ПЕЛЬМЕНИ or ? [PELMENI] OR [JIAOZI]? Dietary Acculturation among Russian Immigrants in Beijing

Maiorova, Ekaterina

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Dietary Acculturation among Russian Immigrants in Beijing

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Abstract

Emerging multiculturalism in China's metropolitan areas implies people's frequent engagement in intercultural contacts and, therefore, creates a need for a mutual acculturation between the migrants and the host society. This research aimed to contribute to the study of immigrant adjustment in China by exploring the patterns of dietary acculturation among Russian immigrants residing in Beijing. The research was framed as an explorative qualitative case study and employed Berry's acculturation model as a theoretical basis. This model draws on the dichotomy between ethnic identification and acculturation in order to distinguish four strategies of acculturation: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Acculturation strategies framework was applied to food preferences of Russian immigrants in three food-related contexts: everyday consumption, preparation, and New Year celebration. As a result, integration was defined as a predominant acculturation strategy of the group. However, it was also revealed that the patterns of dietary acculturation altered considerably depending on the context of consumption. Overall, the findings of the study demonstrated a complex, dynamic, and multidimensional nature of the acculturative processes.

Keywords: dietary acculturation, acculturation strategies, Russian immigrants, China, food, immigrant adjustment.

Contents

1. Introduction

China's rapid economic development has given rise to a massive flow of international immigration and turned the country into ''a crucial hub of the global migration order'' (Pieke 2011: 40). With each passing year more and more international students, journalists, foreign managers, labor migrants and people involved in trade are coming to China in search of new opportunities. According to the results of the 2010 population census, the total number of foreigners residing in China equaled 1,020,145, which was composed of 234,829 residents from Hong Kong, 21,201 residents from Macao, 170,283 residents from Taiwan, and 593,832 residents originating from other countries (NBSC 2011). Although the official statistics do not include illegal immigrants and therefore the actual number of foreigners is higher that the official figures, the number of immigrants is still modest in comparison to China's population of 1.34 billion people (UN ESA 2011). However, the relatively small share of foreign population does not imply that the foreign presence in China should not be studied. Pieke (2011: 46) argues that in cities such as Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing ''foreigners have become a long-term and important aspect of the urban landscape.'' The concentration of foreigners of similar ethnic or cultural background in certain cities or city districts leads to the formation of immigrant communities and therefore inevitably entails cultural adjustments of both immigrants and host society. ''The dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members'' is referred to as a process of acculturation (Berry 2005: 698).

1.1 Knowledge Gap: Acculturation in China

Compared to flourishing academic studies on lived experience and acculturation of Chinese people residing overseas, acculturation of immigrants within China remains under-researched. The previous research on foreigners in China deals with, for instance, gendered identities and transnational Singaporean households in China (Yeoh & Willis 2000, 2005), comparison of British and Singaporean transnational communities in different parts of China (Yeoh & Willis 2002), the African trading community in Guangzhou (Bodomo 2010, Zhang 2008), the Korean enclave economy in Yanbian (Kim 2003), North Korean refugees in Northern China (Lankov 2004, Lee et al. 2001), and identity and self-perception of Taiwanese immigrants in Shanghai (Lin 2011, Wang 2009). However, none of the studies employs the acculturation theoretical framework or deals directly with acculturation of

foreigners in China. Several studies conducted by Selmer (1999, 2002, 2005) elaborate on the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriate managers in China and their subjective well-being. However, these studies focus on general patterns of adjustment of Western immigrants and do not take their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds into consideration.

Emerging multiculturalism in China's metropolitan areas implies people's frequent engagement in intercultural contacts and, therefore, creates both a potential for conflict and a ''need for negotiation in order to achieve outcomes that are adaptive for both parties'' (Berry 2005: 697). Thus, understanding the patterns of acculturation of foreigners in China can be considered a promising field for future research, as it would help to identify problematic and conflicting areas in intercultural relations.

The concept of acculturation refers to a process of cultural change resulting from contact between two cultures (Hunt et al. 2004: 977). At an individual level, cultural change can be understood as a process whereby a person acquires new cultural traits that are adding to or replacing previous traits (ibid.). In other words, acculturation can be defined as maintenance of traits of the culture of origin and/or acquisition of traits of the host culture (Laroche et al. 1999: 207). It is important to note that acquisition of host cultural traits does not necessarily imply the loss of ethnic cultural traits. On the contrary, immigrants may identify with more than one culture, depending on a situational switch to the culture that is operational (Cleveland et al. 2009: 197–198). These multiple cultural identifications can be reflected in an individual's attitudes, values, and behaviors (Laroche et al. 1999, Phinney 1990). Compared to attitudes and values, behavioral traits are easier to observe, trace, and compare. Therefore, the field of acculturation research is dominated by the study of immigrants' behavioral characteristics. In particular, the studies of immigrant acculturation were conducted in relation to acquisition of the host country's language (Jiang et al. 2009, Young & Gardner 1990), purchase of clothing (Rajagopalan & Heitmeyer 2005, Shim & Chen 1996), and food choice (Gray et al. 2005, Kim & Chan 2004).

This thesis contributes to the study of immigrant adjustment in China by exploring the patterns of acculturation of Russian immigrants residing in Beijing. Scientific research on this group of people is virtually non-existent and therefore this study contributes both to the field of studies of immigrant acculturation in China and to the research on contemporary Russian emigration and diaspora.

Due to the fact that acculturation is a multifaceted and complex process, there is no intention to provide a comprehensive analysis of all its aspects within the given thesis. This study aims to explore the patterns of acculturation of Russian immigrants in Beijing by focusing on their food preferences in different situations of consumption.

Food has long been recognized as a key expression of culture and an important cultural symbol (Peñaloza 1994: 42, Verbeke & Lopez 2005: 824, Tian & Tian 2011: 51). The manner in which an individual prepares, handles, and consumes food reflects upon the entire culture from which the individual comes (Tian & Tian 2011: 52). However, whereas food habits are basically stable and predictable, "they are, paradoxically, at the same time undergoing constant and continuous change" (Fieldhouse 1995: 2 in Cleveland et al. 2009: 198). Thus, on the one hand, immigrants can use food to maintain relations with their home culture by preparing and consuming ethnic foods. On the other hand, adoption of mainstream foodways can serve as a means to establish a working relationship with the host culture. This duality reflects the potential of food preferences to serve as a marker of the acculturation process, since food consumption can be seen both as a means of identification with the home culture and at the same time as a way to acquire host culture traits.

This thesis explores food preferences of Russian immigrants in Beijing in three food-related contexts: everyday consumption (food they consume on a daily basis), preparation (food they prefer to cook), and New Year celebration (food they consume during the holiday). New Year celebration was chosen as one of the most important festive occasions for most Russian people regardless of their religious views and place of residence. It is further argued that patterns of dietary acculturation may alter considerably depending on the context of consumption. However, before proceeding with the exploration of acculturation patterns, some general characteristics of Russians in Beijing should be presented.

1.2 Russians in Beijing

Russian immigration to China is not a recent phenomenon. Early cross-border migration started in the seventeenth century and was connected with the territorial expansion of the Russian Empire to the Far East (Focus Migration 2009). The northeastern part of China experienced several significant inflows of Russian immigrants, first at the end of the nineteenth

century due to the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway, and afterwards due to the influx of Russian refugees during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the ensuing civil war (Moustafine 2002). Although the refugees were prompted to leave China after the Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949, the northeastern part of the country in general and Harbin in particular are still prominent for their salient Russian heritage.

Compared to the Russian diaspora of Harbin, the Russian presence in Beijing is relatively recent. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent economic transformation of Russia led to the appearance of the so-called small-time traders – people who traveled to China in order to buy cheap goods (mostly clothes) to sell in Russia. In the beginning of the 1990s small-time trade was concentrated around several Russian shops located on Yabaolu Street in Beijing. By the end of the 1990s the Yabaolu area had evolved into a large market supplying small-time traders from the countries of the former Soviet Union (Goncharov 2006). At present Yabaolu is a buoyant ethnic enclave with its own distinct character (see Images 1–3). All the signs here are written in Cyrillic, Chinese street vendors bargain in broken Russian, and numerous rickshaws cheerfully yell *"Poyehali!"* (''Let's go!''). It is no wonder that this area is often referred to as Beijing's ''Russiatown'' or ''Little Russia.''

Image 1. "Red Square" shopping center (author's photo).

Image 2. Yabaolu rickshaws (author's photo).

Image 3. "Yabao" shopping center (author's photo).

The statistics on Russian immigrants in Beijing is controversial. The figures vary from 3,500 (Schenkova 2011) to 5,000–7,000 (Tertsi 2005) people permanently residing in the city. The difference in the estimates can be explained by several factors. First, it is important to note that the majority of Russians residing in Beijing do not hold Chinese citizenship and therefore are not considered to be a part of China's Russian ethnic minority. Since the immigrants (except those married to Chinese nationals) reside in China on the basis of temporary residence permits, it is difficult to distinguish those who

intend to live in China permanently from those whose presence is temporary. Another complicating factor is that the estimates resulting in relatively large numbers tend to view the Russian population of Beijing as similar to the Russian-speaking population and therefore include the migrants from all of the former Soviet Union in the estimate (Goncharov 2006).

The immigrants who reside in Yabaolu area are, as a rule, involved either in trade or in the service industry. Yabaolu is filled with small-time and wholesale traders, interpreters, logistics managers, and so-called ''cargo'' businessmen who deal with custom clearance and shipping goods to Russia. Those who are not involved in trade are employed in Russian restaurants, hairdressing salons, nightclubs, pharmacies, and shops selling Russian food. However, it should be noted that not all the Russians living in Beijing are involved in Yabaolu activities. Among them are employees in Chinese and Western firms, diplomats, journalists, and cultural workers.

Although not all Russian immigrants reside or work in Yabaolu, this area is important to all of them because it is the place where Russian restaurants and food stores are located. According to the website Restoran.us (2012), which lists information about Russian restaurants around the world, there are 38 restaurants and cafes serving Russian food in Beijing, and 24 of them are situated in Yabaolu and the neighboring area. The names of the restaurants are supposed to arouse nostalgic and patriotic feelings. Here one can find *''Moskva''* (''Moscow''), *''Krasnaya Ploschad''* (''Red Square''), *''Sibir''* (''Siberia''), and ''Black Bear.'' Accessibility of both Chinese and Russian food in Beijing makes it possible to study the food choices of Russian immigrants and draw conclusions about their acculturation patterns based on their food preferences.

1.3 Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to examine food preferences among Russian immigrants in Beijing in order to gain a greater understanding of their patterns of acculturation. The research draws on Berry's acculturation model (2005, 2008), which suggests four strategies of immigrant acculturation: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization (see Section 3.1.3). The acculturation strategies framework is applied to the food preferences of Russian immigrants in three food-related contexts: everyday consumption, preparation, and New Year celebration. It is assumed that the immigrants may switch from one acculturation strategy to another depending on the context of food consumption.

The study is guided by the two following research questions:

1) Which strategies of dietary acculturation do Russian immigrants in Beijing employ?

2) In what way does the social context of food consumption and preparation influence the choice of acculturation strategy?

The findings are discussed within the broader acculturation framework. As a final result of the study, conclusions are drawn about the acculturation patterns of Russian immigrants in Beijing in relation to their food preferences.

1.4 Disposition

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 deals with methodological aspects of the thesis. Chapter 3 reviews previous research on acculturation in relation to food consumption and outlines concepts and theories that are used as a theoretical basis of the thesis. Chapter 4 presents and analyzes the empirical data collected during the fieldwork, and Chapter 5 summarizes the findings and presents suggestions for future research.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Strategy

The research is framed as an exploratory qualitative case study. Qualitative approach is considered to be the most relevant way to address the research problem. The aim of the study is to understand the reasons behind the immigrants' food choices in different situations (everyday consumption, preparation, and New Year celebration). There is no intention to ''measure'' acculturation or establish any numerical correlations between variables. This research rather treats food as a symbolic entity and intends to explain how food preferences can reveal the acculturation strategies of Russian immigrants in Beijing. Thus, the study draws heavily on the immigrants' experiences, opinions, and attitudes, and tends to perceive the social world ''through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants'' (Bryman 2008: 366).

Russian immigrants in Beijing were chosen as a case for four main reasons. First, the existence of a geographically compact and therefore visible and

distinctive Russian community in Beijing is an interesting and unusual phenomenon in itself. Second, accessibility of Russian, Chinese, and other kinds of food in Beijing makes it possible to study the patterns of acculturation of Russian immigrants in relation to their food preferences. Third, as it has already been mentioned, there is an apparent gap in academic research on a contemporary Russian immigrant community in China. The final reason for choosing Russian immigrants as a case is the fact that I am a native Russian myself. Sharing the same cultural background with the informants greatly helped me during the process of data collection and analysis.

2.2 Data Collection

Since academic research on food preferences of Russian immigrants in Beijing is non-existent, this study relies on interviews as a principal source of information. The interviews were conducted during a three-week fieldwork that took place mainly in the Yabaolu area of Beijing. The empirical data is placed into a broader theoretical framework of acculturation. The theoretical body of the thesis draws upon academic articles and books, and in the process and as point of comparison references are made to studies of acculturation among other groups of people outside of China.

Empirical data was collected through in-depth multiple interviews with 14 informants: eight females and six males (see Table 1). The average age of the respondents was 31 years and their average period of residence in Beijing was estimated to be seven years. Purposive sampling was used, which means interviewing people who are relevant to the research question (Bryman, 2008, p. 458). The informant selection was based on three main criteria: Russian ethnicity, long-term residence in Beijing, and being single or married to a Russian national. People married to Chinese or other nationals were not selected for this study as it was assumed that mixed marriage would result in different acculturation patterns of Russian immigrants.

Contact with five informants was established before the fieldwork through an Internet forum, *"Vostochnoe Polusharie"* (''Eastern Hemisphere''), where immigrants of Russian origin discuss their life in China, Japan, and other Asian countries. During the fieldwork the snowball method was used for gaining access to the rest of the informants.

Apart from being single or married to Russian nationals, the informants from the sample happened to share several characteristics, which, however, were not included in the selection criteria. First, before settling in Beijing they used to live in urban areas of Russia. Second, all of them held a university

degree, which points at a high educational level of the group. Third, they migrated to China on a voluntary basis. Finally, all of the respondents were fluent in the Chinese language. The relative homogeneity of the group might be a result of snowball sampling (some of the respondents were colleagues, former classmates, close friends, or knew each other before the emigration). In relation to these commonalities, it is important to note that several academic studies reveal that an urban place of residence (Verbeke & Lopez 2005), voluntary migration (Satia-Abouta et al. 2002), a high level of education (Rabikowska 2010, Verbeke & Lopez 2005), and mastering the host society's language (Jamal 1996, Laroche et al. 1999) are the factors that can greatly facilitate an immigrant's adaptation to a host culture. Therefore, it is possible that the informants from the sample are acculturated to Chinese culture to a greater extent than Russians who come to Beijing from rural areas, have a low level of education or do not speak Chinese. However, although it is problematic to generalize the findings of this study to all Russian immigrants in Beijing, the benefit of using a relatively homogeneous group as a sample is that the acculturation patterns of the group might be more apparent and therefore easier to trace.

Table 1. Informant Sample

№	Name (Fictional)	Gender	Age	Line of Work	Period of Residence in Beijing, Years
1	Alex	Male	32	Purchasing manager	9
2	Anna	Female	27	Logistics manager	6
3	Daria	Female	29	Tour guide	8
4	Dmitry	Male	38	Purchasing manager	10
5	Elena	Female	26	Interpreter	5
6	Ivan	Male	28	Interpreter	6
7	Julia	Female	41	Teacher	12
8	Maria	Female	26	Unemployed	5
9	Max	Male	33	Interpreter	9
10	Mikhail	Male	37	Logistics manager	10
11	Natalia	Female	29	Logistics manager	7
12	Sergey	Male	27	Student	6
13	Tatiana	Female	26	Tour guide	4
14	Victoria	Female	31	Interpreter	7

According to Bryman (2008: 437), qualitative interviewing places emphasis on the interviewee's point of view, expects detailed and lengthy answers, and implies an informal style of questioning. Thus, the informants were expected to provide a detailed description of their personal food preferences in three situations: daily consumption, preparation, and New Year celebration. The

interviews were semi-structured and consisted of open-end questions. A prepared list of questions (available in the Appendix) was used to guide the conversation and make sure that all the topics of interest were covered. Apart from that, the conversations were flexible and, as a rule, resulted in active discussions.

The interviews were conducted in the Russian language in an informal setting. Usually it was a coffee shop, however with three of the informants I had dinner in three different Russian restaurants. The length of the interviews varied from 20 minutes to two hours depending on the setting and responsiveness of the informants. All the 11 interviews conducted in coffee shops were recorded. During the dinners I took notes because the conversations lasted for several hours and were not always related to the topic of the research.

The gathered data served as a basis for a textual description of the experience and, in the end, provided an ''understanding of the common experiences of the participants'' (Creswell 2007, p. 61). Throughout the thesis the data is displayed by using quotations from the interviews, which are discussed within the acculturation theoretical framework.

As a native Russian temporarily residing in Sweden, I am aware that my interpretation of the informants' stories could be influenced by my own expatriate experience. Nevertheless, I attempted to make the results of the research ''as accurate and representative of the field of inquiry as possible'' (Kvale 2009: 74).

2.3 Ethical Considerations

The study was carried out in accordance with the ethical guidelines formulated by The Swedish Research Council (CODEX 2012). Informed consent, which implies informing the participants about the purpose and the procedures of the research (Kvale 2009: 71), was obtained from all the respondents. Hence, before conducting the interviews it was made sure that the informants had a clear understanding of the fact that the collected materials would be used for my Master thesis and could be published online. The interviews were recorded only with the full consent of the respondents. Acquired information was treated confidentially, and the anonymity of the informants was protected by assigning aliases to the individuals. I do not consider the acquired data to be hazardous or harmful to the respondents, however, in case some of the participants regret sharing certain information, I informed them of ''their right to withdraw from the study at any time'' (ibid.: 70).

3. Acculturation and Food: Theoretical Insights

3.1 Acculturation

The acculturation concept was developed in the beginning of the twentieth century as a means to understand how immigrant populations became incorporated into mainstream American society (Lakey 2003: 104, Padilla & Perez 2003: 36). Nowadays, international migration has become a core component of the process of globalization (Castles & Miller 2003), which means that the acculturation concept can literally be applied to any area in the world.

In order to develop working relationships within a new environment, immigrants are compelled to constantly negotiate the differences between host and home cultures and adapt to cultural values that may differ from their own (Lakey 2003: 104, Tian & Tian 2011: 52). In this vein, acculturation can be understood as a "process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry 2008: 328). Thus, the acculturation concept implies the existence of two different cultural orientations: "the ethnic versus the mainstream, and attempts to place the acculturating individual on a continuum between them" (Hunt et al. 2004: 977). The ethnic component of acculturation, which is further conceptualized as “ethnic identity” or “ethnic identification,” should be given special attention, as it is crucial for understanding acculturation as a multidimensional construct.

3.1.1 Ethnic Identity versus Acculturation

There are numerous attempts to define ethnicity and ethnic identity. According to Phinney (1990: 503), ethnic identity involves an individual's self-identification as a group member, a sense of belonging to an ethnic group, attitudes toward ethnic group membership, and a degree of ethnic group involvement. Bhugra (2004: 133) argues that “ethnicity” implies sharing a common heritage in terms of history, language, rituals, and preference for certain music and food, and “ethnic identity” "depends on the cultural or physical criteria which set the group apart." Laroche et al. (1999: 204) mention common ancestry, a sense of shared values and attitudes, and feelings of belonging and/or commitment as the basis for identification with one's ethnic group. Moreover, ethnic identity can be expressed through friendship networks, religious affiliation, participation in clubs and organizations, endogamy, food preferences, and traditional celebrations (ibid.: 205).

Although definitions of ethnic identity vary, it is generally accepted that ethnic identity "is meaningful only in situations in which two or more ethnic

groups are in contact over a period of time" (Phinney 1990: 501). In other words, an immigrant becomes aware of his/her ethnic identity only when relocated from the home environment to a new cultural context (Rabikowska 2010: 378). Thus, ethnic identity development implies both differentiation and integration: "differentiation of oneself and one's group from others and the integration of oneself with members of one's own group" (Laroche et al. 1999: 203).

Ethnic identity is recognized as a culture-bound phenomenon (ibid.: 204, Bhugra 2004: 133). On the one hand, culture can be viewed as "a cluster of nebulous characteristics carried by ethnic group members" (Hunt et al. 2004: 977). These characteristics include attitudes, norms, values, beliefs, and behaviors (ibid.). Hence, ethnic culture is a relatively stable notion as it is preserved by ethnic group members, and can serve as a basis for distinguishing one ethnic group from another. However, on the other hand, culture is a learned experience that is "acquired by individuals in the course of interacting with others in their daily lives" (Cleveland et al. 2009: 197). Thus, "while preserving traditions, culture also incorporates mechanisms for change" (ibid.). As cultural components are amenable to change, ethnic identity can be seen as a fluid and developmental occurrence (Cleveland et al. 2009: 197, Laroche et al. 1999: 203, Phinney 1990: 510).

When viewed through the lenses of acculturation theory, ethnic identity can be defined as "the retention or loss of the attitudes, values and behaviours of one's culture of origin" (Laroche et al. 1999: 201). By contrast, acculturation means adaptation to the dominant culture, which entails acquisition of host culture traits (ibid.: 206). Thus, ethnic identification and acculturation can be seen as similar yet separate constructs (ibid., Farver et al. 2002: 338). The main distinction between ethnic identity and acculturation is that the former is focused on the maintenance of original cultures, whereas the latter emphasizes the acquisition of host cultures (Chattaraman & Lennon 2008: 520, Phinney 1990: 501). Attempts to correlate the notion of ethnic identity to that of acculturation have resulted in differing acculturation models. This research draws on a multidimensional model of acculturation, which is described in the following section.

3.1.2 Multidimensional Model of Acculturation

A multidimensional model of acculturation appeared as a replacement of a unidimensional model, which was "no longer born out empirically" (Askegaard et al. 1999: 2). The unidimensional model implied that the eventual outcome of the acculturation process was the loss of distinctive cultural and behavioral features of non-dominant group members, leading to

their full assimilation into the dominant society (Berry 2005: 706, Jamal 1996: 13). This model tended to confound ethnic identity with acculturation, as it implied that "a strengthening of one requires a weakening of the other'' (Phinney 1990: 501).

On the contrary, the multidimensional model of acculturation implies that "ethnic identification and acculturation are two distinct sub-processes of cultural adaptation" (Cleveland et al 2009: 209) and are built on two assumptions. First, acculturation processes are viewed "as functioning in various separate domains, such as in attitudes, values, behaviors, language and cultural identity" (Van Oudenhoven et al. 2006: 641). Thus, immigrants may identify with heritage and host cultures to different degrees in these various domains (ibid.). For instance, fluency in the host country's language does not imply that immigrants abandon the consumption of their ethnic food or stop wearing their ethnic dress. Hence, acquisition of host culture traits does not necessarily lead to the loss of ethnic identity (Cleveland et al. 2009: 198). Quite the reverse, new culture traits are rather seen as supplementing native ones (Laroche et al. 1999: 207). The second assumption holds that acculturation is a mutual process that can bring about changes in either or both groups in contact, rather than only in a non-dominant group (Berry 2005: 701, Jamal 1996: 13). The main ideas of the multidimensional model are summarized in the definition of acculturation suggested by Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits (1936: 149–150):

> "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups ... under this definition, acculturation is to be distinguished from culture change, of which it is but one aspect, and assimilation, which is at times a phase of acculturation ..." (in Berry 2008: 330).

Thus, the multidimensional model of acculturation implies that "immigrants are the architects of their own identities" (Askegaard et al. 1999: 2) as they "can decide what elements of their culture they wish to surrender and what cultural elements they want to incorporate from the new culture" (Padilla & Perez 2003: 37). Hence, immigrant groups and individuals undergo the process of acculturation in different ways and to varying degrees (Gbadamosi 2012: 7). There are various factors that can affect the process of acculturation. These include gender, religion, family structure, power relationships between the host society and minority groups, and duration of intergroup contact (Padilla & Perez 2003: 39). Moreover, the process of

acculturation is strongly influenced by the immigrant's personality, and therefore individuals of the same cultural background might pursue different acculturation strategies (ibid.: 40).

Thus, immigrant identity construction can be seen as a result of different acculturation outcomes based on a cultural dichotomy (culture of origin versus culture of immigration) (Askegaard et al. 1999: 5). This thesis draws upon the acculturation strategies suggested by Berry (2005, 2008) in order to explain different patterns of acculturation that emerge as individuals combine host and home cultural traits in their consumption practices.

3.1.3 Acculturation Strategies

In the previous section acculturation was defined as a multidimensional process that involves immigrants' orientation to both home and host cultures. In order to further conceptualize the multidimensional model of acculturation, Berry's acculturation strategies framework (2005, 2008) is employed.

According to Berry (2005: 704), immigrants are faced with two fundamental problems, one related to the maintenance of heritage culture, and the other referring to the relations with other ethnocultural groups. In Figure 1 these two issues are presented as varying along bipolar dimensions (Berry 2008: 331). The four strategies of acculturation are distinguished on the basis of correlation between the two issues: "(i) a relative preference for 'maintenance of one's heritage culture and identity' versus not maintaining them; and (ii) a relative preference for 'seeking relationships with other groups' and participating in the larger society versus avoiding such relationships" (ibid.). The names of the strategies differ depending on whether the focus is on the strategies employed by the non-dominant group (the left side of Figure 1) or the larger society (the right side of Figure 1).

Berry (2005, 2008) argues that immigrants can pursue four strategies of acculturation: *assimilation*, *separation*, *integration*, and *marginalization*. *Assimilation* occurs when individuals are not interested in maintaining their cultural identity and instead seek daily interaction with other cultures. On the contrary, when individuals place a value on maintaining their ethnic culture, and at the same time avoid interaction with other cultures, *separation* takes place. *Integration* involves interest in both maintaining one's original culture and regular interaction with other groups. Individuals undergoing *marginalization* express little interest in both ethnic and mainstream cultures, or do not have a possibility to maintain their original culture or interact with other cultures. According to Berry (2008: 328), the most likely outcomes of intercultural contact are either some forms of integration or separation.

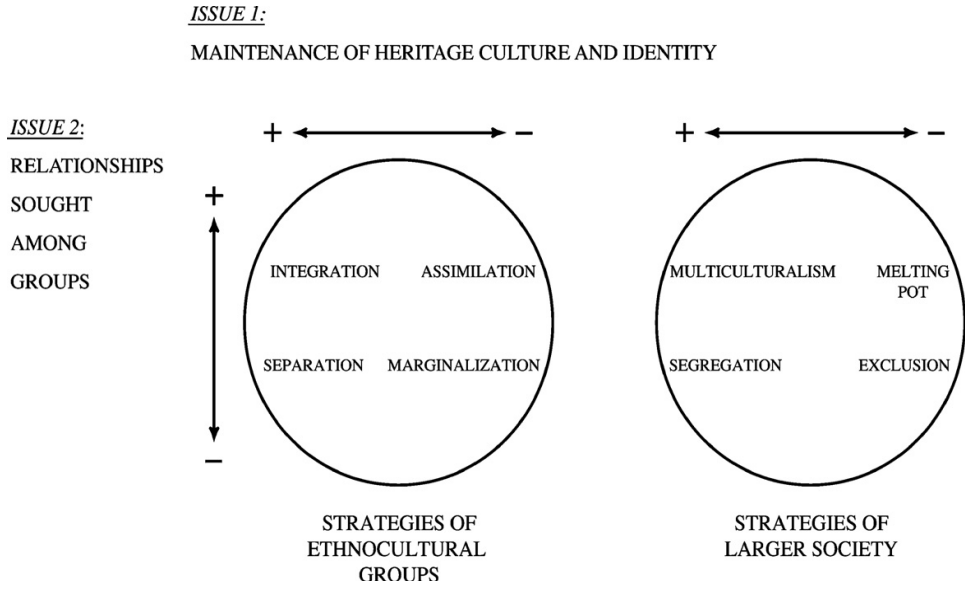

Figure 1. Acculturation Strategies (Berry 2008: 332).

The strategy employed by the host society can influence the way in which mutual acculturation would take place (Berry 2008: 332). The *melting pot* strategy aims to assimilate immigrants into the mainstream culture. When immigrants' *separation* is imposed by the dominant group, *segregation* occurs. Similarly, when *marginalization* is forced by the host society, *exclusion* takes place. *Multiculturalist* strategy promotes ethnocultural diversity and immigrants' *integration* into the mainstream society. It is important to note that acculturation strategies are neither discrete nor static: individuals may switch from one strategy to another, and the host culture may consist of several cultures rather than a single dominant culture (Van Oudenhoven et al. 2006: 641).

The acculturation strategies framework was applied predominantly in academic studies dealing with the health implications of acculturation. For example, acculturation strategies were studied in connection to acculturative stress (Caplan 2007, Dow 2011, Kosic 2004, Phillimore 2011, Poppitt & Frey 2007), migrants' mental health status (Jang et al. 2007, MacLachlan et al. 2004), their psychological well-being (Abu-Rayya 2006), and self-esteem (Pham & Harris 2001). Besides health research, Berry's model was applied in a variety of studies aiming to understand the patterns of immigrant adjustment in host societies (e.g. Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver 2003,

Ghuman 2000). However, the model is rarely used in the studies of dietary acculturation. It was applied, for instance, in Gold's (2012) research on the dietary acculturation of refugees in the American Midwest. Other studies (e.g. Castellanos 2011, Vanegas 2007) dealt mostly with the food preferences among Hispanic immigrants in the USA in relation to their health conditions.

In this study I apply Berry's model to the dietary acculturation of Russian immigrants, and argue that the choice of dietary acculturation strategy depends on the context of consumption. Therefore, the following section addresses four main issues. First, it looks at food consumption through the lenses of the multidimensional model of acculturation. Second, it briefly reviews academic literature related to dietary acculturation. Third, it adjusts Berry's model to immigrant dietary acculturation and interprets acculturation strategies in terms of food consumption. Finally, it explains why everyday consumption, preparation, and New Year celebration were chosen as relevant contexts for the study of immigrant food preferences.

3.2 Food as a Domain of Acculturation

3.2.1 Cultural Meaning of Food

Culture is considered to have the most profound influence on consumer behavior (Cleveland et al. 2009: 196, Gbadamosi 2012: 7), as cultural context "shapes the meanings people ascribe to objects, behaviours, and environments embedded within the consumption experience" (Gbadamosi 2012: 7). The multidimensional model of acculturation holds that it is possible for immigrants to identify with more than one culture and alternate between cultures (Cleveland et al. 2009: 197). Hence, if consumer behavior is determined by cultural context, immigrants' consumption choices would reveal their multiple cultural identities. Askegaard et al. (1999: 1) argue that the consumption system represents a domain in which immigrants, on the one hand, may seek to maintain certain patterns from their home culture and, on the other hand, adopt patterns of the host culture. Thus, consumption choices made by immigrants can relate to both ethnic identification and acculturation. Therefore, it is assumed that individuals employing different combinations of acculturation versus ethnic identification or, in other words, pursuing different acculturation strategies, may also show differences in consumption patterns.

It has long been acknowledged that food serves as a key expression of culture and is considered to be an important cultural symbol (Peñaloza 1994: 42, Verbeke & Lopez 2005: 824, Tian & Tian 2011: 51). Anthropologists

view food not only as a basic biological need but also "as a social phenomenon, a strategic field in which 'nature' and 'culture' come into contact" (Girardelli 2004: 310). An individual's cultural background determines "what he or she eats, the manner in which the food is consumed, when it is appropriate to eat, and the significance of the food being consumed" (Miller 2009 in Tian & Tian 2011: 51). Moreover, cultural symbolism lies not only in food's physical traits, but also in "an item's absence at table, the utensils employed to eat it, the cuisine of which it is a part, and who provides the dish and in what form" (Jones 2007: 137). Hence, observations of the types of foods consumed and manners in which they are consumed can be an important, if not determining, factor in the study of cultures (Tian & Tian 2011: 52).

However, as has been noted before, culture is not a static notion and while preserving traditions, it also incorporates mechanisms for change (Cleveland et al. 2009: 197). Therefore, if food is a culture-bound product, neither food preferences nor rituals of food consumption can be seen as rigid and permanent. Thus, on the one hand, food is an ethnic marker "which carries out productive meanings recognized by members of the same group, who through food-related rituals celebrate their belonging" (Rabikowska 2010: 377). On the other hand, whereas food habits are basically stable and predictable, "they are, paradoxically, at the same time undergoing constant and continuous change" (Fieldhouse 1995: 2 in Cleveland et al. 2009: 198). This duality reflects a potential of food preferences to serve as a marker of the acculturation process, since food consumption can be seen both as a means of identification with the home culture and at the same time as a way to acquire host culture traits.

3.2.2 Immigrant Food Preferences: Continuity and Change

This subsection deals with current academic research on immigrant acculturation in relation to food consumption. Immigrant dietary acculturation has been frequently addressed in academic literature, which makes it difficult to review all the relevant research in this short subsection. Therefore, in order to simplify and structure the review the studies related to immigrant food preferences were grouped around two broad issues that are frequently encountered in the literature. These issues are nostalgia and identity construction. The research focused on nostalgia places the emphasis mainly on the maintenance of home culture traits, while the studies dealing with identity construction aim to find out how immigrants combine home and host culture traits in their food preferences.

Food-related Nostalgia

Studies dealing with food-related nostalgia place the emphasis on the experience of displacement rather than on identity construction (Holtzman 2006: 367). In this case food manifests the relationship with the home country and serves as a "vehicle for the recreation of the abstract meaning of home through materially involved activities which alleviate the sense of fragmentation and discontinuity caused by displacement" (Rabikowska 2010: 378). The concept of a lost home becomes then fragmentarily reconstituted through various practices, including food choices and rituals of food consumption (ibid.).

For instance, in her study of Polish immigrants in London, Rabikowska (2010: 379) argues that consumption of foods known from home is seen, on the one hand, as an act of ritualizing belonging, and on the other hand, as an act of delineating the difference between "us" and "the others." The results of her study reveal a high degree of isolation among the first-generation Polish immigrants within the host culture, which is explained mainly by their inability to communicate in the English language fluently (ibid.: 383).

Sutton (2001) uses findings from his fieldwork on the island of Kalymnos, Greece, to explore the connection between food and memory. He argues that food and eating are "part of migrant responses to displacement and strategies for reconstituting community and re-creating cultural continuity" (ibid.: 120). He also emphasizes the longing evoked in immigrants by the smells, tastes, and appearance of familiar food, which provide a temporary return to a lost homeland (Counihan 2002: 583).

A broad range of scientific literature has been concerned with how immigrants in the United States perform and maintain their ethnic identities through ethnic food. For instance, Humphrey and Humphrey (1988) explore the role of food consumed on festive occasions in defining the ethnic identity of modern Americans. Liu and Lin (2009) argue that the post-1965 Chinese immigrants to the United States use ethnic food to maintain their Chinese ethnicity while becoming American. The symbolic meaning of food and its role in maintaining ethnic identities within ethnically diverse American society was also studied by, for example, Brown and Mussel (1984), Douglas (1984), Gabbacia (1998), and Latshaw (2009).

Identity construction

Dietary habits and the choice of foods not only "represent an explicit tool that migrants can use to recreate their identity in the migration context" (Gasparetti 2009: 8), but also "can serve as a means for immigrants to adapt

to the host culture, while honoring the traditions of the home culture" (Cleveland et al. 2009: 199). The research dealing with immigrant identity construction aims to understand how immigrants display "overlapping social group identities" by consuming particular foods from host and/or home cultures (ibid.).

A vast variety of studies on immigrant identity construction in relation to food consumption confirm the conclusion by Cleveland et al. (2009: 208) that immigrants (in their case Lebanese living in Canada) "appear to reside in a two-culture world — over time acquiring characteristics of the dominant culture, yet maintaining strong ties to their culture of origin." Thus, in terms of food preferences immigrants tend to maintain the consumption of ethnic foods while adopting traits of host culture food consumption. For instance, in his study of Inuit people living in Canada, Searles (2002) argues that the immigrants consume a combination of Inuit and non-Inuit food, and explains "the cultural logic" that lies behind the consumption of each of the food types.

However, not all the studies are based on a presumption that immigrants assume their ethnic identities for themselves. Gasparetti (2009) and Georges (1984), for example, hold that ethnic identity can be imposed on immigrants by the host society. Gasparetti (2009: 18) notes that when building their identity, Senegalese migrants in Italy take account of the classifications and simplifications imposed by the host society, which sees them as "all the same," whereas they often have different cultural backgrounds. As a result, they are forming and defining a collective Senegalese identity on the basis of Senegalese food consumption, which serves as a vital link with their homeland (ibid.).

Moreover, not all the studies confirm the notion that in the course of dietary acculturation immigrants would eventually combine host and home culture foods in their consumption patterns. Holtzman (2006: 366) argues that "everyone has origins and ancestors, but not everyone performs them through food," and even if they do, such a performance "may not have much life outside festivals or public displays."

For instance, Buckser's study (1999) of the Jewish community in Denmark reports that "Jewish dietary rules have declined sharply, with many Jews observing them only partially and many others renouncing them completely" (ibid.: 193). Tuchman and Levine (1993) reveal another surprising trend among the Jewish people who emigrated from Eastern Europe to New York City. They are reported to have become strongly attached to Chinese restaurant food and even incorporate the consumption of Chinese food into

their new culture and identity as New York Jews (ibid.: 382). Lee (2000: 217) argues that elderly first-generation Korean immigrants in Japan struggle to negotiate their identity in Japanese society because their ethnic food is too spicy for them to handle.

Although the focus of Jamal's study (1996) is not on immigrant acculturation but on acculturation patterns of the host society, it provides important insights into the possible outcomes of the acculturation process. Jamal (ibid.: 23-24) reports several cases of "overacculturation" in relation to foreign food consumption. He argues that the increasing popularity of food from the Indian subcontinent in the United Kingdom led to the fact that native English people living in Bradford started to eat spicier dishes than did the British Pakistanis themselves (ibid.: 23). Wallendorf and Reilly (1983) reveal overacculturation of Mexican immigrants in the southwest of the United States. Their findings demonstrate that Mexican Americans consume more red meat, eggs, white bread, prepared tortillas, and several other products than do Mexicans in Mexico or Anglos in America (ibid.: 300).

Summing up, the overview of the studies of immigrant food consumption reveals that acculturational outcomes vary greatly for different ethnic groups involved in cross-cultural contact. As has already been noted in the Introduction chapter, the research on acculturation patterns of Russian immigrants in Beijing is virtually non-existent. Therefore, this thesis aims to contribute to the field of acculturation studies by addressing the food preferences of this group of people. In order to frame the research theoretically, I apply Berry's acculturation strategies framework, which first needs to be interpreted in terms of immigrant food preferences.

3.2.3 Acculturation Strategies Revised

As has already been noted, four acculturation strategies suggested by Berry (2005, 2008) are *assimilation*, *integration*, *marginalization*, and *separation* (see Section 2.1.3). These strategies are defined depending on the correlation between the two dimensions – acculturation and ethnic identification. If food consumption is considered, the dimension of acculturation can be interpreted as consumption of host culture food versus avoiding it, while the dimension of ethnic identification implies maintenance of ethnic foodways versus its abandonment. When assessing the correlation between these two dimensions, four dietary acculturation strategies can be defined.

Assimilation implies low ethnic identification and a high level of acculturation. Hence, the immigrants employing this strategy would prefer to consume host culture food while abandoning their ethnic foodways. On the contrary, *separation* occurs when ethnic identification is high and the level of

acculturation is low. Thus, immigrants pursuing separation strategy would have a strong preference for ethnic food while avoiding host culture food. *Integration* implies maintenance of home culture traits while acquiring traits of the host culture. In this case, immigrants would combine the foodways from both cultures and attempt to find a balance between them. *Marginalization* takes place when both ethnic identification and acculturation levels are low. Hence, marginalized immigrants would experience little interest in both ethnic and host food consumption and therefore would attempt to find an alternative foodway.

Along with acculturation strategies employed by immigrants, Berry's model of acculturation (see Figure 1 in Section 2.1.3) takes the strategies employed by the host society into consideration. However, the analysis of host society attitudes lies beyond the objectives of this research. Therefore, in this study acculturation strategies employed by Chinese society are not considered.

There are various factors that can influence the choice of an acculturation strategy in general, and making food consumption decisions in particular. Environmental, individual, and situational characteristics have proven to be of particular importance (Cleveland et al. 2009, Bisogni et al. 2011).

Characteristics of the environment include, for example, social support from fellow ethnic group members, density of ethnic community, social class of the immigrants (Cleveland et al. 2009: 208), cultural distance between host and home cultures (ibid.), availability and cost of ethnic products and ingredients (Verbeke & Lopez 2005: 838, Jones 2007: 146, Hartwell et al. 2011: 1398), and existence of immigrant community organizations (Laroche et al. 1999: 208).

Individual characteristics that can influence food choice include, for instance, age and gender (e.g. Jamal 1996: 19, Jones 2007: 131, Rabikowska 2010: 383); income (Jones 2007: 146); level of education (Rabikowska 2010: 383, Verbeke & Lopez 2005: 837); length of cultural contact (Cleveland et al. 2009: 208); urban or rural place of residence (Verbeke & Lopez 2005: 837); cultural pride towards own ethnicity (Gronhaug et al. 1993); religion (Hartwell et al. 2011: 1398, Laroche et al. 1999: 201); state of health (Jones 2007: 131); and ability to speak the mainstream language (Jamal 1996: 23, Laroche et al. 1999: 206). An immigrant's personality traits also influence food consumption decisions. For instance, food neophobia (reluctance to eat and/or avoidance of unfamiliar foods) is an individually varying trait (Verbeke & Lopez 2005: 826).

The third group of factors that determine immigrant food choice is referred to as situational or contextual factors. Given the group's homogeneity in

terms of educational level, ability to fluently communicate in the host society's language, and urban origins, in this research the emphasis is placed on the context of consumption as a determinant of the immigrants' food choices. Therefore, situational factors are addressed separately in the following subsection.

3.2.4 Food Choice and the Context of Consumption

The process of acculturation has proven to be selective, which implies that immigrants, if they are not oppressed by a host society, can decide which traits of the home culture they wish to maintain or surrender, and which traits of the host culture they wish to adopt or avoid (Cleveland et al. 2009: 198, Padilla & Perez 2003: 37). However, Tadmor and Tetlock (2006: 174) argue that rather than simply blending aspects from host and home cultures, immigrants maintain dual, independent identities. Hence, they can switch from culture to culture as appropriate to the situation (Cleveland et al. 2009: 198). Projecting this notion onto food consumption, it can be assumed that immigrant acculturation patterns may differ depending on a particular context of food consumption (ibid.).

Cleveland et al. (2009: 208) argue that "the fabrics of home and host cultures can be woven into different textures" depending on the considered situation of consumption. Their study of Lebanese immigrants in Canada reveals that the level of both ethnic identification and acculturation depends on a social setting of consumption. Thus, ethnic food items are consumed with family and Lebanese friends, while the consumption of mainstream food occurs when the immigrants share meals with Canadian people (ibid.: 201).

A variety of studies emphasized the importance of ethnic food consumption during national holidays and other festive events (Askegaard et al. 1999, Cleveland et al. 2009, Humphrey & Humphrey 1988, Gasparetti 2009, Jones 2007, Rabikowska 2010, Searles 2002). According to Gasparetti (2009: 10), the consumption of ritual meals during particular religious events and festivities serves as an expression of Senegalese identity on a collective level, and plays a crucial role in maintaining the social and cultural cohesion of the Senegalese community in Italy. Similarly, Rabikowska (2010) points out that the symbolic and emotional prominence of Polish products increases during Easter and Christmas, when "Polish identity gains a more ostentatious collective performance" (ibid.: 389).

Askegaard et al. (1999) argue that Greenlandic immigrants in Denmark prefer either ethnic Greenlandic or mainstream Danish food depending on the consumption context. Ethnic food is consumed mainly on festive occasions, however, gathering around a Greenlandic meal may be a festive

occasion in itself (ibid.: 6). Danish food is usually consumed in everyday life, and thus perceived as utilitarian and convenient (ibid.: 9).

Apart from the food types that immigrants prefer to consume on a daily basis and festive occasions, the types of food that immigrants choose to prepare at home can also serve as an important marker of their adaptation to the host culture. Preparation of food by the immigrants can be seen as linked both to ethnic identification and acculturation. On the one hand, preparation of ethnic food manifests the relationship with home and nation (Rabikowska 2010: 378), and therefore reinforces the migrant's ethnic identity. On the other hand, cooking host culture food indicates "a more personalized adaptation of culturally foreign objects" (Jamal 1996: 17), and thus points to a high level of acculturation to the host culture.

Thus, literature review reveals three food-related situations that may result in different acculturational outcomes. These situations can be referred to as everyday consumption, preparation, and festive occasions. In this study, New Year celebration was chosen as a particular case in order to more specifically analyze the food preferences of Russian immigrants during festive occasions. In the next chapter the findings from the fieldwork are presented, and the acculturation strategies framework is applied to each of the three contexts of consumption.

4. Food Choice Among Russian Immigrants in Beijing: Contextual Dimensions and Variations

4.1 Everyday Consumption

All the respondents stated that they usually had three main meals a day – breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Thus, in the course of the interviews they were asked to describe the food they preferred to eat for each of the mealtimes, and reflect on the factors that influenced their choice of Russian, Chinese or other types of food in certain situations of consumption.

As a result, all the informants reported that out of the three mealtimes breakfast underwent the least transformation after their emigration to China. In other words, the breakfast they had in Beijing was more or less similar to what they used to have in Russia. However, it does not imply that the informants ate similar food for breakfast. On the contrary, nearly every interviewee had his/her own idea of proper morning food. Some of the informants (mostly females) favored a light meal consisting of yoghurt, fruit, and oatmeal or muesli. Males usually preferred a more substantial meal, e.g.

fried eggs or omelet sometimes coupled with fried sausages. The most popular breakfast food among both male and female informants was *kasha* (oat, semolina or rice porridge) and/or sandwiches.

When the informants were asked if they incorporated any elements of a typical Chinese morning meal, most of them admitted that it was highly unlikely that they would ever do that. The opinions commonly shared by the respondents are expressed in two following quotations:

> "Honestly I don't think I could ever adopt a Chinese way of having breakfast. My Chinese colleagues can eat buns stuffed with meat or zhou [rice gruel] or even a bowl of noodles in the morning. Their breakfast seems more like lunch to me... Everything is cooked, hot, and often has meat in it. In the morning I prefer to eat tvorog [cottage cheese] or sandwiches. If I have some extra time, I make bliny [crepes] or syrniki [cottage cheese pancakes]" (Julia, 41).

> "I've tried zhou, youtiao [deep fried dough sticks], mantou [steamed bread] and other things which are considered to be typical Chinese breakfast items. Although I suspect that most of my Chinese friends eat leftovers from the previous day's dinner for breakfast (laughs) [...] I admit that I quite like zhou and youtiao with hot soy milk and often eat it at hotels if I travel somewhere. However, I wouldn't eat it every morning. I can eat it occasionally but it still feels strange... It's a cultural thing I guess... My usual omelet or a ham sandwich just seem far more appealing..." (Max, 33).

Several respondents explained that they were reluctant to adopt the Chinese way of having breakfast because Russian food was easily available in the Yabaolu area, and thus there was no need to look for substitutes for familiar items:

> "We always make sandwiches with bread, butter, and cheese for breakfast. By bread I mean real bread, not the one you see at a Chinese bakery. To me their bread tastes like a sponge cake; it's sweet and heavy. I prefer rye bread or other dark sorts of bread that are not that easy to find here... It's good that I live not far from Yabaolu so I can always buy normal bread in Russian shops" (Daria, 29).

> "What I really miss here in China is normal bread, normal butter, normal sausages. It's good I can find all that in Beijing. Although it

> doesn't taste exactly the same as back home, it's still better than what you can find in Chinese supermarkets" (Sergey, 27).

These quotations are representative in several ways. First, there is a clearly pronounced division into "us" (Russians) and "them" (Chinese). Second, when discussing the Chinese way of having breakfast, the respondents perceived it as alien and odd, whereas Russian food habits were commonly described as "normal." Such distinction coupled with unwillingness to adopt the elements of the host culture points both at the group's high level of ethnic identification and a low level of dietary acculturation, which corresponds to the separation strategy of acculturation.

However, at lunchtime the informants appeared to be much more open to the dietary patterns of the host society. For instance, Julia, who was rather skeptical about adopting the Chinese way of having breakfast (see the quotation above), expressed much more enthusiasm about eating Chinese food for lunch:

> "I work with Chinese people and we usually have lunch together at one of the Chinese restaurants nearby. I usually get some dumplings or noodles or some rice dish. When I'm having lunch alone I get a takeaway from the same place."

When I asked Julia if she ever had Russian food for lunch, she replied the following:

> "Sometimes... Not often though... In fact, I don't remember when I had it for lunch last. I live and work quite far from Yabaolu so when I'm at work I always have lunch at a Chinese place. But on weekends I can eat something else. It's rarely Russian though... Usually some Chinese, Thai or Japanese food. I guess I got used to eating a lot of rice here (laughs) [...] Frankly speaking, it depends on what I'm in the mood for, whom I'm with, and what is convenient."

Lunch was a mealtime that most of the respondents had at work, and therefore the choice of a lunch meal was largely determined by a convenience factor. As the quotations below demonstrate, the respondents tended to have lunch at places that were closer to their workplace, cheaper, or where they could be served quicker:

> "I work in Yabaolu and have lunch at a Russian restaurant across the street. They have a canteen service with quite decent food at lunchtime. Sometimes I eat Chinese food too, but not very often" (Mikhail, 37).

> "Of course I eat Chinese food for lunch! I like Russian food more, but it's too expensive to eat at Russian restaurants every day" (Daria, 29).

> "I usually have lunch at a Korean restaurant close to my school" (Sergey, 27).

> "If I have time I go to a Chinese restaurant and get a lunch menu. If I'm in a hurry I can just grab a burger from KFC or McDonald's" (Ivan, 28).

> "I go out to get a takeaway and then eat it at work. Usually I get some chow mein [fried noodles] or something rice-based from a small restaurant nearby. I rarely have lunch at Russian restaurants because I think that their food is overpriced... It's okay to have dinner there but for lunch it's a bit too much" (Natalia, 29).

It is interesting that Mikhail was the only respondent who had lunch at a Russian restaurant on a daily basis. The rest of the informants tended to choose other options that were either cheaper or closer to their workplace. However, when asked about their food preferences on weekends, seven out of 14 informants admitted that they would rather have Russian food for lunch. Moreover, all of them expressed a preference for homemade Russian food over restaurant food. Five informants did not express a clear preference for any food type. For instance, Maria, 26, reported the following:

> "We [her and her boyfriend] usually eat Asian food on weekends. Indian and Thai are our favorites. We eat at Chinese and Korean restaurants quite often too. But, you know, sometimes you get tired of Asian food and really want something normal... Like mashed potatoes, beef stroganoff, pizza or lasagna... Or a cheeseburger (*laughs*)."

It is notable that Maria clearly divides food types into two groups: "Asian food" (Indian, Thai and Chinese) and "normal" food that is also a mixture of different cuisines. The first group includes the food types that are popular in

Beijing while largely uncommon in Russia, whereas the second group is represented by the food known from home and therefore perceived as familiar.

Dietary patterns of two informants, Alex, 32, and Anna, 27, differed considerably from those of the rest of the group. Alex admitted that he preferred Chinese food to any other food type and explained his choice in the following way:

> "Chinese food is my absolute favorite. Flavors are fantastic and the variety of dishes is enormous. I mean, it's impossible to get tired of it, you just try food from another province and it's completely different […] Russian food? I doubt it exists (laughs). I think you'll agree that most of what we have was borrowed from other countries. Of course I eat it during holidays and sometimes with friends, but I'm not obsessed with it. I just don't understand why some people keep whining how they miss this and that. One of my friends would literally drive through all Beijing to get a loaf of rye bread! I mean, come on! We are in China! Take a chance and try as many new things as you can!"

Another informant, 27-year-old Anna expressed a different opinion. She admitted that she avoided eating Chinese food because it was "unhealthy." She argued that "it [Chinese food] can't be healthy because it is so oily, and they also use meat with bones, fat, and skin... And they also add MSG [monosodium glutamate] to everything..." However, when I asked Anna about Russian food, she said that it was "not much better than Chinese." She believed that the Russian diet contains too much bread and fats (mayonnaise, butter, full-fat milk, cream, and sour cream). Therefore, she preferred to bring "a lunchbox with healthy food" (usually boiled or steamed chicken breast with broccoli and fresh vegetables) to work. Anna admitted that she rarely went out to have lunch or dinner, and if she had to, she tended to choose vegetarian or vegan dishes.

If lunchtime dietary patterns are viewed through the lens of acculturation theory, it appears that most of the respondents tended to pursue the integration strategy of acculturation. Almost all of them tended to consume Chinese food on weekdays, whereas consumption of Russian food was more common on weekends. Anna was the only person from the sample who avoided both Chinese and Russian foodways and thus employed the marginalization strategy of acculturation. Alex, on the contrary, expressed the strongest preference for Chinese food among all the respondents. Although he

still consumed Russian food on rare occasions, his case was the closest to assimilation.

Interviews about the immigrants' dinner preferences revealed several patterns. First, most of the respondents (nine out of 14) admitted that on a daily basis they did not prepare dinner at home and preferred to eat at a restaurant. Second, none of them reported to have only Chinese or only Russian food for dinner. On the contrary, all the respondents with the exception of Anna tended to alternate between the two foodways, which is typical for the integration strategy of acculturation. Finally, the informants admitted that their food choice mainly depended on the social setting of consumption. In other words, what they were having for dinner was determined by whom they were having dinner with. Three quotations below illustrate this statement:

> "My children love pizza and pasta, so when we go out to eat dinner with my family, we usually choose Western restaurants which serve this kind of food. Sometimes we go to the restaurants that serve *uighur* or *dongbei* (Northeastern) food, because it's quite similar to Russian [...] When I have dinner with our Chinese business partners, we usually go to Chinese restaurants" (Dmitry, 38).

> "If I miss Russian food, I cook something at home because I think homemade food always tastes better. So when I go out to have dinner I prefer to eat Chinese food. I rarely go to Russian restaurants. In fact, I've been there only a couple of times and only with my Chinese friends. They were curious about Russian food so I felt like I had to take them there" (Tatiana, 26).

> "I've been living in Beijing for almost five years now but I still can't get used to some foodstuffs that are common here... So I usually prepare dinner at home or eat at Western or Russian restaurants [...] A month ago my mom came here for a week to visit me and I wanted to introduce her to Chinese food. So for a week I only had dinner at Chinese restaurants which never happens when I'm here on my own" (Elena, 26).

In these three cases the informants reported to favor certain food: Dmitry preferred Western food, Tatiana – Chinese, Elena – Western and Russian. However, all of them altered their usual dietary patterns when the social setting of consumption changed. Dmitry tended to consume different food types depending on whether he had dinner with his family or his business partners, Tatiana only went to Russian restaurants with her Chinese friends,

and Elena consumed more Chinese food when her mother came to visit her in China. However, the dependence of food choice on the social setting of consumption did not necessarily imply that a certain food type was bound to a certain social setting. For instance, Sergey admitted that although he often went out to have dinner with the same group of friends (also Russian immigrants), they did not have a clear preference for any food type:

> "When I'm out with my friends we can basically have anything for dinner. It depends on what we feel like. We can go to a Chinese restaurant. It's especially nice if we are a big group because then we can order a lot of food and share. Or we can go to a Russian, Korean or Thai restaurant or to a pizza place. Or when we're out partying we often eat *shaokao* [barbeque, common street food]" (Sergey, 27).

Summing up, if the group's acculturation patterns are analyzed in relation to food preferences at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, it appears that the informants tended to alternate between different strategies of acculturation depending on the mealtime. At breakfast most of the informants pursued separation strategy, whereas at lunch and dinner integration strategy prevailed. The interviews also revealed that in many cases the informant's food choice was determined not only by his/her food preferences, but also by social setting, price, and convenience of consumption. Overall, when the informants were asked about their general attitude towards Chinese and Russian food, 13 out of 14 reported that they neither avoided Chinese food nor abandoned Russian food consumption, which points at integration as the predominant acculturation strategy of the group.

4.2 Preparation

In the previous section it was discovered that dining out was a common practice among the respondents. However, during the interviews many of them mentioned that they prepared food at home too. Therefore, the informants were asked in which situations they preferred cooking at home to dining out, and what kind of food (Russian, Chinese or other) they tended to prepare most often. The answers to these questions revealed several trends that are discussed further.

First of all, cooking-related habits and preferences appeared to be largely determined by the gender of the respondents. Six female informants out of eight reported that they prepared food at least once a week, whereas two informants (Maria and Victoria) cooked occasionally and preferred restaurant

food to homemade. On the contrary, none of the male informants prepared food regularly. Alex and Dmitry even reported that they have never cooked for themselves in China. However, both informants had different reasons for this. Alex stated that he does not ''see any reason to cook because there is plenty of cheap and delicious Chinese food around,'' whereas Dmitry mentioned that it was his wife who usually prepared food for the family. The rest of the male informants shared Max's opinion that ''cooking is great, but only if it happens once in a while.''

Although the female informants generally cooked more often, the male informants tended to be more adventurous in their choice of ingredients and recipes. Ivan's and Max's quotations illustrate this statement:

> ''I think preparing the same dishes over and over again is extremely boring. That's why I rarely cook, maybe once in a couple of months... But if I do, I cook something challenging. For example, here in China I practice cooking Chinese food. Last time I made my own variation of *mapo doufu*, and before that – sweet and sour fish soup. It was edible but definitely not perfect (*laughs*)'' (Ivan).

> ''My wife calls me an inspiration-driven cook, and I think she's happy that I don't cook very often (*laughs*). Although I don't prepare Chinese food, I try to experiment with Chinese ingredients. Once, I made *borsch* [beetroot soup] with lotus roots and it was quite good'' (Max).

Unlike the men, the female informants tended to be more conservative and follow recipes that were tried before. Daria's and Natalia's quotations explain this pattern:

> ''I only cook on weekends, and that's the time when I want to treat myself and my family to something we like. Usually it's something Russian – *pirogi* [pies with various fillings], mushroom soup or stuffed chicken. Sometimes I bake cookies and cinnamon buns for dessert'' (Daria).

> ''When I cook I usually follow family recipes. Why would I experiment if I know for sure what my family would like? I think we experiment enough with Chinese food; sometimes it's good to maintain traditions too'' (Natalia).

Thus, the female informants tended to adopt a role of family tradition-keepers. Although both Daria and Natalia reported that their families consumed Chinese food more often than Russian, both of them highly valued the time when their families gathered around a homemade Russian meal. The male informants, as a rule, relied on their wives or partners to prepare familiar food, and therefore tended to cook less often and experiment more with recipes.

However, this general trend does not imply that men were always adventurous whereas women were always conservative. It would be more correct to say that the cooking habits of both genders altered depending on the situation. For instance, Max, who liked to experiment with ingredients, had his signature dish that he prepared on special occasions:

> ''I have my own recipe for a perfect roasted ham. It takes a lot of time to make but it's certainly worth it! When we lived in Russia I usually made it for New Year and Easter. Here in China I also make it once in a while. Like once a year or so... Then we invite our friends. They absolutely love it, but I never share my recipe with anyone (*laughs*)''.

Similarly to family gatherings, gatherings of Russian friends were often celebrated with homemade Russian food. For instance, Julia reported the following:

> ''We [her family and family friends] have a tradition: if anyone comes back from Russia, they have to throw a nice Russian dinner. And it's obligatory to use the ingredients that are brought from home! We usually bring herring, bread, smetana [sour cream], kolbasa [sausages], mayonnaise, and sweets. Oh! I almost forgot! Caviar is always a must-have, and vacuum packed salmon too. You can buy those things in Beijing, but they're more expensive and the taste is still not the same...''

Daria also commented on her experience of gatherings with Russian friends:

> ''We don't invite friends very often, but I have a Russian colleague who is an amazing cook. She lives alone and doesn't like to cook for herself so she always invites us when she prepares something nice. She cooks different food, usually Italian but now she's really into Latin American cooking (laughs). Anyway, when we visit her I always bring a homemade cake. Honestly, I hate Chinese cakes.

> They look so pretty, but the taste... I think that's why an oven was the first thing I bought when I came to China (laughs). Can't imagine how people live without baking...''

In general, almost all the informants (Anna and Alex were the exceptions) reported that even if they did not eat Russian food very often, it was very important for them to prepare Russian meals on some occasions (as a rule, gatherings with family and Russian friends) or simply have Russian food items (e.g. caviar, *pelmeni*, and pickled cucumbers) in the fridge, even if those items were not consumed very often. However, in spite of longing for familiar food and a tendency to prepare familiar dishes, the informants' cooking habits were neither rigid, nor static. Tatiana's quotation is representative in this sense:

> ''When I first came to Beijing I kept noticing strange things: red beans in ice cream, vacuum-packed chicken feet, black eggs... I was walking around and kept thinking of boiled potatoes with butter and dill (laughs). But now, after four years, I've got used to Chinese food [...] I still don't eat tomatoes with sugar or smelly tofu but I think more and more Chinese things are entering my life. Now I use a wok a lot... I also learned to like chili and bean sauce [...] I didn't even want to look at tofu when I came here but now I quite like it.''

Other respondents also noticed changes in their cooking routines:

> ''Before, I used to stuff pelmeni [Russian dumplings] with minced meat and add some garlic, onion, salt, and some spices. You know, like it should be... But now I add some Chinese cabbage too. Not as much as they use in jiaozi [Chinese dumplings] but enough to make the meat softer'' (Sergey).

> ''I attended Chinese cooking courses a couple of years ago. Mostly out of curiosity. I really wanted to learn how to use Chinese spices. It's like art in a way... But I don't cook Chinese food at home. Why would I, when it's so much easier to go to a restaurant? Although sometimes I cook something simple like fan qie chao dan [tomatoes and eggs] or yu xiang qie zi [eggplant with garlic sauce]... I prepare more difficult Chinese dishes only when I go to Russia and want to surprise my family and friends...'' (Julia).

It is interesting to note that although all the respondents had Chinese chopsticks at home, most of them admitted to almost never using them. One

reason for that was the general reluctance to prepare Chinese food at home due to its easy accessibility. However, when Chinese takeaway food was consumed at home, six out of 14 informants admitted that they would rather use a fork, although at a restaurant they always used chopsticks.

Although most of the informants did not see the point of preparing Chinese food in China, many of them, similarly to Julia, mentioned that they often prepared Chinese food when visiting family and friends in Russia. For instance, Daria reported the following:

> ''I cook Chinese food in Russia because I feel like I'm kind of China's representative now. I really want my family and friends to know what real Chinese food tastes like, because it's definitely not the same as what we eat at Chinese restaurants back home.''

However, the respondents were not only demonstrating their cooking skills to friends and relatives in Russia, most of them appeared to genuinely miss Chinese food. For example, Ivan reported that apart from tea, which he, as a rule, brought as a gift to his family, he often brought noodles and bean sauce for his personal use. Similarly, when going to Russia Daria tended to bring her favorite pickles and spices, whereas Sergey often brought Chinese candy and several packages of instant noodles with him. Apart from certain food items, the informants tended to miss the variety and affordability of fruit and vegetables in general. Natalia commented on this matter in the following way:

> ''When I am in China, I miss normal cottage cheese, normal chocolate, and many other things. So when I come to Russia, I'm really happy for the first couple of days. But then I decide to cook something and go to the supermarket... Well, that's when I'm reminded of how lucky I am to live in China (laughs). Prices are crazy, and the variety is not as great. I miss fruit the most. For example, there is no way you'll find mangosteens in Russia. Or ripe mangoes...''

Overall, although not all the respondents prepared food regularly, those who did tended to both maintain Russian cooking patterns and incorporate Chinese ways of cooking, which points at integration as the predominant acculturation strategy of the group. However, the level of integration varied depending on the situation of consumption, location, and gender of the respondent. In general, female respondents were inclined to prepare Russian food on a regular basis, which corresponds to their responsibility to maintain

the Russian identity of their families. Maintenance of the Russian identity through cooking was particularly noticeable during family gatherings and meetings with Russian friends, whereas incorporation of Chinese ingredients into familiar recipes and bringing Chinese food to Russia pointed at a group's substantial level of acculturation.

4.3 New Year Celebration

Celebrated on January 1, New Year is one of the most important holidays for any Russian person regardless of his/her religious views and place of residence. Traditionally, it is a time when family members and/or close friends gather around a lavish homemade meal, which usually consists of a variety of appetizers, salads, one or several main courses, and a dessert. Although the festive menu varies from family to family, there are several dishes that can be found on most of the tables during the holiday. For instance, two salads – *olivier* and *selyodka pod shuboy* (''herring under a fur coat'') – are prepared by most of the families, and often considered to be symbols of the New Year celebration in Russia. An abundance of food coupled with a substantial amount of alcohol results in a celebration that usually starts at dinnertime and often lasts until dawn.

When the informants were asked if they celebrated the Russian New Year in China, all of them without a single exception exclaimed: ''Of course!'' This phrase was, as a rule, followed by a lengthy conversation about their family traditions before and after their emigration. Overall, all the respondents mentioned having nostalgic feelings about the New Year celebrations back home, and reported that it was very important for them to at least partially recreate the atmosphere of the holiday when celebrating New Year in China. As the quotations below demonstrate, recreating the atmosphere of the holiday was inseparably linked with the preparation and consumption of traditional foods and drinks:

> ''I don't need much to enjoy New Year's Eve. There should be a New Year tree, the smell of tangerines, a big bowl of olivier, and nice company'' (Victoria).

> ''We always buy and decorate a New Year tree about a week before New Year. On December 31, we sit and watch Soviet-era New Year comedies. Later in the evening our friends arrive, and we gather around a table full of different food. There is olivier, of course. I also

make a squid salad, caviar, and salmon canapés, and selyodka pod shuboy, which is my favorite'' (Julia).

''I think olivier and Russian vodka is enough to set the mood for celebration (laughs)'' (Mikhail).

''I celebrate New Year with my Russian friends. Usually each of us prepares one dish, and then we gather in someone's apartment and have a party. There is a lot of alcohol too (laughs). I usually drink wine or cocktails, but some of my friends prefer Russian vodka. And all of us drink champagne when the clock strikes twelve'' (Natalia).

Even Alex and Anna, who were not keen on eating Russian food in China, reported that celebrating New Year with traditional foods was very important for them. Alex did not prepare food himself and preferred to spend New Year's night at a Russian restaurant with his friends, whereas Anna, on the contrary, preferred to celebrate at home. She reported the following:

''New Year and my birthday are probably the only occasions when I allow myself to relax and eat everything I want. A couple of years ago I tried to prepare diet alternatives to olivier and selyodka pod shuboy, but at the end of the night I found myself eating the salads that my friends made (laughs). Well, it's New Year after all, and it should be celebrated properly.''

Although all the informants shared the opinion that the preparation and consumption of traditional food was an essential part of the holiday, most of them reported that a New Year celebration in China differed from a traditional one in several ways. The following quotations illustrate the informants' reflections on this difference:

''In Russia I started cooking the New Year's food at least a day before the celebration. Here I only prepare a couple of salads and a main course, so I do that on the 31st in the morning'' (Julia).

''I work for a Chinese company and January 1 is an ordinary working day for me. That's why I usually have a very modest family celebration. We watch TV, eat olivier, which is usually the only dish we prepare. When the clock strikes twelve, we drink some sparkling wine and then go to bed […] I really miss those crazy Russian

parties when we used to drink to a New Year in each of the time zones from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad..." (Max).

"For the home celebration we order food from a Russian or Western restaurant. Anything but Chinese food (laughs). Of course I make olivier and sometimes other salads, but that's the only thing I prepare myself" (Daria).

Thus, most of the respondents put much less effort into preparing New Year food than they did in Russia. For instance, Elena admitted that she felt glad that she did not have to prepare all the food that was common in her family:

"I'm so relieved that I only make a couple of salads for my New Year party. Back home my mom would prepare seven salads or so. And that's not counting all the appetizers, like mushrooms, pickles, cheese plates, and different kinds of salami! I still don't get it. It was so much food that we had to eat it for a couple of days after the holiday, and then throw away the rest. It's good that I now live far away and set my own rules (laughs)."

Apart from the variety and quantity of food, the immigrants' way of celebrating New Year differed from a traditional celebration in another important way. Most of the respondents reported that back home New Year was considered to be a family holiday, whereas in China it was perceived as a big social occasion, when the immigrants had a chance to get together with their compatriots. Therefore, many informants chose to celebrate New Year in Russian restaurants and clubs. Sergey and Maria were among them:

"Back home I usually went to a nightclub with my friends, but only after midnight. You know, first you have to spend time with your family watching silly TV shows and eating dinner. But after the clock strikes twelve, you are free to go elsewhere. Here in China it's different. You feel like other Russians are your family in a way. You don't even have to be friends; the only thing that matters is that you share something... like traditions or habits. So we gather at some restaurant, eat New Year food, listen to Russian music, and when it's midnight everyone loudly counts to twelve (laughs). It's always a lot of fun" (Sergey).

"I went to a New Year celebration at a Western hotel a couple of years ago. My friends and I wanted to have something different for

> once... Like avoid a crowd of drunken Russians (laughs). The music there was nice, the food was nice too, but something was missing [...] After midnight all the guests started to go back to their rooms, and that's when we gave up and went to a Russian restaurant to continue the celebration in a proper way, with olivier and an unlimited amount of alcohol. I guess it's not that easy to get away from your traditions after all (laughs)'' (Elena).

Overall, all the respondents celebrated New Year at a Russian restaurant or club at least once, whereas eight out of the 14 informants did it almost every year.

To sum up, even though in many cases the immigrants' way of celebrating New Year differed from a traditional celebration, all the informants shared the opinion that consumption of traditional foods was an essential part of the festivity. This general opinion corresponds to a high level of ethnic identification in the group, while the fact that none of the respondents chose to consume Chinese food points at a low level of acculturation. Therefore, separation is defined as a predominant strategy of dietary acculturation in the context of a New Year celebration.

5. Conclusion: The Multidimensional, Dynamic, and Complex Processes of Dietary Acculturation among Russians in Beijing

Dietary acculturation can be defined as immigrants' adaptation to the eating patterns of a host society. However, it does not necessarily mean that immigrants simply adopt the host society's foodways. On the contrary, dietary acculturation is a multidimensional, dynamic, and complex process (Satia-Abouta et al. 2002: 1107). The multidimensional model of acculturation implies that maintenance of ethnic identity and acquisition of host culture traits can occur simultaneously and independently of each other (Laroche et al. 2005: 155). The findings of this study demonstrate that dietary acculturation is indeed a multidimensional process.

For instance, it was revealed that the group of Russian immigrants maintained the consumption of traditional foods during New Year celebration, and tended to cook Russian dishes when they had to prepare food themselves. Both trends point at the maintenance of ethnic foodways and thus correspond to a substantial level of ethnic identification. However, the same respondents reported that they went to Chinese restaurants more often than

prepared Russian food at home, and also tended to bring Chinese food items with them when going to Russia. These trends demonstrate that the group had adopted some of the host society's eating patterns and, therefore, was acculturated to a considerable extent. In general, maintenance of ethnic foodways coupled with willingness to consume the host society's foods allows us to conclude that the group generally pursued the integration strategy of acculturation.

It should be noted that most of the studies employing Berry's acculturation model were aiming either to reveal the immigrants' predominant strategy of acculturation, or to explore the acculturation patterns in connection to certain factors (e.g. ability to speak a host country's language, gender, age etc.). This study can be considered innovative in two ways. First, it contributes to the field of acculturation research by focusing on an immigrant group that has not been given much attention in academic literature. Therefore, the study is explorative and rather intends to discover interesting commonalities and patterns that can be studied in the future, than thoroughly examine the phenomenon. Second, acculturation patterns are examined in relation to different contexts of consumption. As the literature review demonstrated, the contextual nature of food choice has been mentioned in several studies, however, none of them focused specifically on comparing the immigrants' acculturation patterns in different contexts of consumption. The analysis of the interviews revealed that although integration could be considered a general acculturation strategy of the group, the informants appeared to pursue other strategies in certain contexts of consumption. The analysis of the immigrants' food preferences in three food-related contexts demonstrated that the dietary acculturation of the group was not only multidimensional, but also situational.

Similarly to the study conducted by Askegaard et al. (1999), this research revealed that the host society's food was associated with everyday consumption, whereas ethnic food, as a rule, was consumed on festive occasions. Most of the informants reported that eating at Chinese restaurants in many cases was cheaper, more convenient, and less time-consuming than going to Russian restaurants or preparing Russian food at home. Thus, consumption of Chinese food was largely perceived as routine and utilitarian, which explains why most of the informants mentioned Chinese food as their favorite lunch food. Russian food, on the contrary, was largely associated with special occasions: family weekends, gatherings with friends, and celebration of Russian holidays.

The situational nature of food preference also becomes evident when the immigrants' food choice is analyzed in relation to the social setting of consumption. Most of the informants reported that the kind of food they chose to eat was dependent on the group of people they shared a meal with. For instance, the respondents altered their food choice depending on whether they were having dinner with Russian or Chinese friends, family members or Chinese colleagues, Russians living in Beijing or Russians visiting China. Overall, the findings coincide with the argument of Tadmor and Tetlock (2006: 174) and Cleveland et al. (2009: 198), who state that rather than simply blend the aspects from host and home cultures, immigrants maintain dual, independent identities. Hence, they can alternate between the two cultures and switch from one to another depending on a situation.

It is interesting to note that during the interviews the informants tended to divide all the food into "our" and "their." "Our" food was known from home and therefore was perceived as "normal" and familiar, whereas "their" food was seen as unusual and odd. However, "our" food was not necessarily Russian. As a rule, it incorporated Italian dishes (pasta, pizza, lasagna), fast food (hamburgers, French fries etc.), and even Japanese food, which has become one of the most popular Asian food types in Russia. Askegaard et al. (1999: 13) refer to these foodstuffs as "global food" as they represent a globalized food culture of the modern world. The existence of global food, which is a mixture of different cuisines, corresponds to the fact that nowadays people become more exposed to different cultures regardless of whether they are immigrants or not, and points at growing cosmopolitanism as a direct result of globalization.

The analysis of the empirical findings also revealed that although the immigrants evidently expressed longing for "normal" Russian food, their ethnic eating patterns underwent a considerable transformation after emigration. For instance, during the New Year celebration they appeared to be conservative in terms of traditional food consumption. However, the celebration differed from a traditional one in at least two ways. First, the immigrants tended to prepare less food both in terms of quantity and variety, and second, they rather perceived New Year as a chance to get together with their compatriots than a time that should be spent with family members and close friends. This observation corresponds to Sutton's notion (2001) of "reimagined" eating practices. He argues that the immigrants not only remember their homeland through their food practices, but also constantly reimagine it (ibid.: 127). Therefore, not only "people's identities shift levels in

changing contexts such as migration," ethnic products and foodways "can take on shifting identifications as well" (ibid.).

Generally, the results of this research coincide with the findings of other studies on immigrant acculturation in terms of, for example, food-related nostalgia, the importance of traditional food consumption during festive occasions, and interdependence between food choice and the social setting of consumption. However, when compared to some other immigrant groups, Russian immigrants in Beijing appear to show stronger features of integration. For instance, in the studies conducted by Rabikowska (2010) and Law (2001), the immigrant groups (Polish in London and Filipinos in Hong Kong respectively) expressed little interest in the host societies' eating patterns, and tended to place considerable value on the consumption of ethnic foods. Russian immigrants, on the contrary, appeared to successfully integrate the host and home societies' foodways in their eating patterns. The difference in acculturation patterns among these groups might be explained by the difference in their socio-economic status and power relations within the host society. Whereas the group of Russians considered in this study can be seen as affluent and respected in the host society, Filipino and Polish immigrants constitute two marginalized, vulnerable, and isolated groups. Thus, it can be assumed that the groups with a higher socio-economic status are likely to adopt the integration strategy of acculturation, whereas marginalized groups tend to pursue the separation strategy.

Another interesting pattern revealed during the interviews was related to gender and food preparation. Female informants, as a rule, adopted a role of tradition-keepers in their families, as they were cooking regularly and tended to follow familiar recipes. Male informants, on the contrary, rarely prepared food, but when they did, they tended to be more adventurous and experiment more with recipes. Although the interviews did not provide enough relevant information to draw conclusions about the differences in acculturation patterns among male and female informants, this topic can be suggested as a promising direction for future research.

It is also important to note that this study was focused on a relatively homogeneous group of people, who were single or married to Russian nationals, resided in urban areas before moving to China, were highly educated, and could speak Chinese fluently. Hence, the findings of this research are tentative and cannot be generalized to all Russian immigrants in Beijing. Therefore, it is suggested to further explore the patterns of dietary acculturation of Russian immigrants in Beijing in relation to gender, level of education, knowledge of the host society's language, and urban or rural place

of origin. Moreover, it could also be interesting to compare the acculturation patterns of Russians in Beijing with those of the Russian immigrants from the parts of China where the availability of Russian foods is limited. Supposedly, the limited availability of ethnic food items might result in a higher level of acculturation to the host society's eating patterns. Overall, given the gap in academic studies on dietary acculturation among Russian immigrants in China, this topic offers unlimited opportunities for future research.

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Interviews

Alex (Purchasing Manager). Recorded interview, March 6, 2012.

Anna (Logistics Manager). Recorded interview, March 3, 2012.

Daria (Tour Guide). Notes taken during the interview, February 29, 2012.

Dmitry (Purchasing Manager). Recorded interview, March 15, 2012.

Elena (Interpreter). Recorded interview, March 11, 2012.

Ivan (Interpreter). Recorded interview, March 18, 2012.

Julia (Teacher). Notes taken during the interview, February 27, 2012.

Maria (Unemployed). Recorded interview, March 5, 2012.

Max (Interpreter). Recorded interview, March 18, 2012.

Mikhail (Logistics Manager). Recorded interview, March 1, 2012.

Natalia (Logistics Manager). Notes taken during the interview, March 1, 2012.

Sergey (Student). Recorded interview, March 16, 2012.

Tatiana (Tour Guide). Recorded interview, March 7, 2012.

Victoria (Interpreter). Recorded interview, March 16, 2012.

Appendix

Interview Questions

How long have you lived in Beijing?

What is your general attitude towards Chinese food? Do you have favorite Chinese dishes? Which foods do you find repulsive?

Which foods do you miss from back home? Do you have access to those foods in Beijing?

Do you prefer to eat Chinese, Russian or other kinds of food in the following situations? Why?

- On a typical day;
- On a weekend;
- When you are with friends;
- On Russian holidays.

Which factors can influence your food choice (e.g. price, accessibility, taste, healthiness etc.)?

Do you prepare food yourself? If yes, what kind of food? Do you experiment with recipes or tend to prepare familiar foods? Do you prepare Chinese dishes?

Do you choose Chinese, Russian or other kinds of food when you do not eat at home?

Has your attitude towards Chinese food changed since the time you arrived in China? In what way?

How often do you visit Russia? Do you bring any Russian food with you to China?

If you go to Russia, do you bring any Chinese foodstuffs with you as gifts and/or for your own consumption?