

The role of the media in the integration of ethnic immigrants in Germany

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A Journalism Honors Thesis

**Submitted to the faculty of the
Journalism and Mass Communications department at
Washington and Lee University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for an honors degree in journalism.**

**Washington and Lee University
May 2003**

To my parents, Maria and Grzegorz Flak, whom I followed on the journey, and to my brother, Marcin, who shared my struggles, yet taught me how to persist.

Contents

Chapter I:	5
Introduction	
Chapter II:	9
German Ethnic Immigrants: A Short History Lesson	
Chapter III:	16
On the way to full integration – A Literature Review	
Chapter IV:	35
Research Question and Methodology	
Chapter V:	41
Research Results	
Chapter VI:	54
Discussion	
Chapter VII:	66
Conclusion, limitations and suggestions for future research	
Bibliography	69
Survey	73

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank all the people who nourished and encouraged my interest in migration and journalism. It was through the department of Journalism and Mass Communications at Washington and Lee University that I grew in my appreciation for the mass media. It was the Shepherd Program for the Interdisciplinary Study of Poverty and Human Capability at the same school that fostered my interest for disadvantaged populations and migrants in particular. While this study was born out of my personal story, it would not exist if not for the guidance I received along the way in both formulating my questions and finding the answers to them.

I am particularly indebted to Brian Richardson, Krzysztof Jasiewicz and Harlan Beckley, professors at Washington and Lee University and advisors to this project, whose detailed and careful critiques and the editing suggestions helped smooth so many rough edges. I am also deeply appreciative of their constant encouragement while undertaking a project that sometimes seemed too vast and too far removed from my own field of expertise.

Special thanks to Dorothea Pultorak, Maya Gulyanska, Marcin Flak, Anna Godecki, Gerd Limberg and the Reinoldus- und Schiller Gymnasium for their help in collecting the initial data for the research presented in this book. A big thanks to the 47 young ethnic Germans who took the time to fill out my survey and opened their lives to me and this study.

Finally, I am grateful to my parents and my brother, Marcin, who were the inspiration for this study. It is their battles, their persistence in challenging the German system and ultimately their ability to overcome the obstacles that wrote this story. This thesis is dedicated to each one of you.

Thanks to you all.

Agnes Flak
May 24, 2003

Chapter I

Introduction



Ethnic Germans, WELCOME!

(Source: Heinen, 2000).

More than four million ethnic Germans spread across Eastern European nations have returned to Germany since 1950. While many were part of a consistent but small influx of immigrants over the years following World War II, between 1980 and 1994 alone more than two million crossed the border looking for a life in the country their ancestors once called home. The smaller numbers in the initial years rarely caused any concern, but the large influxes of the past two decades created what the German government and the public refers to today as the “ethnic immigrant problem.”

Based on the legislative frame of the “ius sanguini” (the right of the blood), ethnic Germans are lawfully recognized citizens whose ancestors or themselves have once emigrated or were deported from German territory and now have decided to return. Unlike refugees or other migrants forcefully prosecuted from their countries of origin,

ethnic immigrants possessed a degree of choice in their decision to leave (The Conference Board, 1994).

In the early years, the integration of incoming immigrants within German society went rather smoothly. The early generations possessed a good if not perfect command of the German language and could thus be integrated into the system without any further delay. The opening of the eastern borders initiated the arrival of millions with little or no connection to German society and culture. Most immigrants now coming in were ancestors from once-German families or were the children of inter-ethnic relationships. Very few spoke the local language or had an idea about life in the west (Dietz 1997; Heinen 2001; Wagner, 1992).

Simultaneously, the worsening economic situation within Germany and the rising unemployment rate had an impact on the once-welcoming attitude toward ethnic immigrants on the part of the German population. Soon immigrants were seen as a competition and responsible for the failures in the system and the society as a whole. The enactment of legislation that would regulate the immigration process was the result of a commonly expressed desire to put limits on who was allowed to cross the borders and on what terms.

At the same time, the government greatly reduced the services that were thus far available to the arriving migrant population. Because of an unmanageable number of incoming people and a hole in the budget, the number and length of language classes was reduced as were other services meant to ease the adjustment process. To make matters worse, the new groups filling the transitional immigration facilities represented a wide

mixture of people from strong Eastern European backgrounds who had little or no idea about norms, values and cultural developments of the west.

Beginning in the early 1990s, a rocky transition process hindering a full integration within the host society became a widely known phenomenon. The risk of social isolation of ethnic immigrant groups began to challenge the German legislative system and is still a hot topic on the agenda today (Heinen, 2001; Kunschner, 2000). While progress has been made to counteract the segregation through reestablishment of cut services or the creation of new support groups, the gap between the host society and the incoming ones is still wide.

Young ethnic immigrants present a unique group. Their age, their coming of age process, their flexibility in the norms and values they uphold provide a rather advantageous set-up for the transition they are about to face. Yet that same instability in the definition of one's identity has been observed to negatively affect the young people's endeavor to find a new self within the new society. Today, the teenage group is considered to be the one with the greatest assimilation difficulties among the ethnic immigrant population (Baaden, 1997; Heinen, 2001; Mammey, 1998).

In that particular process of cultural and social integration, language competency was found to be the key to success (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Roll, 1998; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992). Both the government and various non-profit organizations have begun to target language instruction as a prerequisite for any other stage of integration. The ability to communicate not only enables the ethnic immigrant to express himself but also influences his progress in the areas of professional aspirations, social contacts and political participation.

Language can be taught in many different ways. There are formal language classes, the informal way of learning through interaction at work or school, and mass media. Frequent exposure to media in the form of television, the Internet, video games and newspapers can prove beneficial in a child's linguistic progress (FisherKeller, 2002; Strasburger, 1995).

The media have long been known to affect a teenager's developmental process. Today's teenagers, especially in Western-oriented countries such as Germany, grow up immersed in the penetrating media culture (FisherKeller, 2002; Livingston, 2002; Strasburger, 1995). Watching television, surfing the Internet or playing video games both positively and negatively influence each child's learning experience. Similarly, the media can contribute a great deal to immersing an immigrant child in the host idiom. Because of their interactive nature the media can also serve as a medium of social interaction between ethnic immigrants and their German peers. Being a product of the German culture, media also provide a window for the teenager's constant exposure to the cultural dialogue.

The following study examines the link between media use and the ethnic immigrant teenager's integration process. Based on a survey of 47 young ethnic immigrants, who have either attended or are currently enrolled in the German school system, and in-depth interviews with several of the participants, it explores the media's ability to accelerate the language acquisition process and thus to create a more opportune basis for a teenager's adjustment.

Chapter II

German Ethnic Immigrants A Short History Lesson

“Most of us come to Germany full of dreams. After all, we have been hearing about the treasures behind the western border for decades. Then reality hits you, sooner or later.”

- Natasha, 24, from the former Soviet Union.

The German government defines ethnic immigrants as members of German minorities living abroad who emigrated to other Eastern, Middle or Southern European states as early as the middle ages and returned to German territory in the last three decades of the 20th century. Most left for other parts of Europe as laborers or were residents of German territories that were lost to the Eastern nations as a consequence of World War II. While these minorities assimilated well with their new environments across Eastern and Southern Europe, they sought to preserve their own language and culture under the protection of minority rights secured by the host nations. A total of 8.6 million Germans lived outside of their country's border as of 1939. The political instability of the 19th and 20th century along with the nationalistic idealism of World War II had a negative impact on the minorities' situation (Dietz & Roll, 1998; Heinen, 2001; Kunschner, 2000; Meister, 1997; Wagner, 1992). In order to diminish the dispersion of German thought and culture, the host authorities sought to limit if not eradicate the practice of the minorities' native language and culture. The emphasis on assimilation with the host society inevitably led to a reduced presence of the German identity, diminishing even more with the following generations. The strained relationships between the nations made returning home a rather difficult if not impossible endeavor.

Those who managed to cross the border were immediately acknowledged as German citizens and rather easily integrated into the mainstream society. With the opening of the Eastern bloc and the breakup of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, regulations in the migration spectrum loosened, allowing large numbers of ethnic Germans to return home (Dietz & Roll, 1998; Einfeld, 2001; Gabanyi, 2001; Heinen, 2001; Kunschner, 2000; Meister, 1997; Rogall, 2001; Wagner, 1992).

When great parts of Eastern Europe entered the process of democratization, the German government saw its chance to, once again, put the question of ethnic Germans on its political agenda. The German government drafted agreements with the hosting nations which were designed to secure the rights of ethnic Germans living abroad and to sponsor programs that would enhance the latter's cultural, social and economic development. Stabilizing their situation within the host countries, the German government ultimately sought to discourage the large number of people from returning home. While this endeavor was only partially successful, ethnic Germans, their arrival and the consequences thereof were nationally soon referred to as the "ethnic immigrant problem" (Heinen, 2001).

A total of 4,222,966 ethnic Germans residing in Poland, Rumania, the former Soviet Union, the former Czechoslovakia, Hungary and other Eastern or Southern European nations returned home in the after-war era between 1950 and 2001. As many as 1.5 million ethnic immigrants returned in the six years between 1987 and 1992 alone (Bundesministerium des Innern [BMI], 2001). The motives for leaving the host nations changed over the decades, as did the immigrating population's characteristics. In the years following World War II, the limitations on minority rights in host communities

provided a 'push-factor' for those who wanted to escape cultural discrimination and prosecution. Even in the 1970s, that and the desire to live among Germans were still dominant motivations for the majority. When in the 1980s a new generation of ethnic Germans sought to settle in their country of origin, the reasons named differed. The chance for a life in a free society, with better professional and economic opportunities for oneself and the generations to come, soon became the major pull factor (Meister, 1997).

The sudden influx of masses of people in the late 1980s and early 1990s forced the German government to set up guidelines that would regulate the future admission of ethnic Germans. The Federal Immigration and Asylum Law (Bundesvertriebenengesetz) was replaced by a new legislation called Post-war Cleansing Law (Kriegsfolgenbereinigungsgesetz). As a result, as of Jan. 1, 1993, each individual seeking recognition as an ethnic German had to provide proof of his German lineage. In order to be awarded German citizenship, an ethnic immigrant had to show that she was a descendent of a German family and that she had pursued German thought and culture while living abroad. Ethnic Germans from areas of the former Soviet Union continued to be exempt from this requirement. In order to restrict the entry requirements even further, in 1996 the government added a language test given to the family head as a prerequisite for a family's admission (Dietz, 1997; Heinen, 2001; Wagner, 1992; Weiss, 1999).

Until 1989 ethnic Germans from Poland constituted the largest group of the incoming population. In the 1990s, the former Soviet Union became the source of the largest influx. The new group was soon discovered to be rather difficult to integrate. They often represented families strongly integrated into the host country, some coming from mixed families, and they usually settled in Germany speaking little or no German. A new

era for German ethnic immigration politics ultimately began (Dietz & Roll, 1998; Heinen, 2001; Kunschner, 2000; Meister, 1997; Wagner, 1992).

Under the framework of the constitutional law, ethnic immigrants are considered German citizens entitled to the same rights as the native population. As a compensation for their precarious fate following World War II, ethnic Germans were not only given the right to settle back within Germany at any time but based on the federal immigration law were also entitled to multiple services (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Heinen, 2001; Wagner, 1992).

The services provided by the government sought to ease the transition of the masses of incoming people. Each ethnic German was awarded welfare checks for the duration of the first six months as a means for a financial start-up. In addition, local agencies offered immediate language support, especially for adults who required quick language instruction in order to re-establish themselves professionally. Those who had the need were also able to participate in job-search programs and, if necessary, go through profession re-orientation training. For the young within the immigrant group, the government and local agencies designed programs specifically targeting that particular age group. Those included local youth groups, workshops and counseling services. In addition, the national pension and state-funded insurance program were other services ethnic Germans took great advantage of (Dietz, 1997; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992; Weiss, 1999).

Political scientist Ute Heinen points out that while native and ethnic Germans are equal by law, their lifestyles differ. The German government began to realize that in order to adequately address that group's particular needs, it would have to do so within

the latter's cultural context. Ethnic immigrants make up a quite heterogeneous group. Each country equipped the German minorities with a different social, economic and political background, and a different level of familiarity with the German culture. Earlier generations grew up living and commemorating the German culture, even while living abroad. Realizing that the present Germany did not correspond with the picture they had kept from the past was a shock to most (Dietz, 1997; Heinen, 2001). While the new generations come to Germany with fewer expectations, they are the ones on whom the Eastern European education and culture has left a noticeable mark. It was no surprise that the new groups of ethnic Germans, mainly from the former Soviet Republic, proved further removed from the local norms, values and cultural developments that constituted German way of life (Eisfeld; 2001; Heinen, 2001).

Ethnic immigrants have acquired their education and qualifications in a system that differs greatly from Germany's. They grew up in families with strict patriarchal structures and in communities devoted to intensive religious practice. Unlike native Germans, ethnic immigrants were brought up in an Eastern European system that emphasizes the traditional gender roles until this day (Dietz, 1997; Eisfeld, 2001; Heinen, 2001). Even the family structures undergo a major test when they are being redefined within Germany's cultural frame. In Eastern European societies family networks play a vital role in its members' everyday experience (Dietz, 1997; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Wehmann, 1999). Once in Germany, ethnic immigrants depend on that same support network. A good emotional climate provides a good psychological and social resource for the transition phase and the family becomes the center of the immigrant's social network. Unfortunately, in the new surrounding parents often cannot provide their children with

the necessary orientation and support as they go through the process of re-orientation themselves. The decrease in parents' authority has been noticed to cause generational conflicts while disturbing family structures upheld so far (Dietz, 1997; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Walter & Gruebl, 1999; Wehmann, 1999).

These and other obstacles can pose great challenges to a newcomer's process of integration. When ethnic immigrants arrive in Germany they face a twofold problem: they are indeed German by lineage, but are foreigners at the same time. The lack of language skills has become the most common and most difficult to overcome barrier. In countries where German schools were not eliminated by the local government, German minorities could preserve the language and educate the generations to follow. In countries such as Poland, where the national government sought to eradicate every mark of the German culture, language competency dwindled as did its instruction. The declining knowledge of the German tongue or the complete lack thereof led to a higher demand for language instruction for ethnic immigrants once the latter arrived in Germany. Unfortunately, the language courses provided by federal law, limited to six months, were too short to provide ethnic Germans with adequate communication skills (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Roll, 1998; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992).

Consequently, ethnic Germans find continuing in their education or profession to be a difficult or even impossible task. The inability to find a job in one's field of expertise forces ethnic immigrants to accept jobs below their qualifications. Those jobs are often the first ones to disappear during times of an economic recession. As a result, many ethnic immigrants are living on welfare, which provides an income but shows no

professional perspectives. (Weiss, 2001). The limited vocational opportunities also infringe upon an ethnic immigrant's desire to participate in the new society's social and cultural life. Isolation from the native population is often the result (Dietz, 1997; Kunschner, 2000; Weiss, 2001).

With a declining economy and a rising unemployment rate, the German government was no longer able to afford to support the rising number of incoming ethnic Germans. As a consequence, language programs, orientation workshops, counseling services and other, mainly financial supports, were greatly reduced or cut in full (Dietz, 1997; Heinen 2001; Mammey, 1998; Weiss, 1999).

While the shortcomings of that action were soon visible, the government saw no way of preventing them. The limited support services, both financial and integrative in nature, failed to provide an encompassing support system for the ever-growing immigrant population. As a consequence, social and professional isolation became a phenomenon noticeable nationwide (Dietz, 1997; Kunschner, 2000; Weiss, 2001).

Chapter III

On the way to full integration – A Literature review

“Full integration is not about denying your own culture and becoming truly ‘German.’ It would be like playing a part on stage. If you want to integrate you have to be willing to approach the new society and culture and mix it with your own.”

- Basia, 28, from Poland

For the last 50 years and particularly in the last decade, the full integration of ethnic immigrants into the German mainstream society has been on the country’s political agenda. Yet only recently has the topic of immigrant integration found its way into research literature worldwide. While studies are still fresh and bear their limitations, some initial conclusions have been formed.

The process of adaptation into a new culture can take on various forms, of which studies name the classic three. Assimilation points to the adaptation of a new culture and a new way of living while entirely giving up one’s own. Isolation, on the other hand, signifies rejection of the host culture. Full integration, however, is perceived as a mixture of the two. It is about adapting to a new culture and society while preserving one’s own. As Andreas Baaden points out in his research on concepts and models of adaptation, the ultimate goal of integration is “equality, satisfaction and the co-existence of cultural difference” (Baaden, 1997, p. 35).

“We have the same passport, the same citizenship, yet we are not equal.”

- Grzegorz, 27, from Poland

The young generation

While all ethnic immigrants are perceived as potentially in danger of being socially isolated, studies pick out young ethnic Germans as being the ones at a greater risk. In 1998, 35.6 percent of all ethnic Germans living in the country were younger than 20 years old, as compared to 21 percent in the native population. About one-fifth of the ethnic immigrant population are students (Dietz, 1997; Welt, 2001). Just a decade ago they were perceived as an easy adaptable group; they were perceived as the “hope for the elder generations (Dietz, 1997, p. 8). Most failed to meet that expectation. Today, they are defined as the “disadvantaged, marginalized, and also conspicuous teenagers” (Dietz, 1999, p. 153).

When young ethnic Germans follow their parents to a new home that is completely alien to them, they are what Dorothee Meister refers to as “living between two worlds” (Meister, 1997, p. 1). For teenagers who are in the process of defining their own identity, the break caused by the intercultural transition forces them to leave their comfort zone and give up the social framework they have built so far. That break comes at a vulnerable stage in their life when they are already preoccupied with their coming-of-age and the break from parental care. Going through both processes simultaneously and without the backup of a familiar environment and friends puts them at a greater risk of being affected by the negative consequences of the migration experiences (Baaden, 1997; Heinen, 2001; Mammey, 1998).

Like any typical teenager, young ethnic Germans want to be accepted and want to fit in. When they arrive in Germany for the first time, they have to accept the fact that this might not be immediately possible. Studies point out that while interaction with native peers is a necessary part of a full integration into the society, it can also lead to contrary consequences, especially in the beginning phase. The direct confrontation with what is different about each other and the desire to imitate the local youth may cause distress (Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Rollke, 1998; Wehmann, 1999). As a consequence, teenagers tend to gather in ethnic groups where they can find the understanding and support from peers who are going through the same process of adjustment. However, while ethnic groups might be stabilizing at first, studies warn about the potential isolation this can cause in the long term.

Studies attribute frequent conflicts between the ethnic and native youths to “cultural differences.” Their belonging to a particular ethnic group makes them very static and thus inflexible in terms of accepting one another. The lack of language skills hinders both groups from overcoming that obstacle and conflicts develop in their interaction. As studies have noticed, misunderstandings and accumulated tensions culminate over time in hatred between the two groups (Dietz, 1997; Eckert et al, 1999; Wehmann, 1999). The negative attitude toward migrants, in a nation where the economy is in recession and unemployment rate is rising, often leads to the perception that ethnic Germans are the sole ones to blame. The native population sees ethnic immigrants as a privileged group, for whom government is developing support programs not accessible to the mainstream population. Unable to find a job, young Germans see their peers among

ethnic immigrants as a threatening competition, even though studies show that the adjustment period prevents the latter from being able to equally do so (Dietz, 1999).

The young ethnic immigrants rarely participate in youth programs organized by their respective communities. A comparison of the use of free time on the part of both groups points out that the two do not differ in their basic understanding about what constitutes fun, but that they lack an incentive to interact with each other. Stereotypes and erroneous perceptions concerning the other group prevent them from doing so. German teenagers consider immigrant peers as backward or underdeveloped because the latter are unfamiliar with the local norms and values. The immigrant youth consider their own group as more mature, primarily because of the lessons the intercultural transition has taught them (Dietz, 1999; Wehmann, 1999). Interviews with members of both groups further point out that both interacted quite a bit with each other while in elementary school. Around the age of 13, when as adolescents they were confronted with the question of their own identity for the first time, ethnically defined groups began to form (Wehmann, 1999). Research has also noted a distinction between the sexes. Based on the traditional gender roles embedded in the post-communist cultures, girls tend to spend more time at home than their male counterparts and thus are at a higher risk of being isolated from their native peers (Dietz & Roll, 1998).

The differences between the Eastern European and German educational systems and their lack of German language skills prevent young people from picking up their education where they have left off. Often they are put back a class or two, so that they can acquire the necessary language skills before they can move to more in-depth subject matter. In an effort to help young people find their connection to their peers, schools have

established special classes featuring German language instruction that accelerates the process (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Roll, 1998; Dietz, 1999; Eckert, Reis & Wetzstein, 1999; Mammey, 1998; Meister, 1997). Yet the setbacks of the transition do not remain unnoticed as young ethnic immigrants often reach a lower status within the tripartite structure of the German educational system. The three main tracks at the secondary level are ranked in terms of their prospects for subsequent education and occupations. The *Gymnasium* is the most direct and academically focused route to an institution of higher education. The *Realschule* can provide the student with access to a limited number of universities or lead to white-collar occupations. The *Hauptschule* is the least prestigious track and has over the years become one for educationally disadvantaged children and foreigners. A fourth alternative is the *Gesamtschule*, which provides the option of combining more and less demanding tracks (Alba et al, 1998).

Young ethnic immigrants seldom attend or graduate from a *Gymnasium*, but frequent the schools at the lower academic level. An example from a city in the North-Rhein Westfalia state which hosts more than 21 percent of all of Germany's ethnic immigrants provides an example. In the 1993/94 school-year, 21 percent of all young ethnic immigrants attended a *Hauptschule*, and only 10 percent were found at a *Gymnasium*. Out of the native German youth, 24 percent attended the *Gymnasium* and only eight percent were at a *Hauptschule* (Dietz, 1997; Stadt Dortmund, 1994; Wagner, 1992).

A study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development points out other risk factors related to young people. Those factors include increased drop-out potential and, as a consequence thereof, decreased chances of leading a responsible and

self-determined life (Dietz & Rollke, 1998; Dietz, 1999). Beyond poor language skills, studies mention membership in a minority group and growing up in poverty or the social margin as factors that could potentially affect a teenager's developmental process. Studies also refer to unfavorable living conditions, isolation from the mainstream population with no contact to native peers, and lack of access to youth oriented programming as predicaments of social isolation and concentration within one's own ethnic environment. The risk factors, an inevitable consequence of migration, can lead to a permanent isolation if not addressed on various levels and at an early stage of the transition. This, as studies point out, is still a blank page on the German government's agenda, which, so far, has refused to acknowledge the multifaceted character of the migration phenomenon (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1999; Dietz & Rollke, 1998; Eckert et al; Meister, 1997).

The inadequate support of the incoming ethnic immigrant group has been noted to create a marginalized minority with a rising crime rate (Dietz, 1999; Eckert et al, 1999; Walter & Gruebl, 1999). While the number of arrests of ethnic immigrants is higher than that for native youth, researchers warn about hasty conclusions. Studies have shown that the courts are more likely to assign short-term detention to ethnic immigrant teenagers than to the local youth. The fact that many, once they commit one crime, fall in a pattern has been linked with the fact that preventive resources have not been available. Especially in migrant-concentrated areas, social programs that could address some disciplinary issues are rarely available. Statistics from one detention center show that while the numbers for arrested ethnic teenagers are high, the frequency of robberies and physical assault-related offences does not differ greatly from the local population. On the

other hand, the number of teenagers arrested in cases of drug possession and sexual assault have been particularly high for this group (Walter, 1999). The latter has been attributed to the young adults' unfamiliarity with the local norms concerning sexual self-determination and an often-inadequate knowledge about the consequences of drug abuse.

Various factors could be responsible for the high crime rate. While disadvantages of migration put ethnic immigrants in a vulnerable position, authors also point out the characteristic of the departure from the host country are significant. The fact that parents often decided to leave without asking their children or against the child's desire to stay has pre-determined a rather negative mindset on part of the young generation toward the experience of the migrant and the German society as a whole (Dietz, 1997; Walter & Gruebl, 1999).

All studies on immigrant integration conclude that the German government needs to change its course of action in order to address the situation more adequately. In one study Andreas Baaden distinguishes among integration on the job market, in the residential areas, and in the socio-cultural environment (Baaden, 1997). As he points out, full integration cannot take place if one looks at one of those aspects only. All three are interrelated and need to be addressed simultaneously. The development of services that are more targeted and focused is in order. Yet budget deficits prevent the government from establishing suitable migration policies. Above all, there is still insufficient desire to address the 'ethnic immigrant problem' (Dietz, 1997; Kunschner, 2000; Mammey, 1998; Wagner, 1992; Weiss, 2001). While studies acknowledge the society's limits in its current political and economic context, they also warn about the consequences that inaction could have in a long run.

“I always wanted to improve my Polish, but that always was easier said than done. Today, I speak it very poorly and often stutter when I am trying to say something. It is my native tongue, but it sounds so foreign.”

- Basia, 28, from Poland.

Language – An important integration tool

Studies agree, however, that knowledge of the German language is the key to a successful integration (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Roll, 1998; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992). While minimum knowledge allows an individual to communicate with his neighbors, employers and colleagues, the growing competence also increases his ability to fully participate in Germany’s everyday experience. Language competency emphasizes the government’s and society’s focus on full integration rather than assimilation, which is only possible with the necessary communication skills (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Roll, 1998; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Katzenbach de Ramirez, 1997; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992; Walter & Gruebl, 1999; Weiss, 1999).

With sufficient German skills, an ethnic immigrant can succeed professionally and economically, establish contacts in the social environment, and ultimately participate in the political and cultural dialogue. Language skills will encourage her to mingle with the host community rather than isolate herself within an ethnically defined setting. As was pointed out earlier, linguistic competency goes beyond being just a means of communication. For ethnic immigrants, it is the cultural window to a more profound understanding of the German culture and people (Baaden, 1997; Carrasquillo, 1994; Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Roll, 1998; Heinen, 2001; Katzenbach de Ramirez, 1997; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992; Walter & Gruebl, 1999; Weiss, 1999)

While ethnic immigrants need to learn German in order to be able to communicate with the natives, they also require it to communicate with the approximately 7.2 million migrants currently living in Germany (BMI, 2001). Language acquisition thus becomes an expectation on part of the government that tries to create a comfortable co-existence for all the minorities present (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Roll, 1998; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Katzenbach de Ramirez, 1997; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992; Walter & Gruebl, 1999; Weiss, 1999).

Ethnic immigrants need sufficient language skills in order to communicate and as a means to eliminate prejudice, stereotypes and misconception on part of the native population. The current discrimination against immigrants in many areas of public life occurs partly because the ethnic immigrants lack the communication skills to openly defend themselves. Officials, supervisors, employers and landlords take advantage of the migrant's unfamiliarity with the German system and turn them into victims of the German bureaucracy (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Roll, 1998; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Katzenbach de Ramirez, 1997; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992; Walter & Gruebl, 1999; Weiss, 1999).

The inability to communicate can bear negative long-term effects. As studies point out, language competency is necessary for a physical and psychological balance of the migrant and for a healthy development of the child. Psychological problems, ranging anywhere from homesickness, unemployment, social insecurity, to the lack of a future perspective are often the consequence of a linguistic deficiency. This, on the other hand, causes a low self-esteem among migrant groups and creates what studies refer to as the "minority complex" (Eckert et al, 1999; Dietz & Rollke, 1998; Katzenbach de Ramirez,

1997; Kunschner, 2000). The lack of language skills then leads to a passive behavior and ethnic immigrants begin to perceive themselves as victims of their fate. In addition, adults with limited language skills have to sacrifice portions of their authority over the children, as they themselves are not fully capable of defending their own rights (Dietz, 1997; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Walter & Gruebl, 1999; Wehmann, 1999).

Political participation, a right granted by ethnic immigrants with their citizen status, clearly depends on sufficient language skills. If eloquent enough, ethnic Germans have the opportunity to actively affect their situation. If not active political participation, language competence at least enables them to follow the political developments communicated through the mass media and leaves them the option of becoming active, when necessary (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Dietz & Roll, 1998; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Katzenbach de Ramirez, 1997; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992; Walter & Gruebl, 1999; Weiss, 1999).

The migration experience itself creates conditions that often affect the migrant's learning-motivation. Katzenbach de Ramirez quotes other researchers who mention the idea of a "language-shock." The inability to express oneself moves the migrant to a child's cognitive level, where many, due to fear and shame, decide to remain silent instead. Also, where there is little connection between the native and the minority group, there is usually little desire to learn the language on a level ranging past the basic everyday skills. In addition, among language students German is known to be a difficult and rather complex language. German articles, the great number of grammatical cases, the long sentences and the ability to combine words in order to create even longer word-

compositions make it hard for beginners to appreciate the language (Katzenbach de Ramirez, 1997).

Several other factors affect a migrant's ability to learn a language, of both internal and external nature: contacts with the native population in the free time, age at time of arrival, contacts with colleagues/classmates at work, previously acquired professional qualifications, level of education and length of stay once in Germany. Individual aptitude, personality traits and a person's cognitive style also affect a person's level of success. Ethnic immigrants spend little time outside their ethnically confined groups and thus diminish their chances to learn and practice the language on an informal basis. For children, the attitude toward the language expressed by parents and the latter's willingness to support the children's learning process can greatly affect the outcomes. A total immersion in the native tongue along with a suppression of the German language slows down the learning process and creates a negative attitude toward the German people and the society as a whole (Carrasquillo, 1999; Katzenbach de Ramirez, 1997; Wehmann, 1999).

Yet the responsibility does not lie on the part of the parents alone. Educators can contribute a great deal to creating an environment where an exchange between both parties is not only possible but encouraged. The intercultural learning setting inevitably leads to the formation of a bicultural identity, an important factor in an increasingly important global environment. The children and teenagers are forced to reevaluate their own cultural identity, questioning their own and the German cultural premises and ultimately accept an identity that is a combination of both (Baaden, 1997; Dietz & Roll,

1998; Dietz, 1999; Katzenbach de Ramirez, 1997; Kunschner, 2000; Wagner, 1992; 1999; Weiss, 1999).

Language is a powerful tool, in more than one sense. In her study on teaching a language – in her case English – to nonnative speakers, Angela L. Carrasquillo points out several aspects that constitute language. It is the most impressive expression of human beings, a means of communication with other members of the same speech community, a means of individual expression, and a social phenomenon that hardly operates without meaning or function (Carrasquillo, 1994, p. 9). While language acquisition is a developmental process lasting throughout a lifetime, there are several stages that any person learning a language, be it first or second, has to go through. What begins with the person's growing ability to understand meaning, develops into the ability to speak, then emerges into more elaborate speech patterns and finally results in intermediate fluency, at which students begin to engage in conversation, producing full sentences and connecting them in a narrative context (Carrasquillo, 1994; Ellis, 1999). For newly arrived immigrants, the process begins with establishing social relationships with the speakers of the target language, then proceeds to their ability to speak it and ultimately develops in their ability to communicate in all possible forms.

Learners apply similar strategies in the language acquisition process, be it first or second language. They go through the same silent period before they begin to orally produce the language. They follow the same developmental sequence of linguistic patterns, make the same errors that are a natural part of language learning. Second language learners are more cognitively developed and have already experienced learning

a language and thus build on their cognitive and linguistic knowledge to learn the second language more effectively (Carrasquillo, 1994).

Age in second language acquisition is a controversial issue. The old theory suggesting that children are better able to learn a second language than adults and that they do so naturally and without any effort has yet to be proven. However, several theories debate the so-called Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), which would point to a limited developmental period during which it is possible to acquire a language to nativelike levels (Birdsong, 1999). The defendants of CPH claim that late-learners display slower linguistic processing than early ones and that there are distinct neurofunctional mechanisms whose decreased plasticity could be linked to the passage of a critical period for language learning (Eubank & Gregg, 1999; Weber-Fox & Neville, 1999). James R. Hurford and Simon Kirby support that opinion, saying that an adult's linguistic processing resources are no longer well suited to the task, as he has moved past the stage of learning a language (Hurford & Kirby, 1999). The opponents of the CPH claim that pronunciation accuracy declines linearly with age and does not display a trademark discontinuity that others associate with the passing of a critical period. Rather, they attribute it to declines in general cognitive abilities that come with aging (Flege, 1999; Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999). Furthermore, evidence in late learners who were able to master a nativelike accent supported that position (Bongaerts, 1999). The debate usually concludes with the assumption that while children might generally be more likely to attain nativelike pronunciation, there is no indication that this also holds true for a better mastery of the new language as a whole (Birdsong, 1999; Carrasquillo; Gonzalez, 1999; Major, 2001).

While the authors of linguistic studies do not want to pin their opinion on a CPH, they list criteria that could affect an immigrant's level of attainment in a new language. In her study on language and cognitive development in second language learning, Virginia Gonzalez points out that "every child or adult learning a second language has individual abilities, aptitudes, rates of language acquisitions, strengths and weaknesses" (Gonzalez, 1999, p. 300). She further emphasizes the fact that language acquisition is a cognitive process influenced by external socio-cultural factors that can determine the success rate of a person's learning experience (Gonzalez, 1999). This would indicate why adult ethnic immigrants seem to have a harder time learning a new language, as their children generally have better learning conditions: more time, more attention and many informal opportunities for using the target language. Researchers found that where opportunities are equalized, older learners seem to learn more quickly and efficiently. Furthermore, factors such as motivation, greater cognitive maturity, more developed native language skills and a greater need to communicate orally contribute to adults' and older children's superior performance (Carrasquillo, 1994).

Second language learning is a lifetime process that changes due to the influence of external factors such as amount and kind of contact with the target language, the exposure to cultural experiences linked with the native use of it, and the specific contextual use of that language at work or in personal situations (Gonzalez, 1999). Language can be learned formally, as in the case of adults, or it can be picked up informally, as it often happens with children. Interaction with speakers of the target language has been listed as a great way to further that acquisition. Interaction with native

speakers mediates learning, facilitates learners' attention to new linguistic forms and provides opportunities for learners to practice using them (Ellis, 1999).

Overall, studies suggest a more active role for language teaching programs. The intensive language training sessions should not only teach grammar and syntax but should also introduce colloquial German and the society as a whole. The latter will increase a migrant's chance of actively connecting with the German reality (Carrasquillo, 1999; Ellis, 1999; Gonzalez; 1999; Major, 1999)

“On TV you hear about the immigrants on unemployment, about those who drink and live on welfare – it's no wonder they don't like us.”

- Anja, 25, from Poland.

Learning through media

Several labels describe the connection between the young generation of today and the mass media. ‘Digital generation,’ ‘children in the information age,’ ‘computer nerds,’ ‘innocents on the Net,’ and ‘addicted surfers’ are just a few examples (Livingston, 2002). All of those names have in common that they portray how today's homes are transforming into the site of a multimedia culture. The influence of the mass media is so prevalent that it can no longer be clearly separated from children's education, their employment prospects, their participation in public activities and their participation within the private realm of the family. Defining today's audiences as ‘users,’ studies point out that people's relation to media is being constructed not only in terms of viewing, reading or listening, but also in terms of using, consuming and owning. While media organize and shape people's sense of culture, the viewer interprets the message

from within his own structure of identifications such as gender, age group, family, class, race or nationality (FisherKeller, 2002; Livingston, 2002).

Children and young people are a distinctive group when it comes to media use. They are a sizeable market segment, a subculture even, and one that often “leads the way” in the use of new media (Livingston, 2002, p. 3). One needs to regard the special circumstances surrounding that particular age group. Young adolescents are faced with identity quests; they are going through puberty and have to negotiate their sense of sexual identity. They must establish independence from their parents, finish formal schooling and begin to assess one’s place in modern society (FisherKeller, 2002; Strasburger, 1995). A level of vulnerability comes with that condition. If teenagers are not taught adequately about image-making tools and techniques, they are bound to feel relatively powerless in the official domains of image making. The example of television shows that until children are old enough to realize that it is fantasy, they are likely to be heavily influenced by the programming they view. This ultimately could affect their behavior (FisherKeller, 2002; Strasburger, 1995).

Numerous studies on the subject of media effect debate the inestimable effect upon people, molding their orientation to the world, their psychological and physiological approach to thinking, seeing, feeling and learning (Cortes, 2000; Hillard, 2001; Strasburger, 1995). Several theories have been developed in order to explain that potential effect. Susan Neuman points out four common theories (Neuman, 1995). The displacement theory points out that television takes time away from other pursuits, be it leisure or learning. The information-processing theory describes how television might influence the way people think and with the development of new media also results in

training students to process information in a way that is far different from what traditional school-based learning required. The gratification-theory shows how television transforms viewers into apathetic spectators who are unable to pursue long-term goals. Finally, the interest-stimulation theory describes the media as a means to enhance learning by opening the viewer to new information and informational avenues he had not thought about pursuing (Neuman, 1995). It is the last that is of particular interest to this study.

Mass media are the product and reflection of the social systems out of which they were born and in which they continue to exist (Demers & Viswanath, 1999). They represent their local communities, portraying their dominant interests, philosophies and cultural norms. The mass media could potentially serve as an introduction and a first exposure to the culture incoming ethnic immigrants are about to encounter. (Tse & Lee, 1994; Chaffee, Nass & Yang, 1990; Hwang, 1999; Walker, 1993). Dorothee Meister points out that greater use of media, while overwhelming at times, can serve as a quick orientation into the culture ethnic immigrants, and the young generation in particular, are about to become part of. The media thus provide a short version of what to expect and leave the teenagers the opportunity to evaluate, accept or deny the values and perceptions they will eventually be faced with in real life (Meister, 1999). Researchers also point out the media as possible tools of educating the immigrant youth about possibilities of succeeding in a society that by nature has separated itself from the disadvantaged groups present within its borders (Walter & Gruebl, 1999).

In a paper on media consumption of Hong Kong immigrants to Canada, David Tse and Wei-Na Lee indicate that immigrant consumers seem to pursue the same media habits in the country as they have at home (Tse & Lee, 1994). While the individual's

adoption of majority norms may be related to other factors such as their length of residence, education level, age, income and the use of English, studies do not exclude the possibility that exposure to media has played a role in it. A paper on media uses and acculturation among Chinese immigrants in the U.S. shows that those who used more English-language media were generally better acculturated than those who exclusively turned to Chinese-language media. While the participants of the survey indicated a heavy use of the Chinese-language media, they supplemented the latter by the use of English-language media as a source of information but primarily for entertainment and language learning (Hwang, 1999).

The few existing studies on immigrants and their media habits bear limited insight. Journalist Douglas Clyde Walker, who wrote his dissertation on the role of mass media in the adaptation of Haitian immigrants in Miami, has conducted one of the more thorough studies available. He explored the immigrants' use of both Haitian and Miami media and how they related to the immigrants' integration process. Walker has come to several conclusions. There was a reciprocal relationship between host media use and host communication competence. The more the participants in this study used the media, the better their language skills; the better their language skills, the more they used the media (Walker, 1993). Furthermore, he shows that the greater the participants' predisposition to fully adapt to the host culture, the more they were likely to use the host mass media. He also concludes that media use had an impact on the participants' knowledge of public affairs pertaining to the community. The numbers were especially significant when both Haitian and American media were regarded as the source (Walker, 1993).

While the research is still scarce, it indicates a correlation between media use and integration. In fact, as Walker's study points out, first-year immigrants' use of Miami's English-language media showed a stronger initial relationship with the ability to communicate in the new society than did the immigrant's number of interpersonal relationships with Americans (Walker, 1993). Walker acknowledges the limitations of his study: his sample was small, he focused on one ethnic group only and he conducted his study after the initial integration process had passed. Yet first steps have been made and set a frame for further studies to come.

Chapter IV

Research Question and Methodology

“Even though I was still very young when we came over, I definitely had to give up certain memories that connected me with Poland. I remember trying really hard to fit in. I would try to speak in German all the time. I hated being different.”

- Basia, 28, from Poland.

Introduction

The goal of this study was to assess the role of the media in the adjustment process of young ethnic immigrants in a German city.

A review of some of the available literature has shown that ethnic immigrants have indeed become a frequently debated topic, both on the political and societal agendas. The large influx of ethnic immigrants in the early 1990s redirected the focus of immigration politics from services directed at merely processing and locating the incoming people to those more targeted at integrating the new group within the native population (Dietz, 1997; Wagner, 1992; Weiss, 1999).

Some studies have listed various reasons for the differences between the ethnic immigrant population of the last two decades and the one crossing the borders immediately following World War II. The poor language competency or, more frequently, the complete lack thereof, has been quoted as the number one obstacle between the ethnic immigrant and his adjustment within the host society (Dietz, 1999).

I focused on media as a means to language acquisition as they provide an exposure to the German language and culture without directly infringing upon an ethnic

immigrant's own identity. Using the mass media, be it television, newspapers, or the Internet, the user has a degree of choice as to whether to accept the ideas and norms that are being communicated. Total immersion, on the other hand, while providing a temporary solution, has been noted to conflict with the ethnic immigrant's desire to preserve his own cultural identity, including his native tongue (Dietz & Roll, 1998).

I have chosen media as my focus in an ethnic immigrant's language acquisition process because of their role in the young generation's growing up experience. Television, music, newspapers and today's wide-spread familiarity with the Internet are known to affect a teenager's learning progress (Cortes, 2000; Hillard, 2001; Strasburger, 1995). This study examines whether this applies to ethnic teenagers as well for whom media serve both as a language tutor and a window to Germany's cultural individuality.

***"I like to nurture both of my cultures.
Germans often do not like that idea."***
- Natasha, 24, from the former Soviet Union.

Research Question

The aim of this study was thus to explore the link between media and an ethnic immigrant's integration process and examine the consequences thereof. The general question was stated as follows:

***Are media a contributing or a distracting factor
in an ethnic immigrant's integration process, or maybe a combination of the two?***

In order to keep this wide-reaching topic within the limitations of a thesis, the question was focused more particularly as:

1. What is the extent of an ethnic immigrant's use of the German media?

2. How does an ethnic immigrant's use of media relate to his linguistic abilities?
3. How are linguistic ability and media use linked to an ethnic immigrant's integration within the host society? (The level of integration is measured by professional achievements and the immigrant's personal assessment of his level of compatibility with the host culture).

Methodology

My approach to this study was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. I began by researching literature already available on the topic and thus assessing the current status of the discussions on the issue. While collecting data from overseas turned out to be a rather tedious and difficult process, I managed to gather a sizeable sample of the literature available. As the topic of ethnic migration and the consequences thereof have not attracted great interest before the 1990s, the studies quoted in this research exemplify the discussion that has emerged during that particular decade.

Because only a few studies have looked at an immigrant's use of media and none looked at that of ethnic immigrants in particular, I decided to follow the literature review with a survey of my own that would pose and test some initial hypotheses and provide preliminary data that could be refined and developed through further research. The aim of the survey was to provide a sample of an ethnic immigrant's use of the German media. The extensive survey was designed to provide data about the chosen sample regarding personal characteristics, media use, linguistic abilities and their status of integration. Time constraints prevented me from attempting a survey among a larger and more encompassing sample of ethnic immigrants, extended to other parts of Germany and

other ethnic backgrounds that the immigrants represented. While the sample was too small to allow me to draw inferences about a population, it was sufficient to answer some initial questions and provide guidelines for further research. I found both my findings and my limitations to be significant in establishing what the issues are and what yet needs to be addressed.

After reviewing the results of the survey, I began to identify major themes and also inconsistencies present throughout the data. I then chose four individuals from my sample and through more in-depth interviews began to add some qualitative data to my research results. The four individuals, three females and one male, were chosen to represent a range of backgrounds, current situations and future perspectives. Their answers are presented as part of the discussion chapter.

“The German government can help you with a support system. Yet you have to walk the path alone.”

- Grzegorz, 27, from Poland.

Participants

In order to conduct my survey in a manageable time frame I used the convenience sampling approach. I chose Dortmund, a city located in the North-Rhine Westfalia region, because of my familiarity with the place and because of the city’s and the region’s significance within the context of national immigration politics. In 1999, 21.8% of all of Germany’s ethnic immigrants were settled in that north-west region, thus hosting a far greater percentage of ethnic immigrants than any other German state (Welt, 2001).

The survey was sent to a total of 60 ethnic immigrants between the ages of 14 and 35, all chosen based on discussions with other ethnic immigrants or information provided by people living in my neighborhood.

Before being considered for this study, the addressees had to fulfill the following conditions:

1. They were by definition 'ethnic immigrants.'
2. They were born between 1970 and 1995.
3. They came to Germany between 1980 and 1995.
4. They were children or teenagers at the time of arrival.

I chose ethnic immigrants who came to Germany between 1980 and 1995 because it was that particular period during which the ethnic immigrant question was mentioned to become a national "problem" (Heinen, 2000). I focused on young people in particular, as it is an age group for whom the intercultural transition could both be a springboard of professional and social opportunities or the beginning of personal and societal failure. Unlike their parents, the teenagers and children arrive in Germany at an age when they can still be molded. Not yet affirmed in their beliefs and values, teenagers can learn to integrate and identify with the culture they are confronted with. Yet their young age and the vulnerability that comes with it, could also mean their downfall when facing the new societal and cultural pressures. It is that fine line that makes this age group a fascinating subject for this study (Baaden, 1997; Dietz, 1997; Dietz, 1999; Heinen, 2001; Mammey, 1998).

A total of 47 people responded to the survey, 41 from Poland and six from the former Soviet Union. The group represents a wide range of both educational and economic backgrounds.

“I admit very fast that I’m Polish. I don’t even know why, maybe it’s a security mechanism.”

- Basia, 28, from Poland

Researcher

A journalism and theater undergraduate student at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va., I was solely responsible for the data collection and evaluation, all under the supervision of three appointed professors. My interest sprang from personal experience as a migrant from Poland to Germany in 1990. The transition between cultures, language acquisition and a process of assimilation with my German peers painted a vivid picture of the ups and downs of the migration experience and led to the formulation of the questions addressed in this study.

Chapter V

Research Results

“No Germans would make the effort to get acquainted with us, to play with us or invite us to their birthday parties. They thought we did not want to be associated with them, especially since none of us spoke the language.”

- Basia, 28, from Poland.

The survey, “The role of the media in ethnic immigrants’ integration into the German society,” consisted of 238 questions divided into five main areas: personal, school environment, linguistic abilities, media use and integration. The following is a summary of all the results, categorized by these sections.

Personal

Twenty-five female and 22 male young ethnic immigrants participated in the survey. The participants were born in the years between 1970 and 1991, with greater agglomerations in the years 1976, 1977 and 1980, each with five people. Thirty-eight of the participants were single, and the other nine married. The majority (38) had no children, two people had one child, four had two children and two people had more than two.

Thirty-six percent live with a partner, 13 with two parents, nine with one parent, and nine also with their siblings. Six live on their own, two live with friends and one person with a relative other than the ones mentioned above.

Asked about living arrangements, 34 of the 47 participants said they were living in a rented apartment. Of the remaining, three lived in a dorm, the same number each in either a rented or an owned house. Only two participants admitted to living in a 'social welfare apartment,' a living arrangement greatly supported by government funding.

The participants differed greatly in their current occupation. Eleven are still in school, 14 attend a university, six are in vocational training and 13 have a job. The remaining three people were either unemployed or gave no answer. Seventeen finance their living through a full-time job, 13 are employed part-time, 12 are still supported by parents, three supported by the partner, four receive a pension and three receive unemployment compensation. Four of the participants are using their past savings, five are on a scholarship and four use some other form of funding. No person mentioned being on welfare.

Out of the 47 participants, 45 came to Germany between 1980 and 1993. Two were born immediately after their family's arrival. While the participants were spread out fairly evenly over the 13 years, 12 came in 1989, followed by 10 in 1990.

The majority (41) of the participants came from Poland, three from the former Soviet Union and one person did not name a country of origin. Fifteen came with rather mixed feelings, nine were full of expectations, 10 could not really tell, and two were each either afraid or did not really care. One person admitted not wanting to come at all.

The reasons for coming varied. For the parents of 21 participants it was the prospect of economic betterment, for 17 the lack of future perspectives in their country of origin, for 15 the reunification with family members, for 14 the political situation in their country, for nine the prospect of better medical care, for seven the search for a better

national situation, for six mere curiosity, and for two the connection with roots. Six among the participants could not express their reasons.

While 19 of the 47 participants would like to go visit their countries, only two can imagine going back for good. Nine cannot picture ever going back, eight maybe for a temporary period, and four on the condition that the situation at home changes from what it was when they left. Twenty-seven do not regret having come to Germany, while 18 have second thoughts from times to times.

For 18 of the participants, their fathers' level of education was vocational training, for three it was secondary school. The fathers of 13 of the participants went to college, while one father did not go past elementary school. Among the mothers, 15 finished vocational training, 11 secondary school, four went to college while two did not go past elementary school.

The fathers' occupations are primarily in the blue-collar sector, with five fathers being the exception, holding college-level jobs such as that of a teacher or an engineer. One father is unemployed, while two do not give an answer. Among the mothers, only two claim a college-educated occupation.

Twenty-six of the participants live in neighborhoods with primarily German neighbors, 16 reside in mixed neighborhoods. Only four live in areas primarily housing ethnic immigrants. Twenty-three of the participants have mixed circles of friends, while 16 hang out primarily with ethnic immigrants and eight with native Germans only.

Participation in clubs is not that common. Eleven reported to be part of an athletic club, seven are members of their church group, four belong to a music group and one person joined a youth group. Twelve of the participants claim membership in other, not

mentioned, groups. In those, the members are mostly Germans for 14 of the participants, a mix of both groups for 10 and primarily ethnic immigrants for five.

“I have been long enough in Germany to call it home. I do want to know what is happening in Poland, but as it does not affect me directly, that is only secondary now.”

- Anja, 25, from Poland.

School environment

Twenty-eight of the 47 participants attended the gymnasium. Twelve were students at a ‘*Realschule*,’ five at a ‘*Hauptschule*,’ and two at a ‘*Gesamtschule*.’ Twenty of the participants were in the average of the class, while five managed to be in the top five, followed by 18 in the top 30 of their classes. Only one person dropped out of school.

Two-fifths of the students were admitted into the same grade upon arrival in Germany, while 17 were put back a grade. The question did not apply to the remaining, who were either born in Germany or arrived before school age. Out of all the participants, 20 acknowledged repeating a grade. Twenty-seven of the participants finished their education with secondary school or a vocational training. Only 13 decided to go to college.

For 24, their classmates were primarily native Germans, while for 17 it was a 50-50 mix between ethnic and native Germans. Only four participants were in a classroom primarily attended by ethnic immigrants. For 25, their classroom friends come from both ethnic and native German groups. Twelve admitted having primarily ethnic immigrants among their friends, while only seven said to have only Germans as friends. Almost all students (42) were instructed in German, and two in their native tongue.

“Your limited German skills are an obstacle but one that can be overcome. You might lose some time along the way, but there is still a chance for you to succeed, both socially and professionally.”

- Grzegorz, 27, from Poland.

Linguistic competence

Nineteen participants assess their German language competence to be good, 17 very good. Ten find their German to be average, and one person believes it is bad. The majority (39) said that they did not know any German before crossing the border. Once in Germany, however, only 17 attended an organized language course. In most cases the course was organized by the school they attended. Only one person took advantage of a course organized by the Department of Labor. All of the students who said they attended a course completed it.

The native tongue is the language spoken at home of 33 of the participants. The language they use most, however, was German for 28 of them. Only seven speak primarily in their native tongue, while 12 speak both equally.

The use of the native tongue happens primarily among family members, so say 46 of the participants. Eight use their native language with colleagues at work, 34 with friends, and three on other occasions.

The reason for the ongoing use of the native tongue varies from participant to participant. Thirty-four have said that they do not want to forget their mother tongue, 22 have said that their family members' German is not sufficient, nine that they can communicate that way better and five feel more comfortable while speaking in their native tongue. One person admitted to using her/his native tongue in order to isolate him-

/herself from the native population. Six participants named other reasons. When it comes to counting and mathematical research in particular, 11 still use their mother tongue.

“I’m always perceived as part of that ethnic group. It’s as if I were invisible. Nobody asks about ME.”

- Natasha, 25, from the former Soviet Union.

Personal statements/perceptions

In response to the statement that ethnic immigrants can have an impact on the way German politics are run only if they begin to care, 21 agreed to a certain extent, 11 strongly agreed, and six each either disagreed to some extent or strongly disagreed.

Twenty-three of the participants somewhat agreed with the idea that identification with one’s own ethnic group was important as a testimony of one’s own roots. Here, five agreed to some extent, 10 somewhat disagreed and nine disagreed strongly.

Twenty-five of the participants somewhat believe that ethnic immigrants should delve into the German society and culture as much as possible in order to take advantage of what Germany can offer them. Sixteen strongly agreed with that statement, while six disagreed to some extent. There was no one who strongly disagreed.

When asked whether in order to be successful, an ethnic immigrant had to learn German and mingle as soon as possible, 30 strongly agreed and 13 agreed to some extent. Only four participants disagreed with that statement.

Twenty-nine participants believe that if you do not succeed in Germany, it is your own fault. Fourteen disagreed with that statement to some extent, while four believe the contrary.

Twenty-eight believe that the German government does enough to support ethnic immigrants. Sixteen disagreed with that to some extent and two rejected the statement altogether.

There is a split in the perception of Germany's attitude toward ethnic immigrants. Eighteen of the participants believe that Germany is somewhat welcoming, while 17 think that there is some negative attitude. Eight participants perceive it as entirely welcoming, while three only see the negative.

Nineteen of the participants believe that they have done all they could in order to succeed in Germany. There are 24 who agree with that to some extent, while four disagree.

The majority (40) are satisfied with what they have achieved and with where their lives are right now. Here, five disagree to some extent, while two express their clear dissatisfaction.

The majority (33) do not believe that their lack of German language competency has been a hindrance in their achieving what they wanted. Twelve do see it as an obstacle, out of whom four name it to be a major hindrance.

Twenty-four of the participants feel very well integrated into the German society and 19 agree to some extent. Only four disagreed. Apart from that, 39 believe that their German identity is part of them, while the remaining eight either disagree (five) or give no answer (three).

“If you treasure the culture you grew up with, if you constantly long to relive that time – then you can never be happy over here.”

- Grzegorz, 27, from Poland.

Media use

Cable TV and satellite are widely in use. 42 of the 47 survey participants own either one. 43 watch TV on a regular basis and 32 turn it on every day. The number of hours that people devote to TV each time they turn it on varies, with 2-3 hours for 31 of the people asked. The number of people who watch TV for an hour or less is eight, five for those who spend 3-4 hours watching. Only three people said they spend more than six hours each time they turn the television on.

Thirty-eight of the participants primarily watch either news or movie channels, both equally popular. Only two say they turn to educational programs on a regular basis.

TV is primarily an entertainment medium, say 37 of the survey's participants. The remaining use television for educational purposes (four), out of boredom (two) or have it running as background to other activities they are going about (three).

Of the 41 who own a VCR, 14 rent movies every once in a while. Eight watch rented movies several times a month, followed by five who only do it several times a year. Two people said they plugged in a videotape several times a week, and only one person watches one movie a week.

Going to the cinema enjoys moderate popularity. Twenty-two people say they go once in a while, followed by ten who go to the movies at least once a month. Six participants go to the movies several times a year, while five said they go at least once a

month. Only one person admitted to going as often as every week, while three said they did not go at all.

Watching the same movies over and over is a common practice. Thirteen of the participants do it on a regular basis and twenty-four plug in the same tape once in a while. Only ten gave a negative answer.

When one watches a movie over and over, he tends to remember lines and recite them, if opportunity allows. Twenty-six of the participants have caught themselves doing it frequently, followed by twenty who only noticed it once in a while.

All 47 participants watch television in German. Apart from that, twenty-eight also tune to channels in their native tongue, nine also watch programs in English and three people have listed other languages featured in the programs they are turning to.

The company usually varies. Thirty-two participants have noted that there are times when they watch TV by themselves or with family, thirty-three usually have friends over. Seventeen say their friends are evenly divided between natives and ethnic immigrants. A total of sixteen said that their company mostly comprises of ethnic immigrants, and nine watch TV primarily with native Germans.

Forty-five of the 47 participants own a radio, but only 26 listen to it on an every day basis. There are 11 who rarely turn it on, followed by eight who listen at least once a week. The number of hours the participants spend listening to the radio is minimal. For 29 it is an hour or less, for eight it is 2-3 hours. Only five devote more than six hours at a time to the radio, with the rest of the group evenly spread.

While 21 name entertainment as their main reason for turning on the radio, for the other 19 it is merely background to other activities. There are 43 who listen to German

stations, followed by 12 whose station destinations are English. Only four of the participants receive stations in their native tongue and two even turn in to stations in other languages. The primary location for listening to the radio is the car (37 people), followed by the house with 31 people. Only 13 turn the radio on at work.

Only seven of the 47 participants subscribe to a newspaper. Nevertheless, 41 read the paper at least once in a while, of whom 18 do it once a week and 11 who open the paper on a daily basis. Of those, 37 read the paper in parts and only three read it in its entirety.

The majority of the participants were interested primarily in national and international news (29 people) and local news (21 people). Only 15 were interested in culture, followed by 13 each interested in sports or classifieds. Business news seemed to grab the attention of only four of the participants.

Reading papers online is not a common practice yet. Only 16 of the participants turn to the Internet for news once in a while, but there is a small contingent of three for whom the Internet is the main source for news.

Among all of the participants, 42 read the papers in German, 10 also in their native tongue, and seven look at English papers. Two participants say they read papers in a language other than the ones mentioned above.

Thirteen of the participants subscribe to a magazine. The types of magazines that the participants look at vary, with science and entertainment magazines each read by 17, sports by 13, technology by 11, and environment by three people.

Twenty-five of the participants read magazines once a week, 11 once in a while, and nine as often as every day. In contrast to the papers, magazines are read in their

entirety by 24 of the participants, followed by 21 who read the papers in parts. Among them, 30 browse through magazines looking for information and 14 for plain entertainment. Only one person quoted magazines as an educational resource.

Twenty-five of the participants do not use the Internet to read magazines, but the other 20 certainly do. Of all respondents, 44 read magazines in German, 11 also in their native tongue and eight also read them in English.

It is common by now to have access to the Internet. Thirty-six of the participants have access at home; 26 also have access to the Internet either at school or at work. The participants use it to various extents: 21 surf daily, 18 either once a week or once in a while and the rest rarely or never. When the participants go online, it is usually for an hour (20 people) or less or for 2-3 hours (also 20 people).

While 36 go online to look for information, 31 use it in order to write or read email, 25 for entertainment, 19 for education, 15 for shopping and 10 in order to access chat rooms.

Participants access Web sites in various languages. Forty participants go to German ones, 20 also look at English ones and a total of 11 look at sites in their native tongue. Three participants named "other" as the language of their Web sites. The majority (37) of the students go online when they are alone, when they are with friends, but only six in the presence of their family.

Playing videogames enjoys limited popularity among the students who participated in this survey. While 32 admitted that they have videogames or computer games at their home, only 17 said that they used them with regularity, be it every day (three people),

once a week (five people) or once in a while (nine people). Ten rarely take advantage of them, while the remaining 20 do not play at all.

Twenty-one of the participants play games at home, 13 do it at their friends' home and three when they are visiting relatives. Only one person admitted to using public arcades. For those who play, it is usually not a novelty. Eighteen have done it for more than two years, four for a year and two people have just started. Here strategic games enjoy the greatest popularity with 10 of the participants, followed by action games, which grab nine. Role-plays and sport games were each the favorite of three.

Twenty-eight of the students said that they play games primarily in German, 19 played also in English, while only three students have games in their native tongue. Nineteen have said that if they play, they do so by themselves, while nine are usually accompanied by friends. For nine the company is composed primarily of ethnic Germans, while for another nine it is a 50-50 mix between the two groups. Only five have experienced their company to be primarily native Germans.

Forty-five of the participants own CDs or tapes. The majority (35 people) have a rather sizeable collection with more than 30 CDs, 11 have 30 or fewer with five having more than 20, two more than 11 and four between one and 10. Thirty-eight of the students asked listen to music every day, three at least once a week and four once in a while. Once they turn the music on, it is going to stay on for a while. For 20 it is 2-3 hours at a time, followed by 19 who listen for at least an hour. One-tenth of the participants turns on to music for six hours or longer in one sitting. The music is in German for 28 of the participants, while the dominant language is English with 44.

Twenty-two of the participants also have music in their native tongue and 13 also listen to music in languages other than the ones mentioned above.

There is great variety in the amounts of money the participants spend on media. For 25 up to \$20 is devoted to music every month, for 10 it is up to \$50 and six spend as much as \$100. There were two participants who admitted to spending more than \$100 on media each month. While four named parents as the source for that money, for 41 the money comes out of their personal savings.

Each participant seemed to have had a very different experience in his or her teacher's use of media in the classroom. The medium used most was newspapers, named by 30 of the participants, the Internet was used in 25 of the cases, television in 22, radio in 11 and music in 10. Four participants mentioned the use of another medium.

The use of media in classrooms was usually confined to particular projects, say 19 of the participants, rather than being used on a regular basis. Only in six of the cases do teachers use it every week, and for two participants as often as every day.

The encouragement to use media in one's work was found in only four of the cases. Twenty-five of the participants agreed that their teachers mentioned the use of media only once in a while; for 10 this was never the case.

Chapter VI

Discussion

“When they realized that I could not speak any word in German, they called me ‘stupid’ and ‘handicapped.’ When after a year I became one of the top students in the class, they did not like that either. An immigrant cannot be better, they told me.”

- Natasha, 24, from the former Soviet Union.

The following discussion is based on both the results of the survey and the in-depth interviews that followed. I used the material from the interviews to provide some qualitative data to the research results. In particular, I was able to address some of the major themes and inconsistencies revealed in the data. This chapter attempts to both summarize the results of this particular study and to put it into the frame of the research conducted before. It is then followed by a conclusion which addresses the limits of this study while setting some initial guidelines for the research yet to come.

The in-depth interview subjects

All four interviewees enrolled at the Reinoldus- und Schiller Gymnasium (RSG) in Dortmund sometime between 1988 and 1993. Those particular four students were chosen because their common educational background provided a mean for some initial comparisons. On the other hand, their personal stories related to age at the time of arrival, the motivation behind their parents’ move as well as their current situation show the extent of outcomes possible. It is that variety despite the initial similarities that points out

the various factors that, beyond education, need to be addressed in order to assess the situation and potential for success among ethnic Germans.

What made the RSG stand out among other gymnasiums in Dortmund was the German as a Second Language (GSL) program organized solely by the school's faculty. The program was established in order to accommodate the large immigrant influx of the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a result, immigrant students from the various districts in Dortmund transferred to RSG in order to be included in that support system that would further them linguistically while providing a rigorous academic challenge at the same time. The GSL program was abolished in late 1990s due to faculty resources and financial restraints. Today, all GSL students at the secondary level are placed in *Hauptschules* across the city.

Grzegorz, 27, came to Germany from the south of Poland at the age of 13. He did not speak any German at the time of arrival, so continuing his education at the advanced level of the eighth grade seemed out of the question. Unfamiliar with the German education system and following the advice of officials she met only for the first time, Grzegorz's mother decided to put her son into a local *Hauptschule*. For the following year, Grzegorz's classroom was anything but German: there were Turks, there were Russians, and there were Poles. Learning a language in a classroom dominated by foreign tongues proved difficult. In addition, the rather laid-back environment did little to encourage Grzegorz in his academic pursuits. When a year later, his mother insisted on his transition to the academically rigorous setting of a *gymnasium*, Grzegorz was forced to repeat a grade in order to be able to compete with his peers both linguistically and academically. Trying to meet the foreign language requirements, which ask for two

languages other than German to be completed by the time a student graduates, Grzegorz had to repeat another grade later in his educational career. He finally graduated from the gymnasium at the age of 22, three years older than most of his peers. Immediately following graduation, Grzegorz completed a one-year civilian service, a requirement for every able male in Germany. Today, he is in his sixth semester of college, majoring in computer science.

Natasha, 24, came to Germany from the former Soviet Union at the age of 15. She also spoke no German at the time of arrival. Natasha enrolled in the same grade she would have been in had she stayed in the Ukraine. Simultaneously, she participated in the GSL classes, thus gradually catching up on her language skills. With the time, Natasha became one of her classes top students, and graduated with the second highest GPA. She immediately continued with a psychology degree in college, and is now about to enroll in a doctorate program.

Anja, 25, came to Germany from Poland at the age of 11. Immediately upon arrival, she enrolled at the 5th grade of the *gymnasium*, thus beginning her secondary education along with her German peers. One of six children, Anja began working while still at school already early on, making her academics only a second priority. She left the *gymnasium* after completing the 12th grade, without obtaining the Abitur which is awarded at the completion of the 13th grade. Shortly afterwards, Anja enrolled in the vocational track and after three years completed training as a commercial clerk. Today, she is a department manager at a tobacco firm.

Basia, 28, arrived in Germany when she was only seven years old and enrolled in a German elementary school immediately upon arrival. She graduated from a *gymnasium*

with the same class she entered with, and proceeded with an architecture major in college. Basia dropped out of college one semester before completing it. She is now helping her mom in the latter's small business, delivering sandwiches to companies every morning and at lunchtime.

“Living two cultures is not contradictory. It's about being rich in interests and perceptions.”

- Anja, 25, from Poland.

Discussion of results

This study has examined whether the German media have an impact on an ethnic immigrant's process of integration into the new society and culture. As the results show, every one of the 47 survey participants uses the mass media to some extent.

Only a few participants read papers on a regular basis, and just a few own a subscription. Music, television and the VCR enjoyed the greatest popularity, with the Internet slowly finding its way into every household. The fact that television is the most popular medium among immigrants can be linked to various reasons. As Bao-hui Hwang points out in his study on media use among Chinese immigrants in the U.S., television “offers both visuals and sound, and, therefore, it does not require good language skills to understand or guess what is presented in the content” (Hwang, 1999, p. 17). This appears to have been a factor for the four interviewees. “Especially at the beginning it was so much easier to turn on the TV than to read a newspaper,” recalls Anja. “Most of the channels we watched we also remembered from Poland. That made the guessing a piece of cake.”

Whether the participants' use of media had had an impact on their competency in the German language is hard to say. None said that they were consciously turning to

media in order to improve their language skills. However, that does not mean that learning was not taking place. The fact that two-thirds of the participants watch the same programs over and over shows that the potential for language improvement through repetition could have taken place. In addition, more than half of the participants recall lines or entire passages from movies or programs. This shows that while conscious learning was not the intention, the media still trained some in their listening and memorization skills. “After watching certain movies for the second or third time, I would remember some of the expressions and even use them myself,” said Grzegorz, who uses television above any other media. “It was like a vocabulary lesson, just without any conscious effort.”

In his study David Walker concludes the existence of a reciprocal relationship between host media use and host communication competence. The more the subjects of his study use the host media, the better their communication competence; the better their communication competence, the more they seemed to use the host media (Walker, 1993). These data suggest that participants use the written media more as their German skills improve. While television was the primary medium among the participants, many of them also used other type of media. That often depended on the period of time over which they have resided in Germany and thus their increased level of language competency. Where music and television train one’s listening skills primarily, the written media provide more visual training and actual confrontation with the written word. While this process is still passive and one-way oriented, it requires more active effort on part of the user. “It is hard to read newspapers at the beginning if you have to look up every

other word,” said Natasha. “The more comfortable I got with the language, the more I tended to look at papers and magazines voluntarily.”

The participants’ use of the media as a source of information about Germany’s current events or the Germanic culture was moderate. While news channels and the news sections in the newspapers are quite popular among the participants, the type of news they are looking for show that awareness about Germany’s political culture was not always the goal. The participants primarily read national and international news, thus showing an interest in events in both Germany and the world as a whole. “The media are a great way to keep ourselves informed about what is going on in the countries we come from,” said Natasha. “While we keep in touch with relatives back home, the media can be vital in providing us with the national and international contexts.” This comment reconfirms what other studies have noted while studying media use among immigrant populations. While immigrants use ethnic media solely for the purpose of staying informed about affairs pertaining to their country of origin, when using host media they are often found to pick out information fulfilling the same goal (Hwang, 1999; Walker, 1993). That tendency decreases depending on the age of the immigrant at the time of arrival. Participants who arrived in Germany at an older age have stronger ties to the country they come from. “I wished that I could say that I feel ‘Polish,’ but I’m truly not,” says Basia, 28, who arrived in Germany at the age of seven. “That’s why I don’t feel connected with what is going on in Poland.” Unlike Basia, Natasha who arrived in Germany when she was 15, sees media as a way of staying informed about what is happening in the Ukraine. “In Eastern Europe and countries from the former Soviet Bloc things are still changing at a very fast pace, and on an everyday basis,” said Natasha.

“You can almost be reassured that your home is going to be part of the German news one way or the other.”

The primary goal for media use among the participants is entertainment. The availability of a multitude of channels and other types of media carried a certain attraction for many of the participants. “We only had two channels in Poland and the TV we owned was black and white,” recalls Grzegorz. “The idea of suddenly having over 40 channels to choose from was exciting if not a little overwhelming.” The participants recall watching their favorite TV show, listening to the radio while driving, reading about national discoveries in environmental magazines or searching the Internet to find out more about the country they are about to visit. Yet they never use a medium with the direct purpose of just ‘learning’ in mind. On the contrary, using the media in a classroom environment might be a deterrent for some. “You watch TV or surf the Internet for sites that interest you. That’s how you learn,” said Grzegorz. “If you have to watch some boring movies that your history teacher decides to show you, you soon get distracted and don’t pay attention. Watching TV at home is different. You choose what you want to see, so you are more likely to fully absorb it.”

Media use indirectly affected the participants’ scholastic achievements. Those who graduated either from a *Gymnasium* or a *Realschule* were noted to use all types of media more heavily. A reason for that might be the fact that more academically geared institutions pay great attention to including media use as part of their curriculum. The heavy Internet use was a surprising finding in that even though the medium has become a common household particle just over the last decade, it has already gained immense popularity. The latter seemed to increase the better a participant’s language skills. Yet, as

the participants of the survey emphasized, it is outside of the classroom that they would use media the most. “As students we often react in a negative way when we are told to do certain things, like using a newspaper to complete an assignment, for example,” points out Anja. “It is only during those times when we attend to media out of our own will that we can get the most out of it.”

As expected, German is the prevailing language of all of the media used by the participants. The exception is music, where English leads in the CD collection by almost one third. This result does not necessarily support other studies which show a preference in the use of ethnic media over the host media. In-depth interviews revealed that while the participants’ own use of the native media is not as common, their parents take great advantage of it. That often reflects their desire to retreat to something that is comfortable and which they personally can identify with, like in the example of the native tongue. Only one-fifth of the participants also read newspapers and magazines in their native tongues. The availability of foreign media at newsstands in larger cities has been common for many years. Yet first the opening of the borders has opened up the possibility of a commercially oriented media traffic. Individual vendors have begun to transport media from country to country, opening up the wide array of media available. Vendors are usually targeting markets with large conglomerates of ethnic groups, be it particular neighborhoods or specific gatherings such as church groups or weekly mass. “I have seen how my parents or their friends would approach a car out of which a man would sell various magazines and newspapers,” recalls Anja. “It really doesn’t matter that the media they are buying are usually a week or two old. The fact that it’s available seems most important.”

The greatest presence of the native tongue among the participants is noticeable in the television sector. The availability of movies in the native language, either brought in from the country of origin or sent through relatives, is only one explanation for the programs. Since the mid-1990s the availability of satellite TV has grown across the country. Either through satellite reception or in certain cases per regular cable, TV participants were able to receive channels from many different countries, including their own. The availability of everyday programs from the countries of origin or specialized ones which, like in the case of TV Polonia, were targeted to attract Polish minorities abroad, drew viewers to the screen nationwide and enjoyed great popularity among emigrants who longed to establish a connection with the country they have left. This also had negative effects. "I find my parents sitting in front of the television, watching Polish channels and getting nostalgic about their life in Poland," said Grzegorz. "Then they will usually have second thoughts about the move to Germany along with hypothetical ideas about the 'what-could-have-been. That is definitely not helping." This conclusion is anything but new. The globalization of the mass media has provoked new research across national borders analyzing the effect of the latter on the cultural identity of immigrant and foreigner populations. As studies point out, the accommodation of all ethnic groups with media markets they can identify with can lead to both positive and negative consequences. They can be a source of information about their native home and also serve as a support group, but they can also lead to ethnic isolation and the hardening of cultural borders (HAM, 2001).

As Hwang points out, it is not the immigrant's length of stay in the new society but rather her age at the time of arrival that affects her motivation for acculturation and

thus also her use of the ethnic media (Hwang, 1999). This study reconfirms that conclusion. While already those participants who arrived in Germany at the age of 11 and above use ethnic media only sporadically, for those who came at an age of 10 or age it is minimal or non-existent. The diminishing native language skills are definitely a factor. Basia who arrived in Germany when she was seven barely speaks Polish and only uses the language around her parents. “I always wanted to improve my Polish, to keep up with it by reading books, but that always was easier said than done,” she said. “I am glad, however, that I have not forgotten it completely. I mean, it doesn’t happen to everybody that they can call two cultures and languages their own.” As the results point out, as native language skills decrease the younger one is at the time of arrival, so does the interest in the native home. “I have been long enough in Germany to call it home,” said Basia. “Yes, I do want to know what is happening in Poland, but as it does not affect me directly anymore, that is only secondary.”

As age at the time of arrival is important in determining an immigrant’s desire to use either host or ethnic media and his desire to integrate into the new culture, personality can also be an important factor (Walker, 1993; Tse & Lee, 1994). The results of the survey as well as the in-depth interviews showed some support of that suggestion. The survey itself shows that almost all of the participants were willing to integrate with the host culture and were using the host media to a great extent. As the in-depth interviews pointed out, this is not always the case with the older generation. Overall, the participants pointed out that their parents had a harder time putting the past behind and integrating with the new society and culture. Yet even here, individual attitudes and characteristics played an important role. Basia mentioned the vast difference between the way her

mother and father accepted the new culture. Her mother was ready to come to Germany and leave everything connected to Poland behind. Once in Germany, she put extra effort to learn German along with her children, read books, attended language classes and mingled with natives. Today, she rarely talks about Poland, and seems well integrated into her new environment. Basia's father, on the other hand, was a different case. After spending 21 years in Germany, he still speaks limited German. "From the beginning on he would show a certain apprehension toward the country and the language," Basia said. "He would always speak Polish and avoided the identification with anything that was German." All of the other three in-depth interviews revealed the same story: the more a parent was willing to settle down, to accept the new culture, the more effort she would put into learning the language, into using the host media, and ultimately into calling Germany his new home.

David Walker also examined whether host media use and interpersonal relationships were equally important for language acquisition and came to a conclusion that, especially in the initial phase, media played a greater role (Walker, 1993). He supports other studies which suggest that the "pressure-free use of mass media is much easier than facing both the frustration and often negative feedback from initial contacts with the host nationals" (Walker, 1993, p. 295). The results of this survey suggest, however, that the participants' language skills were indeed increasing primarily with augmented interaction with the host community. As the interviews suggest, the limitation to one's own ethnic group may, on the other hand, lead to an ethnic isolation. Basia still remembers how she spent most of her time with other ethnic immigrants in her apartment building. "No German would make the effort to get acquainted with us or invite us to

their birthday parties,” she said. “They thought we did not want to be associate with them, especially since none of us spoke the language.” Yet with the time she herself pushed for the interaction. “I made a conscious effort to speak German when we were at the playground and even invited some of my German classmates to my birthday,” she said. “After that, things were so much easier.” Grzegorz who first was put in a classroom filled with other ethnic immigrants and foreigners, did not learn much German during the initial year. “I knew whatever I picked up on TV or by reading books, but not from talking with my friends who mostly were also Polish,” he said. “Once I transferred to the Gymnasium and almost all of my classmates were German, I had no other choice but speak it.” Yet there are many factors that contributed to each child’s learning success. “My parents always encouraged me to learn German, even tried to speak it at home,” Anja remembers. All of the interviewees realized that the GSL program at school did a great deal in advancing their process in both learning the language and in continuing the education they were forced to disrupt. “We could have done it without it, there are cases that reconfirm that,” said Natasha. “But we would not have been able to succeed in it so fast and in such an efficient manner.”

Chapter VII

Conclusion, limitations and suggestions for future research

“After 10 years of living here, I don’t feel like a foreigner anymore. I don’t feel German or Russian. Yet I feel like a European, that I am part of that modern European society where borders are melting and where you have the opportunity to travel the world, to discover yourself without feeling limited by or isolated from others.”

- Natasha, 24, from the former Soviet Union.

Within the limited context of this study it was impossible to prove a direct correlation between media use and an ethnic immigrant’s language competency and thus his ability to integrate within the German society. Yet as other studies before, this survey and interviews link to a hypothetical correlation between media and integration that could have been influenced by various factors on many different levels. One conclusion that can be drawn, however, is the fact that the greatest acculturation need shown by ethnic immigrants is their ability to communicate in the German tongue. Only half of the participants feel fully integrated into the German society and culture. This is partially true for another 40 percent. While this feeling could have various reasons, it can also be linked to language competency. The participants who consider themselves well integrated, have better language skills, were among the top thirty of their classes and see themselves as professionally successful. Here, language competency was key. There are suggestions that media are able to assist an immigrant in that endeavor, but to what extent has yet to be proven in a more elaborate study that would address many of the limitations faced above.

This exploratory study has several limitations. The sample was small and not representative of either the ethnic immigrant population or the varying regions of Germany, which differ in their number of immigrants, their cultures and support services offered. This study was based on primarily Polish ethnic immigrants, with the exception of three, and thus cannot speak for the diverse group of ethnic Germans. The participants also represent a rather broad age group, with few falling into the same category. Focusing on a birth year span of a maximum of five years would have provided more accurate results for that particular age group. In addition, contrasting a study on ethnic immigrants with one on other migrant populations living in Germany could help defining more clearly what makes this group unique.

Future researchers should obtain from their subjects a more objective assessment of their German skills and level of integration. The time frame of this study and the limits of the survey in particular made concrete measurement in those areas impossible. Furthermore, future studies should use a random sample of ethnic immigrant youth and also include native youth as part of the study, in order to draft more accurate conclusions about the challenges of a migrant's situation.

While this study quantitatively assesses the participants' use of the German media, it does little to provide qualitative results. A thorough content analysis of both the German and the native media could have yielded more specific results. This study was done at a time when all of the participants were already, at least partially, integrated into their new environment. In the future, the sample should be drawn from a group immediately upon the latter's arrival. A thorough research could follow its subjects over the initial period of adjustment, both assessing the people's media habits and their

implication on the increasing level of language ability and level of adaptation. Doing the same retrospectively limits the conclusion to mere hypotheses, as various other factors could have influenced the process along the way, be it personal characteristics, time frame, available support groups or other.

An aspect this study has deliberately left out of the picture is the way media convey images of minority groups and the effect this can have on the receiving population. The fact that all of the interviewees have mentioned that particular aspect of media as particularly destructive to their own adjustment process shows that the latter is definitely an issue. Whether media support the ethnic immigrant population or rather shed a negative light on it and thus influence the perception of that population group among the natives could thus be a topic for another study.

Hearing stories of immigrants can be fascinating, but also terrifying, if one begins to realize how easily the latter can fall through the cracks of the system. The increasing interest in the nature of migration and the lot of the million of ethnic immigrants in particular shows a commitment to an issue that will for decades affect Germany's demographics, politics, economy and culture. That is encouraging indeed.

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Survey Results

Personal

I would like to begin by finding out more about yourself, your personal background and your current situation.

You are...

Male	22
Female	25

Year of Birth.

1970	4
1973	2
1974	3
1975	3
1976	5
1977	5
1978	4
1979	3
1980	5
1981	1
1982	1
1983	3
1984	1
1985	1
1988	4
1989	1
1991	1

Marital Status.

Single	38
Married	9
Divorced	0
Widowed	0

Do you have children? If yes, how many?

None	38
One child	2
Two children	4
More than two	2
No answer	1

Do you live with: (Name all that apply)

Alone	6
Partner/Boyfriend/Spouse	17
One Parent	9
Both Parents	13
Siblings	9
Other Relatives	1
Friends	2

You live in:

Temporary arrangement for ethnic Germans	1
Dorms	3
Apartment	2
Condominium	34
Rented House	3
Own House	1
Other	3

What do you do right now?

Secondary school	11
College/University	14
Vocational training	6
Military/civilian service	13
Job	1
Unemployed	1
Other	1

How do you finance your living? Name all that apply

Full-time job	17
Part-time job	13
Supported by parents	12
Supported by partner	3
Maternity leave	0
Unemployment support	3
Pension	4
Savings	4
Welfare	0
Scholarship	5
Other	4

What year did you come over?

Born in Germany	2
1980	1
1981	3
1982	1
1984	1
1986	2
1987	3
1988	7
1989	12
1990	10
1991	1
1992	3
1993	1

What is your country of origin?

Former Soviet Union	3
Poland	41
Born in Germany	2
No answer	1

How did you feel about coming over?

Full of expectations	9
Mixed feelings	15
Afraid	2
Did not want to come	1
Did not care	2
Other	1
Hard to tell	10
Does not apply	4
No answer	3

What were the reasons for your move?
(Name all that apply).

Reunion with family members	15
Connecting with roots	2
Search for a better national situation	7
Hope for economic betterment	21
Better medical care	9
Lack of future perspectives in country of origin	17
Political and economic situation in country of origin	14
Curiosity	6
Other	2
Do not know	6
No answer	2

Could you ever imagine going back?

No, never	9
As a tourist	19
For a temporary period of time	8
Yes, when the situations betters	4
Yes, maybe forever	2
Do not know	3
No answer	2

Have you ever regretted coming over?

Always	0
Sometimes	18
Never	27
No answer	2

What level of education has your father achieved?

Elementary school	1
Secondary school	3
College	13
Vocational training	18
Other	4
Does not apply	2
No answer	6

What level of education has your mother achieved?

Elementary school	2
Secondary school	11
College	4
Vocational training	15
Other	8
Does not apply	1
No answer	6

Do you live in a neighborhood primarily with...

Ethnic Germans	4
Native Germans	26
50-50	16
No answer	1

Are you friends predominantly...

Ethnic Germans	16
Native Germans	8
50-50	23
No answer	0

Are you a member of... (Name all that apply?)

Sports club	11
Youth group	46
Musical group	4
Political group	0
Church group	7
Any other group	12
No answer	15

Are the members of those groups predominantly...

Ethnic Germans	5
Native Germans	14
50-50	10
No answer	18

School Environment

In order to assess how education supported or hindered your process of acclimatization in the German culture, I need to know a little about the schooling you received.

What type of secondary school did you attend/do you attend?

Gymnasium	28
Realschule	12
Gesamtschule	2
Hauptschule	5
Other	0

What was your level of success while in school?

Top 5% of your class	5
Top 30% of your class	18
Average	20
Struggling	1
Dropped out	3

When you first came to Germany, were you placed in the grade you were supposed to be or put back a year or two because of lack of German?

Same grade	19
Put back	17
Does not apply	10
No answer	1

Did you ever have to repeat a year or two?

Yes	20
No	27

What type of school/university etc. did you attend last or are you attending right now?

High School	11
Vocational school	16
College	13
Other	4
No answer	3

Were/are your classmates predominantly...

Native Germans	4
Ethnic Immigrants	24
50-50	17
No answer	2

Were/are you taught in a total immersion program – are all your classes in German?

German	42
Native tongue	2
No answer	3

The classmates that you hang out/did hang out with are/were predominantly...

Native Germans	12
Ethnic Immigrants	7
50-50	25
No answer	3

Linguistic abilities

The level of your ability to communicate in the local language can have a great impact on your integration within the host society. Tell me about your German skills.

How good is your German?

Fluent	17
Good	19
Average	10
Bad	1

Did you speak German before coming over?

Yes	8
No	39

Have you attended language classes since coming to Germany?

Yes	17
No	30

If yes, who organized the language classes?

School	18
Department of Labor	1
Private Sponsor	0
Self-taught	0
Other	2
Does not apply	18
No answer	8

Have you completed the course?

Yes	17
No	22
Does not apply	8

What language do you speak at home?

German	14
Native tongue	33

What language do you speak most often?

German	28
Native tongue	7
No distinction	12

With whom do you speak your native tongue? (Name all that apply).

Family	46
Friends	34
Colleagues	8
Other	3

Why do you still speak your native tongue? (Name all that apply).

I can better communicate that way.	9
My family and friends speak little German.	22
I can express my feelings better that way.	5
I don't want to forget my mother tongue.	34
I want to isolate myself.	1
Other reasons	6
Do not know	3
Does not apply	0

What language do you count in?

German	31
Native tongue	11
No answer	5

Personal Statements/Perceptions

The final objective of this study is to find out how media influence you integration within the host culture. Tell me about the way you feel about your present situation.

Ethnic Germans can have an impact on German politics, only if they began to care.

Strongly agree	11
Somewhat agree	21
Somewhat disagree	6
Strongly disagree	6
No answer	3

Identification with one's own ethnic group is important as a testimony of one's own roots.

Strongly agree	5
Somewhat agree	23
Somewhat disagree	10
Strongly disagree	9
No answer	0

One should delve into the German society and culture as much as possible in order to take advantage of what Germany can offer them.

Strongly agree	16
Somewhat agree	25
Somewhat disagree	6
Strongly disagree	0
No answer	0

Is learning the language and mixing among the native population a prerequisite for being successful in Germany?

Strongly agree	30
Somewhat agree	13
Somewhat disagree	3
Strongly disagree	1
No answer	0

If you do not succeed in Germany, it is entirely your fault.

Strongly agree	11
Somewhat agree	18
Somewhat disagree	14
Strongly disagree	4
No answer	0

The German government does enough to support ethnic immigrants.

Strongly agree	14
Somewhat agree	14
Somewhat disagree	16
Strongly disagree	2
No answer	1

The German society has a welcoming attitude toward ethnic immigrants.

Strongly agree	8
Somewhat agree	18
Somewhat disagree	17
Strongly disagree	3
No answer	1

I have done all I could in order to succeed in Germany.

Strongly agree	19
Somewhat agree	24
Somewhat disagree	3
Strongly disagree	1
No answer	0

I am satisfied with what I have achieved and with where my life is right now.

Strongly agree	21
Somewhat agree	19
Somewhat disagree	5
Strongly disagree	2
No answer	0

My lack of the German language has been an obstacle in achieving what I wanted in Germany.

Strongly agree	4
Somewhat agree	8
Somewhat disagree	8
Strongly disagree	25
No answer	2

I feel fully integrated into the German society.

Strongly agree	24
Somewhat agree	19
Somewhat disagree	3
Strongly disagree	1
No answer	0

My German identity is part of who I am.

Strongly agree	18
Somewhat agree	21
Somewhat disagree	2
Strongly disagree	3
No answer	3

Media use

I would like to get an idea of your use of the media available. Television newspapers, music and the Internet are used in many households on an everyday basis. In yours as well?

Television

Do you own cable TV or satellite?

Yes	42
No	5

How often do you watch TV?

Every day	32
Sometimes	11
Rarely	4
Never	0

How many hours each time?

0 – 1	8
2 – 3	31
3 – 4	5
6 and more	3

What type of shows do you watch primarily?

News	20
Movies	18
Educational Shows	2
Entertainment Programs	7

Why do you watch TV?

Entertainment/Social	37
Education	4
Boredom	2
Background while doing other things	3
Other	1

Do you own a VCR/DVD player?

Yes	41
No	6

How often do you rent videos?

Several times a week	2
Once a week	1
Several times a month	8
Once a month	4
Sometimes	14
Several times a year	5
Never	7
Does not apply	2
No answer	4

How often do you go to the movies?

Several times a week	0
Once a week	1
Several times a month	5
Once a month	10
Occasionally	22
A few times a year	6
Never	3

Do you watch the same movies over and over?

Often	13
Sometimes	24
Never	10

Do you remember lines from movies?

Often	26
Sometimes	20
Never	1

In what language are the movies/programs you watch? (Name all that apply).

German	47
Native tongue	28
English	9
Other	3

Who do you watch TV with?

Alone	32
Family	32
Friends	33
Other	5

If you watch TV with other people, are they predominantly...

Ethnic Germans	16
Native Germans	9
50-50	17
Does not apply	4
No answer	1

Radio

Do you own a radio?

Yes	45
No	2

How often do you listen to the radio?

Every day	26
Once a week	8
Rarely	11
Never	1
No answer	1

How many hours each time?

0 - 1	29
2 - 3	8
3 - 4	1
6 and more	2
No answer	2

Why do you listen to the radio?

Entertainment	21
Boredom	3
Background while doing other things	19
Do not know	1
Other	1
No answer	2

In what language are the stations you listen to? (Name all that apply).

German	43
My native tongue	4
English	12
Other	2
Does not apply	0
No answer	2

Where do you listen to the radio? (Name all that apply).

While driving	37
At home	31
At work	13
Other	2
No answer	2

Newspapers

Do you subscribe to a newspaper?

Yes	7
No	39
No answer	1

How often do you read papers?

Every day	11
Once a week	18
Rarely	12
Never	4
No answer	2

Do you read papers in their entirety or parts only?

In their entirety	3
Parts	37
Does not apply	4
No answer	3

What parts interest you most? (Name all that apply).

Local news	21
National/international news	29
Entertainment	15
Sports	13
Business	4
Classifieds	13
Does not apply	4
No answer	2

Do you read papers online?

Always	3
Sometimes	16
Never	26
No answer	2

In what language are the papers you read? (Name all that apply).

German	42
My native tongue	10
English	7
Other	2
Does not apply	3
No answer	1

Magazines

Do you subscribe to a magazine?

Yes	13
No	33
No answer	1

What type of magazines do you read? (Name all that apply).

Fashion	18
Home/Garden/Cooking	5
Sports	13
Technology	11
Science	17
Entertainment	17
Environment	3
No answer	2

How often do you read magazines?

Every day	9
Once a week	25
Rarely	11
Never	1
No answer	1

Do you read magazines in their entirety or parts only?

In their entirety	24
Parts	21
Does not apply	1
No answer	1

Why do you read magazines?

Entertainment	14
Information	30
Education	1
Does not apply	1
No answer	1

Do you read magazines online?

Always	2
Sometimes	18
Never	25
No answer	2

In what language are the magazines you read? (Name all that apply).

German	44
My native tongue	11
English	8
Other	0
Does not apply	0
No answer	1

Internet

How often do you surf the Internet?

Every day	21
Once a week	9
Sometimes	9
Rarely	2
Never	4
No answer	2

How many hours each time?

0 – 1	20
2 – 3	20
3 – 4	3
4 – 5	1
No answer	3

What do you use the Internet for? (Name all that apply).

Entertainment	25
Information	36
Education	19
Shopping	15
Chat rooms	10
Email	31
Other	3
Does not apply	5
No answer	2

In what language are the sites you surf? (Name all that apply).

German	40
My native tongue	11
English	20
Other	3
Does not apply	5
No answer	2

Who do you surf the Internet with? (Name all that apply).

Alone	37
Family	6
Friends	19
Other	2
Does not apply	5
No answer	2

Video/computer Games

Do you or your family own any type of video/computer games?

Yes	32
No	15

How often do you play video/computer games?

Every day	3
Once a week	5
Sometimes	9
Rarely	10
Never	19
No answer	1

Where do you play video/computer games? (Name all that apply).

At home	21
At friends' house	13
At relatives'	3
Arcades	1
Other	2
Does not apply	20
No answer	1

How long have you been playing video/computer games?

Just started	2
1 – 2 years	4
Over two years	18
Does not apply	23

What types of games do you like?

Strategic	10
Role plays	3
Sport	3
Action	9
Other	1
Does not apply	18
No answer	3

In what language are the games you play?
(Name all that apply).

German	28
My native tongue	3
English	19
Other	0
Does not apply	18
No answer	1

Who do you play video/computer games with?

Alone	19
Family	1
Friends	9
Other	5
No answer	13

Are the people you play games with predominantly...

Ethnic Germans	9
Native Germans	5
50-50	9
Does not apply	22
No answer	2

Music

Do you own any tapes/CDs?

Yes	45
No	1
No answer	1

How many do you own?

1 – 10	4
11 – 20	2
21 – 30	5
More than 30	35
No answer	1

How often do you listen to music?

Every day	38
Once a week	3
Sometimes	4
Rarely	1
Never	0
No answer	1

How many hours each time?

0 – 1	19
2 – 3	20
3 – 4	2
6 and more	5
No answer	1

In what language are the tapes/CDs you listen to? (Name all that apply).

German	28
My native tongue	22
English	44
Other	13
Does not apply	0
No answer	1

Media and Money

How much money do you spend on media each month?

Zero	4
\$1 – 20	25
\$20 – 50	10
\$50 – 100	6
More than \$100	2

Where does that money come from?

Savings	41
Parents	4
Other	0
No answer	2

Media and school

Which media have your teachers used or do they use right now? (Name all that apply).

Internet	25
Newspapers	30
TV	22
Radio	11
Music	10
Other	4
None	4
No answer	8

How often have your teachers used or do they use media?

Every day	2
Every week	6
Once a month	2
For particular projects	19
Rarely	4
Never	6
No answer	8

Have your teachers ever encouraged you to use media in your work?

Always	4
Sometimes	25
Never	10
No answer	8