatively correlated with positive esteem. The multiple regression analysis revealed the perceived parenting variables accounted for substantially more variance in self-deprecation (28% to 32%) than positive esteem (13% to 19%).
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Humans have an emotional need for positive response and positive regard from attachment figures and significant others (Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2012). When these emotional needs are not met, the individual is predisposed to respond emotionally and behaviorally in specific ways (Rohner et al., 2012). Parents can also respond in rejecting ways (e.g., love withdrawal, shame) that can affect individuals negatively (Rohner et al., 2012). Perceptions of parental acceptance and rejection have been found to impact their self-esteem (Rohner et al., 2012; Michaels, Barr, Roosa, & Knight, 2007). Self-esteem is an important developmental outcome because positive esteem relates to life satisfaction, happiness, healthy behavioral practices, general-self efficacy, and academic success while negative esteem (i.e., self-deprecation) is related to depression, anxiety, conduct problems, delinquency, academic difficulties, substance use, and suicidal behaviors (Michaels et al., 2007).

Although, much research has established the relationship between parental acceptance and rejection on self-esteem, there is a lack of empirical data available on the Armenian American population. Also, relatively few studies examine these relationships in samples of male and female adolescents and emerging adults in one study. The intent of this study is to help fill the void in the literature.

In addition, most studies on self-esteem consider self-esteem as a unidimensional construct that ranges from low self-esteem to high self-esteem, yet a few recent studies have indicated that self-esteem, as measured with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979), results in two factors (i.e., positive esteem, self-deprecation),
providing support for the concept of the dialectical self (Alessandri, Vecchione, Eisenberg, & Łaguna, 2015). Identifying whether parental acceptance and parental rejection relates differentially to positive esteem and self-deprecation in Armenian American samples can also add to the body of knowledge of self-esteem.

**Statement of the Problem**

There are very few studies on Armenians or Armenian Americans; this is especially true when examining family dynamics and self-concept of adolescents and emerging adults. A PsychINFO search for “Armenian Americans” retrieved 66 articles and only two specifically incorporated parenting and self-esteem variables. IPARTTheory (explained below) has been examined among many cultural groups (Rohner et al., 2012), but no studies have currently applied this theory exclusively with Armenian or Armenian American samples; especially with adolescents or emerging adults. A sizeable population of Armenian Americans resides within the United States of America (Sloan, & Cortés, 2013); therefore it is important to conduct research to help understand the development of Armenian Americans. Due to the lack of empirical data on Armenian Americans, practitioners, researchers, and educators have to apply theory and research conducted on other groups when working with Armenian Americans.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to study how perceived maternal and paternal acceptance and rejection correlates with positive esteem and self-deprecation of Armenian American adolescents and emerging adults. In addition, the study will test the applicability of IPARTTheory (Rohner et al., 2012) to Armenian Americans. These results will add to the body of literature on Armenian Americans, IPARTTheory, and dialectical
self. As a result, mental health practitioners will have empirical results to use as a guide when working with the self-concept of Armenian American adolescents and emerging adults. Also, theorists using IPART Theory (e.g., Rohner) can use the results in theory testing or theory building. And finally, the results can provide additional evidence for those scholars exploring the dialectical self using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979).

**Definitions**

1. Armenian Americans are men, women, and children who live in the United States of America and trace their lineage to the ancient land and culture of Armenia (Bakalian, 1994).

2. Adolescence is considered a developmental stage between childhood and adulthood, and is often believed to start at puberty.

3. Emerging adult refers to a developmental period between adolescents and adulthood characterized by people in the late teens through mid-to-late twenties (Arnett, 2007).

4. Parent refers to any person who has a more-or-less long-term primary care giving responsibility for a child (Rohner et al., 2012).

5. Parental acceptance refers to the child’s perception of warmth, affection, care, comfort, concern, nurturance, support, or love from a parent (Rohner et al., 2012).

6. Parental rejection refers to the child’s perception of absence or significant withdrawal of love feelings and behaviors, and presence of a variety of physical and psychological hurtful behaviors and affects from a parent (Rohner et al., 2012).

7. Positive esteem refers to the degree to which an individual believes in his or her moral worth, virtue, and efficacy (Owens, 1994).
8. Self-deprecation refers to the degree to which an individual disparages his or her self and capabilities (Owens, 1994).

Theoretical Framework

Interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTheory), formerly known as parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory), is a socialization and lifespan developmental theory developed by Ronald P. Rohner in the 1980s (Rohner et al., 2012). Starting June 25th, 2014 PARTheory was officially changed to IPARTheory to reflect the change in focus from parental acceptance-rejection to all of the important divisions, facets, and concerns of interpersonal acceptance-rejection throughout the lifespan (http://csiar.uconn.edu/introduction-to-partheory/). IPARTTheory attempts to predict and explain major antecedents, consequences, and correlates of an individual’s interpersonal behavior in relation to subjective perceptions of acceptance (e.g., warmth, affection, nurturance, and support) and rejection (e.g., coldness, lack of affection, hostility, aggression, indifference, and neglect) (Rohner et al., 2012). According to Rohner (2012), IPARTTheory is evidence-based, universal, and cross-culturally valid because numerous studies across different cultures have demonstrated consistent support for the tenets of the theory. Although IPARTTheory has been replicated and validated across cultures throughout the world and specifically, with ethnic minorities in the United States, no studies have been conducted utilizing this theory with Armenians or Armenian Americans.

Hypotheses

Null Hypotheses

The data analyses for this thesis was guided by the following null hypotheses:
1. Perceived maternal and paternal acceptance will not be significantly correlated to positive esteem or self-deprecation of Armenian Americans.

2. Perceived maternal and paternal rejection will not be significantly correlated to positive esteem or self-deprecation of Armenian Americans.

3. Perceived maternal and paternal acceptance-rejection will not account for significant variance in positive esteem and self-deprecation of Armenian Americans.

**Alternative Hypotheses**

Based on the review of literature in Chapter 2, the following research hypotheses were developed.

1. Perceived maternal and paternal acceptance will be significantly and positively correlated to positive esteem of Armenian Americans (total sample, male and female subsamples, adolescent and emerging adult subsamples).

2. Perceived maternal and paternal acceptance will be significantly and negatively correlated to self-deprecation of Armenian Americans (total sample, male and female subsamples, adolescent and emerging adult subsamples).

3. Perceived maternal and paternal rejection will be significantly and negatively correlated to positive esteem of Armenian Americans (total sample, male and female subsamples, adolescent and emerging adult subsamples).

4. Perceived maternal and paternal rejection will be significantly and positively correlated to self-deprecation of Armenian Americans (total sample, male and female subsamples, adolescent and emerging adult subsamples).

5. Perceived maternal and paternal acceptance-rejection will account for significant variance in positive esteem and self-deprecation of Armenian Americans (total...
sample, male and female subsamples, adolescent and emerging adult subsamples).

Assumptions

This research study was created based upon certain assumptions:

- First, it was assumed that the Armenian American adolescents and emerging adults agreed to participate in the study free from pressure by the researchers, their assistants, or teachers in the classes where data were collected. Specifically, the researchers emphasized to the assistants and teachers that participants should not be coerced or pressured to participate in the research. In addition, the adolescent assent form and adult consent forms reiterated the right to not participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

- Second, it was assumed that the Armenian American participants would be able to read English and comprehend the items on the survey since (1) they lived in the United States and (2) were currently attending either high school or college in the United States where English was the language of instruction.

- Third, it was assumed that the participants would answer the survey completely and honestly since (1) the surveys were anonymous, and (2) confidentiality was assured in the adolescent assent and adult consent forms.

- Fourth, it was assumed the scales used in the study would also be appropriate for Armenian Americans since the scales were found to be reliable and valid in previous studies with adolescents and emerging adults from various ethnic groups.

- Fifth, it was assumed that no errors were made in the data coding or data entry since the research assistants were trained in data coding and data entry procedures. Also, the data coding and entry were double checked for accuracy. In addition, after the
data were entered and double checked, frequencies were run on every variable after to make sure they responses were valid values. If any non-valid values were found, they were checked against the hard copy of the survey.

- Sixth, it was assumed that no errors were made during the statistical analyses because the analyses were conducted under the supervision of a faculty member who is well-versed in the statistical analyses used in the thesis.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Armenians

Movses Khorenatsi, a 5th century historian, argued that Armenian’s origins are linked to Noah and even Adam (Baliozian, 1985). According to Genesis, Noah’s Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat (Massis); which was once part of historic Armenia, but is currently located in eastern Turkey. The people of Armenia call their land Hayastan, which is named after a legendary archer Hayk, a great grandson of Noah (Bayramyan, 2001), who liberated his people from the tyrannical Pel (Belus) and lead them to the safety of the mountains of eastern Anatolia (Baliozian, 1985).

The two main building blocks of the modern Armenian identity were put into place with the adoption of the Christian faith as a nation in 301 A.D. and with the advent of the Armenian alphabet in 406 A.D. (Bayramyan, 2001). These two major historical events lead Armenia to differentiate itself from its neighbors and put into place an independent platform from which its cultural heritage and integrity could be preserved throughout the ages. During a more recent and tragic event, the Armenian Genocide became the third and final block of modern Armenian identity for Armenians throughout the world.

Throughout history, Armenia or more specifically Armenia Major has held a key position as a vital trade route and as the center of commerce between Asia, Europe, and the Middle East (Dagirmanjian, 2005). However, this has presented a heavy burden in the form of established foreign powers (e.g., Persians, Parthians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, and later Ottomans and Russians) and also, nomadic tribes (e.g., Tatars, Mongols, and
Kurds) sporadically attempting to attack, invade, rob, and/or rule Armenia (Baliozian, 1985). To escape and avoid foreign occupation, oppression, exploitation, and/or persecution, many Armenians migrated westward towards the mountain ranges of southeastern Anatolia (Baliozian, 1985). By the time the European crusaders came through this region, the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia (Kilikia) or Armenia Minor was already in existence (Baliozian, 1985).

The formation of the Armenian Diaspora arguably was put into motion with the events of April 13, 1375 when the capital of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia fell to the Egyptian Mamluks (Baliozian, 1980). Thousands of Armenian families were either forcefully exiled or chose to voluntarily leave their ancestral homeland to remote places such as India, China, Singapore, and Western Europe (Bayramyan, 2001). Yet, the majority remained within the proximity of Greater Armenia and in the highlands of Cilicia (Baliozian, 1980; Bayramyan, 2001). These remaining Armenian communities fell victim twice more during the massacres of the 1890’s by the Ottoman Turks and also during the Genocide perpetrated by the Young Turks during World War I. These events significantly escalated the disbursement of the Armenians from their ancestral lands. Individuals and families who were able to escape migrated to neighboring countries including Bulgaria, Greece, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon (Baliozian, 1980); where they organized and built successful and influential Armenian communities. It is estimated that 5 million Armenians live outside of the Republic of Armenia (Pattie, 2005).

The present day Republic of Armenia proclaimed its independence from the Soviet Union on September 21, 1991. Its current capital, Yerevan, is dated to be older than Rome. During the rain of Tigran II the Great (94-56 B.C.) the territorial span of the
Armenian empire reached from the Mediterranean to the Caspian Sea (Bayramyan, 2001), yet today Armenia is a landlocked country encompassing 11,484 square miles (Jendian, 2008) bordering Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, and Iran. The majority of the estimated 3 million populace of Armenia is Christian and identifies with the Armenian Apostolic Church (Takooshian, 2014).

**Armenian Americans**

Armenian Americans are men, women, and children who live in the United States of America and trace their lineage to the ancient land and culture of Armenia (Bakalian, 1994). Bakalian (1994), the author of *Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian*, points out that the definition of Armenian American is quite subjective in nature due to the “wide within-group variations that include generational presence in America, recency of immigration, legal status, country of birth, religious affiliation, mixed parentage, socioeconomic status, knowledge of Armenian language and culture, political/ideological beliefs, degree of involvement in ethnic communal activities, and so on” (p. 5). According to Bakalian, the generational status of the person influences the development and adjustment of the individual. Bakalian argues no two Armenian Americans are exactly alike on the micro level, yet on the macro level there is actually a distinctive unifying factor that acts as the adhesive or glue of solidarity. She continues on to explain that the Armenian identity tends to fluctuate depending on audience and in response to changes in the dominant society or the Armenian Diaspora itself (Bakalian, 1994).

Armenians have immigrated and still immigrate to the United States of America for a host of reasons and tend to reside in the regions of the Northeast, Midwest, and the
West Coast. The very first Armenian American is believed to be Malcolm the Armenian who immigrated to North America and resided in Jamestown Colony in 1619 (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Specifically, there have been three major Armenian “waves” of immigration to the United States. The first wave of Armenian immigration took place between the 1890’s to the end of World War II and consisted of individuals from Asia Minor who were directly or indirectly affected by the massacres, mass deportations, and the Armenian Genocide (Dagirmanjian, 2005). This cohort of individuals was mostly made up of agrarians, and they faced immense hardships due to their psychological and socio-economical status and their lack of skills and abilities needed to integrate smoothly within the highly industrialize society of the new world (Dagirmanjian, 2005). During this period in American history, there was a strong case of xenophobic hostile attitudes directed towards all ethnic cultures and life-styles (Bakalian, 1994). Hence, the first wave of Armenian immigrants experienced discrimination and prejudice, yet through hard work, humility, and dedication they were able to lay down a solid foundation for the next wave of Armenian immigrants. Ironically, the first wave of immigrants considered themselves to be sojourners who would one day return to the motherland, yet the majority of them permanently rooted themselves into the American life-style and society.

The second wave of Armenian immigrants started arriving after World War II (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Unlike the previous wave of Armenian immigrants who migrated from the homeland, the second wave mainly consisted of immigrants from a variety of Armenian Diaspora communities located in Syria, Lebanon, Greece, France, Iran, and elsewhere (Dagirmanjian, 2005). In addition, the consecutive wave of Armenian immigrants were a much younger cohort, hence for them the Armenian Genocide was not
a personal experience (Bakalian, 1994). Furthermore, cultural shock was not as intense as it was for the first wave of Armenian immigrants because the second wave of immigrants arrived from countries that were in the process of industrializing, were significantly more educated, had some financial resources, and were fairly proficient in the English language (Bakalian, 1994). Towards the end of the second wave, starting from the 1970’s, a relatively large Armenian exodus was taking place in the Middle East due to the political turmoil, which included the Civil War in Lebanon in 1975 and the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1978. During this period in history, the social climate in the United States was beginning to be more tolerant of ethnic differences (Bakalian, 1994). In comparison, first generation Armenian Americans during these times were more likely to be self-confident in expressing their ethnic traditions and behaviors and also, were more readily and openly identifying themselves as ethnic Armenians in the larger American society.

The third wave of Armenian immigrants into the United States began to take place towards the end of the 1980’s, mainly from Soviet Armenia and other Soviet Republics (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Other Armenian immigrants also continued to arrive from a variety of other non-Soviet Armenian Diaspora communities. Many foreigners, including Armenians, saw the United States as the land of endless opportunity and riches, so undeniably many migrated for the sole purpose of staking their piece at the “American Dream.” Unfortunately for a large portion of Armenians, it was a necessity. The devastating calamity of the 1988 Soviet Armenian earthquake was ruthless, with a death toll of up to 45,000 people and upwards of 500,000 homeless. Thus, many decided to migrate out of the country. Also, there were other factors that increased the Diaspora, such as (1) growing socio-political conflict between Soviet Armenia and Soviet
Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) region, (2) the Armenian massacre in Baku in January 1990, and (3) the energy crisis inside of Soviet Armenia. Thus, many Armenians fled the region, and the majority found refuge in the well-established Armenian communities of the United States (Dagirmanjian, 2005).

Armenian immigration to the United States is still well underway. A significant portion of Armenians from all over the world migrate to the United States to find a better life for themselves and their families. Some arrive by choice and others are forced to leave due to political and socio-economical hardships. For example, a second mass Armenian exodus from the Middle East started to take place in 2003 when the United States invaded Iraq. The Armenian exodus from the Middle East picked up once more with the Arab Spring of 2010 and specifically intensified during the 2011 Syrian Civil War. More recently, on March 21, 2014, forces opposed to the Syrian government made their way through a Turkish border and executed an attack on Kessab, which is a Syrian village inhabited by mainly Christian Armenians (McDonnell, 2014). Currently, the unrest in the Middle East continues to pose a major threat to the remaining Armenian communities and villages in this region of the world.

Interestingly, each wave of Armenian immigrants tends to marginalize the other waves by applying the “us” and “them” ideology. According to Dagirmanjian (2005), the newcomers’ are perceived to be arrogant and pushy in their behaviors. More specifically, Bakalian (1994) states, “the Armenian-American community is not a monolithic structure; it is divided into sub-communities by country of origin, by generation, by political ideologies, by religious denominations, by socioeconomic status, by life-style and interest, and so on” (p. 242). For example, many first and second generation
Armenian Americans upon meeting other Armenian American strangers tend to identify themselves with their or their parents’ country of birth; whether they are Lebanese Armenian (Beirutsi), Persian Armenian (Parshahye), Syrian Armenian (Syriahye), Armenian National (Hayastanci), and so forth.

Overall, Armenian Americans have found their niche within the larger American society and have come a long way compared to their earlier immigrant counterparts. Today, Armenian Americans enjoy rich and culturally vibrant communities in a variety of locations throughout the United States, though some may argue that the epicenter is the Greater Los Angeles area of Southern California.

**Armenian Americans in Greater Los Angeles Area**

The first recorded Armenian migration to California took place in the fall of 1881, when two brothers named Hagop and Garabed Seropian moved to Fresno in search of a warm, dry climate to replace the cold and moist climate of Worcester, Massachusetts (Avakian, 2008). By 1906 the number of Armenians in Fresno had grown to about 2,500 where they worked as farmers and laborers for the packing industries (Avakian, 2008). During the 1920’s the number of Armenians in Fresno peaked, yet by the end of the decade due to the decline of the agricultural economy a large exodus took place (Avakian, 2008). During this time, Fresno Armenians moved to Los Angeles in search of jobs outside of the farming community (Avakian, 2008). Other Armenians from around the world soon followed.

Today, one of the largest Armenian populations outside of the Republic of Armenia is spread across the Greater Los Angeles area of Southern California. Some of the areas that Armenians call home in the Los Angeles area include Hollywood, North
Hollywood, Glendale, Burbank, Tujunga, Pasadena, and Montebello. Throughout these cities the Armenian presence echoes proudly as they are well vested in local businesses, politics, religion, education, sports, and the entertainment industry. The city of Glendale has the highest concentration of Armenians in the United States (http://www.glendaleca.gov/home/showdocument?id=13200).

**Armenian and Armenian American Families**

The traditional Armenian family was strongly patriarchal, and the household was relatively large and diverse; incorporating several generations of individuals which consisted of the eldest male, his wife, their sons, their grandsons, the brides of their sons, and possibly the brides of their grandsons (Bayramyan, 2001). In general, marriages were arranged by the bride’s and groom’s parents and sometimes through the help of a middleman or matchmakers (Bayramyan, 2001). Thus, it was common for the bride and groom to wed without ever having seen one another until the day of the wedding ceremony. Due to the interdependent, extended-family, structural unit there were no economic or social hardships that a newlywed couple would face, so it was common for a 17-year-old boy to wed a 15-year-old girl (Bayramyan, 2001). The newlywed girl would be expected to adjust to her newlywed husband’s family and be subservient to the eldest female in the household, which was usually the mother-in-law (Dagirmanjian, 2005).

The modern Armenian family has changed quite significantly throughout the past century. Overall, the household size has become considerably smaller, though the family hierarchy still remains mostly patriarchal (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Today, arranged marriages are rare and have been replaced with marriages whereby a man and a woman wed based on attraction, affection, commitment, and mutual love. Both Armenian and
Armenian American families are still very close-knit, thus members are expected to refrain from acts and behaviors that may bring shame onto their family name (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Part of maintaining the family name and honor ties back to the traditional attitudes regarding conservative sexual mores, which entails the “purity” of the women in the family, the distaste towards homosexuality, and the prohibition against marrying non-Armenians (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Also, sons and daughters are expected to live at home with their parents until the day they get married and then, they are finally allowed to move out on their own. In general, Armenian Americans have historically taken precautionous measures for the sake of protecting their family’s integrity and also, preserving their unique cultural heritage from outside influences (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Though, with each new generation, the sentiment of family needs over personnel needs (i.e., familism) has become less pronounced (Bakalian, 1993).

Familism still has an influence on Armenian American’s adjustment. In a cross-sectional study using self-report data from 97 Armenian American adolescents Ghazarian, Supple, and Plunkett (2008) found that adolescents with an orientation towards familism were more likely to report conformity to parents’ wishes, respect for parental authority, and disclosure to parents about activities. Similarly, indication of moderate levels of familism was associated with higher academic motivation, higher positive esteem, and lower self-deprecation. An unexpected finding was that conformity to parental expectations was positively associated with self-deprecation.

**Parental Acceptance and Rejection**

**IPARTheory**

According to Blum (2002), the field of psychology, from its inception, frowned
upon scientific exploration on warmhearted affection or love. According to Rohner et al. (2012), the field of psychology has managed to make a 180 degree turn during the past five decades since more than 2000 studies have found a commonality that children need a specific type of positive response in the form of acceptance from parents and other attachment figures (Rohner et al., 2012). According to Rohner et al., many of these studies were inspired by the interpersonal acceptance-rejection theory (IPARTTheory) which Rohner et al. describes as an evidence-based universal and cross-culturally valid socialization and lifespan developmental theory that attempts to explain and/or predict the antecedents, consequences, and correlates individuals’ interpersonal behaviors in relation to their subjective perceptions of acceptance-rejection. Subjective perceptions of acceptance-rejection are central to the workings of IPARTTheory because it allows a specific person to make interpretations of acceptance-rejection by attachment figures or significant others (e.g., parents, siblings, friends) through his or her unique cultural and personal views without having outside parties (e.g., observers and researchers) misinterpret the meaning (Rohner et al., 2012).

A vast number of studies focusing specifically on parent-child interactions have discovered a common theme in the way children and adults determine if they are loved or accepted (Rohner et al., 2012). Within IPARTTheory, these interpretations of an individual’s perceptions of their parents are culminated into two distinct categorizations: parental acceptance and parental rejection. Parental acceptance is comprised of physical, verbal, and/or symbolic behaviors by parents that demonstrate warmth, affection, care, comfort, concern, nurturance, support, or love (Rohner et al., 2012). According to Rohner et al., parental rejection is comprised of physical, verbal, and/or symbolic behaviors by
parents that demonstrate significant withdrawal of love (e.g., silent treatment, avoiding eye contact) as well as the presence of various physically hurtful behaviors (e.g., hitting) and psychologically hurtful behaviors (e.g., shaming, inducing guilt).

Acceptance and rejection by parents can be studied through a phenomenological method whereby a person’s subjective perceptions can be directly assessed or through behavioral methods whereby indirect analysis is obtained through scientific observation (Rohner et al., 2012). However, according to IPARTheory, the phenomenological approach should receive precedence over its counterpart whenever there is a significant discrepancy in conclusions (Rohner et al., 2012). Quite often, the preceding holds merit because the individual may feel unloved, yet the observer will fail in detecting the indicators or behaviors of parental rejection. Similarly, due to variability in cultural views or idiosyncratic gestures of symbolic behaviors of acceptance-rejection, the observer may run the risk of misinterpretation (Rohner et al., 2012).

According to Rohner et al. (2012), the personality subtheory of IPARTheory attempts to answer two general questions: (1) Do children everywhere, with varying backgrounds, respond similarly when they perceive themselves to be accepted or rejected by their parents? (2) What amount of the effects of childhood rejection will carry over into adulthood and old age? Hence, this subtheory strives to predict and explain the influence of perceived parental acceptance-rejection on cognition and personality. At its core, the personality subtheory assumes that human beings have developed an enduring, biologically-based emotional need for positive responses (e.g., comfort, support, care concern, nurturance) from significant others through the process of evolution (Rohner et al., 2012). During later stages of life, adults develop a more complex need for positive
responses that manifests as a yearning for positive regard from significant others with whom they have an affectionate bond or attachment (Rohner et al., 2012). Generally, infants’ and children’s need for positive response is satisfied by their parents (attachment figures) and during adolescent and adulthood this need is met by parents and significant others. Hence, quite similar to attachment theory, IPARTHeoy postulates that the quality of parental acceptance-rejection influences and shapes the child’s personality development over time (Rohner et al., 2012). Moreover, during childhood and later in adulthood, when the need for positive responses is not satisfied, then individuals are predisposed to respond emotionally and behaviorally in specific ways (Rohner et al., 2012).

For example, those who perceive themselves as rejected tend to be more anxious and insecure (Rohner et al., 2012). Hence, perceived parental rejection (depending on the form, frequency, duration, and intensity) can potentially lead to psychological and behavioral maladjustments (e.g., hostility, aggression, passive aggression, psychological problems, emotional unresponsiveness, impaired self-esteem, impaired self-adequacy, emotional instability; Rohner et al., 2012). The main ingredient responsible for the preceding psychological, emotional, and behavioral dispositions is the psychological pain derived from the perceived rejection which harbors anger, resentment, and other debilitating and painful states of being (Rohner et al., 2012). Thus, individuals experiencing significant amounts of perceived rejection develop a negative worldview about interpersonal relationships, quality of life, and even the nature of human existence.

Conversely, those individuals who experience significant acceptance from their parents will have a more secure attachment, and they will feel they have a supportive
base within which to explore and experience the world (Peterson, 2005). Thus, these individuals are more likely to develop a positive view of the world and self, thus decreasing the risk of mental health issues. Based on the ideas presented by IPARTheory, it is likely that perceptions of parental acceptance and rejection by Armenian American adolescents and emerging adults will relate to their self-esteem.

**Self-Esteem**

The concept of self-esteem has been expressed in English since the 1650’s, and popularized in 1890 by William James as a concept with psychological relevance (Brown, 2010). Self-esteem refers to an affective evaluation of one’s overall feelings of self-worth as a person (Coopersmith, 1967; Rosenberg, 1965). Research has shown that positive esteem is related to life satisfaction, happiness, healthy behavioral practices, perceived efficacy, academic achievement, and healthy adjustment (Michaels et al., 2007). On the other hand, negative self-esteem (i.e., self-deprecation) increases risks of depression, anxiety, conduct problems, delinquency, academic difficulties, substance use, and suicidal behaviors (Michaels et al., 2007).

**Dialectal Self**

Similar to the age-old argument of nature versus nurture, the debate within cultural psychology has been concerned with the universality versus culture-specificity in relation to a variety of phenomena including the constructs of self-esteem and self-regard (Boucher, Peng, Shi, & Wang, 2009; Brown, Cai, Oakes, & Deng, 2009). Early research implementing the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) clearly indicated a mean score difference and a dissimilar responding style between the majority white Anglo Americans and the ethnic minorities within the United States of America. It was also witnessed that
individuals from Westernized nations typically scored higher on the RSES and on average only endorsed positive measures of self, while non-Westerners scored lower and also, tended to endorse both positive and negative measures of self (Boucher et al., 2009; Pullmann & Allik, 2000). This eventually led the researchers to reexamine the reliability and validity of the RSES (Greenberger, Chuansheng, Chen, Dmitrieva, & Farruggia, 2003) and also, questions its practicality in relation to non-Western cultures and societies (Supple, Su, Plunkett, Peterson, & Bush, 2012; Supple & Plunkett, 2011; Brown, 2010).

In time, researchers realized that: (1) individuals from collectivistic backgrounds had dialectical self-esteem or the tendency to simultaneously acknowledging both positive and negative self-aspects and (2) self-esteem was not only unidimensional, but also bidimensional in that it can be split into two separate constructs of positive esteem and self-deprecation (Owens, 1993).

The Supple et al. (2011) study is of particular interest because it included samples of European American, Latino, Armenian, and Iranian adolescents (grades 9 through 12). The researchers found that a bi-dimensional factor structure was superior. Also, they found that Armenians reported higher negative self-esteem in comparison with European Americans. And, they found that maternal support was more strongly related to positive self-esteem for Armenian/Iranians, and psychological control was more strongly related to negative self-esteem for both Latinos and Armenian/Iranians.

Since individuals from different cultural backgrounds may experience, interpret, and react quite uniquely towards the same stimulus found within self-evaluative measures. Given that self-esteem has been shown to be two separate constructs in ethnic minorities (including Armenian youth), it is important to examine how perceived
acceptance and rejection from mothers and fathers relates differentially to positive esteem and self-deprecation of Armenian American male and female adolescents and emerging adults.

**Parenting and Self-Esteem**

In addition to IPARTheory, other prominent researchers and scientists including Charles Horton Cooley, John Bowlby, and Mary Ainsworth, similar to Rohner P. Rohner, have exemplified the process of identity and personality formation through their unique constructs of the looking-glass-self (Cooley, 1902) and attachment theory (Bretherton, 1992). Cooley’s conceptualization of looking-glass-self incorporates “three principle elements: (1) the imagination of our appearance to the other person, (2) the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, (3) some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification” (Cooley, 1902, p. 152). In his book *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902) he introduces the reader to the concept of reflected appraisals (i.e., verbal and nonverbal responses of others), similar to IPARTheory’s positive responses, which indirectly shapes an individual’s inner image of self and therefore, affects the way they respond to the world around them (Hensley, 1996). For example, if an attachment figure (e.g., mother, father) or a significant other (e.g., sibling, cousin, friend) communicates a reflected appraisal, which carries a positive message to an individual, then that individual would develop a positive image of self.

The conceptualization and realization of attachment theory is based on the joint works of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1992). The underlying unifying variable of attachment theory, similar to IPARTheory, is arguably the perception of acceptance from attachment figures and significant others in relation to the development
of positive esteem. Bowlby is responsible for drawing the basic tenets of attachment 
theory from ethology, cybernetics, information processing, developmental psychology, 
and psychoanalysis to which later Ainsworth’s security theory was supplemented 
(Bretherton, 1992). The major tenant of security theory according to Bretherton (1992) 
proposes that, “infants and young children need to develop a secure dependence on 
parents before launching out into unfamiliar situation” (p. 760). Thus, attachment theory 
hypothesizes that children need a secure base (i.e., attachment figure) from which they 
experience warm, intimate, and continuous relationship as they explore their environment 
and establish an internal working model of autonomy and security (Bretherton, 1992). 
These internal working models later become the roadmap for which the child references 
back to throughout his or her developmental lifespan as he or she experiences and 
interacts with the world.

Based on these ideas, it is not surprising that many studies have found a strong 
relationship between parent-child interactions and self-esteem (e.g., Behnke, Plunkett, 
Sands, & Bámaca-Colbert, 2011; Laible & Carlo, 2004; Midgett, Ryan, Adams, & 
Corville-Smith, 2002; Herz & Gullone, 1999; Ruiz, Roosa, & Gonzales, 2002). Also, in 
support of the ideas presented above, it is perceptions of parenting that should be 
especially related to the development of an offspring’s’ self-esteem. Studies have found 
that self-esteem of adolescents was more strongly correlated with their own perceptions 
as opposed to their parents’ reports of their behaviors (Demo, Small, & Savin-Williams, 
1987; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). Thus, the focus of the literature review and study will 
be on individuals’ perceptions. The following two sections summarize some of the 
available literature on the relationships between two perceived parenting behaviors (i.e.,
acceptance and rejection) and self-esteem.

**Parental Acceptance and Self-Esteem**

According to Peterson (2005), the positive impact of parental support/acceptance on youth outcomes is “Perhaps the closest thing to a general law of parenting” (p. 40). A vast number of studies have indicated a positive correlation between parental acceptance (e.g., support, warmth) and psychological adjustment (e.g., Khaleque, 2013) including self-esteem (e.g., Amato & Fowler, 2002; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). According to Rohner et al. (2012), the personality subtheory of IPARTTheory assumes that human beings have developed an enduring, biologically-based emotional need for positive responses from attachment figures (e.g., mother, father) through the process of evolution. Perceived parental acceptance communicates to their offspring that they are capable, important, successful, and worthy as an individual. Dekovic and Meeus (1997) reiterate these ideas when they state that parents who convey affection, emotional support, and positive evaluations towards their children, which instill feelings of value within the children, forming the basis of their self-esteem. These subjectively experienced variables of parental acceptance are expressed through physical (e.g., kiss, hug, cuddle), verbal (e.g., praise, compliment, say nice things to or about), or symbolic (culturally or idiosyncratically specific gestures) behaviors, which communicate acceptance and support to the child or adolescent (Rohner et al., 2012).

Plunkett, Henry, Robinson, Behnke, and Falcon (2007) conducted a cross-sectional study with a sample of 293 mostly high school students (80% Caucasian) from a Midwestern state. They found that perceived support from mothers and fathers were significantly and positively correlated to global self-esteem. In another cross-sectional
study, researchers used self-report survey data from a sample of 158 Iranian American adolescents from an ethnically-diverse public school, a private Armenian high school, and Iranian youth groups in the greater Los Angeles area (Frank, Plunkett, & Otten, 2010). They found that perceived support by mothers and fathers were both significantly and positively related to Iranian American adolescents’ positive esteem, but negatively related to self-deprecation.

Researchers investigated the impact of perceived parenting on adolescents’ self-esteem in a cross-sectional design (Bean, Bush, Mckenry, & Wilson, 2003). The sample included 75 African American and 80 European Americans adolescents from six public high schools in a Midwestern state. They found that maternal acceptance (i.e., support) was positively correlated to self-esteem of African Americans and European Americans, while paternal acceptance was only correlated with European American adolescents. Interestingly, Gecas and Schwalbe (1986) found that perceived paternal acceptance (i.e., support) was a stronger predictor of self-esteem than perceived maternal acceptance in a study with youth ages 17-19 years of age from eastern Washington. However, both maternal and paternal acceptance was positively correlated to their offspring’s self-esteem.

Bámaca, Umaña-Taylor, Shin, and Alfaro (2005) examined the relation between Latino adolescents’ perception of parenting behaviors and self-esteem using 324 Latino students from 9th and 10th grade from five Midwestern high schools. In their cross-sectional, correlational study, they found perceived acceptance (i.e., support) by mothers and fathers were positively related to Latino boys and girls self-esteem.

Longitudinal studies have also investigated the relationship between perceived
parenting behaviors and self-esteem. Felson and Zielinski (1989) conducted a longitudinal study examining the reciprocal relationship between parental support and self-esteem using a sample of 373 students drawn from 22 fourth through seventh grade classrooms in a suburban school district. They found that parents’ supportive behaviors affected the self-esteem of children, but that self-esteem also affected how much parental support children reported. Specifically, girls were found to be much more affected by their parents and were more likely to have high self-esteem when they believed they can communicate with parents and when their parents show physical affection.

Similarly, Dekovic and Meeus (1997) used a sample of 508 families with adolescents (12 to 18 years of age) from a larger national sample of Dutch families. Their results indicated that adolescents with a more satisfying relationship with their parents have a more positive self-concept. The quality of acceptance by mothers and fathers significantly predicted adolescents’ general and social self-concept.

Roberts and Bengtson (1993) conducted a longitudinal study examining the contributions of parent-child affection to filial self-esteem and psychological well-being in young adulthood. The sample consisted of 293 parent-child pairs. The researchers found that young adults who reported greater parent-child affection in their late teens and early adulthoods reported higher self-esteem.

The abovementioned studies incorporating cross-sectional and longitudinal approaches indicate that, in general, acceptance by mothers and fathers is positively related to the self-esteem of children, adolescents, and young adults. Therefore, it was hypothesized that perceptions of perceived maternal and paternal acceptance would be significantly and positively related to positive esteem and negatively related to self-
deprecation, of Armenian American adolescents and emerging adults as well as female and male Armenian Americans.

**Parental Rejection and Self-Esteem**

The quality of the parent-child relationship is found to be a key marker in determining and predicting psychological and behavioral adjustments (Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004), maladjustments, and mood disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety (Luebbe, Bump, Fussner, & Rulon, 2013; Soenens, Park, Vansteenkiste, & Mouratidis, 2012). A parenting behavior that has been receiving increased attention in the literature is parental rejection, also called psychological control, intrusive parenting, and harsh parenting (Barber, 2002; Barber & Harmon, 2002; Peterson, 2005). Specific examples of parental rejection include negative guilt induction, shaming, nagging, and love withdrawal (Silk, Morris, Kanaya, & Steinberg, 2003; Barber, 1996). According to IPARTheory, the child’s perception of significant love withdrawal by the parent(s) is considered to be the most powerful and fundamental unit of parental rejection (Rohner et al., 2012). Barber and Harmon (2002) contend that parental rejection is focused on controlling and violating the child’s psychological autonomy in order to gain compliance. When a child’s autonomy is violated, the person may feel less confident and capable, resulting in diminished self-esteem. Thus, parental rejection, actual and imagined, may ultimately lead to lower positive esteem and higher self-deprecation as a result of self-appraisals saturated with negative self-images (Plunkett et al., 2007). Parental psychological control has been found to relate to emotion regulation, anxiety (Luebbe, Bump, Fussner, & Rulon, 2013; Soenens, Park, Vansteenkiste, & Mouratidis, 2012), depression (Behnke et al., 2011), and relational
aggression in children and adolescents (see meta analysis by Kuppens, Laurent, Heyvaert, & Onghena, 2013).

Various cross-sectional studies have shown a strong relationship between parental rejection and self-esteem. In a study of primarily Caucasian adolescents from a Midwest state Plunkett, Henry et al. (2007) found that perceived psychological control from mothers as well as fathers were significantly and negative related to global self-esteem. Similarly, in a study of Iranian American adolescents, with many Armenians in the sample, Frank et al. (2010) separated global self-esteem into positive esteem and self-deprecation. They found that psychological control by mothers and fathers were significantly and negatively related to positive esteem, and positively related to self-deprecation. It should be noted that the relationship between psychological control and self-deprecation was substantially stronger than the relationship between psychological control and positive esteem.

Cross-sectional studies with Latinos have also found a link between parental psychological control and self-esteem. For example, Plunkett, Williams, et al. (2007) conducted a study with 807 Latino adolescents from three high schools in Los Angeles. They found that youth in intact families, stepfather families, and single mother families who reported higher maternal and paternal psychological control also reported lower self-esteem. Bush, Supple, and Lash (2004) studied adolescent’s perceptions of parenting in a sample of 534 youth (10-16 years of age) from Mexico. They found that (1) perceived maternal and paternal coercion was related to lower self-esteem in girls but not boys, and (2) perceived maternal and paternal autonomy-granting (often viewed as opposite of parental rejection) was related to greater self-esteem in boys and girls. Ruiz, Roosa, and
Gonzalez (2002) found that maternal rejection was negatively correlated to their children’s self-esteem in samples of Mexican American \((n = 70)\) and European American \((n = 161)\) families. Similar results have been found with Latino samples.

Longitudinal studies have found that psychological control by parents is related to a range of maladaptive outcomes such as aggression by adolescents (Murray, Dwyer, Rubin, Knighton-Wisor, & Booth-LaForce, 2014), adolescents’ aggression and delinquency (Barnow, Schuckit, Lucht, John, & Freyberger, 2002), negative attention-seeking classroom behaviors in children (Peretti, Clark, & Johnson, 1984), internalizing and externalizing problems in children (Stone, Otten, Janssens, Soenens, Kuntsche, & Engels, 2013), psychological distress of 16 and 18 year olds (Boudreau-Bouchard, Dion, Hains, Vandermeerschen, Laberge, & Perron, 2013), depression in university students (Zemore & Rinholm, 1989), and hopeless attributions, which in turn predicted symptoms of anxiety of early adolescents (Schleider, Vélez, Krause, & Gillham, 2014).

Longitudinal studies have also shown a link between perceived psychological control and self-esteem. For example, Felson and Zielinski (1989) found that having highly critical parents resulted in lower self-esteem in children and adolescents.

Across ethnic groups, age groups, and research design, the literature indicates that perceived rejection by mothers and fathers is harmful to self-esteem of their offspring. Therefore, it was hypothesized that perceptions of perceived maternal and paternal rejection would be significantly and negatively related to positive esteem and positively related to self-deprecation, of Armenian American adolescents and emerging adults as well as female and male Armenian Americans.
Gender Differences

It is likely that gender differences could emerge when examining the relationships between parental acceptance and rejection with positive esteem and self-deprecation. First, children’s first experience of the socialization process generally takes place within the family. In Armenian and Armenian American families, there are typically very distinct gender roles (Bakalian, 1993). As one illustration, Armenian American parents expect girls to be more obedient to parents (Bakalian, 1993; Dagirmanjian, 2005).

Also, according to Gecas and Schwalbe (1986), girls are often more sensitive to interpersonal relationships and dependent on significant others. In contrast, boys’ socialization process encourages mastery, agency, instrumentality, and exploratory activities (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986). Gecas and Schwalbe found that boys’ self-esteem was more sensitive to the parental control while girls’ self-esteem was more strongly affected by parental acceptance.

Also, gender differences have been found on self-esteem (see meta analysis; Kling, Hyde, Showers, & Buswell, 1999). Specifically, boys reported slightly higher self-esteem than girls, with larger effect sizes during late adolescence. Another meta analysis conducted by Gentile, Grabe, Dolan-Pascoe, Twenge, Wells, and Maitino (2009) examined gender differences in various domains of self-esteem across 115 studies. They found that male participants scored higher than females on physical appearance, athletic, personal, and self-satisfaction self-esteem, while female participants scored significantly higher than males on behavioral conduct and moral-ethical self-esteem.

In summary, gender differences are predominant in Armenian American families, the importance and sensitivity to family relations may vary by gender, and self-esteem
differences have been found. Thus, in this study, the relationships between parenting and self-concept will also be looked at separately for male and female participants.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Procedures

Adolescent Procedures

The adolescent data came from a private Armenian school (45.6%), a public school (38.7%) with the majority of students being Armenian, and five public schools (15.7%) with primarily Latino students. Each school was located in the Greater Los Angeles area of southern California. Written permission to conduct the study was obtained from the administration at each school prior to data collection. Students were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research process after it was explained to them in detail by the researchers. Parent consent forms were distributed to the students approximately 1-2 weeks prior to data collection. Students with signed parent consent and student assent forms were allowed to participate in the study. Questionnaires were distributed in class. Students completed the questionnaire in their class on the same day.

Emerging Adult Procedures

The emerging adult data were collected from Armenian American university students through an online survey and/or paper survey. The principle investigator contacted local Armenian American university student groups in the Greater Los Angeles area of southern California to solicit participation in the research project. Permission was solicited by the student group coordinators by explaining the research process and the importance of their participation. Later, the principle investigator visited the university program or class and administered the paper survey, explained the instructions, remained in the room to answer any questions or concerns, and then collected completed surveys.
from the undergraduate and graduate students who were willing to participate.

Additionally, an online version of the survey was created through Qualtrics.com. Snowball sampling was utilized to contact emerging adults who met the criteria for inclusion. They were sent a link, which directed them to the online survey. They were then asked to forward the link to other Armenian American university students. Similarly, Facebook was utilized to link the online survey through a group event that targeted other Armenian Americans. No compensation was provided.

Finally, the study also included students from psychology subject pool at a comprehensive university in Los Angeles. These students participated by filling out the online survey. Their compensation included class credit to fulfill a course requirement for a freshmen introduction to psychology course (general education) and a sophomore psychology course.

**Data Coding and Entry Procedures**

The data collected through the paper-pencil surveys were taken to a university research lab where trained undergraduate research assistants coded and entered the data into an Excel spreadsheet. To minimize error, teams of students verified the data entry. The data collected from the online surveys were also downloaded into Excel format, where coding was verified and matched with paper survey coding to ensure consistency. Next, both the paper-pencil data and the online data were combined into an SPSS data file. Lastly, frequencies were conducted on every variable to double check for any errors. All data were stored on password-protected computer in a locked research office.
Sample Characteristics

Adolescents’ Demographics

The analyses on adolescents were conducted using data from 233 Armenian American adolescents ranging in age from 13 to 18 years ($M = 14.88$). Gender was distributed with boys making up 44.2% of the participants and girls making up 55.8%. The majority of the students were in the 9th grade (71.7%) with approximately 24.0% in 10th grade, 2.6% in 11th grade, and 1.7% in 12th grade. Of the adolescents, 45.6% attended a private Armenian school, 38.7% attended a public school with the majority of students being Armenian, and 15.7% attended one of five public schools with primarily Latino students. All the schools were located in the Greater Los Angeles area of southern California.

The majority (89.7%) of the adolescents reported living in a home with both their birth mother and birth father. The second highest family form was birth mother only homes with 5.6%. The remaining 4.7% came from other family forms.

The generation statuses of the adolescents follow: 54.1% first generation (i.e., adolescent and both parents foreign born), 41.6% second generation (i.e., adolescent USA born, both parents foreign born), 3.9% two and half generation (i.e., adolescent USA born, one parent foreign born), and 0.4% third generation (adolescent and both parents USA born).

Birth countries of adolescents who completed the survey follow: 45.9% were born in the United States, 37.8% were born in Armenia, 6.4% were born in Iran, 2.6% were born in Lebanon, 1.3% were born in Turkey, and the remaining 6.0% were born in other countries. Birth countries of the participants’ mother figure were as follows: 1.7% were
born in United States, 46.8% were born in Armenia, 18.5% were born in Iran, 12.9% were born in Lebanon, 1.3% were born in Russia, 4.7% were born in Syria, 6.0% were born in Turkey, 1.3% were born in Egypt, 1.3% born in Iraq, 1.3% were born in Kuwait, and the remaining 2.5% were born in other countries. The birth countries of the participants’ father figure were as follows: 3.4% were born in United States, 40.3% were born in Armenia, 20.2% were born in Iran, 13.3% were born in Lebanon, 6.9% were born in Syria, 6.9% were born in Turkey, 1.7% were born in Egypt, 1.7% were born in Greece, 1.3% were born in Iraq, and the remaining 2.6% were born in other countries.

Emerging Adults’ Demographics

The analyses on the Armenian American emerging adults were conducted using data from 171 emerging adults ranging in age from 18 to 28 years ($M = 20.1$). Gender was distributed with men making up 36.5% of the participants and women making up 63.5% of the sample. All the emerging adults were students at a comprehensive university in Los Angeles. The classification of the emerging adults follows: 32.4% freshmen, 20% sophomores, 27.6% juniors, 18.2% seniors, and 1.8% master’s students.

The majority (81.2%) of the emerging adults reported living in a home with both their birth mother and birth father. The second highest family form was birth mother only homes with 11.8%. The remaining 7.1% came from other family forms.

The generation statuses of the emerging adults follow: 35.3% first generation, 63.5% second generation, and 1.2% third generation. Birth countries of emerging adults who completed the survey follow: 63.5% United States, 24.7% Armenia, 3.5% Iran, 2.9% Russia, and the remaining from other countries. Birth countries of participants’ mother figures follow: 54.7% Armenia, 22.9% Iran, 7.6% Lebanon, 4.1% Russia, 4.1% Syria,
2.9% United States, and the remaining from other countries. Birth countries of participants’ father figures follow: 52.4% Armenia, 22.9% Iran, 9.4% Lebanon, 4.1% United States, 2.9% Syria, and the remaining from other countries.

**Measurement**

The demographic characteristics of the sample were measured using standard fact sheet items. The parenting variables and self-esteem variables were measured using previously validated and reliable self-report scales.

**Parenting Behaviors (Mother, Father).**

**Parental acceptance.** Maternal acceptance and paternal acceptance were measured using the 4-item parental support scale from the Parent Behavior Measure (Bush, Peterson, Cobas, & Supple, 2002). The items assessed perceived behaviors from mothers and fathers that communicate to the participant feelings of warmth, affection, and a sense of being valued. Participants were asked to respond to each item twice: once about their primary mother figure and once about their primary father figure. A sample item follows: “This parent says nice things about me.” Response choices follow: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *strongly agree*. The items were averaged to create scores for each parent. Using the current data, the Cronbach’s alphas for maternal acceptance were .70 for adolescents and .75 for emerging adults. Using the current data, the Cronbach’s alphas for paternal acceptance were .83 for adolescents and .86 for emerging adults.

**Parental rejection.** Maternal and paternal rejection were measured with a 9-item scale using items from the love withdrawal (3 items), guilt induction (3 items), and punitiveness (3 items) subscales from the Parent Behavior Measure (Bush et al., 2002).
Participants were asked to respond to each item twice: once about their primary mother figure and once about their primary father figure. A sample item follows: “This parent is always finding fault with me.” Response choices follow: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. The items were averaged to create scores for each parent. Using the current data, the Cronbach’s alphas for maternal rejection were .86 for adolescents and .89 for emerging adults. Using the current data, the Cronbach’s alphas for paternal rejection were .89 for adolescents and .89 for emerging adults.

**Survey format.** The survey data about parenting behaviors by mothers and fathers were collected using slightly different formats. Specifically, almost half of the adolescent data (i.e., 42.1%) were collected in a same pages format where a respondent read a single item (e.g., “This parent says nice things about me”), and then answered about mothers and fathers. However, for the emerging adult data, all of the data were collected in a separate pages format where a participant answered all the questions about the mother on one page (e.g., “My mother says nice things about me”), and then on the next page answered about the father (e.g., “My father says nice things about me”).

Plunkett, Ainsworth, Henry, and Behnke (2011) found that the correlation between the maternal and paternal behaviors were significantly higher in the same pages format compared to the separate pages format. The implication of this will be discussed in the interpretation of the findings.

**Self-Esteem (Positive Esteem, Self-deprecation)**

The 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979) was utilized to measure two aspects of self-concept: positive esteem and self-deprecation. Evidence exists that the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale is sometimes better as two separate factors
(e.g., Farruggia, Chen, Greenberger, Dmitrieva & Macek, 2004; Owens, 1994; Supple & Plunkett, 2011; Supple, Su, Plunkett, Peterson, & Bush, 2013). Positive esteem was created by averaging the five positively worded items, while self-deprecation was created by averaging the five negatively worded items. Response choices follow: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree. Sample items include: (a) “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself” (positive esteem), and (b) “All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure” (self-deprecation). Using the current data, a Cronbach’s alpha of .79 for adolescents and .85 for emerging adults was found for positive esteem, and a .83 for adolescents and .87 for emerging adults for self-deprecation.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

SPSS 22.0 for Mac OS 10.10 was used to run the statistical analyses. Prior to conducting the analyses, independent samples t-tests were conducted to examine whether responses on online surveys significantly differed than the paper surveys on each of the variables in the study. These analyses were only conducted for the emerging adult sample, since all data on adolescents were collected using paper surveys. The results indicated no significant differences between the two methods on maternal acceptance, paternal acceptance, maternal rejection, paternal rejection, positive esteem, and self-deprecation. Thus, the data from online surveys were collapsed with the data from the paper surveys.

The analyses were conducted separately for the total sample as well as the following subsamples: adolescents, emerging adults, female participants, and male participants.

Zero-Order Correlations

Zero-order correlations (i.e., Pearson correlations) were used to determine how strongly related (at the bivariate level) the four maternal and paternal variables were with positive esteem and self-deprecation. Table 1 shows the results from the correlations for the total sample and each subsample.

As hypothesized, perceived acceptance from mothers and fathers were significantly and positively correlated with positive esteem across the total sample and all subsamples. The strength of the correlations ranged from .23 to .34. Also as hypothesized, perceived acceptance from mothers and fathers were significantly and
negatively correlated with self-deprecation across the total sample and all subsamples, with correlations ranging from -.22 to -.43.

As hypothesized, perceived rejection from mothers and fathers were significantly and negatively correlated with positive esteem across the total sample and all subsamples; except for paternal rejection to male emerging adults’ positive esteem ($r = -.10, p > .05$). The strength of the significant correlations ranged from -.16 to -.37. Also as hypothesized, perceived rejection from mothers and fathers were significantly and positively correlated with self-deprecation across the total sample and all subsamples, with correlations ranging from .36 to .51.

### Multiple Regression Analyses

Multiple regressions were conducted using data from the total sample and each subsample. The multiple regressions showed the amount of variance in positive esteem and self-deprecation accounted for by the four parenting variables. Also, the beta coefficients were examined. Table 1 shows the $R^2$, corresponding $F$ value, and the standardized beta coefficients for each regression model.

In the first multiple regression equation with the total sample, the parenting variables accounted for 15% of the variance in positive esteem and 29% of the variance in self-deprecation. Perceived maternal acceptance, paternal acceptance, and maternal...
rejection were significantly related to positive esteem, while perceived maternal rejection, paternal rejection, and paternal acceptance was significantly related to self-deprecation,

In the next set of regressions for the adolescents, the parenting variables accounted for 15% of the variance in positive esteem and 28% of the variance in self-deprecations. Perceived maternal acceptance and paternal acceptance were significantly and positively related to positive esteem, and perceived maternal rejection and paternal rejection were significantly and positively related to self-deprecation.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Sample (N = 404)</th>
<th>Adolescents (n = 233)</th>
<th>Emerging Adults (n = 171)</th>
<th>Female Participants (n = 239)</th>
<th>Male Participants (n = 165)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>PE</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom accept</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad accept</td>
<td>.19**</td>
<td>-.14**</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom reject</td>
<td>-.21**</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad reject</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R^2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F value</td>
<td>16.86**</td>
<td>41.28**</td>
<td>9.82**</td>
<td>22.49**</td>
<td>5.10**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*\(p < .05\). **\(p < .01\). Note: Standardized beta coefficients are shown. PE = Positive esteem; SD = Self-deprecation

In the following set of regressions for the emerging adults, the parenting variables accounted for 13% of the variance in positive esteem and 23% of the variance in self-deprecation. Perceived maternal rejection was significantly and negatively related to positive esteem, while perceived paternal acceptance and maternal rejection were significantly related to self-deprecation.

In the subsequent set of regressions for the female participants, the parenting variables accounted for 19% of the variance in positive esteem and 32% of the variance in self-deprecation. Perceived paternal acceptance and maternal rejection were significantly related to positive esteem. Perceived maternal acceptance, paternal acceptance, and maternal rejection were significantly related to self-deprecation.

In the final regression models for the male participants, the parenting variables
accounted for 13% of the variance in positive esteem and 32% of the variance in self-deprecation. Perceived maternal acceptance was significantly and positively related to positive esteem, while perceived paternal rejection was significantly and positively related to self-deprecation.

In summary, the maternal and paternal variables accounted for greater variance in self-deprecation (i.e., 23-32%) than positive esteem (i.e., 13-19%). Also, the amount of variances accounted for in positive esteem and self-deprecation were similar across subsamples. Although not a consistent pattern, it appears that, in general, maternal acceptance and paternal acceptance were more likely to contribute to positive esteem, while maternal rejection and paternal rejection were more likely to contribute to self-deprecation.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

Brief Summary of Major Findings

The purpose of this study was to add literature on Armenian American parent-child relations and self-esteem. Specifically, the study examined the influence of perceived parental (i.e., maternal and paternal) acceptance-rejection on self-esteem (i.e., positive esteem and self-deprecation) in Armenian American adolescents and emerging adults. As hypothesized, at the bivariate level in the total sample and subsamples (with one exception), parental acceptance was correlated positively to positive esteem and negatively correlated to self-deprecation, while parental rejection was negatively correlated to positive esteem and positively correlated to self-deprecation. In the correlations, perceived paternal rejection was not significantly correlated to positive esteem of male participants. Overall, the parenting variables accounted for substantially more variance in self-deprecation (28-32%) than positive esteem (13-19%). The parenting variables accounted for similar patterns of variance in the adolescent and emerging adult subsamples as well as the male and female subsamples. And finally, some support for the dialectical self was provided in the findings of maternal and paternal rejection to self-deprecation.

Discussion of Major Findings

As hypothesized, the current study demonstrated that perceived acceptance from mothers and fathers were positively related to positive esteem and negatively related to self-deprecation. These results are similar to previous studies examining parental support related to positive esteem and self-deprecation in other samples (e.g., Supple & Plunkett,
2011), including samples that included Armenians (even though they were not the primary focus; e.g., Frank et al., 2010; Supple et al., 2013). This and the previous findings are consistent with IPARTheory which indicates that individuals who perceive acceptance from their parents will develop a more secure attachment, ultimately providing a sense of autonomy and confidence which manifests in more positive esteem (Rohner et al., 2012). These findings are also consistent with Cooley’s (1902) “looking-glass-self” construct, which postulates that individuals will have better self-esteem when they perceive positive appraisals reflected from significant others (e.g., parents). Also consistent with previous studies (e.g., Frank et al., 2010; Supple et al., 2013) as well as IPARTheory (Rohner et al., 2012) and looking glass self (Cooley, 1902), the hypotheses regarding parental rejection and self-esteem were also supported. Specifically, this study demonstrated that perceived rejection from mothers and fathers was negatively related to positive esteem and positively related to self-deprecation. When individuals perceive rejection from parents, they are more likely to be anxious and insecure, therefore arousing self-deprecating cognitions and emotions and undermining positive esteem (Rohner et al., 2012).

The significant relationships between perceived parenting and self-esteem were expected because of the importance of family in Armenian American culture (Bakalian, 1993). The findings were somewhat similar between the adolescent and emerging adult subsamples. This might be because of the high value of family and also because all of the adolescents and 92.4% of the emerging adults lived with at least one of their parents. Thus, it is likely that parents are still actively involved in the emerging adults’ lives.
The findings were somewhat similar between the male and female respondents in the correlations, with a few differences emerging in the multiple regressions. For example, paternal acceptance and maternal rejection were especially important for female participants to both positive esteem and self-deprecation, while maternal acceptance was related to male respondents’ positive esteem and paternal rejection was related to male respondents’ self-deprecation. Because of the multiple household roles that Armenian American mothers and daughters share, it is possible that rejection from mothers can be especially impactful, while acceptance from fathers could provide a secure base within which to develop self-esteem. Perceived rejection from fathers was not significantly related to positive esteem of male participants in the correlations or multiple regression. This finding is surprising for a few reasons. First, within Armenian American families, the father is the head of the household and usually the one who lays down the rules, thus control by fathers should be especially important. However, a father could set down the rules without engaging in rejection. Even so, Gecas and Schwalbe (1986) found that the self-esteem of 17-19 year-old boys, compared to girls, was more sensitive to parental psychological control (i.e., a form of rejection). However, in this study the impact of parental rejection is only indicated with self-deprecation but not positive esteem with adolescent boys and male emerging adults. Thus, male Armenian Americans might internalize negative appraisals from fathers, increasing self-deprecation, while not undermining positive esteem. Further research is needed with other samples of Armenian Americans before definitive conclusions are drawn.

And finally, some support for the dialectical self was provided, but only in the findings of maternal and paternal rejection to self-deprecation. Specifically, when
examining the correlations between maternal and paternal acceptance and positive esteem and self-deprecation, the strength of the associations are somewhat similar. However, rejection from parents is substantially more correlated to self-deprecation than acceptance from parents. These patterns hold true across each of the subsamples. Thus, there is at least partial support for a dialectical self-esteem which has been found in other minority cultures such as the Persian Americans and Asian Americans (i.e., Frank et al., 2010, Schmitt & Allik, 2005, Boucher et al., 2009). The next step is to specifically examine the factor structure of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, testing one-factor, two-factor, and bifactor models in samples of Armenian American adolescents and emerging adults.

**Limitations and Research Implications**

This thesis will add to the understanding of Armenian American adolescents’ and emerging adults’ perceived parental behaviors in relation to their self-concept, however, certain limitations do exist. First, a cross-sectional design was used to collect the data at one point in time, which limits the ability to show that whether perceptions of parenting can predict later development of self-esteem. It is possible that a person’s self-esteem could influence perceptions of parental acceptance and rejection (see Felson & Zielinski, 1989). Future studies should utilize a longitudinal approach to measure parenting and self-esteem at multiple time points to help determine the order of the relationship between the variables.

Second, this study only used data from a single respondent to measure the variables in the study, which could lead to shared method variance, inflating the relationship between the variables. Also, research in the past has indicated little correspondence between parents’ reports of their parenting behaviors and the child’s
perception of these parental behaviors (i.e., Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986) or that child’s perceptions are more related to self-esteem than parents’ perceptions (Demo et al., 1987). Future studies may consider collecting data from parents in addition to perceived parenting behaviors, both of which could address the two aforementioned limitations.

Next, this study does not take into account intra-group differences due to collapsing various Armenian factions (e.g., Armenians from Armenia, Iran, Lebanon, Russia) into a single group. Plus, generational differences, religious differences, and socioeconomic differences were not examined as possible confounds. Thus, future studies should consider examining the potential differences that may exist in relation to perceived parental behaviors and self-concept between varying Armenian groups (e.g., Western/Eastern Armenians, generation status, socioeconomic status, religion).

Next, generalizability was restricted due to the sample being limited to only Armenian Americans from the Greater Los Angeles area. Armenian Americans in Los Angeles area have access to churches, mass media, and organizations all targeting Armenians. Thus, the sample may not be representative of Armenian Americans in other locations in the United States which do not have the same access. Future studies should attempt to collect data from Armenian Americans throughout the United States.

Also, this study focused on only two parenting constructs (i.e., parental acceptance, parental rejection) that were consistent with the IPARTheory. However, there may be other parenting behaviors that are relevant in Armenian American families. Therefore, future studies should look at other parenting behaviors (e.g., parental authority, coercive parenting, behavioral control, meeting parents’ expectations, parent-child conflict, open/closed communication).
Also, the present study is limited because it focused on just two aspects of self-esteem (i.e., positive esteem, self-deprecation). Future studies may consider looking at specific types of self-esteem (i.e., academic, moral-ethical, physical appearance, self-satisfaction) as well as other indicators of adjustment and well-being.

**Implications**

In spite of the previously mentioned limitations, the results of this study may be interpreted and utilized in accordance with a variety of prevention and interventions which aim to enhance positive esteem and minimize self-deprecation. The old adage of, “your perception is your reality”, couldn’t be truer! With this in mind, along with the abundant and rich empirical research studies validating this notion, joined by the findings of the current study, teachers, counselors, practitioners, and parents can benefit from the results. For instance, the findings indicate that perceived parental acceptance generally correlates positively with positive esteem and negatively with self-deprecation, and perceived parental rejection correlates negatively with positive esteem and positively with self-deprecation. Therefore, within the academic environment, school administrators and faculty members including teachers and school counselors can be encouraged and trained to help students identify the varying ways parents show their love and affection towards their children. Similarly, practitioners during clinical sessions can spend time with their client by exploring and distinguishing between perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection and the reality of why parents behave in a specific way with their children. For example, if a client is expressing that their parent doesn’t love them because he or she is not allowed to attend parties, then the practitioner can utilize cognitive restructuring techniques to reframe the client’s negative perception to a more positive
perception by guiding the person to discover or realize the protective and caring nature of the parent’s decision in not allowing him or her to attend a specific social gathering. Likewise, practitioners serving emerging adults may also utilize cognitive restructuring techniques to reframe negative perceptions into positive perceptions by exploring and eventually aiding the client to see patterns through talk therapy whereby the client will consciously arrive towards awareness, acceptance, resolution, and self-empowerment.

Also, Armenian American adolescents and emerging adults could be taught ways to deal with the psychological pain and/or threats to autonomy and self-concept that result from perceived rejection from parents. Cognitive behavioral strategies, mentioned above, can be used to improve and increase the coping tools of the clients. Also, homework and psychoeducation can be utilized.

In addition, practitioners can inform Armenian American parents they should be especially cautious not to utilize rejecting behavior because it may hinder the child’s ability to develop positive views of self and increase self-deprecating thoughts. Thus, parents can be taught more strategies that reflect acceptance, and they can be helped to state and enforce their expectations in a more authoritative way without engaging in rejecting behaviors. When this occurs, it would be expected that their offspring would be less likely to feel rejected.

Since some evidence for dialectical self-esteem was supported in the study, practitioners should prescribe to treatment goals, which promote positive esteem as well as diminish self-deprecating thoughts and emotions for positive goal oriented treatment outcomes.
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