Between Three Worlds: Host, Homeland, and Global Media in the Lives of Russian Immigrant Families in Israel and Germany

# Keywords

* immigrant families
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* immigrants integration
* global media

# Details

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## Sample

The research methodology applied in this study was semistructured in-depth interviews with Russian-speaking immigrant children and their parents in Israel and Germany. The field portion of this study was conducted in 2004. Altogether we interviewed 94 parents and 78 children in 60 families (30 families in each country). The main sampling method applied was “snowballing” (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, Murdock, 1999). Initial interviewees from the research population shared with us a list of coworkers, neighbors, and friends. On further investigation, we selected those who met the research requirements. Even though the sample did not aim to achieve a statistically representative sample of the immigrant population investigated, we also used a “quota” sampling method (Deacon et al., 1999) to improve the sample design and ensure representation of respondents meeting important demographic variables, according to children’s age cohorts (6-9, 10-14, 15-18),4 children’s gender, family’s length of residence in the host country, and area of residence (big cities vs. small towns, immigrant vs. ethnically mixed neighborhoods). According to the quota method, respondents meeting specific characteristics were recruited until the quota was filled. In Israel, we interviewed 19 girls and 19 boys, 29 mothers and 20 fathers, who had resided in the host country between 1 and 14 years. Twenty of the 30 households consisted of both parents; in 7 households children were raised by their mother, in 1 household by a father, and in 2 households by grandparents, who were the children’s custodians since their parents were unable to raise them. In Germany, we interviewed 21 girls and 19 boys, 28 mothers and 17 fathers, who had resided in the host country between 1 and 12 years. Twenty-one of the households consisted of both parents; mothers were raising their children alone in eight households, and in one household by a father (see Table 1 for additional demographic characteristics of the sample). The typical family structure of these families included one child, as is true for the population in the CIS in general (Antonov, 2007). Each family interviewed received compensation in the form of 20 Euros for participation in the study (p.1252-1254).

## Implications For Parents About

Parenting guidance / support

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Empowering immigrant youths by improving their digital skills

# Abstract

This study investigated various roles played by host, homeland, and global media in the lives of immigrant families from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS, former USSR) to Israel and Germany, as well as the place of different media in family conflicts, consolidation, and parenting strategies. The study was based on focus group interviews with 60 families of Russian-speaking immigrants in Israel and Germany and 73 semistructured, in-depth interviews with immigrant youngsters. The findings of this study demonstrate that the mass media fulfill diverse roles for immigrant families, assisting them face two main relocation challenges: integration “inward” (i.e., cultural transmission and family consolidation) and “outward” integration into their new surroundings.

# Outcome

In line with the uses and gratification theoretical perspective adopted for this study, the model shows that media uses were motivated and explained by a variety of the immigrant families’ social and cultural needs. That is, immigrant parents and children were aware of the centrality and nature of the many challenges faced throughout their relocation process. Thus, their selections of various media were made according to these media’s differential capacities to fulfill their most urgent integration needs (see Table 2): Although homeland media were used, mostly to preserve family unity, they played a less central role in maintaining a common cultural denominator and they did not play any role in the integration outward. Concomitantly, although host media were very effective in assisting parents’ and children’s integration outward, their role was much less central in integration inward. Whereas homeland and host media had a clear advantage in either the “inward” or the “outward” integration, the media of global reach and appeal were found to be equally effective for both processes. That is, the turn to global media content by parents and children was seen as a compromise between conflicting adaptation strategies: between the need to integrate “outward” (which widens the intergenerational gap) and the need for integration “inward” (which requires preservation of a common cultural denominator). Instead of dwelling on controversial questions—such as “How faithful should I remain to the homeland culture?” or “How much effort should I make to become an Israeli/German?”—global media content enabled two generations of the immigrant family to locate themselves in a seemingly “neutral” cultural territory and thus defuse intergenerational cultural tensions. In addition, media content of “global” reach and appeal, which included cultural links to the distant homeland, also served as an important and effective means by which old-timer immigrant parents passed along some of their cultural identity in a pleasurable and noncoercive manner. Finally, since consumption of media texts with a global appeal is very popular among the host population in both countries, as well as worldwide (Lemish, 2007), these television viewing preferences end up supporting immigrant parents’ and children’s cultural adaptation. The results of the study highlight, therefore, the multifaceted media uses, as they serve the multidimensional needs of immigrants’ relocation and adjustment. (p.1267-1268)