Defining Boundaries Between Two Immigrant Waves From Latvia:
A Study of Latvian Supplementary Schools in the U.S.

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In memory of my mother

To my dear brothers
Abstract

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and reestablishment of Latvia’s independence in 1991, followed by removal of the Soviet-imposed restrictions on human mobility, there has been an exodus of Latvians to Western countries, some of which, such as the U.S., already had substantial populations of Latvians since the last wave of emigration took place during World War II. Consequently, two parallel and mutually detached Latvian communities have emerged in the U.S. – one consisting of World War II refugees and their descendants, the second – a largely scattered community of post-independence immigrants from Latvia, both of whom embody different migration experiences and expressions of Latvian identity.

This interdisciplinary mixed methods study of intergroup relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, conducted through the network of Latvian supplementary schools in the United States, which is the main site where they come together, capture the current status of the relationships and expose existing barriers that set the two groups apart. In the end, this study investigates what role Latvian supplementary schools play in bridging the two groups.
Anotācija


Šo vēsturisko notikumu rezultātā Amerikas Savienotajās Valstīs izveidojušās divas paralēlas un lielā mērā savstarpeji atrautas latviešu kopienas, katru no kuras raksturo atšķirīga emigrācijas pieredze un atšķirīgas latviskās identitātes izpausmes.

Šis starpdisciplinārais pētījums, kas īstenots caur latviešu skolu ūkli Amerikā un kura ietvaros veikta gan skolu, gan ar skolu saistītu personu aptauja, intervijas ar latviešu kopienu pārstāvjiem Amerikā, dokumentu analīze un novērojumi latviešu kopienu un organizāciju dzīvē, cenšas apzināt, kādas ir pastāvošās attiecības starp diviem latviešu emigrācijas vilņiem Amerikā, kādas ir galvenās barjeras savstarpejo attiecību veidošanā un kādu lomu spēlē latviešu sestdienas un svētdienas skolas šo barjeru pārvarēšanā.
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Abbreviations

AL – Latvian Americans
ALA – American Latvian Association
DHS – Department of Homeland Security
DP – displaced person
IHRC – Immigration History Research Center
INA – Immigration and Naturalization Act
LL – post-independence immigrants from Latvia
LV – Latvian language
1. **Introduction**

“So… when are you going back to Latvia?” was the first question Dzintra, a recent immigrant from Latvia in the United States, heard after she had enthusiastically introduced herself to some elderly Latvian Americans at a local Latvian community house. Dzintra, who had come to the U.S. a few months before in a search for a job, felt tarnished by the response of Latvian Americans who she earnestly thought would be happy to see somebody new to attend their events. Instead, what Dzintra interpreted from the question was a latent way of saying: “Go home! You are not welcome here!” Needless to say, this was the last time Dzintra ever attended any events organized by the Latvian American community.

While the situation outlined above does not quote anybody in particular, it embodies experiences of dozens of post-independence immigrants from Latvia who have tried to establish connections with the well established Latvian American community, but had failed to do so. The fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the re-emergence of Latvia as an independent republic in 1991 after five decades of Soviet occupation, along with opening of its borders, brought about an exodus of Latvians to Western countries, some of which, such as the U.S., already had substantial populations of Latvians since the previous mass emigration from Latvia that took place during World War II.

The voluntary post-independence emigration of Latvians to the West created bewilderment among many elderly Latvian Americans who at the end of World War II had been forced to leave their homes and after losing their homeland to the communists
were later resettled in different parts of the world, including the United States. Many of these once exiled Latvians, who had tirelessly fought for Latvia’s independence and Latvian language and culture preservation throughout the entire period of the Soviet occupation, believed that the young and energetic Latvians should stay in Latvia and strengthen the emerging democracy and market economy. This was not necessarily the view shared by many Latvians who decided to leave the country in pursuit of their personal goals and ambitions, whether economic, social or professional.

The situation, explained in the preceding paragraphs, illustrates a problem that goes beyond the limits of the Latvian community. It addresses the complexities of transnational movements, intersection of forced and voluntary migration, boundary drawing between in-group and out-group, as well as negotiating ethnic identity among people of the same ethnicity, but of very different upbringing. The main purpose of this study is to raise awareness about the complexities of relationship building between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, which would hopefully foster a better understanding, empathy, and relationships between the two immigrant waves from Latvia. This study, which was carried out through the network of Latvian supplementary schools in the United States, which, as argued in this study, is the main site where the two immigration waves from Latvia come together, exposes similarities and differences in migration and acculturation experiences and expressions of Latvian identity between the two immigration waves from Latvia. By studying intergroup relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia and their expressions of Latvian ethnic identity, this study will also tell the story of a little
researched ethnic minority in the United States and expose their efforts to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage in an all American environment.

1.1. Placing the Study Within Existing Disciplinary Literature

Over the past decades, along with globalization major changes have taken place in international migratory patterns, as well as in American immigration discourse. If several decades ago immigrants were, as Eva Morawska (2009) labels them, “closet ethnics who displayed their differences in their own communities” (p.37), then, nowadays, ethnic identity has obtained its momentum and is openly manifested in public, sparking celebration and the same time heated discussions about the shift in American national identity discourse. While some fear that the growing numbers of immigrants and the increasing assertiveness in their ethnic and cultural manifestations are endangering the country’s Anglo-Protestant heritage (Huntington, 2004), others see it as a valuable contribution to advancing American national success and well-being (Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones, 2006). Different disciplines have taken different approaches to understanding human migration experience and issues of ethnic identity. While sociologists and anthropologists have been trying to gain a better understanding of the social aspects of human migration, ethnic identity construction and preservation, culture transmission and socialization, psychologists have been exploring the psychological aspects of immigrant adaptation to the host society.

Whatever the focus and motive behind ethnic identity exploration in the United States, it is an area that deserves a further investigation. Until now scholarly literature
pertaining to ethnic minorities in the U.S. have mainly focused on several issues – becoming American and the various paths to assimilation in the mainstream society (Alba, 1990; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; 2006; Zhou, 1999), and the retention of ethnic identity within and among various ethnic communities (Erdmans, 1998; Waters, 1990) and its psychological and social impact on immigrants and immigrant communities (Trimble, 2003; Berry; 2003; Phinney, 2003).

Nevertheless, there is relatively little research done to understand ethnic minorities in the United States in their own right, their internal group dynamics, intricacies of language and culture preservation, as well as drawing boundaries between the in-group and out-group. This is especially the case when it comes to small ethnic minority groups, such as Latvians, who have generally been overlooked in the mainstream American immigration discourse.

By addressing the issues listed above, this study seeks to contribute to the studies of transnational migration, as well as number of disciplines, such as sociology, social psychology, anthropology, communication, and history. This study will explore relationships between the type and nature of migration and one’s acculturation patterns by looking specifically at how the nature of person’s departure from their homeland - forced or voluntary – impacts their self-identification and their relationships with the host society and co-ethnics. This research will also contribute to the “shamelessly neglected” (Fishman, 2001) area of heritage languages and heritage language schools (that has been done in relation to ethnic or, as some call them, heritage language schools.
1.2. Studying Two Waves of Immigration From Latvia

Latvia is a country located in Eastern Europe bordering the Baltic Sea with a population of 2.2 million. It emerged as an independent republic in 1918 as a result of major geopolitical shifts that took place in Europe as a result of World War I. Latvia’s independence lasted until 1940, when it was occupied by the Soviet Union. Latvia re-established its independence in 1991, following the breakup of the Soviet Union. Each of the latter two developments – the Soviet occupation and the restoration of Latvia’s independence - was marked by a wave of emigration to the Western countries, including the United States. One consisted of political refugees who fled Latvia from the approaching communists. The other wave consisted of mostly voluntary migrants, who rushed to enjoy the newly available freedom of movement after the fall of the Iron Curtain. These two waves of Latvian immigrants are the main focus of this study.

The prominent Latvian publisher Osvalds Akmentiņš (1976) once compared Latvians in the U.S. to the Baltic ivy. “It is neither luxuriant, nor poisonous. Unnoticed, it continues to survive. (..) They live and survive without ostentation, as they are seldom found among the limelight crowds of glittering society” (Akmentiņš, 1976, p.5). Even though often praised for their remarkable ability to organize themselves immediately after their arrival in the United States, Latvian Americans have to a large extent remained invisible in American scholarly literature. Some of the past scholarly investigations of the Latvian American community contain research on Latvian political activism and anticommunist struggles in the United States (Zaķe, 2008; 2010), Latvian folklore
(Carpenter, 1996; 1997) and Latvian language and culture preservation in exile (Sanders, 1975; 1979). While several authors have tried to fill in major gaps in the history Latvian émigré life in the U.S., there is virtually no research conducted about more contemporary issues related to Latvian ethnic group in the U.S., especially in regards to the post-independence immigrants from Latvia to the United States.

The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that 94,905 Americans claimed Latvian ancestry in the U.S., 27,907 of them were born in Latvia, the majority of whom are Latvians who arrived in the U.S. as a result of World War II. The number of post-independence immigrants from Latvia at the time of this research was estimated around 10,000 to 12,000, although, as it will be explained later in the study, it is very problematic to verify such an estimate.

Even though often discussed in different circles of Latvians in the U.S., the question of two immigration waves from Latvia and their mutual relationships have remained uninvestigated and unresolved. Hence, this interdisciplinary mixed methods study of relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, conducted through the network of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S., is an attempt to fill in this void. First, acknowledging the interest of Latvian Americans to engage newcomers from Latvia in Latvian community organizations in the U.S. as a way to prevent them from “dying out” due to diminishing membership and, second, recognizing the shared desire of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia to preserve Latvian language and culture, this mixed methods study will seek to find answers to three main questions:
1) What is the status of existing relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia?

2) What hampers relationships between the two groups?

3) What role do Latvian supplementary schools play in bridging the two groups?

In order to address the previously stated questions, this interdisciplinary mixed methods study employs both qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures. Through a documentary analysis, survey of Latvian supplementary schools and the school community, in-depth interviews with parents, teachers, and school administrators, as well as direct observations at Latvian supplementary schools, this study will attempt to seek a better understanding about existing intergroup relationships, barriers that set the groups apart and goals and interests that bring them together.

It is essential to point out that this study by no means reaches out to the whole population of Latvian immigrants in the U.S., as it focuses mainly on the organized Latvian community in the U.S. and Latvian supplementary schools in particular. It also has to be acknowledged that, since this study was conducted through the network of Latvian supplementary schools, it is limited to the self-selected, mostly active community members, and provides only marginal account of the views of those Latvians whose voices could not be heard as a result of their own invisibility.

When dealing with post-independence immigrants from Latvia as part of the sample of this study, it is important to clarify the term “immigrant”. The U.S. immigration rules and regulations provide a very specific definition of the term immigrant:
The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) broadly defines an immigrant as any alien in the United States, except one legally admitted under specific nonimmigrant categories (INA section 101(a)(15)). (Department of Homeland Security, 2010)

The Immigration and Nationality Act distinguishes between immigrants who have been „admitted to the United States as lawful permanent residents“ (DHS, 2010) and illegal aliens who have entered the United States without inspection. Even though the latter category, according to INA, would also be placed in the category of immigrants, they would not be classified as permanent resident aliens.

Describing this study’s sample according to the U.S. legal framework is problematic as this study is not limited to persons who have obtained the status of permanent resident aliens or might have arrived and settled in the U.S. without an inspection. Rather, for the purposes of this study a more generic definition of a migrant is used as presented in the documents of the Council of Europe, which decode a migrant as "any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born, and has acquired some significant social ties to this country" (Council of Europe, not dated).

In this study the label “post-independence immigrant” is ascribed to all those Latvians who have arrived and settled in the U.S. since 1991, including persons who have arrived in the U.S. under non-immigrant visas and have spent in the country a substantial amount of time, without distinguishing if that has happened legally or illegally.

When addressing the issue of immigration from Latvia one also has to keep in mind the diverse ethnic composition of Latvia’s residents, which means that not every
immigrant from Latvia would necessarily identify himself or herself as Latvian, which is the target group of this study. The issue of Latvian identity in terms of ethnicity and nationality is unresolved and continues to fuel debates in Latvia. For the purpose of this study I define Latvian as any person who self-identifies himself or herself as Latvian, in part or in whole, and who in one way or another practices Latvian culture and customs. Thus, this research excludes those immigrants from Latvia who identify themselves with different ethnic and cultural background.

1.3. Managing Researcher’s Bias

Latvian sociologist Juris Veidemanis (1961b) once pointed out that it is unlikely that anyone but a Latvian could do a study within the Latvian community, because of the necessity to communicate in Latvian, utilize Latvian language sources, and observe and participate in the life of Latvian community. As the prominent Polish scholars William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1927) pointed out: “Membership in and acquaintance with a society also helps in noting data and relations which would perhaps not be noticed so easily by one not immediately acquainted with the life of the group” (p.76). Acknowledging the great benefits from sharing linguistic and cultural background with the sample group, I also share Veidemanis’ caution that my Latvian background not only gives me a “particular impetus”, but also “challenge to the study which would perhaps be lacking for the ordinary observer” (p.xiii). One of the key challenges arising from my Latvian background is balancing emotional attachment and detachment. While the former
is needed to connect and better understand the community, the latter is key to producing valid and credible findings and conclusions.

When conducting research, which contains qualitative research components, scholars often call attention to the problem of researcher’s positionality and subjectivity. By seeking out their subjectivity, as Peshkin (1988) explains it, researchers become more aware how their own biography might impact the research process and outcomes.

I was born in Latvia under the Soviet regime, but became of age in the newly established Republic of Latvia. Hence, I have been exposed to life under the Soviet rule, but for the most part have been brought up under liberal, West-oriented, emerging democracy. I have gone through the adaptation process in the U.S. twice – first, as an exchange student at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire; second, as a graduate student at the University of Minnesota. Each time I gained valuable experience as an outsider trying to integrate in the existing Latvian community in the United States. Additionally, more than two years of experience as a Latvian language teacher at Minneapolis – St. Paul Latvian school has provided me with a first hand experience of what it means to be intensively involved with the school life, observe the everyday life of Latvian school community and be engaged in discussions pertaining to Latvian language and culture preservation in the U.S.. Regular encounters with other teachers and parents brought me intimately close to the subject of my study, I was invited to people’s homes, birthday parties, baby showers, etc. My voluntary work in the local Latvian community brought me closer to the elderly generation of Latvians who had experienced Displaced Persons’ (DP) camps first-hand, and my connections with post-independence immigrants
from Latvia of a much younger age – allowed me to stay connected with the new first generation immigrants from Latvia.

All of the factors above have greatly shaped my views as a researcher and formed my understanding of the research topic. At the same time they have frequently made me challenge my own status as a researcher, teacher, volunteer, a friend, and an advocate. Throughout the study I often found myself negotiating my own identity, my dislocation and in-betweenness, as I tried to get close to the Latvian community at the same time as I was trying preserve distance necessary for academic credibility. As a result this final report will be a delicate dance between the demands set for me as a researcher, as a community member, and as a person to whom so many people have entrusted their personal insights, memories, and experiences.

1.4. Thesis Contents

The subsequent chapters, addressing the previously stated research questions, are laid out in the following sequence. The Literature Review, provided in Chapter 2, will examine and engage in conversation some of the key concepts pertaining to international migration, ethnic identity preservation, and intergroup relationship building, all of which will be studied in the context of American immigration discourse.

Chapter 3 will explain the research methodology used in this study. It will describe the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as illuminate the data collection and data analysis procedures that were applied in this study.
Based on documentary analysis, interview and survey data, Chapter 4 will provide a sociological profile of Latvians who arrived in the U.S. as a result of World War II and those who came to the U.S. since 1991, serving as a background for further investigation of intergroup relationships.

The focus of Chapter 5 will be exploring what is the current status of relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Based on study participants’ own assessment, currently the two groups to a large extent exist parallel one to another and do not interact much. Such an inference is drawn from the Latvian supplementary school community survey, which, as it will be outlined in Chapter 5, suggests limited overlaps between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia in terms of their involvement in Latvian community organizations in the U.S., as well as in terms of their circles of friendships.

Building on inferences made in the previous chapter, Chapter 6 will explore the main barriers that hamper relationships between the two groups - the lack of awareness of each other’s existence; motivational differences; perceptual, emotional and cultural barriers that exist between the two groups, largely resultant from socialization in different environments and different rites of passage of representatives of each group. Among some of the other important factors affecting intergroup relationships are generational differences, differences in socioeconomic standing, physical distance, as well as the nature of Latvian mentality. Chapter 6 will also touch upon the very sensitive and largely controversial issue of the legal status of post-independence immigrants from Latvia in the United States.
Chapter 7 will explore what role Latvian supplementary schools play in bridging Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. By exploring the emergence of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S., their mission and goals, and the current demographics of the Latvian supplementary school community, Chapter 7 will expose Latvian language and culture preservation efforts among the third and fourth generation Latvian Americans and 1.5 and second generation post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Due to the fact that the schools are one of the few sites where Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants come together with a shared goal to pass on to their children Latvianness, Chapter 7 will also explore similarities and differences in the two group’s perception of the most important expressions of Latvian ethnic identity and ways they are illuminated in the everyday life.

Finally, Chapter 8 will provide concluding remarks about the existing relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, as well as outline some implications for policy work and research directions in the future.
2. Conceptual Models for Studying Immigrant Communities

To better understand the complexities of intergroup relationships between Latvian Americans, encompassing WWII émigrés from Latvia and their descendants, and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, and the role of Latvian supplementary schools in bridging them, it is necessary to examine some key concepts. By engaging in a dialogue relevant theories from international migration studies, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and communication the following section will examine key issues pertaining to international migration, ethnic identity formation, and intergroup relationship building, all of which will be studied in the context of American immigration discourse.

2.1. Voluntary Versus Involuntary Transnational Movements

Several migration scholars acknowledge that the character of contemporary transnational movement of people has been greatly altered as a result of collapse of the Soviet Union and the associated “breakup of the familiar international balance of power” (Cohen, 1997, p. 162). As sociologist Avtar Brah (1996) points out, among the major causes for the massive movement of people since the collapse of the Soviet Union have been economic inequalities between different regions, expanding movement of capital, political strives, as well ethnic conflicts, wars and famine. Yet other equally important factors contributing to transnational movements are related to globalization and emerging transnational corporate and personal connections.
When studying transnational movements of people and migration causes, patterns and directions, scholars use a variety of conceptual frameworks. One way to look at transnational movements of people is to study factors that set off movements of people, such as existing push and pull factors in sending and receiving countries (Morawska, 2009; Castles, 2007). Another way to look at it is to study it from the legal perspective, such as distinction between legal or illegal migration and all related implications, which is a sensitive topic in contemporary immigration discourse (Massey & Capoferro, 2007).

For the purposes of this research project, which studies relationships between two distinct waves of immigrants from Latvia to the United States, each of which is different in nature, this study will utilize the conceptual distinction between voluntary and involuntary (forced) migration. Even though migration scholars indicate that such a categorization is somewhat arbitrary, it nevertheless has important implications for understanding migrants and their adaptation in the host societies (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Oliver-Smith and Hansen, 1982).

Migration scholar Nicholas Van Hear (1998) by forced migration defines the process when individuals or communities are “compelled, obliged or induced to move when otherwise they would choose to stay put” (p.10). Van Hear elaborates that the force involved “may be direct, overt and focused or indirect, covert and diffuse” (p.10). In this somewhat diffused category, David Turton (2003) places refugees, displaced persons, and asylum seekers, each of which represent migration scenarios where departure from the homeland has been inflicted by an external force (p. 12 – 14).
Anthropologist Liisa Malkki (1995) focuses on different ways of self-identification among people who share the fate of expulsion and being exiled, illuminating the many ways they are identified in the literature and amongst themselves. In her attempts to conceptualize the meaning of refugees and displacement from an anthropological perspective, Malkki looks specifically at the management of displacement in Europe after the World War II. In her article “’Exile’: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Displacement”, Malkki accounts for the various possibilities of labeling forced migrants:

Although it is true that anyone prevented from returning home is an exile, some distinctions can be made between exiles, refugees, expatriates, and émigrés. Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider. Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth-century state. The word “refugee” has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas “exile” carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality. (Malkki, 1995, p.512-513)

The term “refugee” is not ascribed to any person who seeks asylum in another country, but rather suggests a particular kind of a person. Malkki explains that the term exile “connotes a readily aestheticizable realm”, whereas refugees “connotes a bureaucratic and international realm” (p. 513). These “representational conventions”, as Malkki (1995) calls them, are important elements of the migration discourse as they illuminate the complexities of identification and self-identification among subjects of forced migration.
The discussion on different types of migrants falling under the category of forced migration is particularly relevant to the ongoing discussion of self-identification among those persons who arrived to the U.S. after World War II under the 1948 Displaced Persons Act. Over five decades there has been a variety of terms that the community of ethnic Latvians in the U.S. has assigned itself, such as “trimda” and “trimdinieki”, both names denoting exiles and émigrés, or “politiskie bēģi” political refugees and others. Due to the forced nature of the departure, many Latvian community members in the U.S. have strongly rejected to be called emigrants. In this study the label émigré will be used that carries a connotation with being forced into exile for political reasons, which was one of the main reasons that prevented displaced persons after World War II to return to their once occupied homelands. Nevertheless, one has to acknowledge that the use of the term “exile” and also “émigré” could be deemed inappropriate, since the re-establishment of Latvia’s independence has removed the political obstacles for their return.

In contrast to forced migration, voluntary migration signif/ies a movement of people, where there is more choice and more options on the part of the migrant (Van Hear, 1998). In most cases of voluntary resettlement it has been guided by a quest for better lives and is often perceived to be tantamount to economic migration. In the context of increased mobility and the growing complexity of migratory movements, the conventional distinction between voluntary and forced migration becomes increasingly more difficult. One can argue that these two categories are too ambiguous as both of them refer to presence of external forces, where the only difference is the salience, intensity and urgency of these forces. For example, Portes and Rumbaut (1996) state that the “so-
called voluntary migrations are not always as voluntary and planned as described, and there are wide differences in the degree of urgency, suddenness, and ‘acute flight’ experiences of different refugee groups” (p.168). As some others scholars point out, any person who makes a decision to migrate does that “in response to a complex set of external constraints and predisposing events” (Turton, 2003, p.8-9) and all migration implies some degree of prior deprivation. Conversely, others point out that even a person at gunpoint has a choice (Penz, 2002).

Despite the conceptual ambiguity, distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration is important as it helps to better understand the “distinctive experiences and distinctive needs” of international migrants (Turton, 2003, p. 7). What makes the nature of departure from homeland so important is that it not only helps to better understand migrants’ motivation and resettlement experience, but also the possible scenarios of their adaptation to the host society and their relationship to their homeland. The next section will focus on American immigration discourse, which provides a general framework for studying immigrant adaptation in the United States.

2.2. From Assimilation to Transnationalism

During the first half of the 20th century, American immigration discourse was dominated by assimilationism paradigm, which suggests blending of cultures in one big “melting pot”. The concept of “the Melting Pot”, whose name has been derived from a pre-World War I play, suggests that the divisions along ethnic lines would soon disappear in the promised land of America (Hirschman, 1983). The concept became embodied in
early 1920s by the work of sociologists Robert Park and the so-called Chicago School of sociology, which developed theories fundamental to advancement of assimilationist discourse. Generally, the assimilationist paradigm is guided by belief that immigrants would gradually adopt customs and values of the host society while rejecting the culture of their origin (Zhou, 1999). A “straight-line assimilation” implies that immigrants will eventually, down the generations, “unlearn” and “shed” their original cultural values and behavioral patterns and become unhyphenated Americans (Warner & Srole, 1945). Milton Gordon’s (1964) influential book *Assimilation in American Life* dissects the concept of assimilation by introducing different dimensions of assimilation and suggesting that eventual immigrant assimilation in the host society is inevitable.

While assimilation still plays a prevalent role in American immigration discourse, with the dawn of cultural multiculturalism in 1960s, it is no longer the guiding paradigm. An important turning point in the field was the publication of *Beyond the Melting Pot* by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan (1963) which refuted the dominant belief that assimilation is inevitable, concluding that “ethnicity is a permanent quality of American society persisting in racial, religious, political and cultural differences”. Based on their study of five ethnic groups in New York City, Glazer and Moynihan (1963) argued that distinct ethnic identities were maintained even into the third and fourth generation. Along with the paradigm shift, many sociologists came to a conclusion that ethnicity continues to be an important source of immigrants social and political consciousness (Trimble, 2003).
In the past few decades, some scholars have brought the argument even further by questioning both the assimilationist, and the multiculturalist perspective. In the context of ever changing global environment and increasingly complex migration patterns, a new mode of migratory experience has been captured under the name of transnationalism. Anthropologists Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc (1995) explain that contrary to historical patterns, the new era produced transmigrant populations that “maintain, build, and reinforce multiple linkages with their countries of origins” (Glick-Schiller, Basch & Szanton-Blanc, 1995, p.52). In fact, with the changing nature of transnational movements of people, changes also the notion of the sending and receiving country:

“In the past, migrants moved either with the intention of permanent settlement or of a temporary sojourn in one receiving country. Now it is possible to go back and forth or move on to other countries.” (Castles, 2007, p. 40)

Transnationalism represents a break with the past, as it shifts the focus from one locality and long time assumed convergence of a nation state and society, to bilocalism or the continued connections between the migrants and their homelands (Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004). Hence, transnationalism calls attention to a completely different state of being – a transnational mode of existence and existing connectivity between the source of migration and the destination. It also expands the range of “home” encompassing both here and there, the country of residence and the real or imagined homeland (Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004).

This departure from the assimilationist and multiculturalist perspective is captured by Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) who state that “migration has never been a one-way
process of assimilation into a melting pot or a multicultural salad bowl but one in which
migrants, to varying degrees, are simultaneously embedded in the multiple sites and
layers of the transnational social fields in which they live” (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007,
p.130).

The above-suggested theories are some of the major conceptual models for
understanding immigrant experience in America. Whatever the outcome – a transmigrant
who internalizes two or more cultures or an all-assimilated and Americanized individual
– the process of immigrant adaptation in a host society is generally referred to as
acculturation. Psychologist John Berry (2003) suggests that assimilation is only one of
possible outcomes or phases of acculturation, which largely depends on the nature and
degree of mutual engagement between the ethnic minority group and the dominant
society.

One of the classical definitions of acculturation, provided by Redfield, Linton,
and Herskovits (1936), states that acculturation encompasses “changes in original cultural
patterns that occur as a result of ongoing contact among groups of individuals with
different cultures” (Cited in Chun, Organista & Marin, 2003, p. xxiii). It is a result of
“continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of
either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). Even though
nowadays some people use assimilation and acculturation interchangeably suggesting
that both processes result in change that is “directional, unilinear, nonreversible, and
continuous” (Suarez-Orozco, 2001, p. 8), others argue that straight-line assimilation is
not necessarily an inevitable outcome of acculturation.
Other than assimilating in the host society, according to Berry (2003), a minority group may also chose to maintain its ethnic and cultural identity and establish minimal contact with the dominant society, which he calls “separation”. A minority group may also lose its ethnic identity without merging with the larger society, thus experiencing “marginalization”. The process where a minority group participates in the life of dominant society while preserving its own cultural identity Berry labels as “integration” (p.29).

In a different categorization presented by migration scholars Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, and Haller (2009), this latter kind of relationship between an ethnic minority group and the host society is labeled as “selective acculturation”. Among the other models of acculturation, integration or selective acculturation is commonly associated with positive outcomes “because youths learn to appreciate and respect the culture of their parents and because command of another language gives them a superior cognitive vantage point, as well as valuable economic tool” (Portes et al., 2009, p. 1082). Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, and Haller note that “only selective acculturation provides a natural path to make full use of symbolic resources brought from abroad” (2009, p. 1100). A study conducted by Cuellar, Nyberg, Maldonado, and Roberts (1997) focusing on relationship between ethnic identity and acculturation among three generations of Mexican students, concludes that greater orientation towards host culture does not necessarily result in a diminished sense of ethnic identity. For the reasons stated above, some authors ascribe acculturation more general meaning as “a process of developing a dual cultural outlook” (Sanders, 2002).

2.3. Factors Influencing Immigrant Acculturation
The available literature on acculturation attests for several major factors that influence acculturation process of ethnic migrants at both the group and the individual level. One of the major factors affecting immigrant acculturation, as introduced earlier, is the nature of culture group’s presence in the host country. As argued by Williams and Berry (1991), groups of people that have arrived in the host country voluntarily would seek greater contact with the dominant group compared to the groups whose settlement in the host country has been involuntary (such as refugees).

Among other factors, Berry (2003) also points out at the impact of distinct physical appearances of a culture group that either strengthens or hampers group’s ability to integrate in the dominant society. This argument has historically been the core of the racial discourse, where one’s skin color greatly influences one’s ability to acculturate in the dominant society and have an equal access to the same opportunity structures.

Additionally, social psychologists Lena Celine Moise and Richard Y. Bourhis (1997) emphasize two major group level factors that influence the acculturation path of different ethnic groups: first, the nature of contact situations between the minority group with the dominant group, in other words, the level of discrimination or acceptance; and second, the number of people in the culture group and group’s “vitality”. From the statements above one can read that in the absence of discriminatory factors the larger and more interconnected and lively the ethnic group, the more likely its members will pursue the path of selective acculturation. Whereas, small numbers and weak ties within culture groups are predictors of assimilation. Overall, the density of ties among immigrant communities to a large extent determines the social capital available to the community
members, which as explained by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) “provides a key resource in confronting obstacles to successful adaptation” (p.64). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that “modest but tightly knit communities can be valuable resource” (p.65), as they provide support to parental control and parents’ aspirations for second-generation immigrants and thus enhance the probability of selective acculturation. Yet another important factor influencing immigrant acculturation, according to Berry (2003), is the national policies that are either encouraging or preventing development of a multicultural society.

When discussing acculturation of immigrants, sociologists commonly refer to different generations or generational cohorts, which according to Phinney (2003) is “the most frequently used marker of acculturation” (p.64). Immigrant generation, as suggested by Rumbaut (2004), can be “defined by age and life stage at migration for the foreign born and by parental nativity for the U.S. born” (p.1160).

Many scholars who have attempted to operationalize the term of immigration generations have faced the same problems – how to draw a distinction between generational cohorts and where to draw the border separating one generation from the subsequent one (Oropesa and Landale, 1997; Rumbaut, 2004). The label first generation immigrant is commonly attributed to “persons born and socialized in another country who immigrate as adults” (Rumbaut, 2004, p.1165). Whereas, the second-generation immigrant “technically refers to the U.S. born and U.S. socialized children of foreign-born parents” (p.1165). This distinction however is far from definite. The definition becomes particularly complicated, when it comes to persons who have immigrated in
another country as children. The prominent Polish scholars Thomas and Znaniecki (1927) referred to these foreign-born individuals coming of age in the United States as the “1.5” or “half-second” generation, which is a term still used today.

The most commonly studied immigration generation in scholarly literature is the second-generation of immigrants, who epitomize the struggles between the parental culture and the culture of the host society (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). There is comparatively less scholarly literature available on the third and fourth generation immigrants in the United States that would go beyond studying remaining expressions of their ancestral ethnic identity.

Multiple studies conducted among different ethnic groups focus on the degree of their acculturation in American dominant society, following different models and utilizing different measurements. When focusing on acculturation patterns of Latvian migrants in the United States, Kushinka (1979) argued that Latvians as a white ethnic minority in the U.S. would be more inclined to assimilate than some other minority groups of color, for whom their skin color posed as a barrier to assimilation. In her study *Assimilation Experiences of Jewish, Latvian, and Ukrainian Displaced Persons*, Kushinka (1979) speculated that Latvians who settled in the U.S. as a result of WWII had a higher chance of assimilating in the American mainstream society in comparison with the other two groups – Jewish and Ukrainian. Kushinka noted that Latvians had a higher level of education than Jews and Ukrainians and “probably also benefited in the United States from being Protestants” (p.123). Kushinka also stated that “a larger number of Latvians attended schools in the United States and their knowledge of English at the time
of arrival seems to have been greater”, which in her opinion, would have moved Latvians towards faster assimilation than the Jews and Ukrainians (p.123).

Nevertheless, contrary to Kushinka’s projection of a fast assimilation among Latvians, Latvian ethnic identity to this day is one of the most important sources of social and political consciousness among first, second and third generation Latvians in the United States, which is attested by numerous Latvian organizations, associations, and schools that operate in different parts of the United States, focused on Latvian language and culture preservation, and striving for the Latvian cause.

2.4. Ethnic Identity and Identity Politics

The question of ethnic identity and its construction is a complex issue, where one of the key challenges arises at the very outset of defining the term. According to sociologist Jyoti Puri (2004), “ethnicity is typically defined as a form of collective identity based on shared cultural beliefs and practices, such as language, history, descent, and religion” (p.174). It “encodes important questions about identity, belonging, tradition, boundaries, race, and group’s past and future” (p.174).

Puri points out that ethnicity is commonly mistaken with race, being seen as natural determinant of someone’s belonging to a certain ethnic group. Hence, Puri challenges the more traditional assumption that ethnic identity is generally acquired at birth. Other recent scholars talk about “invented” ethnicities (Sollors, 1989) or “constructed” ethnic identities (Nagel, 1994), which come into being through “creating common cultural backgrounds and imagining common ancestry” (Frontier, 2000, p.7).
In the context of white Americans, the notion of ethnicity carries yet a different meaning. Sociologist Mary C. Waters (1990), who has studied ethnic identity issues among white Americans, talks about ethnicity as an “option” or “choice”. Similarly, sociologist Miri Song (2003) talks about “choosing ethnic identity”. Waters’ (1990) and Song’s (2003) notion of ethnicity resonates Gans’ earlier concept “symbolic ethnicity”, which implies adapting ethnicity to people’s own circumstances, “selecting from an ethnic heritage a few symbolic elements that do not interfere with the need to intermix socially, turning ethnicity thereby into an occasionally practiced avocation” (cited in Alba, 1990, p. 29).

When studying immigrant acculturation in the host society, it is often mistakenly perceived that ethnic groups are homogenous groups of ethnics, where in fact they have a great internal diversity. Sociologist Miri Song (2003) calls attention to the fact that “it is often assumed that members of an ethnic group share, by definition, similar cultural values, practices and identities” (p.42), which according to the author is not necessarily the case. “Every group’s culture is complex, diverse, and constitutive of a wide variety of practices and intellectual and cultural traditions, which may espouse differing values and positions. No group’s culture is static or unidimensional; rather it is always contested and in flux” (Song, 2003, p.42).

Building on Song’s arguments, ethnicity and ethnic identity is an object of continuous negotiation and contestation. Furthermore, belonging to a certain ethnic group implies continuous renegotiation of one’s belonging to the group: “What it means to be a group member is continuously contested through collective debates about group culture
and identity” (Song, 2003, p.42). As Song (2003) concludes, “in this way, individual agency regarding the assertion of ethnic identity is constrained and influenced by the politics of recognition and authenticity practiced within minority groups” (Song, 2003, p.42).

Summarizing Song’s arguments, no ethnic group is truly homogenous, nor stable and permanent in its character. Rather, ethnic groups are constituted of different people from different walks of life, age, gender, class status, all of which add to the heterogeneous nature of any given ethnic community. Hence, individuals within one ethnic group may have very different understanding and conception of their ethnic identities and may manifest it in very different ways compared with some other members of the same ethnic group.

Identifying oneself with a certain ethnic group implies certain benefits, as well as implicit duties and expectations. As Song (2003) summarizes it, belonging to an ethnic groups “entitles one to participate one in groups culture and politics” (p.41), at the same time it certain obligations such as expectation for “degree of conformity or similarity in expressions of ethnic identity” (p.41). The author concludes that these pressures are particularly strong among ethnic minority groups, which require individuals to demonstrate a strong commitment to their ethnic group and cultural practices, as well as make it difficult for individuals to defy the cultural norms and customs without being marginalized from the ethnic community.

2.5. Distinction Between In-Group and Out-Group
Many authors in political sociology have stopped focusing merely on the contents of ethnicity and nationalism, but are paying attention to the process of “othering” or the boundary creation between “us” and “them”, through which a sense of ethnic and national identity is constructed and negotiated (Barth, 1969). As sociologist Mary Patrice Erdmans (1998) puts it: “The cultural content alone does not contain or maintain ethnicity. It is the understanding of a “we” negotiated against “them” that produces salient group identities” (p.6). When pursuing this argument political sociology goes hand in hand with the social psychology and communication science, which also deal with distinction of in-groups and out-groups, which appears to be an integral part of any group identity construction. As argued by social psychologists, boundaries are important element of defining any group, whether it is an ethnic group, racial group or any other type of a group. According to Homans (1950), “the definition of a group implies, and is meant to imply, that the group has a boundary...” (p.86).

A distinction between “us” and “them” is particularly prevalent in the context of ethnic minorities’ acculturation in the host society, as it creates symbolic borderlines between ethnic minorities and the dominant society. It is especially the case when some minority groups develop oppositional identity towards the dominant group. This as argued by anthropologists Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu (1986) appears to be the case among some “involuntary minorities”, which have found themselves in the U.S. against their own will. Drawing from the experiences of Afro-American in academic settings, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) claim that these “involuntary minorities” sometimes
choose to draw boundaries between themselves and the dominant white culture as a way to respond to the white domination and promoting their own Afro-American identity.

The process of “othering”, as explained by Australian scholars Greg Noble, Scott Poynting and Paul Tabar (1999) entails “mapping of oppositions between and within cultures mobilizing different categories and different notions of self and other” (p.29). Noble, Poynting and Tabar argue that boundaries drawn between ethnic identities “can be fluid and shifting, often depending on context” (p.29). One can read from this that the process of “othering” is both an interethnic and intra-ethnic phenomenon. In summarizing Stuart Hall’s earlier work, Noble, Poynting and Tabar (1999) point out: “Syncretism and hybridity are constitutive of the identities of migrant communities, and fluidity characterizes boundaries between them, even as they assert cohesiveness.” (p.30)

Several empirical studies published in the United States address the issue of boundary negotiation between and within different ethnic groups. For example, a study focusing on Polish immigrants in Chicago conducted by sociologist Mary Patrice Erdmans (1998) illuminates the great diversity that exists within the Polish community in Chicago and exposes boundaries that exist between different immigrant waves from Poland. In her book *Opposite Poles*, Erdmans calls attention to quarrels and disputes within the Polish community in Chicago, resulting to a great extent from the complex nature of Polish immigration to the United States. Erdmans suggests that the three distinct groups of Polish immigrants in Chicago – Polish Americans as she calls those people born in America whose ancestors were born in Poland; World War II émigrés, and new Polish immigrants, differ along four dimensions: culture, networks, power, and national
loyalty. Essentially, by discussing each of these components Erdmans seeks to negotiate the multiplicity and contradictions in expressions of Polish identity and loyalty among different waves of Polish immigrants.

When dealing with issues such as presented in the study of Polish communities in Chicago, one can easily substitute the name migration wave with a group, as it is commonly attributed to people who share the same characteristic – time and type of migration. Fiedler (1967) argues that a group is “... a set of individuals who share a common fate” (p.6). Wilder and Simons (1998) point out that groups can be defined either based on interaction or similarity. The authors argue that when the group is defined based on similarities, “the term group is used in the same manner as the term category” (p.34). In the context of studying intergroup relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, the concept of group is used as a category and not necessarily “as a dynamic entity” which is based on direct interaction of individuals and structured interdependence (Wilder & Simon, 1998, p.36). When approaching group from the categorical perspective, the characteristics held in common and uniting individuals play a central role in defining the group. In the context of two waves of immigrants from Latvia, the time and nature of departure from Latvia are the denominators of each migration wave.

There are certain implications Wilder and Simon (1998) point out in regards to perceiving and treating a person as a group member or as an individual:

At one extreme, we may regard another (or ourselves) as a unique individual independent of social groups. At the other extreme we may regard another as a deindividuated
representative of a social category or group; someone who is interchangeable with other members of that group. (p.37)

Both extremes are equally harmful to building relationships between two groups, as in the first case the entire sociopolitical and historical context of one group is ignored, but in the latter they precede and overshadow individual’s personality.

As a discursive construct, classification of people in groups helps to simplify and thus understand the complex social realities, which nevertheless carries major risks. As social psychologist Wetherell (1996) points out: “Putting people in certain social categories, however bears the risk of not only organizing cognitive impressions, but also creating certain social identities, impacting self-definitions and creating value systems” (p.212).

When trying to understand intergroup relationships, the disciplines of social psychology and communication provide particularly valuable perspectives on intergroup dynamics and relationship building. Communication scholar William Gudykunst (1998) in his summary of earlier scholarly literature explains that there are several consequences that arise from a division between in-group and out-group. First, people have a tendency to expect from members of their in-groups to behave and think similarly to the way they do (p.71). Second, people have a tendency to put their in-groups in a favorable light when they compare them to out-groups (p. 71). Third, people have less anxiety about interacting with members in their in-groups than interacting with people representing an out-group. All of these factors above will serve as a background to understanding
relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia.

2.6. Ethnic Identity Transmission Through Supplementary Schools

It is commonly assumed that ethnic communities that have been created outside of their homeland as a result of expulsion “strive to maintain a traditional identity or to create a new one that remains distinct, unassimilated and anchored in specific institutions and practices” (Tölöyan, 2003, p.59). In order to accomplish that, prominent diaspora researcher Gabriel Sheffer (2003) emphasizes that these communities consciously maintain their ethnonational identity through familial efforts and participation in communal organizations. Some of the most important communal organizations in regards to language and culture preservation are the ethnic schools or heritage language schools, which are often perceived to be of paramount importance to the ethnic language and culture preservation among members of ethnic communities.

In the 1960s, Joshua Fishman (1966) spoke of ethnic schools in the United States as a “terra incognita”, in other words the unknown land or unexplored area. Since then there have been only sporadic research studies conducted within separate ethnic communities. The available literature on ethnic schools in the U.S. is limited and mostly focuses on the links between ethnic schooling and educational attainments of ethnic immigrants (Feliciano, 2001; 2009). Other authors call attention to ethnic schools as an institutionalized way to enhance “the richness of America’s cultural heritage” (Coleman, 2004), while arguing for the benefits of biculturalism.
An important point to point out is the main motive and rationale for existence of such schools, whether it is to aid immigrants in their adaptation to the American society through studying subjects in familial language or quite the contrary – by all means to preserve their ethnic language and culture as part of America’s multicultural heritage.

Among the latter ones, scholarly literature points out ethnic schools set up by Jewish communities, which are often perceived to be an exemplary case in ethnic identity and culture preservation efforts outside of their ancestral land. Among these are also supplementary schools set up by Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, as well as Poles, Ukrainians, and others who after fleeing their homelands as a result of World War II set up these schools at many places of their settlement. For example, Kersti Liinask (1978) when speaking about Estonian supplementary schools in the U.S. and Canada serving the needs of émigré communities that had transferred to these countries from post-World War II displaced persons’ camps point out three main aims for establishment of these schools: 1) “to teach young people Estonian language”, 2) “to keep them Estonians, i.e. to make them part of the Estonian society in the free world”, 3) to instill in them “the spirit of ‘Estonianness’” (p.63). As it emerges through Liinask’s study, Estonian supplementary schools are set up as boundary drawing institutions that focus on Estonian language and culture preservation among second, third and subsequent generation Estonians in North America. Similar motives were the driving force also behind the creation of Polish schools in Chicago, which were created as “independent, ethno-centric community-based” (Coleman, 2004, p. 37) schools, which provided “specialized language and cultural classes that are unavailable in public and Catholic schools” (ibid.).
available scholarly literature places also Latvian supplementary schools in the category of schools among which the primary goal is not smoothing the immigrant integration in the mainstream society, but firstly and most importantly – preserving the ethnic language and culture.

Overall, Joshua Fishman (2001) concludes there has been insufficient interest among the U.S. authorities in the ethnic schooling, except for the times when it has served the U.S. national security interests, as it was the case after the launch of Sputnik in late 1950s or in mid 1980s, when the U.S. institutions in charge of education policy development demonstrated awareness that “heritage languages were a national resource that should be preserved and encouraged” (p. 88). In addition to the wave-like interest in ethnic and heritage language schools, the focus of these studies has mainly been confined to the heritage language and culture preservation, with virtually no studies addressing the issue of intra-ethnic relationship building. In mid 1980s, there were at least 6533 heritage language schools in the U.S. (Fishman, 1985), nevertheless these ethnic schools, as concluded by Fishman 20 years later, have been continuously neglected by the U.S. education policy makers (Fishman, 2001) and the mainstream scholarly community. Hence, also their broader social impact on ethnic communities has been virtually unexplored.

To summarize some of the key points, the American immigration discourse has experienced major changes over the last century, moving away from the strictly assimilationist paradigm, which dominated the sociology of the early 20th century towards a more multicultural approach, which is now followed by the emergence of
transnationalism as a response to the increased human mobility and prevailing ties across national borders. In this context the social relationships are becoming increasingly more complex, creating a need for redefinition of social boundaries between different groups of people. Distinction between in-group and out-group is an important element of the social world, so are the ethnic boundaries, which are enforced to create a greater sense of cohesion among those falling inside of the ethnic boundaries. Ethnic schools or heritage language schools are one of the most vivid examples of such boundary creating practices, which have the potential from one side to accelerate immigrant acculturation in the host society, from the other – to foster preservation of immigrant ethnolinguistic and cultural identity. As this literature review suggests, the issue of migration type and nature, ethnic identity and boundary creation, and intergroup relationship building are tightly linked to each other as each of the separate components is reinforced and negotiated through the others. By engaging in dialogue relevant concepts of sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and communication, the remainder of this study will seek to illuminate some of the key factors that define relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia.
3. Methodology

The main aim of this interdisciplinary mixed methods study, conducted via the network of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S., is to explore and raise awareness of complexities of relationship building between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, sense of Latvian identity and how it is negotiated at Latvian supplementary schools, which have become the main site where the two groups come together. This study attempted to find answers to:

1) What is the nature of relationship between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia?
2) What hampers relationships between the two groups?
3) What role do Latvian supplementary schools play in bridging the two groups?

To obtain the most complete picture possible a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods was used, as a way to “to offset the weaknesses inherent within one method with the strengths of the other (or conversely, the strength of one adds to the strength of the other” (Creswell, 2007, p. 213).

3.1. Mixed Methods Research

From the different approaches to a mixed methods research, this study employed “concurrent triangulation strategy” (Creswell, 2009, pp. 213-214), which is commonly used by researchers whose major concern is well-validated and substantiated findings. When using concurrent triangulation strategy “the researcher collects both qualitative and
quantitative data concurrently and then compares the two databases to determine if there is convergence, differences, or some combination” (Creswell, 2007, p. 213). It is a particularly beneficial approach for the purposes of this study as the qualitative and quantitative data inform each other and help to support or challenge inferences derived at different stages of the research project.

3.1.1. Qualitative data collection.

One of the focal characteristics of qualitative research is the great emphasis that is placed on in-depth of understanding of processes and reality. As Creswell (2009) puts it: “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p.4). It tends to approach the world as consisting of multiple intersecting realities that have been assigned a particular meaning through human interaction and communication (Merriam, 1998). In addition, qualitative research studies social phenomena within the particular context in which they are taking place, thus illuminating the importance of external factors that affect the object at study. It is important to note that in qualitative research the researcher is the “primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p.7), as he or she is directly engaged in gathering, as well as analyzing and interpreting the data both from the emic (insiders’) and etic (outsiders’) perspective. This study heavily relies on qualitative data as the author admits the complexity of intergroup relationship building and identity formation, and even more importantly the meanings the study population attribute to it.
3.1.2. Quantitative data collection.

To offset limitations associated with qualitative research, such as limited scope, researcher’s subjectivity, and lack of generalizability, quantitative research methods were be used to reach out to a wider population and gather some measurable data. Quantitative research methods were also used to explore in a quantifiable way some of the assertions derived from preliminary qualitative research. More precisely, the purpose of using quantitative data collection methods was to test a hypothesis that emerged from the pilot study and preliminary documentary analysis, interviews and observations – that there are limited relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. The research was done in the following sequence (see the Graph 1)

3.2. Data Collection Procedures

First, in spring of 2009 a pilot study was conducted in the Minneapolis – St. Paul Latvian supplementary school, using ethnographic observations, a survey of parents, and interviews with parents and teachers. The focus of the pilot was exploring motivations for parents sending their children to Latvian schools, learning in what ways does the school help to transmit Latvian language and culture to children attending it, and determining what role is attributed to the school within the Latvian community in the U.S.

Second, this study employed documentary analysis to provide historical context for the evolution of the Latvian community in the United States, with the main focus
being placed on emergence of the organized Latvian community that served as the vanguard of Latvian identity preservation in the U.S. Scholars argue documentary analysis is an important part of qualitative research as it provides essential information and evidence regarding researched phenomenon (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

**Graph 1:** Data collection procedure.
In this study, documentary analysis helped to uncover the deeper layers of Latvian identity formation over time, addressing how Latvianness was perceived and understood in the first decades of Latvian exile and how Latvian identity is perceived and negotiated now – among the post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Latvian archival collections stored at the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota were a significant source of information for the purposes of this study. Some of the most valuable sources of information were Latvian émigré publications, such as Archīvs (Archive), ALA Kultūras Biroja Biļetens (ALA Culture Bureau Bulletin), Trimdas skola (Exile School), Mājai un Skolai (For Home and School), yearbooks of the American Latvian Association Education Bureau, local press publications, student publications and newsletters, and other materials published between 1945 and 2010.

Third, a survey of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. was conducted, targeting all existing supplementary schools in the U.S., which at the time of this study numbered 19. The purpose of this survey was to explore what population each school serves and to identify the number of children and teachers who fall within in each of the following categories – Latvian American, recent immigrant from Latvia, American or some other ethnic group. This survey was sent to school principals electronically and by mail using publicly available contact information on Latvians Online website. Altogether, 18 out of 19 Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. responded to the survey. This survey also functioned as a recruitment strategy for school participation in the next phase of the study – school community survey, onsite visits, interviews and observations.
Fourth, a school community survey was launched through the network of Latvian supplementary schools in the spring of 2010 aiming at gathering both qualitative and quantitative data on how respondents identify themselves and representatives of the other immigration wave, how they describe existing intergroup relationships and what in their opinion hampers and what promotes relationship building between the two groups. This survey was mainly conducted electronically, using the SurveyGizmo instrument, and by mail that was sent to school principals upon request. The survey consisted of 31 questions, eight of which were open-ended (See Appendix 1). Between March and June, 2010, 165 persons from across the United States responded to the survey.

This sample of responses consists of 64 post-independence immigrants from Latvia and 90 persons who identified themselves as persons whose families had arrived in the U.S. as a result of World War II. Three respondents stated that they had arrived in the U.S. during the Soviet Times, whereas four respondents identified themselves as descendants of pre-World War II immigrants from Latvia. Four other persons had not identified the timeframe of their immigration. Due to the specific purpose of studying relationships between Latvians who arrived in the U.S. as a result of World War II and Latvians who immigrated to the United States after Latvia re-established its independence in 1991, only responses submitted by respondents falling in one of these two categories were included in this study.

In addition to the two exploratory surveys, 25 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted to probe in greater depth some of the themes discovered through the documentary analysis, observations, and surveys. The benefit of these “guided
conversations” (Yin, 2009, p.106) was: first to gather information that could not otherwise be obtained through observations, such as thoughts, emotions, feelings, and intentions. As Patton (1990) explains it: “We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world (...). The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (p.196). Secondly, the in-depth interviews were also beneficial as they allowed asking interviewees follow-up questions about their personal experiences, present examples of the claims they were making, and altogether obtain much more detailed and extensive responses than were possible to obtain via the community survey. Thirdly, these interviews helped to engage Latvian community members in the U.S. in a much more active dialogue about relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants, Latvian language and culture preservation, and the role of Latvian supplementary schools. An additional side effect of interviews was the impact that they had on some of the interviewees. As one of the interviewees stated at the end of our conversation: “I learned something about myself today!” (Interview with Juris, AL – LV, March, 2010)

A purposeful sampling was used in the interviewee selection process to obtain the widest spectrum of experiences and opinions. Hence, interviews targeted both Latvian Americans ad post-independence immigrants from Latvia. The interviews targeted a sample of persons who were in leadership positions in Latvian supplementary schools and community organizations and those who were located on the margins of the organized Latvian community. The interviews were conducted during onsite visits to
different Latvian supplementary schools, teachers’ seminars, the 59th Congress of the American Latvian Association, and the 45th anniversary of Latvian summer school Garezers, and thus they reflect views of Latvian immigrants from different parts of the United States. All, but two, interviews took place in Latvian.

Due to the fact that intergroup relationships appear to be a sensitive topic and due to the fact that the Latvian community in the U.S. is relatively small and tightly interconnected, this study does not identify any of the interviewees by their real names, unless the person spoke as a representative of an organization. To ensure confidentiality of the interviewees, this study instead uses pseudonyms. To protect the identity of study participants also other identifiable data are excluded from the final report.

**Observations** were an important part of this study, which were conducted throughout the duration of this study at different Latvian community events, gatherings, and Latvian supplementary schools. The preliminary observations at different Latvian community centers and Latvian supplementary schools suggested different themes for further exploration in in-depth interviews. Continuous observations at Latvian schools and community events were essential as they allowed to see intergroup interactions in everyday situations, which resonated with some of the attitudes and themes that had emerged through the interviews and surveys. Visits at Latvian supplementary schools also provided a great opportunity to learn of the physical environment where the interaction between the two communities takes place. As Merriam (1998) explains it, observation is a research tool that enables study of the social phenomenon in its natural environment. In contrast to interviews, data obtained through observation “represent a
firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world” (Merriam, 1998, p.94).

Altogether, the principal investigator visited nine Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. during the spring of 2010. The selection of schools was done by employing purposeful sampling based on the initial survey responses, as well as by using convenience sampling – whichever Latvian schools were in a manageable distance and were willing to provide access for an onsite visit. The most important criterion for school selection was the enrollment of Latvian American children, as well as children of post-independence immigrants from Latvia. The other important criterion for selecting schools was their geographical location and the type of school – church affiliated or community run. During each of these trips field notes were taken, providing a rich resource for further analysis.

The focus of observations at Latvian schools was the school culture, the physical environment, as well as interaction among parents and teachers, among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Observations at community events focused on interaction patterns between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants, examples of successful and unsuccessful interactions, commonalities and differences, use of labels, descriptors, and characterization of each group.
3.3. Data Analysis

While the school survey provided numerical data on school enrolment, the survey of school community and interviews with Latvian community members provided very rich data for analysis for emerging themes in regards to existing relationships between the two waves of immigrants from Latvia.

During analysis of the qualitative data, an inductive coding was conducted to explore emerging themes. A separate coding was done for each open-ended survey question. The frequency and reappearance of certain themes in the survey, which was assessed by counting the number of times they appeared in the survey, was used to weigh their cumulative importance to the study participants and allowed to analyze the two groups’ responses comparatively. As noted by Creswell (2007), “this quantification of qualitative data then enables a researcher to compare quantitative results with qualitative data” (p.218).

A similar inductive analysis was carried out with interviews, which were initially transcribed, then read and coded for emerging themes and patterns. The interview themes were put in a dialogue with community survey responses as they commonly provided a more in-depth information and context to some of themes emerging through the survey. During the analysis a constant comparative analysis was conducted to search for similarities and differences in survey responses of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Hence, in the initial data analysis the two data sets were split apart, coded and analyzed separately using the same coding scheme and were later brought together and analyzed in comparison.
In the findings section, the qualitative and quantitative data are integrated in one narrative. Sometimes the quantitative data is presented first, followed by respondents’ comments or interpretations. Other times the themes are presented first, followed by statistical information on their overall frequency in the survey responses. More commonly though the themes are presented according to their relative importance to the community members, assessed by the frequency of their appearance in survey responses and interviews.

3.4. Strategies for Validating Findings

Literature pertaining to qualitative research highlights two distinct criteria for research validity—internal and external validity (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009), which can be enhanced by employing different strategies for validating findings. If internal validity refers to researcher’s ability to build explanations and make inferences that represents the social phenomenon as accurately as possible (Yin, 2009), then external validity, according to Mertens (1998), refers to the researcher’s ability “to extend the findings of a particular study beyond the specific individuals and setting in which that study occurred” (p.254).

One of the best ways to validate research findings, as outlined in the research literature, is to use triangulation. Triangulation, as Stake (1995) puts it, is “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (p.148). In essence, triangulation means that researcher’s claims are supported by more than one source of evidence. In order to increase its validity, this study involved both qualitative and quantitative research methods, as well as
multiple data gathering procedures, such as documentary analysis, surveys, interviews and observations.

This study also employed member checking (Merriam, 1998, p.204), as it continuously engaged Latvian community members in discussions about the issues of their identity formation, relationships with the other wave of immigrants, and what role Latvians schools play in bringing them together. One of the most commonly used methods of member checking in this study, was bringing back some of my preliminary claims and assertions to the study participants and asking them to provide comments about their internal validity.

To ensure greater internal validity, this study sought out participation of people of different levels of involvement with Latvian supplementary schools and the Latvian community more broadly. As the Latvian school community is self-selective in nature, this study also gathered insights from people not related to any of the Latvian schools in the U.S. This information gathered through interviews with Latvians outside of the school settings provided important background information in relation to the views, ideas and values circulated both inside and outside of the Latvian school community. While these views are not be part of the core study, they provide important contextual information about relationship building between the two waves of immigrants from Latvia and the ways Latvian supplementary schools help bridging them.

One of the strategies to address the issue of external validity, according to Merriam (1998), is to provide a “thick description” of the research object and its situational context (p.211). Following this advice, this study attempts to provide a thick
description of the context in which the relationships have emerged and ways they are taking place nowadays. It explains the background of Latvian immigration in the U.S. as well as the historical context of relationship building between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Based on surveys, interviews and observations in selected schools, this study also attempts to provide thick description of complexities of self-identification among representatives of the two immigrant waves and how are they illuminated in the everyday lives of Latvian supplementary schools. This research attempts to ensure thickness of the description by also pulling from the researcher’s field notes and journal entries that were kept throughout the study.

Since the researcher herself does not have extensive prior experience in statistical research, professional advice was sought from experts in quantitative research methods both at the Survey Services of the College of Liberal Arts Office of Information Technology and Office of Research Consultation and Services at the College of Education and Human Development. These offices provided assistance both at the survey design phase, as well as in the survey data processing and analysis.
“Mūsu ienaidnieki vēlējās mūs iznicināt, 
Mūsu draugi vēlējās mūs asimilēt, 
Bet mēs vēlējāmies palikt latvieši”

“Our enemies wanted to destroy us, 
Our friends wanted to assimilate us, 
But we wanted to remain Latvian.”

(Archbishop Grīnbergs)

4. Latvian Émigrés and Immigrants in the United States

To understand relationship dynamics between two migration waves from Latvia it is crucial to gain a better understanding about the sample population. The following section, based on documentary analysis of available literature, interviews, observations, and a survey of the Latvian school community, will provide a sociological profile of Latvians who arrived in the U.S. as a result of World War II and those who came to the U.S. since 1991. The main questions addressed in the following section are how these people ended up in the United States and what are the particular characteristics of the two groups.

4.1. The Long Road of Latvian Émigrés

World War II dramatically changed the geopolitical landscape of Europe, wiping out several formerly independent countries. Latvia, which had been established in 1918, was one of the countries that became the object of geopolitical power wrestling between the Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany, resulting in its subsequent loss of independence in 1940.
In June of 1940, Soviet forces entered Latvian territory sparking what soon became to be known as the “year of horror”, associated with mass deportations, torture, and killings of Latvian political, cultural, and economic elite (Akmentiņš, 1976). A year later, German forces took over Latvia’s territory starting to conscript Latvian men of all ages. In the midst of the turbulence, many of the conscripted men genuinely thought that by fighting against the Soviets they were, de facto, fighting for the freedom of Latvia (Krūka, 2002; Lācis, 2002; Timrots, 2006). Upon the Soviet return to Latvia in 1944, many of the Latvian soldiers were evacuated by Germans, followed by thousands of civilians who fled the second Soviet takeover of Latvia. There was nothing more feared among Latvians than another Soviet occupation.

Altogether around 200,000 Latvians fled Latvia at the end of World War II, the majority of whom ended up in displaced persons’ camps in Germany and Austria (Veidemanis, 1961b). Between 1949-52, around 40,000 Latvians, unwilling to return to a Soviet-occupied Latvia, resettled in the United States under the Displaced Persons Act (Carpenter, 1997). This deliberate decision not to return to the occupied homeland, but rather resettle elsewhere in the “Free World”, as suggested by Inta Gāle Carpenter, marked Latvians’ transition from refugee to an exile identity.

There were several important characteristics that distinguished this community of Latvians that resettled in the U.S. as a result of WWII: 1) forced nature of departure; 2) a dream of their eventual return to Latvia; 3) a high level of organization, self-governance, and political engagement, and 4) a strong determination to preserve Latvian language and culture.
4.1.1. Left under the cover of night.

Fleeing Latvia was not a voluntary choice for the majority of Latvians who at the end of WWII ended up in Displaced Persons (DP) camps and were later resettled in different parts of the world. First, thousands of Latvians were summoned and evacuated from Latvia in the summer of 1944 by retreating Germans forces. Second, thousands of others fled their homes, fearing anticipated prosecutions, deportations and possible killings by the approaching Soviets as they had already experienced in the summer of 1941. For most Latvian refugees, it was an extremely hard choice to make. Many of them believed that their departure would be temporary as they were expecting Americans, British, and the French to liberate their homeland from the Soviet occupation. Former refugee Rita Drone, who has settled in Minnesota, recollects how her mother made one year’s advance payment to the landlord for her rent explaining, that “she wanted the apartment to be there for them when she came back” (Cited oral history project by Hinkle, 2006, p.51).

4.1.2. Dream of return.

The highly anticipated return to their fatherland among Latvian émigrés soon transformed into a myth that kept the Latvian community together and alive for the duration of the Soviet occupation. This expectation and hope for eventual return to a large extent also greatly influenced the way Latvian émigrés looked at their life and acculturation in the U.S.:
Everybody is trying to usurp Western culture and Western lifestyle, acquire the cultural benefits of Western societies, way of life, and also save up some material possession, because all of that will be necessary in Fatherland. (...) We will return to our fatherland with accrued knowledge and experiences, to be able to serve, to serve the suffering nation and the fatherland that has been destroyed. (Zariņš, 1954, p.10)

In the first years after displaced persons’ resettlement in host societies, a network of nationally oriented organizations were established in different parts of the world, including the United States, such as Latvian churches and parishes, Daugavas Vanagi or Latvian Welfare Organization, the Latvian Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts movement, sports and literary clubs, choirs and theater groups, and many other. The primary mission of these organizations and their members were to fight for the freedom of Latvia and to preserve Latvian language and culture until their eventual return to their Fatherland.

We know that our land will be free and that we will go home. We will go home all together, also our newer generation. Let’s help our youth to love the language of their fathers and our dear Latvia. (Savickis, 1954, p.38)

Consequently, the fight for Latvia’s freedom, preserving Latvian language, culture and values were some of the central tasks for the Latvian émigré community, which emerged through a collective experience of forced expulsion and was strengthened by the myth of return.

4.1.3. Rite of passage through DP camps.

Many of Latvians émigrés were representatives of the independent Latvia’s social, political, economic, cultural, and educational elite. They carried into the exile their
strong national loyalty and strong determination to preserve the Latvian culture in exile – its institutions, traditions, symbols, values. According to the Latvian sociologist Juris Veidemanis (1961b), having experienced life in independent Latvia between 1918 and 1940 and having been educated within the milieu of the Latvian culture and state, Latvian émigrés as a result of the Soviet occupation of Latvia were ardently nationalistic and anticommunist. In addition, refugee life in displaced persons’ camps laid the “psychological and practical groundwork” for development of Latvian communities in exile, argues Maija Hinkle (2006), the leader of a Latvian oral history project. As one of her interviewees explains:

If we hadn’t had the experience of the camps, … if we hadn’t had schools, … scouts, who had a very powerful nationalistic bent, … if we had not had camp classmates whom we could write to and visit in Boston, Chicago, Washington, … we would never have remained Latvians for so long. We would’ve joined American society much earlier.

(Cited in Hinkle, 2006, p.52)

Created right after Latvian displaced persons’ resettlement in the United States, there were around 500 Latvian organizations in the United States that had survived until 1990 (Hinkle, 2006). In 2010, the American Latvian Association claimed to represent 160 Latvian organizations in the United States (American Latvian Association, n.d.), which is a sharp decline in numbers compared to 1990. Yet with the aging of the émigré community and with the slow transition of power to the younger generation of Latvian Americans, even the remaining organizations today are fighting for their survival (Cakars, 2009).
4.1.4. A high level of political engagement.

For the entire period of the Soviet occupation, fierce anticommunism and political engagement was one of the core elements of the Latvian émigré’s social identity. As sociologist Ieva Zaķe (2008) points out, the “struggle against the Soviet regime and Communism formed the foundation of the exile community’s political and even ethnic identity” (p.56).

“Refugees are more likely than immigrants to create a double identity in which they successfully assimilate socially and economically, but refuse to adapt culturally and politically,” Zaķe (2010) concludes (p.4). Zaķe’s claims resonate with observations of migration scholars who claim that the typology of migration often also determine immigrants’ political engagement.

4.1.5. Preserving the “true” and “authentic” Latvianness.

For a small nation such as Latvians, nationalistic survival instincts among émigrés were the main mission throughout the entire Soviet occupation. Multiple cultural and ideological statements were issued over the course of several decades, starting from a call “Latvieša stāja svešumā” (1947) to programs against assimilation such as “Programma pret pārtautošanos” (1965) along with countless other publications on issues of Latvian identity preservation and fight against assimilation. For over forty years “they constructed and nurtured a borderless Latvia-outside-of-Latvia to promote their ideological strategies for restoring Latvian independence and sustaining Latvian culture“ (Carpenter, 1997). To describe this phenomenon, Fishman (1968) uses “diaspora consciousness” hypothesis, which he sees being a common characteristic among expelled groups of people: “With
their homelands under anti-religious and often anti-national control, they saw themselves (and other countrymen in diaspora) as the only ones at liberty to preserve and perpetuate the ‘true culture’ during a period of ‘foreign’ domination” (p.28).

Throughout the Soviet occupation, many of the Latvian émigrés presented themselves as the true and authentic Latvians (Gāle Carpenter, 1990; Hinkle, 2006). Inta Gāle Carpenter (1990) explains that Latvian communities, which were established in the democratic West, saw themselves as the “true embodiment of Latvian identity”, compared to Latvians in Latvia who were subjugated to Russification and Sovietization policies. The majority of Latvian émigrés were socialized in believing that it was up to them to keep the idea of free and independent Latvia alive during the long period of the Soviet occupation. The essence of this fight for Latvian cultural survival is captured by Latvian scholar Zinta Sanders (1975):

Latvians in the United States are faced with more than just the general dilemma of Americanization and cultural self-maintenance common to ethnic groups in America. They are confronted with the real possibility of their culture and language dying if the political domination and Russification of their homeland continues indefinitely. (Sanders, 1975, p.2)

Overall, fighting for Latvia’s independence and preventing Latvian language and culture from possible extinction were to a large extent the driving force and the raison d’être for the Latvian émigré community until 1991, when Latvia regained its independence.

4.2. Post-Independence Immigrants from Latvia
If the emergence of the Latvian American community in the U.S. can be traced back through several studies, countless documents, organization reports, and a huge number of print publications, then the overall profile of post-independence immigrants from Latvia in the United States is much harder to create as there are virtually no academic studies conducted about this group of people. Hence, available information about post-independence immigrants from Latvia is to a large extent limited to several documentary movies such as *Atrasts Amerikā* (2003) and *Būt latvietim* (2010), which attempt to capture post-independence immigrants’ experiences and life after their resettlement in the United States, mass media reports and internet sites, such as www.latvianusa.com, which mainly targets post-independence immigrants from Latvia.

Reports released by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security indicate that between 1991 and 2009, 10,882 persons from Latvia obtained legal permanent resident status in the United States (Department of Homeland Security, 2010). This category reflects the number of persons who were admitted in the U.S. either under family sponsored preferences, employment based preferences, or as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, refugees or as asylees, or under the diversity programs established by the U.S. Federal government.

Another set of data indicates that during the same time period (1991 through 2009) there were 5,260 persons from Latvia who were naturalized as U.S. citizens. It is not clear though how to put these two different data sets in dialogue with one another to find out the most precise number of persons from Latvia who have obtained a legal status of permanent resident alien in the United States. The main reason for that is the inability
to establish how many persons who had previously obtained the status of permanent resident alien in the United States had later become naturalized citizens of the U.S. and how many of them were naturalized via a different path.

There are two major problems that arise when trying to determine the most accurate and up-to-date number of post-independence immigrants from Latvia currently residing in the U.S. One of the problems with the DHS data is that it does not reflect the actual number of post-independence immigrants from Latvia, as the DHS only releases the number of cases the permanent resident alien status is granted in a given year, but does not account for those and whose permanent resident alien status has expired or who have left the country since being given the “green card”.

Neither do the DHS data reflect the number of irregular immigrants - Latvians who have entered the U.S. under non-immigration visas and have stayed in the country past the authorized time limit. For example, between 2000 and 2009, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has registered 123,105 non-immigrant admissions from Latvia, covering the range of people who have arrived in the U.S. as tourists or business travelers, as students or exchange visitors, as diplomats or temporary workers, as well as their family members (Department of Homeland Security, 2010). There is no available record of how many of these visits might have ended in overstay.

Even more problematic issue when dealing with the data published by the DHS is the fact that the official immigration statistics reflect foreign nationals’ status in the U.S. only by the country of origin and not by their ethnic background, which is the primary
focus of this study. This is a particularly complicated issue for a country like Latvia that as a result of Soviet occupation has a very mixed ethnic profile.¹

4.2.1. Multiplicity of reasons for departure.

A common perception among Latvian Americans is that the recent immigrants from Latvia have come to the U.S. mainly for economic motives and are hence often seen “fortune seekers”, which is contrasted to the political motives that had driven the previous wave of emigration from Latvia. Such a perception is presented both through survey responses, such as: “A delicate dance between political refugees (pre-1991) and economic refugees (post-1991)” (Respondent: AL – ENG 76768725), as well as interviews: “We came here as political refugees, they come as economic migrants” (Interview AL – LV, May 4, 2010).

However, multiple conversations with post-independence immigrants from Latvia of different walks of life in different parts of the U.S. suggest that there is much greater diversity of reasons and motives for Latvian resettlement in the U.S. than commonly admitted by Latvian Americans. Besides those migrants who came with a desire to support families at home or acquire capital for advancing their personal goals, there are many others who have come for other reasons such as family reunification (reuniting with spouses who live in the U.S.), professional aspirations (advancing one’s professional goals), studies, or simply exploration of the world (which is a common motive cited by

¹ According to the Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia (2001), in 2000, there were 57.6 percent ethnic Latvians in Latvia. Russians constituted about 29.6% of the population, Belarussians - 4.1%, Ukrainians made up 2.7%, Poles 2.5%, and Lithuanians - 1.4% of Latvian society. In 2010, the ratio of ethnic Latvians in Latvia was 59.4%, 27.6% Russians, 3.6% Belarusians, 2.5% Ukrainians, 2.3% Polish, and others (Mežs, 2010)
persons who come to the U.S. as part of the *Au Pair* program or are enrolled in some other short term employment programs in the U.S.).

There are quite a few instances when some Latvians, especially women, have moved to the U.S. for personal reasons – to reunite with their spouses. Strongly rejecting the label of economic migrant, Inga in her early forties captures the main motive for her arrival in the U.S.:

I had a great job in Latvia. I had, and still have, an apartment there. But I came here because my husband came here to study as an exchange student. And somehow we stayed here. (Interview: LL – LV; April, 2010)

Also other women from Latvia admit that they had come to the U.S. in pursuit of their personal happiness. “I was tired of fighting through the life, I was tired of doing it alone,” says an interviewee who is now married to a Latvian American.²

There are other Latvians who have come to the U.S. because they were not able to advance their job prospects in the area of their studies, such as female Lutheran pastors who are banned from advancing careers in theology due to recently established local rules in the Latvian Lutheran church. There are other Latvians who have come to the U.S. driven by a sense of adventure, some of whom have stayed in the country longer than initially anticipated: “I came here as a nanny just to explore the world initially thinking that I would stay here only for a year. Now it is already seven years since I arrived (Interview: LL – LV, May 5, 2010).” Some of these people who have been in the U.S. more than ten to 15 years claim that upon their arrival they did not have an intention to

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² The issue of lack of “marriageable men” in Latvia is attracting increasing interest among scholars (Eglitis, 2010), and is also making headlines in international mass media, such as the British Broadcasting Company (McGuiness, 2010).
stay in the U.S. permanently, and hence some of them refer to themselves as “nejauši palikušie” or “ones who stayed accidentally”.

Regardless of the motives for their resettlement, many of the post-independence immigrants from Latvia now call the U.S. their home. Some of them have decided to stay here permanently, while others do not exclude the possibility of returning to Latvia, but are not sure when. Overall, diverse motives for their arrival in the U.S., as well as differences in their outlook and ties with Latvia, result in a great heterogeneity of the post-independence immigrant cohort:

Everybody has their own motives, either driven by despair or simply search for more space and opportunities. Simply said, when you don’t have these kinds of opportunities in Latvia, then people are searching for the happiness abroad. (Interview with LL – LV; March, 2010)

When applying Portes and Rumbaut’s (1996; 2006) typology to the two waves of immigrants from Latvia, it becomes clear that Latvians who arrived in the U.S. post-World War II are very similar in their migration motives and pattern. Nearly all of them fall under the category of refugees or émigrés, and they strongly object being labeled as either emigrants or immigrants: “We did not go abroad as fortune or better life seekers“ (Norvilis, 1970, p.23). On the other hand, those Latvians who arrived in the U.S. after 1991 fall under different types of migrants and hence they represent a great variety of migration motives, goals, as well as economic status and adaptation strategies.
4.2.2. Dispersion over space and time.

Unlike the massive, simultaneous arrival of Latvian displaced persons after World War II, post-independence immigrants’ arrival in the U.S. is scattered over time and geographical space. The statistical data released by the Department of Homeland Security (2010) suggest that between 1990 and 2009 on average 572 persons from Latvia a year obtained legal permanent resident status in the U.S., ranging from 86 in 1991 up to 892 in 2006 (DHS, 2006; 2010). As explained in the earlier section on post-independence immigrants from Latvia, this number by no means provides a full picture of migration from Latvia to the United States. But at the same time, it presents the stark contrast in migration patterns experienced by the Latvian displaced persons in the post war situation and the flow of migrants since Latvia became independent in 1991.

In general, it is commonly assumed that, except for government appointed officials and diplomats, most of the post-independence immigrants from Latvia arrive in the United States to pursue their individual goals and ambitions. Based on this perceived trend, it is fairly common, as I will elaborate in subsequent chapters, to observe that these persons do not become part of the organized Latvian community. There is a level of disappointment and frustration related to Latvia that can be observed in many post-independence immigrants’ responses and ways of expressing themselves. Some of them feel resentful about the fact that they had to leave their homeland in order to sustain their families. Others are resentful about Latvian politics, social processes and society at large, yet others hold a personal grudge against some people who they have left behind.
After their arrival in the United States, many post-independence immigrants from Latvia intentionally have attempted to merge with the American society, later discovering that they actually need socialization with “people of their own kind”. As one of the interviewees summarizes, in the first years of their arrival, many Latvians are not particularly interested in meeting other Latvians or attending Latvian community events:

Upon their arrival here, they have different priorities. It is not pressing for them to preserve [Latvianess]. They are fairly Latvian themselves, as they have recently arrived from Latvia. They speak Latvian effortlessly. Maybe three or four years later they start to long for Latvian friends, they want to meet up, talk, sing karaoke, celebrate Jāņi together. It takes two, three, or even four years until one starts to feel that one is missing something. (Interview: LL – LV, March, 2010)

The paradox is that at the time when some of these people realized the need to reconnect with their Latvian roots and seek out local Latvian communities, most of which are steered by Latvian Americans, they say they discovered that they felt unwelcome and unwanted in these well-established circles of Latvian Americans. The multiple factors that influence relationships between post-independence immigrants from Latvia and Latvian Americans will be studied in greater depth in the next chapter.

4.3. The Powerful Name Game

There is an immediate, problematic issue that arises when dealing with Latvians in the U.S. - how to identify these two groups of Latvians in relation to one another, to

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3 “Jāņi” is a Latvian festival celebrating summer solstice or Midsummer, which takes place in the night from 23 June to 24. The summer solstice marks the shortest night and longest day of the year.
their homeland and their host society. Scholars from different disciplines have come to agree that labels that people use in describing themselves and the world say a lot about how they see themselves and the rest of the world (Gudykunst, 1998; Wilder & Simon, 1998). Based on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s language psychology, Wilder and Simon (1998) caution that “how we define a word has a significant impact on the reality that we construct with it” (p.41) and “how you define a group affects what you learn about groups” (p.34).

Labels themselves carry a powerful message about the identity, value orientation, and essentially also about the relationships between the two groups. Deciding on appropriate labels for Latvians in the U.S. is a discussion of its own, as it highlights the existing complexities of self-identification resulting from intersection of Latvian emigration history, American immigration policies, racial and ethnic discourse, as well as many other social and psychological factors.

Joanne Nagel (1994) claims that ethnic identities are “the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual’s self-identification and outsiders’ ethnic designations – i.e. what you think your ethnicity is, versus what they think your ethnicity is” (Nagel, 1994, p. 154). Nagel’s descriptor of they implies people outside of the ethnic community, who assign labels and attribute dominant representations and stereotypes to certain groups. Similarly, British scholar Miri Song (2003) calls attention to the crucial role played by “coethnics” or members of the same ethnic groups in deciding on the labels of their own “ingroup”.
A common label for those Latvians who arrived in the U.S. since 1991 has been “Latvijas latvieši” or Latvians from Latvia, which differentiates them from “trimdas latvieši” or “exile Latvians”. It has to be pointed out that the usage of the term “exile Latvians” after reestablishment of Latvia’s independence is largely problematic as the conditions of “exile” are no longer existent.

Those Latvians who came to the U.S. from Latvia since 1991 in conversations are also commonly referred to as “jauniebraucēji” (“newcomers”) and “jaunalatvieši” (“new Latvians”). Each of these terms is problematic, as each of them carries a semantic weight making it hard to find an unbiased descriptive label of this largely heterogeneous group. The term “recent immigrants from Latvia” is problematic as not every newcomer from Latvia can be classified as such according to the U.S. legal definition of the word. The term “newcomer” from Latvia is problematic, because some of these people have been in the U.S. for nearly two decades and thus they can no longer be assumed to be new in the country. “Latvijas latvieši” or Latvians from Latvia is a descriptor that probably is the most problematic of all, as it is often used in a derogatory way and implies negative stereotypes of post-independence immigrants from Latvia. One thing is clear, the labels themselves that have emerged over the course of time suggest a lot about the existing relationships between the two groups. Admitting that there is not one label that would be entirely free of emotional undertones, this study uses post-independence immigrant from Latvia as a descriptor for Latvians who arrived in the U.S. in 1991.

The question of identity becomes even more complicated when dealing with those Latvians who came to the U.S. as a result of WWII. Commonly, the U.S. based scholarly
literature refers to Latvians in the U.S. as Latvian Americans (Riipa, 2004; Straumanis, 2001). In contrast, sociologist Ieva Zaķe (2010) argues: “As a rule, Latvians in America call themselves American Latvians” (p.1). Zaķe concludes that Latvians in the U.S. call themselves American Latvians rather than Latvian Americans based on the salience of their Latvian identity in comparison to their American identity. As Zaķe explains, this self-identification “signals the importance that the refugee status plays in how they define themselves” (Zaķe, 2010, p.1)

The survey conducted as a part of this study reveals that Zaķe’s claims are partly true, as the survey data clearly echoes the salience of Latvian identity among the first, second and even third generation Latvians in the U.S. Despite the fact that many of them were born in the United States, majority of the survey respondents in the open-ended question: “How would you define yourself in terms of your ethnicity?” stated that they are Latvians. Surprisingly, five of these persons who claim that they are Latvians have never visited Latvia or have been there only one or a few times several decades ago.

Among other survey responses, two individuals label themselves as “puslatvietis” or “half-Latvian”. Another respondent identifies himself as “Latvian (by blood), Latvian and American by passport” (Respondent: AL – LV 71236387). As one can read from the paragraphs above, there appears to be no uniform expression of self-identification among the descendants of Latvians who came to the U.S. after WWII, as it appears that the

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4 Until July 1, 1995, Latvia’s “Law on Citizenship” permitted “citizens of Latvia and their direct descendants, who, escaping the terrors of USSR and German occupation regimes, left Latvia from June 17, 1940 to May 4, 1990 as refugees or who were deported, or for these reasons were unable to return to Latvia, and in the intervening time have gone through the naturalization process of another country” to register as citizens of Latvia without having to renounce the citizenship of the country of their residence. Since July 1, 1995, dual citizenship is not permitted by Latvian laws.
choice of the label appears to be influenced not only by internal, but also by external factors. As one of the survey respondents describes his identity: “In the U.S. I am Latvian American, in Latvia I am American Latvian” (Respondent: AL – ENG 78752457).

4.4. Latvian Geographical Distribution Across the U.S.

Latvian American geographical distribution in the United States in the early years of their resettlement was to a large extent determined by their sponsors, social service and religious organizations. Many of Latvians émigrés for the first few years after their arrival lived on the countryside having been recruited for different menial jobs. In the later years most of them moved to the more urban and industrialized areas in the North and Midwest of the country (Albāts, 1954, p. 345).

Nowadays, Latvians are scattered all around the U.S. with several Latvian concentration areas around urban centers. According to the U.S. 2000 Census, the highest concentration of persons claiming Latvian ancestry is in New York (12,758) and California (12,041), followed by Michigan (6,972), Illinois (6,619), and Florida (6,065). Several thousand persons of Latvian ancestry live in Massachusetts (5,410), Maryland (4,684), Ohio (3,499), Pennsylvania (3,468), and Connecticut (3,427). Some of Latvian Americans claim that they had relocated to the areas with higher numbers of Latvians in order to be able to participate in Latvian community life.

There is no clear data on the settlement areas of the post-independence immigrants from Latvia, especially because they appear to be greatly mobile and would not become bound to one particular state. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the concentration areas of recent immigrants from Latvia to a large extent overlap with
concentration areas of Latvian Americans, such as New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, Minneapolis.

After having introduced in this chapter the main characteristics of Latvian American community that was established in the U.S. after World War II and Latvian immigrants who have arrived in the U.S. since 1991, it becomes apparent that the two groups differ greatly from one other. First and foremost, the groups differ by the motivation and nature of their departure from Latvia. Where one group left Latvia *en masse* and by force, the other’s departure from homeland could be labeled as voluntary as it consists mostly of individuals who moved to the United States in pursuit of their personal goals and ambitions. If Latvian Americans starting from the displaced persons camps in Germany have been highly organized and politically very active, then post-independence immigrants from Latvia lack such a self-organization and a sense political mission. If the migration and acculturation experience in the U.S. had leveled many of the socioeconomic differences among Latvian Americans, the post-independence immigration wave from Latvia represent a greatly heterogeneous group of people.

After learning about Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia in juxtaposition to one another, the next chapter will explore the relationships between the two groups in their own words. The next chapter will also attempt to expose how much of an overlap exists between the two groups in terms of their institutional involvement and circles of friendships.
“Cik daudz kopēja mums šodien ar tautu Latvijā? Par cik pazīstam un izprotam tās domas un uzskatus, idejas un idālus? Cik labi informēti esam par tiem, par kuŗiem sakām, ka aizstāvam un pārstāvam viņu intereses brīvajā pasaule?”

“How much in common do we have with the people in Latvia today? To what extent do we know and understand their thoughts and beliefs, their ideas and ideals? How well informed are we about those, whom we claim to protect and whose interests we claim to represent in the free world?”

(Aivars Runģis, 1965)

5. Parallel Groups and Parallel Worlds

Relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia are often discussed, but little researched. The following chapter attempts to fill this void by addressing the relationships between the two groups in terms of their mutual exposure through involvement in different Latvian organizations and overlapping circles of friendships, as well as in terms of their own perception of the intergroup relationships.

Through the use of quantitative measures in the community survey, this chapter attempts to explore the level of Latvian American and post-independence immigrant involvement in different Latvian community organizations, as well as assess the level of their mutual engagement through personal networks, i.e., friendships. Through use of open-ended questions in the community survey, observations, and in-depth interviews with Latvian community members, this chapter also attempts to capture study participants’ own assessment of existing relationships between the two groups.
To capture the overall impression that Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants hold about the relationships between the two groups, participants’ open-ended responses were coded, grouped, and counted in several categories, depending if they were portrayed as either positive, neutral, negative, or non-existent. The suggested categorization builds on social psychologists’ assumption that affect toward somebody or something can be generally classified as either positive or negative. After the initial coding, an additional category was created to assess how frequently survey respondents explicitly pointed out existing differences between the two groups. The categorization of each response was done utilizing the following framework for each category:

- **Positive** – expresses positive attitude toward existing relationships between the groups; explicit or implicit use of positive terms, adjectives, descriptions, and examples.

- **Neutral** - does not express any judgmental attitude; the description of existing relationships is neutral – neither positive nor negative.

- **Negative** – expresses negative attitude toward existing relationships between the two groups; explicit or implicit use of negative terms, adjectives, descriptions, examples.

- **Non-existent relationships** – contains an explicit reference to the lack of relationships between the two groups.

- **Reference to differences** – explicitly points out differences between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia.
When some of the survey responses were too ambiguous to determine their tone and expressed attitude, they were presented anonymously to two unrelated Latvians to obtain their opinion, what message these survey responses express and what attitude do they convey. When no agreement could be reached between the two community members, a third person was invited to share her opinion on the same issue. In the most ambiguous cases, the tone or the expressed attitude was determined by the majority opinion. It is important to note, that a single response could simultaneously express both positive and negative intergroup relationship assessment, as it was often the case, when respondents cited both positive and negative experiences of intergroup relationships. In the latter case, these responses were counted towards both categories.

5.1. Intergroup Relationships Through the Eyes of Émigrés and Immigrants

A common theme emerging throughout this study is the great distance that exists between Latvian American community and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Representatives of both groups, but especially Latvian Americans, state that the community of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants exist parallel to one another and do not interact much. “Distant,” “strained or non-existent,” “not very friendly,” “mostly reserved,” “on the whole, the two groups don't seem to mingle” - are some of the ways Latvians in the U.S. describe the relationships between the two groups. One of the community members gives a more elaborate explanation:

Those Latvians, who arrived in the U.S. since 1991, keep themselves away from those Latvians born in the U.S. (Respondent: AL – LV 76573538)
After coding and aggregating the open-ended survey responses, it appears that 63.3% of all respondents (representing the views of Latvian American and post-independence immigrants combined) characterized intergroup relationships as either non-existent or described them in a way that could be labeled as “negative”. When looking at the numbers separately, 22.4% respondents stated that relationships between the two groups were non-existent and 41.3% respondents characterized them as negative. A positive description of intergroup relationships was provided by 44.1% respondents, whereas 18.9% described the relationships in a neutral way.

Table 1: Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants’ assessment of intergroup relationships*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Reference to differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AL (N=83)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL (N=60)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (N=143)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*When reading the table above, one should be reminded that each response could convey both positive and negative attitudes; hence the total number of responses in each category does not equal 100%.

Interestingly, there appear to be great differences in the way the intergroup relationships are characterized by Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. For example, 31.3 percent of Latvian Americans’ responses suggested that relationships between the two groups are “non-existent”, whereas only 10 percent of
newcomers characterized them as such. Similarly, 49.4 percent of Latvian Americans versus 30 percent post-independence immigrants characterized intergroup relationships as “negative”. While the aggregated numbers might give an impression that Latvian Americans are overwhelmingly negative about the intergroup relationships, it has to be noted that 45.8% Latvian Americans (even more than post-independence immigrants from Latvia (41.7%)) described relationships also in a positive way. One possible interpretation of the great overlap between positive and negative attitudes in survey responses is that Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia see the existing relationships as a complex set of positive and negative relational experiences. For example, it is not uncommon to read that a respondent initially makes a claim that, the relationships are generally reserved and somewhat restrained; however he or she can also can refer to positive examples of relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants.

There are several patterns that emerge from studying survey responses that address the issue of existing relationships between the two groups in a greater depth. The often very complex and detailed descriptions of intergroup relationships, provided by survey respondents, reveal not only a varied assessment of the intergroup relationships, but also illuminate the existing perception of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants as two culturally and socially distinct groups. It is a common pattern among respondents not only to express their attitude towards the relationships, but also to point out at differences between the two groups. This was the case in 34.9 percent Latvian
Americans’ responses and 50 percent of post-independent immigrants’ responses, which explicitly pointed out differences between the two groups.

Frequently, when survey responses described relationships as non-existent or negative these differences served as an explanation or justification of such an assessment, which was commonly captured in a relative clause starting with “because”:

Relationships are cool or distant, because in many cases we have been brought up in very different cultural environments. The Latvian society outside of Latvia became frozen in the traditions of the first republic. For those people coming out the Soviet system their experiences, upbringing and economic conditions are absolutely different. (Respondent: AL – LV 72478275)

They still do not understand each other and do not feel a tight connection, because Latvian Americans have grown up like Americans with American customs, values, experiences, ways of expression, and Latvians from Latvia with completely different ones. (Respondent: AL – LV 74318824)

In another scenario, when respondents described the relationships in a positive way and ascribed it semantically positive labels, such as “good”, “friendly”, “polite,” it was still not uncommon for the same respondents to point out differences between the two groups:

Friendly and positive relationships. Nevertheless, there is some distance, I would think because there is very big difference in environment in which we have grown up. (Respondent: LL – LV 76440624)
In general, relationships are positive. There is a difference in perception about different Latvian things – for the first ones it has remained at the level of Latvia in 30s and 40s, for the latter it is more of the last 10 to 20 years. (Respondent: LL – LV 73788151)

The repeated statements that point out differences between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia illuminate existing perceptual distinctions between the two groups, even though the boundaries in real life appear to be loosely defined.

It is important to point out that the previous description of intergroup relationships is not something that is unvaryingly shared by the whole population of Latvians in the U.S. According to the survey respondents and interviewees, there appear to be significant differences in the way relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants are perceived depending on respondents’ age and geographical location.

5.1.1. Age matters: “The 40 year threshold.”

Age and generational difference appears to be one of the most commonly cited factors that play an important role in relationship assessment between the two groups. Several respondents and interviewees point out that intergroup relationships are more positive between younger generations and become more complicated across generational lines:

[The relationships] depends on persons and age. I think, that elderly Latvian Americans think more about the old Latvia and do not understand the contemporary Latvia and its residents who grew up during the communist times. (Respondent: AL – LV 71162222)
I think that for persons below 40 years old the relationships are good. Mostly elder people (50 plus) are those who impact the relationships negatively. (Respondent: AL - LV 78072029)

The examples presented above are taken from responses submitted by Latvian Americans. Similar attitudes are also expressed in responses by post-independence immigrants from Latvia, for example: “The younger generation of newcomers doesn’t have a special connection with the elder exile generation, church or exile organizations (Respondent: LL – LV 76440586).”

Another post-independence immigrant provides more elaborate explanation:

Overall, relationships are good – one group understands the other one well. The only difference/misunderstanding sometimes is with the elderly Latvian Americans, who have a more naïve (rosy) perception about what is happening in Latvia and who still strongly cling on to Latvian language, which was spoken Ulmaņa laikā⁵. Once again, I want to emphasize that this is the case only with a few elderly Latvian Americans. With the younger generation (born in the U.S.) there are no radical differences. (Respondent: LL – LV 77148860)

After presenting the examples above, it has to be pointed out though that there are multiple examples of successful cooperation and friendships across the generational lines. One post-independence immigrant goes as far as comparing elderly Latvian Americans to

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⁵ Refers to a time period in Latvia’s history, between May 15, 1934 and June 17, 1940, when Latvia was lead by the authoritarian president Kārlis Ulmanis, who is commonly praised by his supporters for his firm rule and success in establishing Latvia as a wealthy state. Kārlis Ulmanis was the last head of state of the independent Latvia before the Soviet occupation in 1940.
substitute grandparents, who have taken over this role in the absence of her own parents and grandparents.

When looking from the perspective of Latvian Americans, the age of post-independence immigrants appears to be as frequently mentioned determinant of the quality of relationships as for post-independence immigrants. Some Latvian American respondents claim that is hard for them to establish rapport and effective communication with post-independence immigrants who spent a part of their lives under the Soviet regime. From different survey responses and interviews it emerges that there is an invisible “40 year threshold” which affects the quality of intergroup relationships, as it is the case in the two responses quoted below:

With those who are of student age, it is easy. Among those, who are 40 and above, one has to look individually, if these people are ready for an interaction. Sometimes it [establishing communication] requires a lot of efforts. (Interview: AL – LV, March, 2010)

I have a hard time communicating with people [from Latvia] born before 1970, because they are not as open and honest. The new ones are nearly the same us. I don’t see differences. (Interview: AL – LV, March, 2010)

The examples presented above indicate that the sample population of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia has a different assessment of relationships between different age groups, indicating that relationships between some age groups are perceived to be more positive than others. It is important to note that the majority (81.8%) of the community survey responses were gathered from persons falling
in the age range between 25 and 54, which might have had an impact on how respondents perceived the relationships between the two groups. Due to the limited number of respondents in some of the age ranges and the related lack of generalizability, this research did not attempt to establish the causality between the age and attitude towards relationships, which could potentially reveal some other interesting details in perception of intergroup relationships.

5.1.2. Geographical location and the assessed quality of relationships.

The generational factor is not the only one that, according to survey participants and interviewees, affects interactions and relationships between the two groups. Several survey respondents and interviewees who have lived in different parts of the United States suggest that there appear to be noticeable differences in intergroup relationships also contingent to geographical location:

These relationships differ from one Latvian center to another. I have lived in several cities. In cities where there are more liberally thinking Latvians, relationships are good. Where there are more conservative people, the relationships are not as good and those who have arrived after 1991 have no interest in meeting the local ones. (Respondent: AL – LV 73533789)

Differentiating survey responses based on regions, such as the East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast, echoes individual respondents’ claims that intergroup relationships differ contingent to geographical location (See Table 2). Relatively many more East Coast Latvian Americans described the relationships as non-existent or negative compared to the number of respondents who characterized them as positive (38 :
Comparatively much more positive intergroup relationship assessment was provided by Latvians living in the Midwest. One has to note though that the data gathered from different regions (particularly from the West Coast) are limited and thus they carry no a statistical significance, but merely echo a trend that has been noted in individual interviews. Persons residing in areas, which according to the survey seem to have relatively well-integrated Latvian communities, such as Washington, D.C., Chicago, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Seattle and Los Angeles, suggest that this is somewhat correlational with the number of post-independence immigrants residing and a subsequent increase in exposure to persons from Latvia:

In different cities in America [the relationships] have evolved differently – possibly depending on the numbers of Latvian Americans and those who have arrived recently. In Minneapolis, they are generally friendly from both sides. If newcomers have interest in joining the local Latvian American community, they are received hospitably.

(Respondent: LL – LV 72362767)

According to some interviewees, Washington, D.C. as the seat of many governmental and diplomatic institutions has experienced a continuous presence of Latvians from Latvia who work either at the Latvian embassy to the United States or some other diplomatic institution or international organization. Chicago, which is one of the biggest Latvian centers in the U.S., has attracted Latvians of different ages, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds to start their own businesses and work in various industries.
Table 2: Intergroup relationship assessment, by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>East Coast</th>
<th>Boston</th>
<th>AL Post-1991</th>
<th>Non-existent</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brooklyn</td>
<td>AL Post-1991</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>AL Post-1991</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>AL Post-1991</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>AL Post-1991</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>AL Post-1991</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indianapolis</td>
<td>AL Post-1991</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>AL Post-1991</td>
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80
Los Angeles has attracted numbers of young Latvians who have aspirations in the movie industry or are just drawn by the warm climate and desire for adventure and new experiences. However, testing what is the intergroup relationship based on the number of post-independence immigrants is problematic as there is no exact data available on how many newcomers from Latvia have settled in each of Latvian American concentration areas.

Another example suggests that an increased number of post-independence immigrants in Latvian American concentration areas do not necessarily translate into higher quality of intergroup relationships. Such is the case of Latvians in New York City, which according to anecdotal evidence is one of the most popular destinations among many post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Responses submitted by representatives of New York City-based Latvian schools suggest a more negative rather than positive outlook at existing relationships. From all the survey respondents from New York area, not a single respondent characterized the relationships as positive, whereas seven respondents described them as none-existent and negative.

Some of the interviewees suggest that the Latvian community in the Eastern part of the U.S. is more conservative, whereas in the West, especially – California it is more progressive and open to newcomers and changes. As many other things, this statement is largely subjective, as each of the communities have members who appear to be more open and welcoming to new people and new ideas than others.
5.1.3. The changing nature of relationships.

From interviews and survey responses one can read that relationships between the two groups are neither fixed nor linear, but have rather experienced upturns and downturns, and are continuously changing. Some of the interviewees point out that right after the reestablishment of Latvia’s independence there was an euphoric feeling among Latvian Americans in regards to Latvia and each Latvian whom they encountered. However, this euphoria did not last for long as encounters between Latvian Americans and Latvians in Latvia, as well as with post-independence Latvian immigrants in the U.S. created situations where both sides started to be cautious in interactions with one another.

As noted by Maija Hinkle (2006) and Mari-Ann Mortensen (1999) in their study of returning Latvian diaspora, this euphoric feeling very soon dissipated as the former exiles (amongst them Latvian Americans) were confronted with a wealth of challenges in their attempts to reintegrate in Latvian society that had transformed under the prolonged Soviet occupation. Many of these persons who found themselves being unable to reintegrate in the “new” Latvia, shared these stories via Latvian American newspapers and newsletters, thus shaping the Latvian American perception of contemporary Latvia and Latvians.

Similarly, if immediately after Latvia reestablished independence Latvian Americans were very excited to meet Latvians from Latvia and, as one interviewee puts it, “felt like hugging and embracing every new Latvian they met”, then a few years later the mood had considerably changed. Based on several negative incidents with post-independence immigrants from Latvia or reports about Latvian American experiences in
Latvia itself, several Latvian Americans recapture feeling “used”, “cheated”, and “deceived” by Latvians in Latvia and Latvians from Latvia.

One such an instance, heard on several occasions, has been about a Latvian American woman who had admitted a young woman from Latvia to temporarily live in her house to later discover that her husband had run away with this person. There are other incidents reported about Latvians from Latvia marrying Latvian Americans and, as soon as they had gotten their permanent resident status in the United States, leaving their spouses behind to pursue their lives in the U.S. on their own. There are also other incidents described in Latvian American press where some post-independence immigrants had arrived at some of Latvian American events and engaged in acts of hooliganism, stirring debates among Latvian community members. Lauma (in her early thirties) recalls her friends advising her once not to invite any post-independence immigrants from Latvia to a party that she organized, suggesting that they would only create trouble. Lauma adds that she did not follow the advice and that a fight, actually, had broken out at that party between some post-independence immigrants and her Latvian Americans guests.

News about incidents starting from early nineties where some Latvians arrived in the U.S. and deceived the trust of Latvian Americans had spread fast and created a bad image of post-independence immigrants from Latvia, for which the label Latvijas latvieši (“Latvians from Latvia”) nowadays is commonly used. Several interviewees point out that incidents like ones mentioned above for a long time have not only influenced Latvian Americans’ attitudes towards newcomers from Latvia, but have also made them become
more cautious in their interactions with post-independence immigrants. To this day, incidents where some Latvians from Latvia have betrayed the trust of Latvian Americans circulate within the Latvian American community, one of the latest being reported in Chicago-based Ciānas Vēstnesis in the summer of 2010. The local newsletter reported on a situation where the former caretaker of the Latvian congregation property in Chicago, originally from Latvia, had abandoned his duties after spending $6,000 of the congregation’s funds for personal needs as well as robbing the congregation of different gardening tools and accessories (Liepiņa, 2010).

Even though each such incident is a blow to the efforts to establish more trust in intergroup relationships, over time there have been some improvements in this area. Several respondents and interviewees cautiously suggest that over the course of past several years relationships between the two groups have started to improve:

In total numbers, these are very secluded communities. However, relationships improve with every year. Still there is certain lack of trust and different values. (Respondent: AL – LV 72946561)

Some respondents explain that intergroup relationships have started to improve since post-independence immigrants from Latvia have become more independent:

In the past few years the relationships seem to have improved, because newcomers from Latvia are now more independent, they have opportunities to build their own lives through American society and not to depend on support from their exiled relatives. (Respondent: LL – LV 76440586)
The previous comment directly speaks to an image that Latvian Americans had about their co-ethnics in Latvia during the first years after re-establishment of Latvia’s independence. A manual published in 1991 providing instructions how to deal with guests from Latvia, portrayed them as needy, desperate, and lacking independence and self-sustainability (*Rokasgrāmata ciemiņiem, kas ierodas no Latvijas, 1991*). The mere existence of such a publication and its contents were by no means complimentary to Latvians from Latvia.

Another factor that has contributed to betterment of intergroup relationships over time according to survey responses is the change in attitudes also among post-independence immigrants, who had been equally suspicious of Latvian Americans:

At first the relationships were strained; Latvia-Latvians came over to visit but had no interest in hearing what Latvian-Americans had to say about Latvia. I think that has changed. The young Latvians that I am in contact with are very open, fun, and do not have the prejudices that the old Latvians (WWII immigrants) had. (Respondent: AL – LV 74475209)

Overall, the open ended survey question asking respondents to describe relationships between the two groups suggest a great level of complexity in the way these relationships are perceived, experienced and interpreted. While some respondents have answered this question in one or few words, stating that they either are “good”, “fine”, or “bad”, there are others who have tried to uncover the full spectrum of factors that influence relationships between the two groups:
There are different kinds of relationships and that all depends on the character of different people. Personally, I feel fewer and fewer differences between myself (Latvian American) and Latvians from Latvia – we are together in the congregation, school, classes, and we are together in deeds and thoughts. BUT I can imagine that overall the relationship between AL [sic] and LL [sic] can be complicated. ALs [sic] have their own history and friendships and thoughts about Latvianness, and they are different from LLs [sic]. It is sad to say, but sometimes ALs think that their Latvianness is “better” or “purer” than that which now comes from Latvia – and it is sad, because, I think ALs can be more forthcoming towards newcomers. But on the other hand … many newcomers hold on to themselves and possibly don’t know or do not appreciate their compatriot society in America. (Respondent: AL-LV 73030870)

The more in-depth analysis of factors that impede intergroup relationship building will be explored in the next chapter. In the meanwhile, building on to the argument by the previous respondent who refers to mutual interaction in congregations, schools, and classes, the next section will explore the actual level of involvement of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia in different Latvian community organizations in the U.S.

5.2. Involvement in Latvian Community Organizations

One of the ways Latvian Americans assess intergroup relationships is by looking at the level of involvement of post-independence immigrants in Latvian organizations in the U.S. As will be explained in greater detail in the next chapter, among Latvian Americans being Latvian and belonging to the Latvian community is often associated
with and expressed through their active involvement in Latvian community organizations. This is a particularly sensitive topic in regards to post-independence immigrants from Latvia as it commonly leads to criticism directed at them for their lack of interest in getting involved with the established organizations, for example: “They simply do not want to create ties with their own culture while they are in America. They have different values (Respondent: AL – LV 76837389).” It also leads to a wide range of interpretations why this appears to be the case:

I feel that many people coming from Latvia aren't interested in engaging in the local Latvian community because for them they are here to gain the American experience, and they do not need our society to hold on to Latvian identity the way that those of us who grew up here need it. (Respondent: AL – ENG 72796966)

Responding to the commonly cited criticism targeting post-independence immigrants for their lack of involvement in Latvian community organizations in the U.S., the following section will attempt to assess the actual, self-reported involvement of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants in these community organizations, most commonly set up by former refugees from Latvia. Importantly, while the question of institutional involvement opens up a discussion on its own, in the context of this study the focus is on the existing institutional avenues for ongoing interaction between the two immigrant waves from Latvia. The main purpose for asking the question - “Are you a member of any Latvian community group or organization in the U.S., other than the Latvian school?” - was to explore what organizations Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants are involved in and to what extent there are overlaps between
the institutional involvement of representatives of the two groups, which provide an opportunity for continuous interaction and intergroup relationship building.

The self-reported survey data on respondents’ institutional involvement support some of the claims made by Latvian American community members that post-independence immigrants from Latvia are to a large extent invisible to the organized Latvian American community. According to the survey of Latvian supplementary school community, 50 percent of the post-independence immigrants from Latvia teaching or sending their children to the Latvian supplementary schools were not part of any other Latvian organizations in the U.S.

Only a quarter (25%) of respondents among post-independence immigrants from Latvia indicated affiliation with a one of the Latvian congregations in the U.S. in contrast to 69 percent Latvian Americans who claimed belonging to at least one Latvian congregation in the U.S. 6.3 percent post-independence immigrants from Latvia stated that they belonged to one of the Latvian fraternities or sororities in the U.S. Only a handful of post-independence immigrants from Latvia indicated that they were involved in a choir, folk dance group, sports organization or a book club. An interesting case can be observed in regards to Latvian credit unions that have been set up in different parts of the U.S., where the self-reported involvement appears to be higher among post-independence immigrants from Latvia than among Latvian American respondents. One has to be careful, though, in generalizing these trends, as this study did not survey the actual membership in each of the organizations, but only studied the self-reported involvement of the sample participants.
Overall, the involvement of post-independence immigrants from Latvia in Latvian organizations set up by the previous immigrant wave appears to be very limited. On average, each post-independence immigrant respondent was involved with 0.7 Latvian organizations in the U.S. aside of the Latvian school, whereas each Latvian American respondent on average was a member or actively involved with 2.3 organizations outside of the Latvian school. One has to keep in mind that these survey responses were gathered from a sample of Latvians who already were actively connected to the Latvian community through their involvement with the Latvian supplementary school, and thus most likely present a higher level of organizational involvement than the overall Latvian population in the U.S.

Historically, organizational involvement appears to have played a fundamental role in preserving Latvianness among Latvian Americans. In the United States, where the surrounding environment is all American, different Latvian organizations such Latvian church, Latvian girl and boy scouts organization, Fraternities and sororities, as well as dance groups, choirs, ensembles, were some of the very few places where Latvian refugees and their descendants could speak Latvian, practice Latvian customs, and work for the Latvian cause. A survey conducted in 1957 within the Milwaukee Latvian community, suggested that 73.5% Milwaukee Latvians belonged to one or more Latvian community organizations (Veidemanis, 1961b, p.704). A different report two and half decades later concluded that about 85% of Latvian Americans belonged to one or more of the Latvian social, cultural, or professional societies in the U.S. (Riipa, 2004). Somebody may argue that these numbers are an exaggeration of the reality; nevertheless the fact is
that Latvian Americans were very actively involved with different Latvian organizations in the U.S., which as it will be argued in Chapter 7 was a way for them to express and preserve their Latvian identity.

5.3. Circles of Friendships

The survey question asking respondents to assess their circles of friendships and which groups they fall within provide a general idea about the existing circles of friendships among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Many would argue that the concept of friendship is largely subjective, ambiguous and greatly interpretable. For this particular reason, the survey question did not provide a definition of friendship, but left it up to the respondent to decide whom they will include or exclude in their assessment of circles of friends. Thus, the data in this section should be treated as suggestive, not as definite measures. The main purpose for including such a question in the survey was to identify how much of an overlap is there between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants in the social sphere.

The suggested categories of friendships were listed as follows: “Americans”, “Latvians who came to the U.S. as a result of WWII”, “Latvians who came to the U.S. in 1991 or later”, “Recent immigrants from other countries”, and “None of the above”, latter of which offered respondents the opportunity to list friends representing other ethnic communities or friends residing outside of the United States.
One of the major themes emerging through the self-reported survey data is that there appears to be relatively limited overlap between the circles of friendships of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia (See Table 3).

### Table 3: Self-reported circles of friendships, by immigration wave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Americans</th>
<th>Persons of Latvian origin who settled in the U.S. before 1991</th>
<th>Latvians who arrived in the U.S. after 1991</th>
<th>Recent immigrants from other countries</th>
<th>None of the above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latvian Americans</strong>*</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>42.98</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-independence immigrants</strong>*</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The table reports data that were submitted both in Latvian and in English.

Latvian Americans reported having, on average, 11.9% friends who fall within the category of post-independence immigrants from Latvia. One has to note though that there were 24 respondents (27% of all Latvian American respondents), who indicated that they had no friendships with post-independence immigrants from Latvia. In contrast, post-independence immigrants suggested more than twice as big (25.1%) proportion of their friends belonging to the category of Latvian Americans. One possible interpretation for this discrepancy is the number of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants that each group is exposed to; in other words, in most areas around the U.S. there are fewer post-independence immigrants than Latvian Americans with whom they could possibly form circles of friendships.
5.3.1. Latvian Americans clinging to other Latvian Americans.

The question about existing friendships suggests some interesting trends within the Latvian American community. Latvian Americans’ assessment of their circles of friendships suggests that they mainly consist of other Latvian Americans (47.7%) and Americans (43%). The ratio of American friends was much higher among Latvian Americans who chose to respond to the survey in English (54%) than among those who responded to the survey in Latvian (34%). Among Latvian Americans who responded to the survey in Latvian on average more than half (53.2%) of their friendships were formed with other Latvian Americans; the number was significantly lower for those Latvian Americans who responded in English (26.9%). The proportion of Latvian Americans’ friends who are recent immigrants from other countries is basically nonexistent - 0.7%. This suggests that Latvian Americans overall have limited first-hand experience with first generation immigrants not only from Latvia, but also from other countries.

5.3.2. Post-independence arrivals befriending other recent immigrants.

Post-independence immigrants from Latvia report having friendships with nearly as many Americans (32.8%) as with other post-independence immigrants from Latvia (33.6%). According to responses of post-independence immigrants, on average 25.1% of their friends were Latvian Americans. In contrast to Latvian Americans, post-independence immigrants had a much bigger ratio of friends among recent immigrants from other countries (10%), especially from the former USSR. An assessment done by
post-independence immigrants’ from Latvia indicated that altogether 43.6% of their friends were recent immigrants in the United States (post-independence immigrants from Latvia and recent immigrants from other countries combined).

These statistics resonate observations by Latvian Americans who believe that post-independence immigrants from Latvia have more in common with people who have lived under the same system as they have. As one respondent puts it:

For younger generation it is harder to communicate with the elder generation or with those who arrived here before 1991. It seems, that often there is a lack of desire to listen to the elder generation, because „what can you teach me?” There is much lesser noticeable Latvianness as they prefer being friends with Russians or Jews of Russian origin and not with Latvians, because it is easier to understand them, with whom they shared similar living conditions in the past. To some extent it might be a shared social identity. (Respondent: LL – LV 74045985)

An option “none of the above” was provided to survey participants for listing all other friendships that they have, which do not fall in any of the other four suggested categories. Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants listed in this category 8.2% and 6.7% of their friends respectively. Due to the close-ended type of the question, it is not possible to identify what background do these people, whom the respondents included in this category, represent. During subsequent interviews conducted with several persons who had taken the survey, some interviewees indicated that they placed in this category their friends in Latvia and in other parts of the world, such as Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Sweden, etc. There were other respondents who had included in this
category their friends in America representing other ethnic groups, such as Estonians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians who had also resettled in the U.S. as a result of World War II.

The numbers mentioned above are a statistical representation of distribution of friendships that can commonly observed also in everyday life. A baby shower organized by a post-independence immigrant, which gathered around 60 people, convened a large crowd of other post-independence immigrants from Latvia, more than a dozen Americans, and only five Latvian Americans. At a different birthday party organized by another post-independence immigrant, which gathered around 50 to 60 guests, the majority of guests were other post-independence immigrants from Latvia, one forth were recent immigrants from Ukraine, a few Latvian Americans, and a few Americans. Inga, the host of the party who has lived in the U.S. for 11 years, says it was the first time in many years when she invited Latvian Americans to her party. Inga explains that for a long period of time after her arrival in the U.S. the absolute majority of her friends were recent immigrants from Ukraine and Russia, but only during the last couple of years had she met other Latvians, mostly post-independence immigrants from Latvia, of her own age with whom she has established friendships.

In contrast, one can observe that guest-lists of Latvian Americans contain much bigger proportion of American names, whereas online discussions often draw a lot of comments from other Latvian Americans, whom they have befriended through Latvian camps, summer schools, participation in American Latvian Youth Association and other organizations. Interestingly but not surprisingly, when looking at the circles of friendships of Latvian Americans, there appears to be a great difference in circles of
friendships among the elderly and the newer generation Latvian Americans (See Table 4).

The older the respondent among Latvian Americans, the higher is the ratio of in-group friendships, in other words, friendships with other Latvian Americans. Such is the example of Līga who in her late 70s and who responds to her phone calls in the United States in Latvian, claiming that she only has Latvian friends. Some community members explain that there are two major reasons why this appears to be the case: first, these people have a shared background and shared experience of the life in DP camps; second, their English skills after their arrival in the U.S. were rather rudimentary, if not non-existent, which determined that they mostly relied on and maintained friendships with other Latvians. For second and third generation Latvians in the U.S., language is no longer the issue.

Table 4: Latvian Americans’ circles of friendships, by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Americans</th>
<th>Persons of Latvian origin who arrived in the U.S. as a result of WWII</th>
<th>Latvians who arrived in the U.S. In 1991 or after</th>
<th>Other recent immigrants</th>
<th>None of the above</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 54</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 55</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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In conclusion, even though in some places where there appears to be relatively high overlaps in institutional involvement, such as the Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S., the social spheres of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants outside of the Latvian community organizations do not overlap much. The two groups to a large extent appear to keep to themselves, with a few people being the bridge builders who cut across the unmarked borderlines. The reasons why this happens to be case will be explored in the next chapter, which will illuminate the main factors that hamper relationships between the two groups.
“Kāpēc šur un vēl ir nesaprāšanās?
Mēs viens no otra dažus gadus, vai gadu desmitus, esam bijuši šķirti.
Ilgā prombūtnē, atšķirīgā vidē, atšķirīgi veidojusies arī mūsu gara dzīve.”

“Why are there still misunderstandings here and there?
We have been separated from one another for several years or several decades.
During the long absence, in different environments our spiritual life has evolved.”

(Rautenšilds, 1951)

6. Barriers to Crossing Boundaries Between Émigrés and Immigrants

Relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, as outlined in the previous chapter, are influenced by various intersecting factors – such as the nature, motives, and pattern of migration – each of which play an important role in determining the way the two groups communicate, interact, and cooperate with one another. This chapter will explore further two major issues in intergroup relationship formation – first, it will aim at detecting some of the major processes that set the two communities apart historically and, second, identify some of the main barriers that separate Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia today.

To understand any intergroup relationships, it important to know the context in which they are built, but even more important is the historical background that has created the foundation for intergroup relationship formation. In the case of Latvian Americans, who have spent most of their lives in the so-called “Free World”, and
Latvians in Latvia, most of whom grew up behind the Iron Curtain, one of the most powerful historical defining factors has been the Cold War and the Cold War propaganda that drew very sharp and distinct lines between the two worlds.

6.1. The Long-Lasting “Othering”

The formation of Latvian ethnic identity among Latvian émigrés can be best understood by the way it was shaped in opposition to an external other. For five decades Latvian émigrés’ existence and the purpose of being was defined by their opposition to and fight against the Soviet regime that had occupied their Fatherland. The two main goals of Latvian émigrés were: first, to fight against the Soviet occupation and reestablish Latvia’s independence; and second, to preserve Latvian culture, language and values (Hinkle, 2006, p.49). Under these circumstances a strong antagonism against anything Soviet-related was fostered, including even fellow Latvians who had or were suspected having any links with the Soviet regime.

At the other end of the continuum were Latvians living under the Soviet regime who were exposed to vitriolic propaganda about the émigré communities, depicting Latvian émigrés as “bourgeois nationalists”, war criminals, and “Nazi collaborators”, whose life abroad was “pathetic and pointless” (Zaķe, 2010, pp. 135 – 143). Kristīna Paukšēns (2009), who has attempted to explore the image of the West and of the Baltic émigrés in the Soviet-controlled publications Zvaigzne and Dzimtenes Balss, explains:

The [Soviet] propaganda suggested that only greedy, evil and corrupted people would leave the paradise of the Soviet Union, and that any Baltic people living in the West should thus be considered with suspicion. By branding Baltic émigrés as liars, Soviet
officials could continue to brand the ‘American Dream’ as a lie, and continue to maintain that communism was the only solution to the woes of the world. (Paukšēns, 2010, p. 19).

Paukšēns (2010) pulls examples from newspaper Zvaigzne, where Latvian émigrés are portrayed as “fascists, traitors to their own people, and as greedy money lovers to whom nothing except money is important” (p. 21). Furthermore, the newspaper Dzimtenes Balss, which targeted Latvians in the West, presented Latvian visitors from the Free World as “spies and provocateurs”, and as “pathetic and morally deranged people seeking to find the negative sides of Soviet life” (Zaķe, 2010, p.140). Overall, the Soviet regime took an active role in portraying Latvians in exile in the utmost negative way:

The LCCR [Latvian Committee for Cultural Relations with Countrymen Abroad] approach was to argue that there was no unified Latvian culture, but one culture in exile, which was bourgeois, nationalist, limited, generally inferior outdated, and ineffective, and another culture in Soviet Latvia, which was superior, mainly because it was socialist and supported by state. Consequently, the culture in exile was “antihumanist, anti-peace, dilettantish and opposed to cooperation among countries” and thus unworthy of being brought to the Soviet Latvia, while the Latvian culture from Soviet Latvia was desperately necessary for the exiles to survive. (Zaķe, 2010, p. 142)

Consequently, the Latvian nation that was separated as a result of World War II was split apart in two groups, which were taught to be distrustful of each other. Latvian writer and former diplomat Anna Žīgure (2009) in her book Viņi. Ceļā. (They. On the road.), which talks about WWII refugees and their experiences of departure from homeland, speaks of the Latvian nation being split apart in “us” and “them” along the lines of those who stayed in Latvia and those who left for life in exile. In the midst of her
literary work, Žīgure (2009) presents side-by-side newspaper articles illuminating the propaganda war that had already been started during World War II between the Soviets and the Nazis. This propaganda in the post-WWII period was replaced by the propaganda war between the Soviet Union and the West. Importantly, the propaganda war was directed in both ways.

As part of their ideological strategy among Latvian émigrés, whom the Soviet regime had stripped of their fatherland, the Soviet regime and everything emerging from it was treated as “a symbol of dread” (Putnins, 1979). For a long period of time, one of the common beliefs among émigrés was: “Communism is the embodiment of the ultimate evil, with which compromises are neither searchable, nor possible” (Nollendorfs, 1963). While during the Soviet occupation Latvian émigrés in the “Free World” maintained strong ties with one another, carried out “through a complex and overlapping network of associations and events“ (Carpenter, 1997), the dialogue with the homeland was virtually cut off. As Carpenter puts it:

Until 1991, when Latvia regained its independence, the only territory excluded from the exile province was Soviet Latvia itself, which the exile hegemony portrayed as taboo territory under Soviet control. (Carpenter, 1997)

Hence, the first opportunity to establish ties with Latvians in Soviet-controlled Latvia, which came during the 1960s and 1980s US-USSR cultural initiatives⁶ or the so-called “cultural contacts,” resulted in very heated discussions and strong disagreements within the Latvian émigré community (Zače, 2008). While supporters of “cultural

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⁶ According to the U.S. Department of State, the first exchange programs between the U.S. and the USSR started after the Geneva conference in 1955. The first agreement about cultural exchanges between the U.S. and the USSR was signed January 27, 1958.
contacts” argued that they provide an opportunity to reconnect with compatriots in Latvia and thus provide them the necessary support in maintaining “Latvian national spirit alive”, the starkest opponents feared that Soviets would use these contacts as a way to brainwash and indoctrinate their participants. One such example can be found in the minutes of the American Latvian Association’s board meeting in 1965, the prominent Latvian community leader Pauls Lejinš expresses attitude, which was shared by many others: “We always emphasize that Latvian culture is one and indivisible, but at the same time we do not want that the communists would use these cultural exchanges as their weapon” (Lejinš, 1965, IHRC).

After many years of fierce anticommunist struggle these “cultural contacts” had created nothing short of animosity within the Latvian émigré community, highlighting the long-fed notion of “us” and “them” among Latvian-Americans, where often even the fellow Latvians were portrayed as the “other”. Building on Portes and Rumbaut’s (1996) argument that “the ideology of opposition to the home regime – anticommunism in most cases – can be powerful source of collective solidarity, reinforcing those from a common language and culture” (p.134), one can argue this has been the driving force of Latvian émigré community through the entire period of Soviet occupation.

Although the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the eventual reestablishment of Latvia’s independence in 1991 created a momentum for national unity and a feeling of brotherhood, the prolonged exposure to anti-Soviet propaganda intertwined with first face-to-face experiences with Latvians in Latvia left a huge imprint on the way Latvian émigrés perceived their co-ethnics who had grown up under the Soviet regime. This
conversely affected the way Latvians in Latvia perceived the émigrés. To use Zaķe’s (2010) words:

In the interactions between the émigrés and the locals, it increasingly seemed that American Latvians looked down on Latvia’s Latvians as badly educated, brain-washed and mentally unhealthy paupers in a dire need for salvation. And it appeared that the émigrés perceived themselves as the only hope for any improvement in Latvia. In response to this perceived arrogance on the part of the émigrés, Latvians in Latvia harbored feelings of resentment. (Zaķe, 2010, p.viii)

A manual printed in 1991 that aimed at educating Latvians abroad on what to expect and how to deal with guests from the post-Soviet Latvia illuminates the negative image that “Free World” Latvians had about Latvians who had grown up under the Soviet regime. Such an inference can be drawn from the negative traits that émigrés attributed to their early guests from post-Soviet Latvia, such as “poor hygiene”, lack of self-initiative, an overly rosy picture of capitalism and lack of knowledge and appreciation of the hard work that one has to do to earn living in the United States, as well as overly high expectations to be shown and helped around (Rokasgrāmata ciemiņiem, kas ierodas no Latvijas, 1991). These early attitudes, reinforced through multiple publications in the Latvian American press in which cases of cheating, corruption, and manipulation have been recorded, set the background for the development of relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia.
6.2. From Unconscious Invisibility to Deliberate Avoidance

Building on the previous chapter in which I argued that Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia to a large extent exist parallel to one another and taking into account the historical context in which their mutual relationships have evolved, the following section will address the main factors that impede boundary crossing between the two groups today - 20 years after reestablishment of Latvia’s independence. An answer to this question was sought through an open-ended community survey and interviews that were conducted with both Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, as well as my own observations at different Latvian community centers and events across the United States.

Based on interviews and observations, one can argue that the first barrier to building relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia today is associated with the fact that the two groups to a large extent are invisible to one another. It is not uncommon to hear Latvian Americans say that they do not know where post-independence immigrants from Latvia are to be found. In this regard, two major factors have to be pointed out – a lack of distinguishable physical features among Latvians that would make them noticeable among others and the lack of awareness about each other’s existence.

First, it has to be noted that virtually all Latvians are Caucasian, and they essentially do not have any other physical characteristics that would make them distinguishable among other white Americans. Building on Mary C. Water’s (1990) and Miri Song’s (2003) arguments that white Americans have a choice to identify themselves
as ethnics or not, white Latvians essentially have a choice to present themselves as Latvians or not.

Second, as some interviews with post-independence immigrants from Latvia suggest, many of them had not known about the existence of any Latvian community centers or organizations in the U.S. This, as argued in the beginning of this chapter, is to a large extent a result from the lack of exposure to information about Latvian communities abroad. Importantly, as many post-independence immigrants from Latvia did not know about existence of these living and thriving Latvian communities in the U.S., they often had not even thought of seeking out such information.

Some of the interviews with post-independence immigrants from Latvia reveal that they often lack knowledge of existing Latvian networks in the U.S. As one Latvian who had arrived in the U.S. 15 years ago says: “For many years I did not know that there were so many Latvians in the U.S., let alone that there were such organizations as Latvian schools” (Interview: LL – LV, March, 2010). This mother of three children learned about the existence of the Latvian American community and the network of Latvian organizations only by accident, when she was approached by another Latvian who had overheard her speaking Latvian to her children at a store. Her story is not a solitary case. It is not uncommon to hear from newcomers who are not engaged with any Latvian institutions in the U.S. that they have no knowledge of existing Latvian organizations.

Some of the post-independence immigrants from Latvia claim experiencing their first encounter with other Latvians many months after their arrival in the U.S. As presented in the example above, for others it has taken several years to discover the
existing networks of Latvian community organizations in the U.S. From the facts listed above, one can read that this kind of unconscious invisibility or lack of awareness of each other’s existence is the first major barrier to building relationships between the two groups.

If the previous section touched upon the lack of awareness about each other’s existence as a major barrier to relationship building between the two groups, then the following section will explore a different kind of invisibility – a more deliberate kind of hiddenness. It is not uncommon to hear from Latvian Americans that through various sources they have occasionally learned about somebody from Latvia who has settled in their area and sometimes have been spotted at some Latvian festivity, without ever returning back or without being willing to become more involved with the Latvian community. A respondent from one the East Coast Latvian communities provides an example of this scenario:

Those Latvians who came to America since 1991 stay separately from Latvians born in America. For example, during Jāņi many Latvians from Latvia arrive in Piesaule, but you don’t see them through the rest of the year. (Respondent: AL – LV 76573538)

The following section will explore the motivational, perceptual, cultural, emotional, linguistic, generational, socioeconomic, as well as physical barriers that according to this study appear to be the main barriers that set the two groups apart. A

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7 “Piesaule” is a property owned by Boston Latvians, located in New Hampshire. A popular place for East Coast Latvians to celebrate Jāņi - the Midsummer’s night festival.
separate issue for discussion is the issue of post-independence immigrants’ legal status in the United States.

### 6.3. Motivational Differences

The type and pattern of migration have a major impact on how immigrants perceive their homeland and the country of destination, as well as how they relate to others – their co-ethnics, their homeland and the host society (Portes & Rumbaut 1998; 2006). As explained in the previous chapter, the two groups - Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia - are distinctively different in terms of their migration type, pattern, and motives. If those Latvians who left Latvia during World War II left their homeland by force and arrived in the U.S. *en masse*, strongly believing in Latvian language and culture preservation efforts, then post-independence immigrants arrived in the U.S. most often individually or in small groups to a large extent in pursuit of their individual goals and ambitions.

From reading scholarly literature and interviews with Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, one can derive a general interpretation that the former wave of Latvians left their homeland because their life was “good” there and because of that risked losing it all, including their freedom or even life, to the Soviet regime. On the other hand, many Latvians who left the country since the re-establishment of Latvia’s independence did so as a result of discontent, disappointment, and resentment about the situation in Latvia. Some others point out that their decision to come to the U.S. was partly based on their desire to get away from Latvia and other Latvians: “When I
arrived in America, I thought that I would never get involved with Latvians any more. I was disappointed in Latvia and Latvians” (Field notes, May 8, 2010).

Comments by one post-independence immigrant from Latvia illuminate existing differences in attitudes towards homeland among some Latvian Americans and of post-independence immigrants from Latvia:

The two waves of emigration differ one from another like a day against night. Latvian Americans live with an ideal of Latvia in their mind. They have a desire to do something for the benefit of that country. Now [among post-independence immigrants from Latvia] there is nothing more, but blaspheming of Latvia. (Interview: LL – LV, April 28, 2010)

While not uncommon, such an attitude should not be generalized to the general population of post-independence immigrants from Latvia. As argued in the previous chapter the post-independence immigrants’ motives for their resettlement in the United States and attitudes towards their homeland differ immensely. Many, contrary to the statement above, have come to the U.S. to pursue education and advance careers in areas that they could not accomplish in Latvia, believing that their achievements and accomplishments would also benefit Latvia.

Resonating Portes and Rumbaut’s (1996) description of professional migrants’ adaptation and acculturation strategies, several survey respondents and interviewees share their observations that those people who have come to the U.S. to advance their professional careers are more inclined to make friendships within their professional circles rather than other ethnics, who do not belong to these circles. “For those who are trying to find professional avenues and build careers, they need the American
environment,” says Antra, a post-independence immigrant from Latvia in her early fifties (Interview: LL – LV; April 28, 2010).

Another study participant explains this argument even further:

I feel that many people coming in from Latvia aren't interested in engaging in the local Latvian community because for them they are here to gain the American experience, and they do not need our society to hold on to Latvian identity the way that those of us who grew up here need it. (Respondent: AL – ENG 72796966)

If the displaced persons’ focus in the first years after their arrival in the U.S. was getting organized and staying together with the rest of the Latvian community, then, as illuminated in the previous comments, many post-independence immigrants’ immediate goal has been merging with and establishing themselves in the host society. As one of the survey respondents puts it: “I came to the U.S. for other reasons, not to befriend Latvians and to worry if they will accept me or not” (Respondent: LL – LV, 73862333).

As observed by some post-independence immigrants from Latvia, such an attitude towards co-ethnics is not permanent and tends to change with time:

In the beginning, they [the post-independence immigrants from Latvia] have other priorities. It is not urgent for them to maintain [their Latvianess]. They are quite Latvian anyway, having just recently come from Latvia. They speak Latvian fluently. Only after three or four years they start realizing that they miss their Latvian friends, a chance for meeting up, having a conversation, singing karaoke, celebrating Jāņi together. Only after two, three or even four years they can say that they start to feel that they miss something. (Interview with LL – LV; March, 2010)
Overall, it is hard to perceive the post-independence immigrants from Latvia as a united community. With the exception of some individuals who have completely isolated themselves from other Latvians, in general post-independence immigrants from Latvia clusters with friends who like to get together for various events, but are relatively hard to bring together and engage in the organized community life. When asked about post-independence immigrants’ involvement with Latvian organizations or attendance of Latvian events, it is not uncommon to hear statements like this: “I would not go to the Latvian church only for the reason that I am Latvian” (Field notes, January 2010).

An enthusiastic post-independence immigrant from Latvia living on the East Coast cites the multiple hardships she has experienced trying to organize activities and events especially tailored to the post-independence immigrants’ interests and needs:

I am telling you, to get newcomers’ attendance it has to be something VERY special. And to inform them you have to spend a huge amount of time and efforts. And you have to do it repeatedly. It is a huge task to pull those newcomers in the Latvian community. (Interviewee: LL – LV, March, 2010)

The arguments above suggest that the newcomers’ limited involvement in Latvian community organizations is not inherently related to their attitude toward Latvian American community, but rather are connected to their motives for their immigration to the United States.
6.4. Perceptual Barriers

One of the biggest stumbling blocks in relationship building between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, according to the survey data, are perceptual barriers, expressed through negative, distrustful and disdainful attitudes that respondents convey or that they feel directed at them by members of the other group.

The reason for assigning the label of perceptual barriers to this subsection is that often one group responds to the other group based on how they perceive it and not necessarily based on how the other group really is. Furthermore, often it is not the attitudes themselves that are the barrier in intergroup relationships, but the way they are perceived and interpreted among representatives of interacting group. Social psychologists Newcomb, Turner, and Converse (1965) call attention to the need “to consider the attitudes that each of a set of interacting persons attributes to the others, and the relationships among these attributes” (p.5), which are different from the attitudes that are actually expressed.

The most common response by post-independence immigrants’ to the survey question - “What hampers the relationships between the two communities?” - is a negative attitude that many of the post-independence immigrants claim they have felt and experienced either directly or indirectly from some American Latvian community members. More specifically, many post-independence immigrants from Latvia say they believe that Latvian Americans hold a hostile attitude towards them. As a result of this, some of them consciously avoid contacts with Latvian Americans as a way to prevent
themselves from their “condemnation and scrutiny”. One of the most common issues that post-independence immigrants mention is that they feel being seen by Latvian Americans as “fortune seekers” and “traitors” who have betrayed the ideals of the post-Soviet, independent Latvia. One of the newcomers mentions that she feels: “a constant admonition from Latvian Americans towards the Latvians from Latvia for their lack of patriotism, lack of love for the fatherland and for betraying it by leaving it” (Respondent: LL – LV 73951659).

One of the main reasons for feeling this way, according to survey respondents and interviewees, are the questions that newcomers commonly hear from Latvian Americans, especially the elderly ones: “Why are you here? When are you going back to Latvia?” Baiba in her early thirties, who arrived in the U.S. in 2000, compares it to somebody asking their guests: “So when are you going to leave?” She then rhetorically exclaims: “Could they be even more rude?” (Field notes March 8, 2010). Even though an independent bystander might not identify these questions as particularly sensitive or interrogative, many post-independence immigrants from Latvia commonly perceive them as such.

If the perceived nature of questions listed above can be disputed as it is not always clear if the intention of asking such questions is a mere curiosity, inquiry or an actual expectation for the addressee to return to Latvia, some post-independence immigrants have experienced situations where the pressure to return to Latvia is expressed in much more direct and explicit ways. As one of the study participants who had arrived in the U.S. to obtain postsecondary education recollects, once she was
intercepted by an elderly community member when somebody else had asked the student about her future plans – if she planned to stay in the U.S. or return to Latvia. Before the student herself got a chance to respond to the question, the elderly community member had exclaimed: “She will go back to Latvia!” At another time, the same person had been interrupted during a conversation with a much more direct comment: “Go home! Go home!” In situations like the ones mentioned above, some post-independence immigrants admit responding with a similar question: “And why aren’t you going back yourself?” As one survey respondent concludes, it is the “failure to recognize the validity of each others' motivations and actions as appropriate considering their individual histories and abilities” (Respondent: AL – ENG 76768725) that creates a major barrier between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. In other words, it is a lack of recognition of the legitimacy of each other’s arguments that stands between the two groups as a significant barrier.

From multiple conversations with post-independence immigrants from Latvia of all walks of life, one can learn that these are the types of situations and encounters that circulate in post-independence immigrants’ conversations and hinder their desire to show up and participate in some of the Latvian community events. Several interviewees state that they consciously choose not to go to the local Latvian community house, because they do not want to be scrutinized in this way. Newcomb, Turner and Converse (1965) provide an explanation for the psychological aspects that is involved in these situations: “One person cannot be directly influenced by another's attitudes as they ‘really’ are, but only as he perceives them” (p.5). And from what has been learned through this study,
post-independence immigrants from Latvia perceive these kinds of questions as being insensitive, interrogative, and often inappropriate.

Several post-independence immigrants mention that they get a feeling that they have to prove their worthiness of belonging to the Latvian community. Some others point out that they have had to deal with distrust and disbelief from Latvian Americans:

I could feel the attitude, as if these newcomers are capable of doing something and why are they even here. You could simply feel the attitude, distrust, if we are capable of anything. (Interview: LL - LV, March, 2010)

Other post-independence immigrants refer to experiencing an attitude of supremacy from Latvian Americans: “The elder generation thinks of itself as being supreme, because they have forgotten that they came here with one travel bag” (Respondent: LL – LV 77674900). Some other post-independence immigrants from Latvia go even further by elaborating that they feel “arrogance” in Latvian Americans’ attitudes, as if their Latvianness was “purer”, “more genuine”, and that the newcomers are not educated enough and have been contaminated by the Soviet Union.” (Respondent: LL – LV 74886789).

On the other hand, also several Latvian Americans express critical opinions about post-independence immigrants from Latvia. One such respondent points out that incidents from the past spoil the image of post-independence immigrants from Latvia at large: “There is a certain percentage of newcomers who are bad and who take advantage of others. And it is hard to separate them out” (Respondent: AL – LV 74291955). Another Latvian American gives a critical view of post-independence immigrants’
priorities: “Preoccupation with improving financial position, most of the time thinking only about themselves, not about the rest of Latvian society” (Respondent: AL – LV 77794412). A few others point out “a lack of Christian values” and “a sense of entitlement” as barriers that hamper relationships between the two groups. There are others who go even further:

Those Latvians, who arrived after 1991, have the bad Latvian servant mentality. Many of them were affected in many bad ways by the USSR, and unfortunately we, Latvian Americans, don’t have much in common with them. (Respondent: AL – LV, 77260553)

The last few examples of attitudes that Latvian Americans express in regards to post-independence immigrants from Latvia can be best understood through a perspective taken by social psychologists Hogg and Terry (1998), who argue that “attitudes can be important markers of – even the defining attributes of – identity” (p. 9). By presenting recent immigrants from Latvia as Soviet-contaminated people, Latvian Americans to some extent reinforce their strong anticommunist identity, which as argued in the previous chapter has been one of the central elements of their identity during five decades of Soviet occupation.

It has to be noted though that a negative description of post-independence immigrants from Latvia does not surface only in the comments of Latvian Americans, but also in the comments of post-independence immigrants themselves, especially the ones who have relatively higher education (Masters and Ph.D.) and who arrived in the U.S. to pursue their professional and academic aspirations. One respondent describes other post-independence immigrants from Latvia as having “a Soviet and Russian touch, you cannot
trust them” (Respondent: LL – LV 73760262). Another post-independence immigrant from Latvia says:

Latvians from Latvia are poorly educated; they are not creative at all. They are ones who had it hard and were doing poorly in Latvia; they are without a profession or education.

(Interview: LL – LV, April 28, 2010).

Surprisingly, there appears to be a great discrepancy of the attitudes felt and attitudes expressed in communication between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, at least in the survey data. While many post-independence immigrants claim that Latvian Americans hold negative attitudes toward them, many of Latvian American respondents actually show a great level of empathy toward post-independence immigrants from Latvia. In instances when a Latvian American respondent addresses the issue of a negative attitude, it is commonly seen from the perspective of the post-independence immigrant:

The old ones are expecting Ulmanis-style behavior and patriotism (nearly fanaticism).

The old ones don’t want to get connected until they know that the LLV [sic] will stay here for a while. (Respondent: AL – LV, 71977571)

I think that the elder generation too frequently asked: When are you going home, what are you searching for here. I also think that those, who have been in their leading positions for so long, are not willing to leave them. It’s hard. The elder generation defines itself – they have held the Latvian boat afloat here. Would they let another captain steer it further? I also think that the fact that things are not going so well with politics in Latvia
also impede mutual trust, without which it is hard to pass on leadership or even to assign somebody some responsibilities. (Respondent: AL – LV, 73789267)

One of the respondents explains that the relationships are “slightly” affected by “American Latvians’ negative attitude towards LL language (Russicism)”. The same person elaborates that the relationships are even more hampered by:

AL [sic] assumption that LL [sic] don’t want to participate and that it is their fault that they don’t come to events by existing Latvian community. AL think that they are the ‘true’ Latvians and do not understand, how different AL are from LL. AL expect that LL will come to events by themselves. But it is hard to enter a new community. And AL don’t do much to improve the relationships. (Respondent: AL – LV 74318824)

Yet another respondent criticizes Latvian Americans for teaching post-independence Latvians what to do and how to behave: “Telling Latvia-Latvians what to do in their own country; not treating them with the respect that any nationality deserves. Politics and religion as the old adage goes, should not be discussed in social circles unless agreed upon” (Respondent: AL – LV 74475209).

At the end, the only universal criticism that Latvian Americans direct at post-independence immigrants from Latvia is for their lack of involvement in Latvian community organizations. This often leads Latvian Americans to conclude that post-independence immigrants are interested only in material gains:

FOR THE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF NEWCOMERS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR OBVIOUS REASONS IS THE MATERIAL WEALTH. ONLY A FEW
Whereas attitudes and prejudice are distinct cognitive constructs, discrimination can be described as a negative attitude in action. Even though most of the cases above address issues with perceived negative attitudes and thus are limited to perceptual domain, there are a few persons who claim having experienced prejudiced attitude also behaviorally.

Gunita, who came to the U.S. seven years ago, speaks of her experience:

I no longer go to the community house. Once upon a time, I was very active, but then they rejected my application for a scholarship twice, instead giving it to some children of community members, who do not even set their foot at the community house. Once I used to organize different events, but I no longer do it. I don’t need it. (Interview: LL – LV, April 29, 2010)

The arguments outlined above approach existing barriers between the two groups mainly from the perspective of post-independence immigrants, but to make things clear also Latvian Americans account for similar experiences – feeling of being looked down upon. As one of the survey respondents explains it, relationships are “not so good, because both groups lack understanding about one another. I believe that Latvians from Latvia do not like Latvian Americans so much. I feel that Latvians from Latvia perceive Latvian Americans negatively” (Respondent: AL - LV 72005997). In several conversations Latvian Americans claim that post-independence immigrants see them as “iekonservējušies” and “iesālīti”, which are somewhat cynical labels for describing somebody who is very traditional in his or her mindset and appearance.
There is a level of arrogance, rigid mindedness, and sense of entitlement that Latvian Americans sometimes ascribe to the way some post-independence immigrants interact with the Latvian American community. “How can they tell us what we should do with our properties when they do not even want to join our organizations,” rhetorically asks one of the East Coast community leaders referring to some post-independence immigrants’ attempts to intervene in New York Latvian Ev. Lutheran congregation’s plans to sell one of its real estates. Some other cases, which Latvian Americans cite as unpleasant incidents, include instances when post-independence immigrants from Latvia brag about the way they had cheated the U.S. legal system, disobeyed the public order, or showed off their newly acquired material properties.

6.5. Emotional Barriers: Staying in One’s Comfort Zone

The perceptual barriers between the two immigration waves are tightly interconnected and result in emotional barriers – in other words lack of trust in each other. There appears to be limited emotional connection between the two groups as they do not share the same past and they have not gone through the same rites of passage as the other group:

The émigré society was established over a long period of time, everybody knows each other. The newer generations play together in the U.S., and 60 years ago their grandparents played together at the DP camps in Germany. The exile history is long with a shared entry point for nearly everybody. It would not be easy for newcomers to merge with such a closed society. This society is not unfriendly knowingly, but it has just existed for a long time and they know each other. (Respondent: AL - LV 73025762)
As illuminated in the previous statement, Latvian émigrés have developed a strongly interconnected and to some extent closed society of Latvian Americans, who have gone through certain rites of passage, having a direct experience of refugee life or being born in a family with refugee experience, attending Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S., attending one of the Latvian summer high schools, being involved with church and other Latvian organizations. The post-independence immigrants from Latvia, who have not been part of this longitudinal socialization process among Latvian Americans, thus feel left out from this tightly bound community of Latvian Americans.

When talking about the American Latvian community, one has to point out though that not all Latvians are equally integrated in this community; regardless of how Latvian they feel or are. Essentially the organized Latvian community or communities have a very particular understanding and practice of Latvianness that not even all persons from the same immigration wave would be readily accepted in these circles. One of the interviewees, who is a second generation Latvian in the U.S., states that her family feels like outcasts in the local Latvian community. According to her, one of the first reasons for being marginalized from the Latvian community already a long time ago is the fact that her mother had married a non-Latvian. Second, since the early nineties her family had prioritized regular visits to Latvia over traveling to events organized by Latvian Americans in the United States. As this person elaborates, nowadays she has much better relationships with Latvians from Latvia than with Latvians Americans of her age.
The socialization rites of Latvian Americans have created a very particular kind of Latvianness. Latvian summer high schools, but especially Garezers, which is commonly cited as one of the most powerful Latvian immersion sites or as „little Latvia in the middle of the U.S.”, is also criticized by others for its boundary creating practices. During my own site visit to Garezers and participation in the 45th School Anniversary, which was marked from 23 to 25 July, 2010, I caught myself thinking that “one can rent a place in one of the Latvian camp sites or cabins among many other Latvians, but one cannot rent a place in the tightly connected circles and networks of Latvians” (Journal entry, July 25, 2010).

Where transitional experience from one society to another brought displaced persons together and shaped the core of what is the present day Latvian community in the U.S., the transitional experiences by post-independence immigrants sometimes make them even more wary of getting involved with other Latvians, whether they are Latvian Americans or newcomers from Latvia. As one Latvian American respondent explains:

It is hard for those who have grown up in America to understand why people from the former Soviet Union are so reserved and cautious. On the contrary newcomers often reluctantly dare to make friendships with Latvian Americans, they are more comfortable

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Garezers (officially called Gaŗezers) is a Latvian summer high school, located in Southern Michigan that was established in 1965. Over the course of 45 years it has provided Latvian language and culture immersion experience to hundreds of North America born Latvians. It has been perceived to be an alternative or supplemental to the Latvian supplementary high schools in the U.S., and together with the West Coast Latvian summer school Kursa has played a fundamentally important role in ensuring Latvian language and culture preservation among second, third, and fourth generation Latvians. There are Latvians from all across the United States that have purchased properties and built houses and cabins around Garezers, and convene at this location every summer. And this tradition of convening in Garezers is passed down from generation to generation. As one of the parents stated at the 45th Anniversary: „We came here, made friends and found or significant others here, and we hope our children would do the same” (Field notes, July 25, 2010). Not many people, if any, from Latvia have participated in the school as pupils due to the relatively high participation fees. However, increasingly more persons from Latvia are teaching at Garezers or are supervising children at the summer high school or adjacent youth camp.
staying in their own “zone” together with other newcomers. (Respondent: AL – LV 78049385).

Even though the respondent provides a rather precise description of the overall relationship dynamics between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants, it does not capture the level of caution and suspicion that can be observed among post-independence immigrants themselves. As one of the post-independence immigrants suggested in a non-formal conversation: “I fought very hard to get where I am right now, let those new ones find their own way” (Field notes: March 7, 2010). Some other post-independence immigrants indicate that they treat any approaches from Latvians from Latvia with a degree of suspicion, implying “what does he want from me?”

From reading the statement above, it becomes clear that the Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants’ desire to stay in their comfort zone and lack of willingness to change and adapt creates a major barrier in building relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia.

6.6. Cultural Barriers: Growing up in Different Environments

Besides the perceptual and emotional barriers that hamper intergroup relationships, there also appear to be cultural differences between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, which at times appear to have a major impact on intergroup relationship dynamics.

Culture is a concept that has been interpreted and defined in multiple ways. When talking about ethnic culture, Richard Alba (1990) implies by it “the patterned,
commonplace actions that distinguish members of one ethnic group from another, including food, language and holiday ceremony” (p.76). Raymond Williams (2000) talks of culture as something “ordinary” that is presented in the shape of each society, “its own purposes, its own meanings” (p.32) and that is expressed through institutions, shared meanings and directions, as well as arts and learning (p.32). While Chapter 7 will look specifically at the Latvian identity signifiers following Alba’s definition of the term, this section will approach culture in its broadest sense – as a socialized way of being, expressed through practice of customs, traditions, belief systems, and value orientations.

More specifically, the following section uses the term cultural barriers to signify differences in cultural expressions - language use, and attitude towards religion and community work.

From surveys, interviews and my observations it appears that both Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants claim ownership of Latvian culture, however their understanding of what “being Latvian” means differs, resulting in intergroup tensions and cultural disconnect. As one of the survey respondents summarizes: “Different cultures, understanding of things, historical outlook” (Respondent: LL – LV 79000832). Some of them make even claims that the two groups have “nothing in common”:

We've grown up in the same culture but different countries. I'd like to be friends with more [post-independence immigrants] but tend to shun them because we have nothing in common and my Latvian isn't what it used to be so I fell they look down on me. (Respondent: AL – LV 76713361)
Such disconnect, as noted by multiple study participants, results from the fact that Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia have been brought up and socialized in different environments:

Overall, I would say that Latvian-Americans have over time developed their own culture that perhaps may seem intimidating or exclusive to Latvians coming in from America. (Respondent: AL – ENG 72796966)

It is not uncommon to hear Latvians from Latvia making comments that the Latvian culture in the U.S. is much more traditional than it is in Latvia. Some of them claim that Latvian Americans practice customs that they have never seen or experienced before, or that they are longer practiced in Latvia. At the same time they are seen to lack knowledge about many of the contemporary cultural developments in Latvia. As one Latvian American exclaims: “Latvian-Americans don't know much about what's current in Latvia in terms of music, celebrities, etc. compared to newcomers” (Respondent: AL – ENG 73947008). However, the differences are not only apparent in regards to the knowledge of contemporary cultural developments, but to something much more substantial – the language that the people use in their everyday lives.


Paradoxically, while Latvian language could be seen as the best unifier of Latvians around the world, at times it actually appears to be a substantial barrier in relationship building between the two groups. One of the themes emerging from responses of Latvian Americans is that they appear to be self-conscious when it comes to
conducting conversations with post-independence immigrants from Latvia. One of the issues cited by Latvian American respondents is their own “inadequate language skills”. The kind and the degree of complexity (or simplicity) of the language used among Latvian Americans, particularly among second and third generation U.S. born Latvians, is captured in a descriptive label - “the kitchen language”. This metaphorically signifies the place where they have learned the language from their parents and grandparents, which, at the end, is almost exclusively limited to the use in family life. Earlier study conducted in Canada suggests that only one in ten second-generation immigrants claim fluency in their ancestral language, with the number of fluent heritage language speakers virtually vanishing in third and subsequent generations (Kalnins, 1979).

Extremely rare are the cases when descendants of Latvian émigrés in the U.S. have pursued their formal Latvian language instruction beyond the supplementary school education, which usually ends with the 8th grade or at the age of 14 or 15. Such rare opportunities have been offered by the few Latvian supplementary high schools in the U.S., the only fully operating Latvian high school in Munster, Germany, and a few universities in the U.S. that at some point of time have offered academic courses in Latvian language. The longest running of all was the Latvian Studies Program at the Western Michigan State University under the Department of Language and Linguistics, which was started in 1966 and was closed in the mid 1990s. Between 1966 and 1980, this program had been attended by close to 650 students (Meija, 2005), not all of them were descendants of Latvians.
As a result of lack of formal Latvian schooling, some second and third generation Latvians in the U.S. admit that they are often afraid to walk up to a post-independence immigrant from Latvia and start a conversation, fearing that they will be looked down upon or ridiculed for their insufficient proficiency of Latvian language. Some of them feel that their Latvian language is outdated, based on comments that they had received from Latvians in Latvia: “You talk like my grandmother!” While the feeling of insufficient Latvian language proficiency appears to be a latent concern of Latvian Americans, expressed in survey responses and in interviews, differences in Latvian language use, grammar and vocabulary, as presented in the last example, serve as a reason for much more salient tension in communication process between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia.

The question of Latvian language use can spark heated discussions among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia since some of the former are passionate preservationists of the prewar Latvian language and in their Latvian language use follow rules of the prominent prewar Latvian linguist Jānis Endzelīns. The Latvian American newspaper *Laiks* and many of the locally published newsletters contain articles submitted by their readers strongly defending the prewar Latvian language as the true and authentic Latvian language. Some of the most passionate language preservationists call the present-day Latvian language “Padvaloda” or the “Soviet language”, strongly condemning influences of Russian language on Latvian vocabulary and grammar. Many post-independence immigrants from Latvia can cite at least one instance when somebody had corrected their Latvian language or questioned their choice.
of words and expressions. Many post-independence immigrants from Latvia often wonder about some of the words used by Latvian Americans, especially in the books used in Latvian supplementary schools, which some post-independence immigrants from Latvia label as outdated.

Already during the first decade after World War II, Latvian linguist Velta Rūķe called attention to the fact that Latvian language in Latvia and in the exile was subject to different influences. Latvian language under the Soviet regime and its Russification policies was subject to Slavic influences, whereas Latvian language in the West was subject to influences from Germanic languages, such as German and English (Rūķe, 1954). Rūķe’s observations are increasingly more true today, when post-independence immigrants would commonly use words borrowed from Russian such as “točna” and “davai”\(^9\), whereas Latvian Americans would easily slip in English words in their daily conversations, such as “pärkings”, “transfērs” or “rezorts”\(^10\).

Influences of English on the present day Latvian language in Latvia and among post-independence immigrants from Latvia is yet a whole different discussion, which creates additional point of tension between the two groups surrounding the question Latvian language preservation. Latvian Americans often ask - “Why post-independence immigrants from Latvia so easily adapt English words in their everyday speech and use English in conversations amid themselves?” In the case of Latvian supplementary

\(^9\) The word “točna” is a direct adaptation of Russian word “точно”, which means “exactly”. The word „davai“ is directly borrowed from Russian „давай“, which implies „let’s“.

\(^10\) „Pärkings” is commonly used word among Latvian Americans, which is directly adopted from the English word “parking”, “transfērs” from “transfer”, and “rezorts” from “resort”.
schools, a common question asked is why some of the post-independence immigrant parents talk to their children in English, not Latvian. Discussions surrounding Latvian language use will be pursued further in Chapter 7.

6.6.2. Religion.

Survey and interview data suggest that often religion\textsuperscript{11} appears to be an important barrier in building relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Religion appears to be an issue for some post-independence immigrants, who wonder if they should send their children to Latvian schools convening under the auspices of local Latvian churches, or participate in some of the community activities that take place in congregations’ venues.

Some post-independence immigrants who grew up under the Soviet system and were subject to fierce anti-religion propaganda argue that there is “too much emphasis on religion” in Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. In some cases it has even resulted in parents withdrawing their children from the local Latvian school. Other interviewees speak of their observations that, if some post-independence immigrants would attend community events at the local community houses, their numbers would decrease if similar events took place at a church venue. As one of the post-independence immigrants in her fifties states: “If these [Latvian] events were organized by the church, I would not

\textsuperscript{11} Lewitt and Jaworsky (2007) summarize that “often, religion is subsumed under the broad rubric of culture”, in part because some theorists have predicted its diminishing importance in “modern” Western nations (p.140). The rationale of introducing religion under culture is not to make a claim that that the importance of religion would be diminishing, but to illuminate that religion appears to be part of Latvian émigré culture.
be able to attend them. How could I? If I did not attend church in Latvia, why would I suddenly I do it here?” (Interview: LL – LV, April 28, 2010).

To understand such an attitude, one has to know the history that has shaped such attitudes towards religion among post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Latvians who grew up under the Soviet regime under which the practice of religion was greatly obstructed, religious holidays were abolished, and “the church was intentionally discredited, its pastors banished and its property nationalized“ (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, 2010). As the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia proclaims, „Church activity was virtually limited to Sunday services held in church buildings“ (Ibid.). As a result of the prolonged Soviet cult of atheism, it is unsurprising that many Latvians have developed an indifferent and, at times, even cold attitude towards religion. Even though today different congregations in Latvia claim significant membership (for example, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia alone claims that it has approximately 580,000 members, which would equal a quarter of Latvia’s population), in fact these numbers appear to be significantly smaller. A recent national survey about Latvian residents’ involvement in non-governmental organizations reveals that only 9.8 percent respondents claim membership in one of the congregations (Gaugere & Austers, 2005). Latvian theology professor and researcher Valdis Tēraudkalns argues that independent surveys are more likely to be realistic in regards to church participation than the membership provided by congregations themselves, as it is not always clear what criteria are used in collecting membership data (Personal communication; December 14, 2010).
One thing that post-independence immigrants from Latvia are not aware of, as suggested by several interviewees, is the significant role that Latvian congregations have played and to this day play in Latvian culture and language preservation in the United States:

Due to the fact that all these years, Latvianness outside of Latvia was preserved by the Lutheran congregations, because under their auspices most of the Latvian schools were founded, premises built, where Latvians could meet and where Latvians regularly met, then it is hard to say that they are the biggest obstacle. But they are. For people who have grown up in environment where God’s name is discredited and is not associated with Latvianness, it is hard to accept that it is MANDATORY [sic] to accept it to be Latvian. (Respondent: AL – LV 71282697)

Latvian Americans’ view on religion corresponds with the claim made by Lewitt and Jaworsky (2007) that “religion and culture often go hand in hand, carrying and reinforcing one another” (p.140). They present an example that it is difficult to separate Mexicanness from Catholicism, Indianness from being Hindu, or being Pakistani from being Muslim. Along the same lines, many Latvian Americans argue that Latvianness cannot be separated from Christianity. As one of the interviewees state: “Latvia and church is all the same” (Interview: AL – LV, March, 2010). Also the motto of Garezers - „For God and Latvia“ - highlights the school founders’ perception of interconnectedness between Latvianness and Christianity.

There are other Latvians Americans in the U.S., such as “Dievturi” who relate Latvianness to practices of ancient Latvian culture and traditions, and follow what is
called “dievturība”. The source of “dievturi” spiritual beliefs is the ancient Latvian culture, but especially folk songs, known as “dainas” and they are “credited for their efforts in maintaining old folkways” (Straumanis, 2000, p.1108). Both Latvian American Christians who belong to U.S. based Latvian congregations, as well as “Dievturi” perceive belonging to Latvian ethnic group as a “Dieva griba” or “God’s wish,” which serves as a common source of wisdom, inspiration, and strength.

As explained by the various denomination leaders, church played a particularly important role in the lives of Latvian émigré community. In summarizing the first ten years in exile, the leaders of Latvian Lutheran, Catholic and Baptist churches make a claim that the Latvian church as an institution was one of the main antidotes to the fast paced assimilation that so many assimilationists expected to happen. School principal Arturs Liepkalns (1961) claims: “Family, religion, and school is the triangle and probably the only three chances also for preserving Latvianness in exile” (p.12). Liepkalns later cites clergyman J.Teriņš: “During the hard times of two occupation regimes in fatherland church and the feeling of Latvian nationalism were inseparable terms. That has not changed also in exile at large and would not change in the exile school either” (Cited in Liepkalns, 1961, p.12).

Historically, church played a very important role providing spiritual and practical assistance to refugees. “The exiled congregation members from the very first days of the exile, there appeared to be a need for the God’s words and spiritual strengthening” (Kundziņš, 1954, p.30). The findings of Veidemanis (1961b) reveal though that religious roots of Latvian émigrés reach even further. A survey of Milwaukee Latvians conducted
in 1957, suggests that 74.2% Latvians in Milwaukee area claimed that religion is meaningful in their life, which is just a small increase from 70.4% who stated that it was the same way in Latvia (Veidemanis, 1961b, p.694). Nowadays, Latvian churches in the United States had become not only the religious and spiritual center of the Latvian community, but also the social center of Latvian community life.

The fact that most post-independence immigrants from Latvia come from a strongly secular background, whereas Latvian Americans spiritual, social and cultural life has been tightly interconnected with Latvian congregations in the U.S. provides a context why religion appears to be a barrier in relationship building between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia.

6.6.3. Community service and voluntary work.

One can occasionally hear Latvian community leaders directing critical comments at post-independence immigrants from Latvia who show up at community events, but are not willing to invest their time and help out with the event planning and implementation. Responding to this claim, some study participants call attention to the fact that post-independence immigrants from Latvia are not familiar with the culture of community service, voluntary work and donating to community organizations. One of the factors indicating this, as presented in the Chapter 5, is the limited involvement of post-independence immigrants in Latvian community organizations in the U.S.

This, however, is not surprising as post-independence immigrants from Latvia come from a background where organizational involvement, voluntary work, and
community service is not a widespread practice. A recent survey conducted in Latvia about the public knowledge, attitudes and involvement in non-governmental organizations, indicate that 78.8 percent of 1,104 respondents were not members in any organizations (Gaugere & Austers, 2005), which is a sharp contrast to the high proportion of Latvian Americans who are active in at least one or several community organizations. Residents of Latvia demonstrate limited participation also in voluntary work. A survey conducted in 2010, targeting youth in Latvia (age 13-25), indicates that only 39% of youth have participated in voluntary work, among whom an even smaller number – 31%, does that regularly (Factum Research Studio, 2010). According to the same survey, 31% of respondents indicated that they have never participated in voluntary work, but would be willing to try; 24% said that they had never participated and did not know if they would be willing to do it in the future; 6% indicated that they would never work without pay or compensation. Even though this data is not generalizable to the Latvian population at large, it nevertheless illuminates the lack of experience of and appreciation for voluntary work in Latvia.

Adding to the list of existing differences between the two groups in relation to their involvement with community organizations is the attitude towards paying organization membership fees and giving donations, which is the main support mechanism of Latvian community organizations in the U.S. As noted by several interviewees, paying organization membership fees and giving donations is not something that Latvians in Latvia would be accustomed to. As one of the interviewees explains:
The culture of donations, similarly to Germans, is not common among Latvians [in Latvia]. They do not understand what it means to donate to a church only to support its existence. For Americans it is customary to give five to ten percent of their income to charity organizations, church or a political party. (Interview: AL - LV, March 7, 2010)

These criticisms that Latvian community leaders sometimes direct at post-independence immigrants from Latvia for their lack of involvement in community organizations and helping out at community events expose the major impact one’s background and socialization has on one’s own practices and expectations for others. These differences in cultural upbringing create points of tension among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, who otherwise claim to share the same ethnicity and culture. However, as will be presented in the next sections, socialization into a particular culture is only one of many factors that have an impact on intergroup relationships building.

6.7. Generational Barriers: Dancing in Circles or Jumping Up and Down

Generational differences appear to be another major barrier in relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. It is not uncommon to hear post-independence immigrants state that when they attend some of the Latvian community events, all they see are elderly people. In some cases, when there are some events taking place at one the Latvian community venues, phone calls are exchanged between young post-independence immigrants inquiring if anybody is planning to attend. The callers admit that they do not want to end up being all-alone among people 50 to 60 years older than them.
Generational differences also result in different interests and needs, where the mostly younger post-independence immigrants from Latvia sometimes complain that many of the activities organized by the Latvian American organizations are geared towards the elderly Latvian American community. As one of the interviewees comments:

In social events you can feel such a smell of dust, such a yesterday. For example, last week we had a Credit Union ball. There was a country musician Dzenītis and violin rock player Melbārdis presenting a program, called “Pa vēstures takām” [“Following the trails of history”]. They played songs, such as “Es karā aiziedams” from the DP camps. Everything is extremely geared towards this particular age group listener. That is irritating. If the artists will not change, the newcomers will not come. I don’t want history, I want future. (Interview: LL – LV, May, 2010)

The same interviewee later admits that it is a general problem for Latvian organizations in the U.S. to get the younger people to attend Latvian community events which are commonly organized by the elderly Latvian Americans: “You cannot ask some 70 year old to think of events for the young ones” (Interview: LL – LV, May, 2010).

The event calendars in different Latvian community centers as well as the contents of Latvian American periodicals resonate with some of the statements made by young Latvians who find these events being tailored to serve the needs and interests of the elderly Latvian community members and not the young ones. There is great focus being placed at commemorative events, such as celebrating Latvia’s Independence day, celebration of University of Latvia’s anniversary, commemorating 14th of June (one of
the most tragic moments in history of Latvia when nearly 15 thousand people were deported overnight to Siberia in 1941). Observations at these events reveal that there is commonly very little attendance by the younger generation Latvians or Latvian Americans.

The Latvian American community to this day is to a large extent steered by those Latvians who were either born in the prewar Latvia or in DP camps in Germany, many of whom are in their 70s and 80s now. Many of these Latvians, who have devoted their lives to the Latvian community service, are still in charge of many of the Latvian organizations in the U.S. or at least have a strong influence on those in charge. In her description of one West Coast Latviešu biedrība (Latvian society), Antra states that the youngest person on the board of directors is 35 years old, but the overall average age of board members is 60 or 65 and above. Attracting younger people who would be willing to take over the leadership of Latvian organizations appears to be a common problem all around the U.S.:

Some of the existing organizations seem to be very ‘old’ and the ‘old ones’ don’t know or don’t know how to change and accept the young ones. (Respondent: AL – LV 76837389)

The generational gap seems to be an issue not only between the post-independence immigrants from Latvia and Latvian Americans, but also within the Latvian American community itself. Some of the Latvian community members complain that they fail to attract even their own children. One of the West Coast Latvian leaders speaks of a lack of shared “rhythm and style”, which results in inability to bring the older and younger generations together for shared social events. “Back in the day we at least
had the same style. Now the old ones dance in circles, but the new ones jump up and down,” explains Paulis in his 70s.

Discussions at the 52nd annual Congress of the American Latvian Association\(^\text{12}\) taking place in May 2010, call attention to the existing problem of aging among the Latvian American community, for which the aged of delegates themselves are a good representation. More than half of the Congress participants appear to be 65 years old or above (Field notes, May 4, 2010). One of the ALA Congress participants, a woman in her fifties speaks of a situation where she has been criticized by one of the elder Latvian community members: “You young ones don’t understand a thing!” Some of the Latvian Americans in their 30s and 40s indicate that sometimes it is hard for them to initiate changes within organizations as they are not always welcome by the elderly community members who have been in charge of these organizations for decades.

When looking from the perspective of the younger generation, at times, there also appears to be a great difference in how much time people have for participation in social activities. As Lutheran pastor Gundega Puidza, who is in her 30s and who came to the U.S. 12 years ago, explains in her presentation given at the Minneapolis and St. Paul Latvian Ev. Lutheran church, persons in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s appear to be busy with their own lives and do not necessarily have the time to engage in organizational activities as much as persons after retirement have. “If one comes here to search a job in his field, he has no time to engage in community activities – he has to work! Only the

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\(^{12}\) Latvian American Association is the main representative organization for the Latvian American community, which has 163 member organizations in the United States, such as churches, clubs and some 6,000 individual members.
ones with gray hair have the time to hang around,” says one of the West Coast Latvian community leaders (Interview: AL - LV, May 3, 2010)


The survey and interview data suggest that another major factor influencing intergroup relationships are the differences in socioeconomic status of post-independence immigrants from Latvia and the relatively well established Latvian American community: “I think that the problem is no longer connected to newcomers as much as with their educational level and socioeconomic status. We live in a big house, but there are ones that live in an apartment together with five, six other people” (Interview: AL – LV, March, 2010).

A common theme in interviews with Latvian community members is that being involved with the Latvian community is expensive, and that not everybody can carry the financial burden, which among some of the Latvian Americans has been labeled - “the Latvian tax”. This so-called “Latvian tax” consists of all the voluntary donations that community members make to Latvian community organizations, such as churches, Daugavas Vanagi (Latvian Welfare Association), Latvian boy and girl scouts movement, school fees, as well as all the expenses associated with attending cultural events, traveling back and forth to these events, and covering accommodation and board.

The costs of participation in Latvian community life in the U.S. appear to be particularly burdensome to many of the post-independence immigrants, who are trying to establish themselves in the new society and to earn the living for themselves, while
supporting their families in Latvia. As one of the survey participants concludes: “Some community events may be cost-prohibitive to newcomers” (Respondent: AL – ENG 73947008). This is particularly the case during the first years after their arrival:

Newcomers came here to establish themselves. If they have established themselves, if they have a stable job, stable income and a house, car etc., then they might devote their Saturday to come to the Latvian school. But, if that person barely manages him or herself, sends money to two children in Latvia, they cannot afford to work for free. (Interview: LL – LV, March, 2010)

Interviews and conversations with people who are not involved with any of the Latvian organizations reveal that post-independence immigrants from Latvia often work in multiple jobs and that they do not have spare time or resources to be involved in Latvian community affairs or sending their children to a Latvian school:

They [newcomers from Latvia] have different priorities, especially if they have come with little children. They have to establish themselves financially. If they don’t know the language, they have to learn it. Their Latvian profession and experience are not worth absolutely anything here, so they have to get education here. Thus, the children are pushed a little bit to the second front. Because the primary task [for the recent immigrants] is to ensure bread and a roof over their head. (Interview: LL – LV; March, 2010)

Several school principals call attention to the costs associated with Latvian school attendance: driving to the school, paying tolls, parking costs, costs of books, folk costumes, instruments, all in addition to the school fees, which greatly differ from city to city. Just to name a few examples, the price for sending one child to the Latvian school in
Washington, D.C. is $100 per semester (per first child), in Philadelphia – $62.50 per semester, in Chicago it is $275 per semester, and in Minneapolis it is $300 per first child per semester. These amounts reflect only a small portion of the financial contribution that parents make to the Latvian community in support of existing infrastructure. As one of the school principals explains in an interview, even though for Americans these sums would probably not sound much as they fall well below the average price for extracurricular activities in the United States, for some post-independence immigrants from Latvia who struggle financially they are still too high to afford:

We have a newcomer family with two children, very nice girls. But they don’t have money to pay for the school. They are struggling financially, they’re fighting, cannot find a job. I offered them to come to the school occasionally, if not regularly, at least some times. I tried to offer her a discount, but she said: “Others are paying full cost and we will not!?” They are not comfortable with that. They would rather not come than accept aid.

(Interview: LL – LV; March, 2010)

Preserving Latvian identity in the U.S. is expensive as the relatively small number of Latvians, even more so the smaller number of active Latvian community members, have to bear all the costs of maintaining infrastructure and all the social and cultural events that aim at celebrating and preserving Latvian cultural and linguistic identity.

Several respondents cite work as one of the primary reasons for not being involved in Latvian organizations or attending Latvian community events. It is not always only about the money, but about having different priorities at a certain time of one’s life. Work and busy schedules are some of the issues that impede Latvian
involvement in Latvian organizations not only today, but also historically. Available literature suggest that already in early 1950s, Latvians were confronting the same issue: “For many participation in community work is impossible, because all of their free time after work is being consumed by overtime work or studies” (Albāts, 1954, p. 345). In a reflection on the first ten years in exile, the secretary general of ALA wrote that Latvian social and cultural life in 1950s was experiencing an upswing, which he attributed to the stabilization of the Latvian economic situation in the U.S.

If in many instances post-independence immigrants from Latvia simply cannot afford participating in Latvian organizations and community events due to financial reasons, then in other cases post-independence immigrants’ lack of participation is attributed to their lack of desire to share these expenses. “Latvians are sometimes unnecessary thrifty,” says a post-independence immigrant from Latvia, who says that she attends Latvian events not because she is always interested in them per se, but as a sense of duty and desire to support Latvian activities (Field notes, May 6, 2010). Several persons in one of the West coast Latvian communities mention that during some of the Latvian community events one can observe some Latvians who come to the event, but don’t pay the entrance fee and, instead, socialize outside of the community house. “They come to these events, meet their friends outside, but don’t want to pay those 20 dollars to share the cost for setting up these events,” says one of the community members. There is no way of establishing, though, what is the actual reason behind such decisions – the attributed “miserliness” or an actual shortage of money to pay.
As noted by Gans (2007), „class is particularly important“ (p.104) in the ways people express their ethnic identities. Building on Sara Lee’s research of Korean Americans, through which she discovered that „upper-middle-class second-generation Korean Americans are proud of their identity and express it in a number of ways“, whereas „their working class peers display less interest in their national identity and are more concerned with economic security and class position,“ one can argue that this also somewhat applies to the first generation post-independence immigrants from Latvia, whose primary motivation for resettlement to the U.S. has been economic one (Cited in Gans, 2007, p.105). To many Latvians who have arrived in the U.S. primarily due to economic reasons, Latvian identity preservation in the U.S. appears not to be their first priority, as their primary focus is directed at establishing themselves in the host society. Many of these Latvians who fall in the category of economic migrants also hold a grudge against the country that they had to leave. In some ways, the situation of some post-independence immigrants‘ from Latvia echo Lee’s argument that „perhaps ethnic identity expression is a luxury of the affluent, better – educated“ immigrants.

According to some interviewees, differences in socioeconomic status are not only cost-prohibitive to the post-independence immigrants from Latvia, but they also create an additional emotional barrier in intergroup relationships as they sometimes stand in the way in building mutual understanding, awareness and empathy. Nora, one of the post-independence immigrants from Latvia who currently lives New York, says:

Those Latvians who have arrived here and who have left their families and children in Latvia and who have to earn money so they could survive... I know what these people are
going through. I am mostly upset about those Latvian Americans who start asking questions, are they [post-independence immigrants from Latvia] legally here and how do they live here? And I tell them – does that make them less Latvian? Does that make them any different? They are Latvians; they are simply trying to survive. (Interview: LL – LV, March, 2010)

The interviewee, essentially, points out at the lack of empathy from some Latvian American community members in regards to the motives for Latvians’ recent departure from Latvia and their reasons for staying in the United States. Nora adds:

The current generation of Latvian Americans has not seen the difficulties. They studied, worked, lived in their own home. They did not go through such difficulties. They simply don’t know what it means to survive. They don’t know what it means when you don’t have money for bread and milk, and that you have to say no, when your child asks if he can eat a piece of bread, because that is kept for the little brother. They don’t understand that. (Interview: LL – LV, March, 2010)

From reading available literature on Latvian Americans, there are two themes that emerge in regard to Latvian American socioeconomic status. First, the DP experience had to a large extent leveled class differences that had formed in the prewar Latvia. In 1976, Latvian scholar Andris Skreija wrote that the shared fate of Latvian refugees “in the DP camps and throughout the first years in America to a large extent leveled differences and divisions in social strata, that had started in Latvia” (Skreija, 1976, p.52).

At the time of their arrival in the United States, according to recollections of elderly Latvian community members, all that the Latvian refugees had upon their arrival
in the U.S. was a box with their personal items that they had managed to take with them during their escape from Latvia and all that was left from their life in displaced persons camps in Germany. It has to be pointed out though that, despite the hard start, the majority of Latvian émigrés established themselves soon after their arrival in the United States. A 1974 survey of Latvians in the U.S. that gathered 31 000 responses, showed that over 70 percent of Latvian Americans at that time were homeowners, 55 percent had either completed or were in the process of getting a college degree. Under the age of 35 the rate was over 90 percent (Akmentiņš, 1976). According to the survey, 820 Latvian émigrés had become engineers; about 700 Latvian émigrés and their direct descendants had entered the medical and dental professions; 200 – were educated architects (Akmentiņš, 1976). “Even those Latvians, who are engaged in manual labor, show great diligence, sense of responsibility, and thrift - true welfare cases by 1960 were rare among the Latvian exiles,” Akmentiņš concluded (p.6).

Today, there are no reliable data available on Latvians’ socioeconomic status in the U.S. as no institution collects such information. What the first generation Latvian Americans point out is that at the time of their arrival in the U.S. after the WWII, there was a great shortage of labor in combination with growing U.S. economy, thus finding jobs and making a living was much more easy than it is for those Latvians who have arrived in the U.S. since 1991.

This does not necessarily mean that these days all Latvian Americans are well off and live luxurious lives. Many Latvian Americans still have work hard to ensure that their needs are met. I can hear at one of the community events a discussion between two
elderly women, weighing the costs of renewing their Latvian passport. When overhearing the possible price of the Latvian passport renewal one of the ladies exclaims, “50 dollars\textsuperscript{13} is a lot of money!” (Field notes, July 20, 2010).

While the costs of participation in Latvian community life come up more often in interviews with post-independence immigrants, they are also cited as a cause for disenfranchisement among some Latvian Americans. Liene, a second generation Latvian American in the U.S., says that she felt marginalized from the Latvian community when she was younger and when so much emphasis was placed on attending Latvian summer schools and youth camps in different parts of the U.S., which consequentially involved high costs for traveling. Liene recalls a situation where she had told her teacher at the Latvian school that she would not be able to attend one of the Latvian youth camps, because she did not have enough money to cover the participation and travel costs. The teacher’s response at that time had bewildered her, as the advice that she received was to ask her parents. What Liene had thought for herself was that she did not have such wealthy parents whom she could ask for this kind of money. Liene concludes that this is a general problem in the U.S., where much of the discussions are focused on race and ethnicity, but not as much on class relations, which in her opinion a topic commonly “pushed under the rug”.

The relatively lower socioeconomic status is not only seen as a barrier to participation in the community life, but in a few instances is also described as the

\textsuperscript{13} The actual price for renewing Latvian passport in the United States was $125. Such an opportunity was provided during the summer 2010, when representatives of the Latvian Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs in cooperation with the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Latvian Embassy in the United States and the American Latvian Association organized a tour of mobile passport stations to seven cities in the United States.
outcome of active participation in the Latvian community life. While being active in the Latvian community has presumably not made anybody poor, in several cases personal decision to take an active part in the Latvian community life has been implemented at the expense of advancing ones professional career and obtaining more profitable jobs. As one of the Latvian community leaders said: “I sacrificed many job opportunities in favor of my participation in Latvian community life” (Field notes, May 4, 2010). Conversely, a 1957 survey conducted by Veidemanis in the Milwaukee Latvian community suggested that 40.4% percent community members would “definitely refuse” an offer of a good and well paid position in the field of his or her specialty, if it was far from Latvian centers in America. Out of all respondents, 21.5 % stated that they would “accept it for a few years in order to save money” (Veidemanis, 1961b, p. 703). These examples attest that many Latvian Americans’ choices in life have been directly guided by their Latvian background, values and connections, and thus they might, at least to some extent, explain the grudge that some of these Latvian Americans have towards post-independence immigrants who place material values higher than their Latvianness.

6.9. Physical Barriers: Three Times Around the Globe

Another theme that emerges through survey responses and interviews in regards to building relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants is the impact that physical distances have on their ability to meet up and get involved in the Latvian community life. Latvian Americans, in general, do not form ethnic enclaves, but rather live scattered around cities and thus have to rely on community events, phone, and mail to keep the community spirit alive (Straumanis, 2000). Anecdotal evidence
suggests that neither have the post-independence immigrants from Latvia formed anything that could be perceived as an ethnic enclave.

Great distances affect relationship dynamics, regardless if they are Latvian Americans or post-independence immigrants. In order for Latvians to get together for community events, they have to overcome long distances - from one side of the city to another, from one state to another, or even from one side of the continent to another. According to my own experience, traveling by public transport between two boroughs of the New York City to get to a Latvian community event can take up to 4 hours one way. Since the Latvian community at certain age groups (especially youth) within many of the Latvian centers is very small, they often have to make trips to national youth camps and gatherings at locations far away from home. Latvian Americans have accepted it as a common reality that their Latvian friends live all across the North America and that traveling is the only way for them to see one another in person.

It is the concept of time and distances that many of the post-independence grapple with during their first years of arrival in the United States. For many of them it seems unthinkable driving 200 miles each Saturday (nearly equal to crossing Latvia from one side to another) to bring children to the nearest Latvian school, as one family in the Midwest has done it over a course of 12 years. When calculated cumulatively, the distance driven by this family for the purpose of providing their three children education in Latvian language and culture is compared to traveling three times around the globe.

Others point out that it is the increasingly fast-paced life that makes it hard for them to stay in touch: “Time and distances. People live farther away from the [Latvian
community] centers, and we are all busier than the previous generations” (Respondent: AL – LV 80402096).

Taking into account the long distances and fast-paced lifestyles, social media play an increasingly big role in connecting people. While many Latvian Americans would commonly communicate and publicize their events through the traditional communications channels set up by the established Latvian community – such as newspapers and newsletters, the younger generation Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia would more commonly communicate through websites and social media:

We often don’t know how to practically contact each other. Newcomers don’t know, that there is a local society here and / or don’t know how to get inside of it. Latvians Americans don’t use the same information channels as even those newcomers who participate in the [Latvian] society. (Interview: LL – LV, March 4, 2010)

If Latvian Americans would commonly check the local phonebook for Latvian surnames upon their arrival in a new city, then this is not something that would often cross the minds of post-independence immigrants from Latvia of a younger age. Interviews and non-formal conversations with post-independence immigrants suggest that they would rather use Latvian social networking site Draugiem.lv or Facebook as a source of information to find other Latvians in the area.

Overall, it appears that Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia use different channels of communication with one another. Latvian Americans commonly rely on newspaper Laiks as a source of information about Latvian
community life in the United States. In addition, each of the local Latvian community center publishes its own newsletter or news bulletin informing the local Latvian community about upcoming or past events, local affairs and community related matters. The Minneapolis and St. Paul Latvian Ev. Lutheran church publishes monthly Svētrīta Zvani, whereas in Chicago, a monthly periodical Čikāgas Ziņas is published, in Los Angeles – Dienvīkālīnijas Latviešu Biedrības informācijas biļetens, in San Francisco – Ziemeļkalifornijas Apskats, to name just a few. These local news bulletins appear to serve an important role in keeping the local communities connected, as they are commonly used as a source of reference among Latvian community members. One has to know though that these news bulletins are distributed based on a list of subscribers, which makes them available only to persons who are connected to the local Latvian community center or congregation or who have subscribed to them in some other way. Many post-independence immigrants from Latvia do not even know about their existence, unless they have attended the local Latvian community center and have been added to the list of subscribers.

Nora, a post-independence immigrant from Latvia living on the East Coast, suggests that she would rather use Russian or Ukrainian newspapers published in her area to establish contacts with other Latvians. Nora explains that these are the newspapers that newcomers from Latvia are more likely to use to search for jobs, housing and recreational opportunities in the area. Conversations with post-independence immigrants reveal that some of them believe they will more likely receive help and assistance in finding jobs, housing or practical guidance through the networks of immigrants from the former USSR.
than anybody else. In addition, as several post-independence immigrants from Latvia indicate in the survey, they have friends from among recent immigrants from the former Soviet republics, which makes them more interested in using shared sources of information.

With an aim to address the shortage of readily available information online about Latvians in the United States, in May 2008, a post-independence immigrant from Latvia, Ilona Vilciņa created a news portal www.LatviansUSA.com, which is tailored to the needs of post-independence immigrants from Latvia. The portal contains information about Latvian events in different parts of the U.S., news articles, discussion forums, which mostly deal with issues concerning recent immigrants – obtaining visas, finding housing, jobs, how to chose schools, where to buy Latvian food, what is the cheapest way to call and send money to Latvia, etc. Ilona Vilciņa explains that the portal is used both by post-independence immigrants from Latvia, as well as Latvian Americans, delivering one of her aims to bring the communities closer.

The portal www.LatvianUSA.com over the past few years has become a strong competitor to the much longer-standing internet portal Latvians Online (www.latviansonline.com), whose audience is predominantly post-World War II Latvians and their descendants. Run by journalism professor Andris Straumanis, Latvians Online cover a wide range of issues, from politics, economy, to culture and social issues in Latvia and in Latvian diaspora.
6.10. The Sensitive Question of Legality

Conversations with Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia suggest that the immigration status of the latter group is a particularly sensitive issue in building intergroup relationships. Based on the information that was published in Latvian press in 1950s and 1960s, which indicated that a majority of Latvians who arrived in the U.S. after WWII got their citizenship of the United States within the first few years after their arrival (Zaķe, 2010), it is assumed that the question of legal status among the WWII émigrés and their American born children is not an issue. According to the survey, conducted as a part of this study, 97.7% Latvian Americans indicated that they were citizens of the United States of America, whereas two respondents mentioned that they hold a permanent resident alien status in the United States (See Table 5).

Table 5: Respondents’ legal status in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Latvian Americans</th>
<th>Post-independence immigrants from Latvia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent resident</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment visa</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't want to identify</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among post-independence immigrants from Latvia, only 14% indicated that they were citizens of the United States, 51.6% permanent residents; 9.3% respondents stated that they were in the U.S. under employment visa; 7.8%, under student visa; and 17.2% did not identify a specific type of visa under which they are residing in the United States.

Commonly, the question of person’s legal status is avoided or very hesitantly discussed among post-independence immigrants themselves, but it is even more so perceived to be a taboo topic in intergroup conversations.

In regards to some post-independence immigrants’ status in the United States, one can commonly hear a reference to “papers”, which implies the legal rights to stay in the United States. A common comment among post-independence immigrants from Latvia about their fellow Latvians whose presence in the United States can be labeled as undocumented is: “Viņam nav nokārtoti papīri” (“His papers are unresolved”) or “Tu jau zini... viņa statuss šeit ir neskaidrs” (“You know... his status here is unclear”). From the tone of conversations it emerges that many post-independence immigrants from Latvia hold a high degree of empathy to these undocumented Latvians in the U.S., often because they understand the motives why these Latvians have chosen to leave their homeland and they can relate to how hard it is to get the “paperwork” done in the U.S., especially as a result of September 11, 2001. Nevertheless, there are other post-independence immigrants who speak very critically of those “underground” Latvians who have chosen
to stay in the U.S. by all means, even if it meant staying in the U.S. illegally. “You cannot trust them,” exclaims one of the survey participants.

While many of Latvian Americans empathetically would like to see changes in the U.S. legislation that would allow undocumented Latvians to legalize their status in the United States, there are others who strongly object it, stating that one should earn the right to stay in the country by respecting the existing rules and regulations and not be awarded for their disobedience.

There appears to be a very distinct attitudinal difference among Latvian Americans towards to those who are present in the country legally or illegally:

Legal immigrants - interesting, hard-working (I have a few personal friends from Latvia).

Illegal immigrants - taking advantage of system, do not feel that the “rules” apply to them (I frequently hear negative comments about them from my friends in Latvia as well).

(Respondent: AL – ENG 79193652)

Or as another interview explains it:

It is a matter of honor. If you did everything as required, and if you are here legally, it reflects that you are trustworthy person. If you are here illegally, then … First of all, I don’t ask this to anybody. One does not talk about this. But if I learn it accidentally or somebody brags about being here illegally, my trust in him disappears. (Interview: AL – LV, May 8, 2010)

Literature in social psychology suggests that belonging to one particular group often results in a desire to protect certain attitudes when these attitudes “define

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14 It has to be noted that the question of illegal overstay was one of the key issues in negotiations between the Department of Homeland Security and Latvian government about Latvia joining the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. Latvia joined the Visa Waiver Program on November 17, 2008.
membership in a salient and important self-referent ingroup” (Hogg & Terry, p. 7). This appears to be the case, when dealing with the particularly sensitive issue of morality and legality, like the post-independence immigrants’ legal status in the United States. As explained by one of the interviewees, following the highest possible moral norms and standards, which implies responding critically to cases where these norms have been violated, is an important component of Latvian American identity. Sandra in her fifties refers to her teacher Mirdza Paudrupe, a prominent figure in Latvian American community who has taught at Garezers summer school for over 40 years and thus is known by different generations of Latvian Americans:

For 45 years she has reminded us that all that we have is our honor. And that it is our uppermost important duty to be honorable. And if we work with children, it is our duty to teach them a sense of integrity and turn them into honorable people. And we can all learn from this, first of all, if you will be dishonest you will burn bridges between yourself and others. However, if you will be trustworthy, people will help and support you. (Interview: AL – LV, May 8, 2010)

Sandra also explains that this is one of the reasons why she is hesitant to move with her family to Latvia:

One of the reasons is that I cannot switch my thought process to the Soviet style of thinking, where people are either indifferent one to another or aren’t always honest. Whereas in the U.S. you commonly assume that people would treat you honestly and that only occasionally somebody would cheat you. (Interview: AL – LV, May 8, 2010)
As several Latvian American speculate, some post-independence immigrants’ unresolved legal status in the United States might possibly be one of the reasons why they consciously choose to avoid contacts with the Latvian American community. As some interviewees would explain: “They are afraid to show up at community events, because they fear for their status.” Some elderly Latvian Americans interpret some post-independence immigrant’s hesitation to share their full name or address as desire to hide something.

Due to the very sensitive nature of the issue, the survey did not specifically ask if the respondent’s presence in the country is undocumented. Nevertheless, through personal communication I have learned about more than a dozen persons who fall in this category, majority of whom were not involved with the Latvian community in the United States. Simona, a post-independence immigrant from Latvia who sends her son to one of the East Coast Latvian schools, tells of a newcomer family from Latvia that chose not to enroll their children in the local Latvian school citing their unwillingness and inability to provide a Social Security number that they claim is needed to enroll their children in the school. Interestingly, the publicly available enrollment form does not require such information.

While these observations ascertain some of the Latvian Americans’ claims that it is the lack of legal status in the U.S. that impede post-independence immigrant involvement in the organized Latvian community life, it is not a common rule. There are also instances that some post-independence immigrants with “unresolved paperwork” are very actively involved in the local Latvian community life.
A common way to deal with the question of legal status is avoid asking about it. One of the school principals states in an interview that she would rather not know if somebody is in the U.S. illegally. According to this principal, the strong sense of honor is something that has been emphasized throughout the Latvian school system, especially in Garezers. Another school principal echoes this argument, claiming: „I don’t ask them about their immigration status. So in case if the U.S. government officials ask me something I would not have to lie them“ (Interview: AL – LV, December 12, 2010).

6.11. Coolness - A National Characteristic

The factors that appear to separate Latvian Americans from post-independence immigrants are not always attributable to some external factors, but partly are engrained in the Latvian mentality itself. As the survey and interview data reveal, if there is one thing that Latvians share regardless of their immigration status in the U.S., it is the reserved “ziemeļnieka daba” or Northerners’ mentality. A comment made by Latvian American highlights this point: “Latvians are cool by nature, they would not approach others, rather avoid them. In contrast, in American church there would be somebody like a greeter who would approach you.” (Interview: AL – LV, May 8, 2010). This would not be common among Latvians, concludes the interviewee.

Another respondent resonates the same idea, explaining that “Latvians as a group are usually not as very friendly and outgoing” as some of the other nations. “If we were more outgoing, I suppose the relationships would have been better,” concludes a Latvian American respondent (Respondent: AL – LV 71236387).
Similar observations have also been expressed in various descriptions of Latvian culture, such as the one that is provided by the Latvian Institute:

The Latvians are an intensely private people. This singular feature of the Latvian mentality perhaps comes from their having lived for centuries on isolated small farms in the countryside -- self-sustaining, autarkic microcosms of order and ritual (...) This enactment of the ancient art of domestic economy and fastidious self-reliance, compounded with a history of fierce oppression from forces that originated “on the outside,” has resulted in the Latvians’ steadfast respect for, and retreat to, the sanctity of the hearth and home, which has historically been the site of all discourse and celebration. (Kalniņš, 2010)

Besides being somewhat cool and reserved, survey respondents and interviewees also point out that Latvians are “arrogant” and "quarrelsome” people. Divisions and detachments among Latvians are not unprecedented, but in public perception are rather common, expressed through multiple versions of jokes along the lines of “Where there are two Latvians, there are three political parties” or “There is no better food for one Latvian than another Latvian.”

Historical sources reveal that dissensions between Latvians have been a common reason why some Latvian Americans have abandoned Latvian community life in the U.S. also in the past. A question asked by Veidemanis in his 1957 survey of Milwaukee Latvian community suggested that 13.8% Latvians in Milwaukee who were not socially active in Latvian community cited “Latvian dissensions, conceitedness” as one of the primary reasons that “keeps or hinders” them from participating in the community life (Veidemanis, 1961b, p.707). This was the third most commonly cited reason for not
participating in social life after “work, also studies” (17.5%), “lack of interest, own passivity” (15.9%), placed at the same level as “lack of time” (13.8%).

Similarly, Veidemantis’s survey (1961b, p.708) explored what factors hindered success of “common Latvian arrangements in Milwaukee.” The three main factors cited by respondents were: 1) “Latvian dissension, discord, stratification into factions (31%), 2) “Latvian individualism, ego-orientation, distrust of leaders and aims” (19.2%), and 3) “dissension between pastors, leaders, their inadequacy” (12.2%). In this survey, only 4.7% respondents claimed that common Latvian arrangements in Milwaukee were hindered by such a factor as lack of time and lack of money (p.708). By assessing the current issues of intergroup relationships building in a historical perspective one can see that there are some common threads of what hampered relationship building within the Latvian community in the U.S. in the past and today.

Overall, when talking about factors that hamper relationship building between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants, it has to be pointed out that there is no one answer why these intergroup relationships at times appear to be complicated, as it is a set of intertwined factors that affect the relationships between the two groups. One of the primary factors that hamper relationship building between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, as argued in the beginning of the chapter, is the lack of awareness of each other’s existence. A second important factor that affects the relationships are the motives and nature of each cohort’s departure from Latvia – where the WWII Latvian émigrés left their homeland en masse and by force, and were later inclined to stay connected to the Latvian community, majority of the post-independence
immigrants from Latvia have come to the U.S. on voluntary basis to pursue their personal goals and aspirations. Another important factor that affects intergroup relationships is the perceptual barrier that exists between the two groups resulting from several negative encounters between the two groups in the past, as well as ramifications of the Cold War propaganda. Another factor is the emotional barrier, resulting from different rites of passage, and cultural barriers expressed through differences in the use of Latvian language, attitude towards religion and community work. Some other important factors are the generational differences between the elderly leadership of the Latvian organizations and the mostly young post-independence immigrants from Latvia, as well as differences in socioeconomic status of the well-established Latvian American community members and recent immigrants from Latvia. A particularly sensitive issue in intergroup relationships is post-independence immigrants’ legal status in the United States.

After having exposed existing barriers in intergroup relationships, the next chapter explores the ways Latvian supplementary schools in the United States bring Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants together and help them negotiate their Latvian identity.
7. Negotiating Latvianness Through a Network of Latvian Supplementary Schools

Building on the previous chapters, which explored the status of intergroup relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia and illuminated barriers that hamper relationships between the two groups, this chapter will focus on the role Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. play in bridging them.

The question of Latvian supplementary schools is central to this study as they epitomize Latvians’ attempts to preserve their linguistic and cultural identity in the United States and place questions of Latvian identity, language and culture at the center of the discussion.

The following chapter will provide a brief history of the emergence of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S., their current demographic situation, and explore what are the main expressions of Latvian identity among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia who attend the school.
7.1. History of Latvians Supplementary Schools in the U.S.

Latvian supplementary schools in the United States are a particular kind of school, which are not general education schools, but are established at Latvian community centers or churches and gather once a week to serve the specific needs of Latvian language and culture preservation in the U.S.

The history of the present day Latvian supplementary schools dates back the Displaced Persons’ camps in Germany of the mid-1940s (Bolšteins, 2004). The curriculum of schools established in DP camps strongly resembled the school curriculum of the middle and secondary schools in pre-war Latvia (Daģis, 1954). These schools, set up to fill in the educational vacuum of the post-war Germany, provided children of displaced Latvians the basic general education that would enable them to reintegrate in regular schools after their eventual relocation from the DP camps. Despite the shortage of textbooks and other teaching tools, the schools were driven by the knowledge and enthusiasm of experienced professors and teachers who had fled their homeland fearing prosecution under the takeover of the Soviet regime.

Latvian supplementary schools, which were established shortly after Latvian displaced persons’ resettlement in the United States, were “a new kind of schools” as the role of general education was taken over by the American educational system. It was here that these schools shifted their focus from general education, which was necessary throughout the years in DP camps, to education that focused primarily on preservation of Latvian language and culture (Bolšteins, 2004, p. 181). This was implemented through a
number of courses in Latvian language and literature, Latvian history, geography, music, folklore, folk dances, etc.

The most frequently cited description of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. has been captured by Hermanis Kreicers (1956), the founder of the Chicago Latvian school:

Five years of experience show that our school in exile is a new school type, which is evolving gradually… it is not a subject teaching school, because in the short time very little can be covered… Our school in exile is a Latvian orientation school – to introduce the child to the Latvian book and newspaper, Latvian song and dance, and to lead him into Latvian society. (p.246)

Another prominent Latvian community leader, Arturs Liepkalns (1977), argues that Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. are a “peculiar” (“īpatnējs”) type of a school. Most often these schools convene in “improvised school premises” (p.29), they also “differ from the modern host countries’ school premises by their big simplicity and often even with grayness” (p.29). These schools are not compulsory, thus they are like type of private schools or educational courses (Liepkalns, 1977).

The motive for establishing Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. was twofold. From one side these schools served the role of preserving and passing on to the next generation Latvian language and culture, whose survival in homeland, according to émigrés’ belief, was threatened by the Soviet-imposed Russification policies. From the other side, the motive behind sending children to Latvian supplementary schools was aligned with émigrés’ expectation to return to Latvia one day:
We know that our land will be free and that we will go home. We will go home all together, also the new generation. Let’s help our youth love the language of their fathers and our dear Latvia. (Savickis, 1954, p. 38)

In addition, Latvian supplementary schools were seen as an antidote to Latvian assimilation in the United States, which was one of the biggest threats faced by the Latvian community in exile.

In 1947, a widely renowned mission statement “The Latvian’s Standing in Strange Lands” (“Latvieša stāja svešumā”) was published in Meerbeck, Germany, containing a pledge that many Latvian community members took not to assimilate wherever they would end up settling after their relocation from the DP camps:

I come from my primary source and can never forget that I am Latvian – the preserver of my ancestral spirit, the cultivator of my language and defender of my nation’s honor. (”Latvieša stāja svešumā,” 1947)

In 1965, this determination was reinstated in a publication by Latvian editor Edgars Dunsdorfs who published a call “Programma pret pārtautošanos” (“A program against assimilation”), and in 1972, released his “Kultūras politikas plāns” (“A plan of culture policy”). Through the suggested program (Dunsdorfs, 1976), as well as multiple other publications, Dunsdorfs calls attention to the role different socialization institutes play in Latvian culture preservation efforts in exile. Were families are forced to focus on establishing themselves financially, the other socialization institutes become increasingly important, one of them being the Latvian supplementary schools (Dundorf’s, 1976, p. 67 – 72).
The heyday of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. was experienced in 1956 when there were 67 supplementary schools in the country, serving a population of approximately 2,200 children. One decade later, in the school year of 1967/68, the number of Latvian schools in the U.S. had diminished to 57 (Blumbergs, 1968). Since then, as a result of diminishing school enrollment the number of Latvian schools in the United States has considerably decreased, and in the school year of 2009/2010 had dropped to 19, some of which serve a population as little as six children.

Historically, the size of each school has varied greatly as some of them had a population of more than a 100 whereas others had less than a dozen pupils. Kreicers (1954) comments: “Exile schools function all around the world, wherever you gather 10 to 20 Latvian children together.” In the early days of Latvian life in exile, the Education Bureau of the American Latvian Association stated that schools had to be set up even if the number of children was as low as three:

Latvian society should take care that as many as possible Latvian children of school age would attend Latvian schools, therefore in countryside and smaller towns schools should be organized even where there are at least three children of school age. (Freivalds, 1952)

In addition to middle schools serving children Kindergarten through 8th grade, for many years the 14 biggest Latvian centers in the U.S. (such as New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Seattle, Los Angeles, Milwaukee etc.) offered also a high school level supplementary education (Bolšteins, 2004, p.181). Nowadays only one such high school exists in Chicago.
Historically, there were two kinds of Latvians supplementary schools established in the U.S. – ones that operated under the auspices of Latvian churches and the others that were created and run mostly by local Latvian societies, parents and community groups (Kārklis et. Al, 1976). For example in 1961, 38 out of 58 existing schools were funded by Latvian congregations and 20 were supported by local societies (ALA Kultūras birojs, 1961). In both cases the source of the funding of schools has been the local Latvian communities, which have obtained virtually no financial support from the U.S. government. Instead, these schools have been driven by a tremendous amount of determination and commitment of Latvian community members who wanted to pass down Latvian language and culture to their children.

Except the early days of Latvian supplementary school existence in the U.S. not many of the teachers in Latvian supplementary schools have been professional pedagogues or have obtained training in pedagogy. Already in 1970s, this trend had become noticeable: “Lately more and more professional teachers of [independent] Latvia’s time are being replaced with enthusiasts of school work, mostly coming from amidst parents, and sometimes the new generation idealists” (Liepkalns, 1977, p.29). With a few exceptions, the teachers of Latvian supplementary schools do not get paid a salary for their work. In some places they only get a compensation for their travel expenses.

Blumbergs (1966), leader of the Education Bureau of the American Latvian Association, outlines three key prerequisites for establishment, survival and development of Latvian supplementary schools: 1) parents’ determination to maintain and strengthen
their children’s Latvian upbringing; 2) the willingness of Latvian organizations, congregations and Latvian community at large to bear the material costs; 3) the teachers’ willingness to commit and sacrifice themselves to the preservation of the Latvian culture.

After Latvia regained its independence in 1991, Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. encountered a major existential crisis that followed the general confusion and disorientation among émigrés about their role and mission in relation to the new-founded Latvia (Zaķe, 2010). As Latvia’s independence brought about opportunities for Latvian families to travel to Latvia to learn their ancestral language and culture, some people speculated that Latvian schools in the United States were no longer needed. As one of the former school principals recalls, in the first post-independence years Latvian supplementary schools struggled with defining their mission, yet they continued to carry on the Latvian language and culture preservation mission among the children of Latvian origin.

7.2. From None to Half and Half – Demography of the School Community

The survey of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. gathered 18 responses out of the 19 Latvian schools that were at the time of this research functioning in the U.S. Even though the list of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. is longer, only those Latvian supplementary schools, which follow a standard academic calendar, were included in this study. Hence, no Latvian summer high schools, such as Garezers, nor Kursa, are represented in this study, even though they undoubtedly play a major role in Latvian language and culture preservation in the U.S.
The size of Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. varies from city to city. The highest enrollment in one school is reported in Chicago, which in 2009/2010 served 80 pupils, followed by Washington, D.C. (72), New Jersey (55), and Boston (49). 14 other schools, which responded to the survey, had a population of 30 pupils or below. Three of them had population of less than ten students.

In the school year 2009/2010, the total enrollment in the 18 schools was 533. Among these, 403 were identified as Latvian-Americans, 117 as children of post-independence immigrants from Latvia, nine Americans, and four children representing other ethnic groups. Hence, the ratio of children of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants in the surveyed Latvian supplementary schools was 4:1.

It is important to notify that the information on school enrollment was obtained from principals and teachers of Latvian supplementary schools and hence it is subject to their interpretation of who counts as Latvian American, post-independence immigrant from Latvia, American or representative of some other ethnic group\(^\text{15}\).

A demographic breakdown of the student population suggested that the student body varied greatly from school to school - some of the schools had an equal representation of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants, whereas others had no representation of post-independence immigrants. The latter was the case in Latvian schools in Indianapolis, Bronx, and Kalamazoo, where in 2009/2010 there were no children that fell in the category of post-independence immigrants. While some of the

\(^{15}\) The classification of children was left to respondents without providing them a rigid definition of what constitutes Latvian American and “a newcomer from Latvia”, which was the term used in the initial survey. The rationale for not providing such a definition is the dynamic process of identity formation, which is subject not only to self-identification, but also labeling by others. As acknowledged by some of the school principals, classifying pupils in certain groups become particularly complicated when dealing with offspring of mixed marriages.
school principals explained this by claiming that there were no post-independence immigrants with children of school age in their area, others revealed that they had tried to reach out and recruit post-independence immigrants to send their children to the school, however without much success.

Table 6: Demographic breakdown of children attending Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>AL</th>
<th>Post-1991</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Boston Latvian school</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 K. Barons Chicago Latvian School</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Denver Latvian school</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Latvian school of Philadelphia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Indianapolis Latvian school</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Kalamazoo Latvian school</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Cleveland Latvian Sunday school</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Connecticut Latvian school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Los Angeles Latvian school</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 O. Kalpaks Milwaukee Latvian School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Minneapolis and St. Paul Latvian school</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 New Jersey Latvian school</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 New York (Bronx) Latvian school</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 New York (Long Island) Latvian school</td>
<td></td>
<td>n/d</td>
<td>n/d</td>
<td>n/d</td>
<td>n/d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 New York (Brooklyn) Latvian school</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Oregon Latvian school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Seattle Latvian school</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Latvian school of Washington DC</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Northern California Latvian school</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total | 403 | 117 | 9 | 4 | 533 |

Data provided by school principals and school teachers for the school year of 2009 / 2010.
There were, however, Latvian schools that had relatively balanced representation of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, such as the Latvian school in Washington, D.C., Milwaukee, Oregon, and Brooklyn. The Latvian Saturday school in Brooklyn presents an interesting case as it was established in 2006 by post-independence immigrants who also realized the importance of Latvian language and culture preservation among their children and were willing to take up the challenge of opening a school. Importantly, this was one of the first successful attempts by post-independence immigrants from Latvia to set up a Latvian community oriented institution in the United States.\footnote{It has to be noted, though, that over the years other similar initiatives from post-independence immigrants from Latvia have come along, as a result of which children’s play groups have been established in Washington, D.C. and Chicago.}

According to the survey, there were 140 Latvian Americans teaching at Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S., compared to 51 post-independence immigrants who worked as teachers for the Latvian schools. Hence, the ratio of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants teaching at Latvian supplementary schools was roughly 3:1.

Even though the survey data suggest that the numbers of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants represented in Latvian supplementary schools is not balanced, a few things have to be kept in mind when interpreting these numbers. First, due to the different size of each immigration wave, the number of Latvian Americans is higher than the number of post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Second, many of the post-independence immigrants from Latvia are young in age and hence they either do not have children yet or their children are younger than the school age. The latter is
supported by reports from different cities, such as Washington D.C. and Chicago, where there has been a rapid increase in the number of preschoolers involved in various children’s groups, particularly from among the post-independence immigrants. Third, several school principals and teachers indicate that numbers of post-independence immigrants attending Latvian supplementary schools is increasing. There are two explanations that the school principals and parents provide for such a tendency. First, more and more parents realize that their children, even ones who are born and have grown up in Latvia, after relocation are losing their Latvian language skills very rapidly. Second, those post-independence immigrants who have become parents after their resettlement to the United States soon learn that it is very hard to teach their children Latvian language all by themselves. In each of the previously stated situations, post-independence immigrants from Latvia look towards Latvian supplementary schools as a possible remedy to circumvent the loss of Latvian language skills and foster their Latvian language acquisition.

7.3. Motives for Sending Children to the Latvian School

A pilot study, conducted in the Minneapolis – St.Paul Latvian school in Spring 2009, revealed that there is a big variety of reasons why parents chose to send their children to the Latvian school, which can generally broken down to four categories:

• Latvian (ancestral) language acquisition;
• Acquiring Latvian culture and cultural customs;
• Socialization with other Latvian children;
• Ensuring that the child is able to return and reintegrate in Latvia.
In the community survey, these four categories with the additional fifth option “other” were presented to parents asking them to rank these motivations according to their priority. Due to the fact that not all parents had responded to this question (as some had done it only partially), this report contains data from only 53 respondents who provided complete responses to this question. From these 53 responses, nearly half of the parents (24 respondents) set Latvian language acquisition as the top priority for sending their children to the Latvian school. The second most popular top priority (13 responses) was transmission of cultural customs, and third - socialization with other children of Latvian origin (10 responses). Only one person listed “Ensuring that my child/children would be able to return to Latvia” as the first priority for sending their children to one of the Latvian schools. Occasionally, some people (5 respondents) listed “other” as the first priority for sending their children to the Latvian school. A shortcoming of this survey is that it did not explore further these other motivations.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, there was no one unified pattern of prioritizing their motivation for sending their children to Latvians school, as parents prioritized their motivations in many combinations. When looking at the ranking in an aggregate way, the highest relative priority was given to Latvian language acquisition as the main motivation to send children to the Latvian supplementary schools. There appeared to be relatively little difference between the second choice - learning Latvian cultural customs and socializing with other children of Latvian origin. The least important motivation from the four categories was ensuring that one’s child would be able to return and reintegrate in
Latvia. One of the interpretations for the latter is that not that many persons have immediate or long-term plans to repatriate to Latvia.

The limited number of responses makes the data non-generalizable, but they nevertheless suggest a trend that speaks of the variety of motives that parents have for enrolling their children in Latvian supplementary school. Conversations with parents expose this in greater detail. For example, for both Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants it is important that children would be able to communicate with grandparents and relatives in Latvia. Among many other reasons for sending children to the Latvian school, some parents state fulfilling grandparents’ or a spouse’s wishes, as well as giving children appreciation for other languages and cultures. One of the parents explains her motivation for passing on to her children her ancestral culture by using a metaphor: “If you have deep roots, then you can replant the plant anywhere. If you don’t not have any roots, then you would languish everywhere” (Field notes, October, 2010).

Whatever the individual motives for sending children to Latvian supplementary schools, there is a shared desire to transmit Latvian language and culture to the next generation. In the case of post-independence immigrants it means Latvian language and culture transmission to the second generation, whereas in the case of Latvian Americans – to the third and fourth generation. These generational differences and the overall purpose that parents assign to Latvian supplementary schools greatly complicates fulfillment of the task of Latvian language and culture transmission. It becomes especially complicated because each group as a result of their own upbringing has a
different perception of what kind of Latvian language and culture should be taught in these schools and what does Latvianness actually mean?

**7.4. The Ideal and the Idealized Latvianness**

Latvianness in the émigré literature is a common and widely discussed theme depicted in countless articles and essays. Professor Eglons Kāpostiņš (1961), in his attempts to identify what constitutes the Latvian cultural core, spoke of several Latvian characteristics: “The ideal Latvian is religious and god-loving” (p.68). The second characteristic he pointed out was Latvian “darba tiks” or diligence. Kāpostiņš also spoke of a high ethical stance and integrity as a typical Latvian virtue (p.69). “Polite, considerate attitude towards all the living creatures and even toward all the inanimate objects. Without an immediate necessity nothing should be killed, destroyed, ruined,” Kāpostiņš cited Hermanis Kreicers of what being Latvian means (Kāpostiņš, 1961, p.69).

Professor Kāpostiņš warned the Latvian community from taking on a Freudian and Deweyian stance in children’s upbringing where, according to him, the focus has been on children’s wellbeing at the cost of other traditional virtues. Kāpostiņš exclaimed that while thinking about children’s well being, one should not forget morality, reverence, heroism, and diligence. The author directed criticism at a few Latvian children, who had been brought up the “Freudian” way and which caused him to “fear that we might start to follow such upbringing philosophies, which do not align to our cultural traditions, and which also do not seem to be wise from the a nationalist standpoint” (p.69).
Overall, the representation of the true and genuine Latvianness is one that could be characterized as highly ethical and conformist, whether it is in regards to Latvian cultural standards or laws and rules of the host society. The émigré literature depicts Latvians as hardworking, trustworthy, esthetically oriented, well spirited. It is assumes that no Latvian would ever intentionally do evil or act in an unethical manner. In everyday life it is represented in statements, such as: “Latvians wouldn’t do that!” This resonates also with conversations and interviews with Latvian American community members, who state that, even though there might be some exceptions, you can generally trust people within the Latvian American community.

Crime and law breaking is has been rare among Latvian Americans, as suggested in previous reports by Latvian researchers. Sociologist Juris Veidemanis (1962) provided an example that in Milwaukee, where around 2,000 former displaced persons had settled after World War II, during the twelve years under his study, "twelve persons of Latvian origin are known to have been found guilty of some criminal violation, none major” (Veidemanis, 1962, p.10). He then elaborates: “If there has been any clash, it has been rather within groups and among Latvians themselves, and instead of disrupting social organization, it seems rather to have strengthened associational life and loyalties” (ibid.).

Overall, if there happened to be instances of serious offense (such as theft, robbery or assault), it is assumed that those Latvians would have probably left the Latvian American society as a result of that. “If you were involved in anything like that, you would not show your face at Latvian social functions, at least here in the U.S.,“ says a third generation Latvian American. Each of these arguments highlights the high regard
for ethical virtues within Latvian American community, as well as the great level of conformity that is required from all the community members.

As it will be explained in the next section, a certain level of conformity is also expected in regards to Latvian identity expressions, creating tensions between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia each of who has been socialized into slightly different kind of Latvianness.

7.5. Latvian Schools and the Content of Latvianness

Latvianness is a concept that is very hard, if not impossible, to define. The prominent Latvian writer Imants Ziedonis warns of the dangers of even doing it: “Why even trying to define Latvianness? Once you will have managed to define Latvianness, you can assume that it is dead” (Pelēce, 2003). Even though defining Latvian identity, according to Ziedonis, runs a risk of taking away its natural characteristic of constant transformation and evolution, it is nevertheless important to become aware of some of its defining elements. Sociologist Richard Alba (1990) refers to these elements as “cultural expressions of identity”. Knowing what these mental and behavioral expressions of identity are is important, because they play a major role in understanding ethnic groups themselves. It is especially important when trying to understand relationships between two immigrant waves from Latvia as both groups claim Latvian identity, but both seem to express it in different ways. Understanding similarities and differences in cultural expressions of identity is also important when it comes to deciding what about the Latvian culture should be taught in Latvian supplementary schools to the second, third and fourth generation Latvians in the United States.
As Alba (1990) argues, cultural expressions of ethnic identity play a particularly important role in maintaining ethnicity: “No matter how strongly an individual identifies with an ethnic background, if this identity is not reflected in action and experience, it makes little contribution to sustaining ethnicity” (p. 75). The following section will approach culture using Alba’s (1990) conceptualization: “Ethnic culture embraces the patterned, commonplace actions that distinguish members of one ethnic group from another, including food, language, and holiday ceremony” (p.76).

While trying to balance Ziedonis’ caution and Alba’s arguments on ethnic identity, the following section will try to explore some of the core ethnic markers or expressions of Latvianness as presented by Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. To achieve that, respondents of the community survey were asked in a multi-select checkbox to choose three out of nine suggested expressions of Latvianness that in their opinion were absolutely crucial to identify somebody as Latvian. The nine primary markers were created based on preliminary documentary analysis, observations, interviews, and field-testing of the survey:

1) Latvian language proficiency (Language);
2) Knowledge of Latvian history (History);
3) Ability to recite from memory Latvian poems and perform Latvian folk songs (Folk songs);
4) Eating Latvian food (Food);
5) Having Latvian friends (Friends);
6) Participation in Latvian community events (Community involvement);
7) Knowledge of contemporary Latvian politics (Politics);
8) Being Christian (Christianity);
9) Voting in Latvian parliamentary elections (Elections).
It is important to note that the online survey tool allowed presenting these markers in a randomized order, thus reducing the possibility of unwanted response-order effects and sequence bias. A blank space was provided to survey participants for suggesting any other yet unspecified significant Latvian ethnic identifiers.

**Table 7: Expressions of Latvian ethnic identity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>History</th>
<th>Folk songs</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Contemporary politics</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Elections</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AL</strong></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LL</strong></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A closer analysis of suggested expressions of Latvian identity (See Table 6) suggests that both groups to a large extent agree on one core Latvian ethnic identifier - Latvian language proficiency, but hold different views on other significant expressions of Latvian identity. Besides Latvian language proficiency, Latvian Americans emphasize community-oriented expressions of Latvian identity, such as participation in Latvian community events and forming friendships with other Latvians. However, post-independence immigrants from Latvia place relatively higher emphasis on cognitive expressions of Latvian identity. Such an inference is derived from the fact that comparatively higher numbers of post-independence immigrants from Latvia than
Latvian Americans state that knowing Latvian history, folk songs, and contemporary politics are the key markers of Latvian ethnic identity. Surprisingly small number of respondents (only 4 out of 153) thought that “participation” in Latvian parliamentary elections is an important expression of Latvian identity.

The further sections will explore these expressions of Latvian identity in a close-up by highlighting some of the similarities and differences in the ways Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia relate to each of these categories.

7.5.1. Latvian language.

The absolute majority of survey respondents indicate Latvian language proficiency as one of the key markers of Latvian identity: 93.7 percent of post-independence immigrants and 91.1 percent of Latvian Americans hold such a view. It is important to note, though, that there was a noticeable difference in regards to the choice of Latvian language proficiency as the primary marker based on the language in which the survey was taken – Latvian or English. Unsurprisingly, those who responded in Latvian ascribe higher importance to Latvian language as an identity marker than those who responded in English – in statistical terms, it is 95.5 percent versus 81.5 percent.

As indicated by Polish-Australian sociologist Jerzy Smolicz, some cultures seem to be “more language-centered than others” (Smolicz, 1980, p.54). “Some cultures are unmistakably based upon a linguistic core that provides the mainstay of their support. The unique role of language for those cultures cannot be challenged,” argues Smolicz (1980, p.54). According to the plethora of publications that highlight the role of language
in Latvian culture and ethnic identity preservation, as well as the survey data, Latvian appears to be one such culture, where language appears to be the core expression of ethnic identity. This is illuminated also by one of the schoolteachers in the Midwest:

When you meet somebody, who says, “I am half Latvian”, but then he does not know a single word in Latvian, then you nearly cannot perceive them as Latvian. I am sad for them. (Interview: AL – LV, April, 2009)

Some refer to these people who claim Latvian origin, but do not speak the language as “mute Latvians”. Overall, there appears to be an agreement that for somebody to be assumed to be Latvian, he or she would be expected to demonstrate proficiency in Latvian language.

A more in-depth look at Latvian language use among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants reveals a striking paradox. Even though both groups indicate Latvian language knowledge as key marker of Latvian identity, as argued already in Chapter 6, there is a great disagreement about the appropriate Latvian language use. Several Latvian teachers at Latvian supplementary schools insist on teaching Latvian language according to the rules set by the prominent Latvian linguist Jānis Endzelīns, dating back to the prewar period. Latvian linguist’s Velta Rūķe’s (1954) explanation from six decades ago is still applicable today: “Conservative drive, which in general is common to exile mentality, is manifested in the way that the orthography of early day Latvia is preserved” (p.53).

Some of the legacies from the prewar Latvian language are the use of “mīkstais ķ” or the softened “r”, which over time has been dropped in Latvia, as well as the use of
“ch” and “ai” in separate instances where in contemporary Latvia children are taught “h” and “a” (for example, “chlors” versus “hlors” or “paidogoģija” versus “pedagoģija”\(^\text{17}\)).

In addition, the vocabulary used among Latvian Americans differs from the lexicon of post-independence immigrants from Latvia. Words like “rakstulis”, “kādenis”, “apstāklenis”\(^\text{18}\) are just a few of examples of émigré vocabulary that are commonly met with confusion and bewilderment among some of the post-independence immigrants from Latvia.

The question of appropriate language raises particularly heated discussions at Latvian supplementary schools, as it is a major component, if not the core, of the school curriculum. Several school principals and parents recall situations where there had been disagreements between parents and teachers about the language that is being taught to children, in some cases to extent that some parents had withdrawn their children from the Latvian school.

Laura, a post-independence immigrant at one of the East Coast Latvians schools, explains that she had withdrawn her son from the school, claiming that he had started talking “incorrect” Latvian as a result of the school attendance: “He learns wrong language patterns, taking them from the conversational speech of Latvian Americans” (Interview: LL – LV, March, 2010). Now, her son has returned to the school, as the mother explains more for the sake of socialization with other Latvian children than for academic learning. Laura elaborates that in her conversations with her Latvian friends

\(^{17}\) The word “hlors” in English means “chlorine”, “pedagoģija” – “pedagogy.”

they sometimes make fun of the use of the soft “ŗ” among some Latvian Americans. “Language is alive, but here they teach outdated language. You should not teach wrong language. You have to teach language up-to-date,” says Laura (Interview: LL – LV, March, 2010). The transformative nature of the language is the most commonly cited argument amongst those who object teaching their children Latvian according to the prewar Latvian language rules.

At the other end of discussion, those who stand in defense of the prewar Latvian claim that the changes in Latvian language, which contemporary Latvians abide by, were implemented during the Soviet regime as integral part of its Russification plans of Latvia. One of the most active proponents of the prewar Latvian language claims: “Some of grammar rules were simplified during the Soviet times in order to make Latvian language learning for Russians easier. They did not learn the language anyway” (Field notes, May, 2010).

Latvian supplementary school principals are often those who find themselves at the epicenter of these discussions and have to find creative ways of reconciling the two:

I am in favor of the softened ř and ch. But that is a question of grammar. I like more to quarrel about it than to immerse myself into it. In exile, a mixed kind of spelling has evolved, because we partly use books that have been published here, and partly ones that have been published in Latvia. That is where several things will be different. For example, here we say leopards. In Latvia, it would be called gepards. Depending on the teacher, the child would learn that word. (...) Earlier we had teachers that represented Endzelīns’s spelling, but now we don’t have anybody who would insist on teaching this
way. That is why we are using a mixed kind of a spelling, where one would, of course, need to make a choice between one or another. (Interview: AL – LV, May, 2010)

Managing the need to keep up with contemporary Latvian and at the same time fulfill requirements set up by the émigré community can be particularly burdensome for teachers and school principals, as many school books and tests released by the American Latvian Association to this day use vocabulary and grammar that post-independence immigrants from Latvia would call outdated:

In grammar classes, for example, the word – kādenis – comes up. In Latvia, a kid would probably be mocked for that, but for ALA tests you have to know that. (Interview: AL – LV, May 8, 2010).

Along with the question of Latvian language comes also the question of Latvian literature as a source of language and culture acquisition. Zintis, a person in charge of overseeing one of the Latvian school libraries, explains that those persons born and raised in Latvia are used to poems by different authors. According to the same person, reading poems among Latvian Americans is not such a commonplace activity. From the study plan developed by American Latvian Association one can read that Latvian folk songs and folk tales are much more commonly included in the Latvian supplementary school curriculum.

One of the school principals explains that during her initial conversations with a teacher from Latvia the question of Latvian literature had revealed differences between the two groups: “In conversations with this teacher from Latvia, the question of literature came up, which created the most intense discussions. What are the Latvian classics?”
Similar questions come up also during 2010 teacher’s seminar in the Catskills, New York: What constitutes classics in Latvian literature? Should children in Latvian supplementary schools only read authors from Latvia’s independence time, should they focus on literary works produced by émigré authors or should they also be exposed the literature that was published in Latvia during the Soviet times?

It has to be noted, that throughout the Soviet occupation many of the Latvian poets and writers were suspected to be collaborators with the Soviet regime, they were seen to be one of the Soviet propaganda tools, and thus they were highly mistrusted (Zaķe, 2010). Already in 1960s the second generation of Latvians in the United States called attention to the fact that Latvian émigrés treated the literature produced under the Soviet regime with a paramount caution. The starkest opponents of cultural exchanges were afraid that some of the Soviet-postulated ideals and beliefs would cling onto the America-born-Latvian youth (Ruņģe, 1963). In the context of émigré’s literary self-isolation, a body of literature was published abroad by a several prominent writers that had gone into exile as a result of WWII\(^\text{19}\). All of the factors mentioned above make the choice of Latvian literary classics to be read at Latvian supplementary schools particularly complicated, especially when it comes to the times the Soviet occupation.

7.5.2. Community involvement.

The second most common expression of Latvian identity among survey participants is “participation in Latvian community events”, which was chosen by 65.6

\(^{19}\) As noted by Andris Straumanis, writer like Jānis Širmanis, who wrote many children’s books and was a popular author among Latvian émigrés, but was persona non grata in Soviet Latvia. His work only in recent years has been discovered in independent Latvia.
percent Latvian American respondents, and 45.3 percent post-independence immigrants from Latvia. As one can read from the survey data, this is also an identity marker that reveals a great level of discrepancy between responses of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants.

Based on the literature, interviews and observations, practicing Latvianness on one’s own would not necessarily be seen as genuine Latvianness by the broader Latvian American community. Only those Latvians who actively participate in the community life, are involved in Latvian organizations, attend Latvian church, and send their children to a Latvian school are seen to be the „true Latvians“.

Latvian schoolteacher Lidija Ziemele (1977) in her publication on biculturalism of Latvian children argues that since children’s mental world is shaped by the surrounding environment, to prevent a child’s immediate assimilation in the host society, he or she should early on be involved in Latvian community life. Ziemele argues, “if the child does not have more contacts with Latvians and Latvian culture than in his own family, it is natural that the child merges with the environment,” (p.25) in which he or she spends most of the time – school friends, neighbors and everything that is outside of family and home. Therefore, involvement in Latvian organizations and participation in Latvian community events is of paramount importance for preserving Latvianness in a foreign land not only among children, but Latvians more broadly:

How can a child belong to a nation, which he does not know? The child has to be introduced to Latvian people, he has to be brought into the Latvian society, so by the time he would come under the influence of the host society, he would know what Latvian nation is to which he belongs. (1977, p.25)
Journal articles or documents written by Latvian Americans throughout the five decades of their life in exile often refer to two numbers, the official number of people in the U.S. claiming Latvian ancestry and the number of Latvians in the U.S. who actually participated in Latvian community life. It was expected that Latvians would not only be active in the Latvian American community, but that they would also actively participate in advancing the Latvian cause – fighting for the freedom of Latvia. This distinction between “istie” (“the real”) and “neistie” (“not-real”) Latvians is reflected also in essays by second generation Latvian Americans attending Latvian supplementary schools. “Why are there shamefaced Latvians, if Latvians have nothing to be ashamed of. I think that shamefaced Latvians aren’t real Latvians, because all Latvians have to talk about our nation and its crisis. The final goal or objective is free Latvia and all Latvians have to work to reach this goal“ (Erdmane, 1986). Overall, being seen as a true Latvian in the U.S. involved taking sacrifices for the benefit of Latvian society, whatever shape or form.

Even though community involvement is also commonly cited as an important expression of Latvian identity among the first generation post-independence immigrants, it is not as crucial as for Latvian Americans who sometimes measure somebody’s Latvianness by his or her involvement in Latvian community life. It appears that post-independence immigrants feel Latvian enough because of being born in Latvia and they do not feel the need to reinforce their Latvian identity through involvement in Latvian organizations in the U.S.
7.5.3. Friendships with other Latvians.

The assigned importance to friendships with other Latvians provides an interesting case for study. 56.6 percent Latvian Americans and 37.5 percent post-independence immigrants from Latvia claim that friendships with other Latvians are crucial markers of Latvian identity. The high importance assigned to friendships with other Latvians as an expression of Latvian identity resonates the self-reported statistical data on circles of friendships among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, each of which implies respondents’ desire to be connected to the people of the same background.

One thing that the numerical data does not capture is the attitudes that Latvian Americans and some post-independence immigrants hold about forming friendships with other Latvians. Both Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia admit forming friendships with other Latvians with whom they would otherwise have very little in common. In other words, both groups admit seeking out friendships with other Latvians, even ones with whom they do not share many interests, educational or professional background. As one post-independence immigrant admits: “I probably would not be friends with these people, if I was in Latvia. But I am friends with them here, because there is not much choice.” (Field notes, May 9, 2010).

7.5.4. Latvian food.

The role assigned to eating Latvian food as an expression of Latvian identity among the studied population presents an interesting case. Ten percent Latvian Americans and 25 percent of post-independence immigrants from Latvia state that
choosing Latvian food is an important expression of Latvian identity. The choice of Latvian food as a cultural expression resonates with Alba’s (1990) argument that for many people’s choice of ethnic food can serve as “a continual reminder of one’s ethnic origins” (p.86), which is also motivated by an affirmation and bolstering of social identities (Sparks, 1998). At times, the choice of food is even a basis for judgments that some people make about others (Sparks, 1998, p.38).

There are certain food items that are commonly perceived to be a signature of Latvian cuisine – such as pūrāgi (crescent-shaped rolls stuffed with ham or fried lard), pelēkie zirņi (gray peas), rūpjaime (dark rye bread), klinģeris (a large pretzel-shaped sweet bread with saffron), kartupeļi, biezpiens and šīķe (potatoes, cottage cheese and pickled herring), as well as different kinds of zupa (soup). Overall, Latvians prefer to eat „solid, hearty, and balanced meals in the insular comfort of their kitchens and dining rooms“ (Latvijas Institūts, 2010).

Building on to Alba’s (1990) and Sparks’ (1998) arguments, these foods are important markers of Latvian identity that help to affirm respondents’ Latvianess as much today, as in the past. An interview conducted in 1980 by a 9th grade pupil with a school principal of Minneapolis and St.Paul Latvian School presents a concern about the changing patterns of ethnic food use among Latvian Americans.

Pupil: What do you think children will eat 20 years from now? Pūrāgi and other Latvian food or American food?

School principal: Some kind of American food, because they will have adjusted to that flavor. People probably will not care as much for preparing Latvian food. (IHRC, 1980)
Contrary to earlier predictions, the custom for baking *pīrāgi* has not died out in the U.S. and is still very common among Latvian Americans; nevertheless Latvian American everyday eating customs, as observed by some respondents, have become quite American and the traditional Latvian meals are prepared and served only on special occasions.

In the meanwhile, post-independence immigrants from Latvia have brought along with them various kinds of food from Latvia yet unknown to the Latvian American community. As one of the interviewees tells of his experience:

For instance, we did a little cookout or barbeque. American barbeque was chicken, hamburgers, American kind of understanding of what you do at a cookout. We did a cookout here with the new immigrants. And there is a word there, which is *sašliks*, like a kebab. I had heard the word a couple of years ago. But I thought what in the world are you talking about? It is nothing that would be difficult. I just thought, where is this coming from? It is really interesting. My parents never talked about that. Was *sašliks* around fifty, sixty years ago? I am guessing, probably not. So it is really interesting.

(Interview: AL – ENG, February 28, 2010)

The statements above point out that over the years Latvian American and post-independence immigrants’ from Latvia perception of Latvian eating habits have changed under the influence of the surrounding environment. Where Latvian American eating habits have been impacted by the American “fast food” industry, as presented in the interview excerpt above, post-independence immigrants from Latvia carry with them some dishes that have been adopted in Latvian cooking from the Slavic cuisine. When talking about Latvian cuisine in Latvia, Latvian culinary expert Māris Jansons admits that
there is a big Slavic culinary influence on the foods that Latvians consume these days. However he points out that Latvians have still managed to preserve the main characteristics of Latvian culinary identity, such as use of fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables, as well seasonality. In regards to Latvian eating customs, Jansons points out the concept of “slow food”, which is an alternative to the American “fast food” industry (Interview, December 27, 2010).

Overall, food plays an important role in reinforcing Latvian identity among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, as it plays a ritual role of bringing people together. While many of the schools for practical reasons have implemented “bring your own lunch” policy, there are other schools, which for long time had attempted to provide children and also their parents with option of getting a full meal at the school. Kr. Barons Chicago Latvian school, for example, organizes a hot meal once a month as a way to bring children, parents, and grandparents together. Latvian school in Bronx serves breakfast before the school day as a way to provide a pleasant start for the day.

7.5.5. Ability to recite Latvian folk songs and poems.

Being able to recite Latvian folk songs and poems as one of the most important Latvian important identity markers was chosen by 17.2 percent post-independence immigrants and 10.0 percent Latvian Americans. Even though the suggested question speaks particularly to knowledge of Latvian folk songs and poems, it nevertheless opens up a much broader discussion about similarities and differences in understanding of Latvian folklore among representatives of the two groups.
Latvians commonly label themselves as the “singing nation” or “nation that sings”. Singing is a major part of Latvian culture, conducted in an organized way in folk ensembles and choirs, or spontaneously at different Latvian community events, celebrations, festivities, or house parties. During my study, the huge importance of singing in Latvian culture manifested itself in multiple occasions both among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants. For example, at the 59th Annual ALA congress after the official ball had ended at midnight several dozen people gathered in one small hotel room to join in singing that continued until 4 a.m. (Field notes, May 6, 2010). At another occasion, around two dozen post-independence immigrants in the midst of a house party suddenly start singing different Latvian songs, many of which express their pride in being Latvian (Field notes, July 16, 2010). However, the kinds of songs performed by Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia sometimes differ to a great extent:

While the two groups share their origins, the life experiences of individuals in each group are so different that integrating can be tricky. A young group of Latvian-Americans can all bond over having attended the same summer camp and singing the same folk songs, but a recently immigrated Latvian won't be able to relate to these experiences and will have most likely grown up singing entirely different folk songs. If one attends Jāņi celebrations with both groups, even though everyone is attempting to bond by singing together, it often turns into the two groups taking turns to sing the songs they know. (Respondent: AL – ENG 72796966)
At a schoolteachers’ seminar in the Catskills, a game “Musical Jeopardy” was presented by one of the school principals. The rules of the game were that the facilitator would provide a melody, and the participants divided in teams would have to guess the title of the song. Later that night another musical game was played, where one team started a song and the next team was given 30 seconds to come up with a different song containing a word from the lyrics of the song performed by the previous team. To my surprise, the list of songs performed by four different teams appeared to be inexhaustible and the chain of singing - unbreakable. The biggest surprise for me was the fact some teams initiated songs based on words in verses that had not been sung yet, implying that all of these songs are known by heart. The majority of the seminar participants, most of whom were second generation Latvians in the U.S., appeared to know these songs by heart and had no need of looking into the songbook distributed to seminar participants. When I turned to my teammates, most of whom were post-independence immigrants, with a question if they know all these songs, they shook their heads and gave a negative response.

When I later asked some of Latvian Americans about how they know all these songs, they said: “These songs we have learned through all the camps that we attended throughout our childhood and adolescence” (Field notes, March, 2010). As one of the second generation Latvians put it: “No nometņu laikiem!” (“From the camp times!”), which directly resembles statements made by elderly Latvian generation in regards to DP camps in Germany. Later that night when I expressed my amaze to a seminar participant from Australia, she expressed surprise at my lack of familiarity with these songs. She
says that she had grown up learning the same songs, concluding that this must be the exile experience. Unsurprisingly, several Latvian Americans make a claim in the survey and interviews that post-independence immigrants “often do not know many folk songs”, which post-independence immigrants acknowledge in their own responses.

This lack of knowledge among many post-independence immigrants of many traditional Latvian songs that are taught through the network of Latvian schools, camps and community events in the U.S., creates situations where post-independence immigrants get a feeling of being excluded from these singing rituals, which are seen to be collective and emotional expressions of ethnic belonging. Drawing from my own reflections, this lack of knowledge of traditional Latvian songs at some of the Latvian American singing events can give a feeling of “being culturally handicapped” (Journal: March 9, 2010). At the end of the day I confronted myself with questions: “Am I Latvian enough” and “Do I know anything about Latvian culture, as I do not know the majority of the folk songs performed by Latvian Americans” (Journal: March 9, 2010).

Even though there appear to be subtle differences in the contents of the ritual, singing nevertheless is an important element of Latvian ethnic identity. It has been repeatedly noted in the community survey as one of the avenues for bringing Latvians together through a shared participation in choirs and ensembles, which are established in many local Latvian communities, as well as through impromptu sing-alongs, which are a common element of Latvian social gatherings.

Even though the survey did not particularly inquire about Latvian folk dances, they are commonly perceived to be an integral part of Latvian folk traditions and thus
they will also be briefly touched upon in this section. Latvian folk dance is an integral part of many Latvian supplementary schools’ curriculum, which many children refer to as one of their favorite classes at the Latvian school. Latvian folk dances are also favored amongst adults, many of which have joined local Latvian dance groups. According to survey participants, Latvian folk dance appears to be a great venue for intergroup relationship building as it brings together people, regardless of their level of Latvian language proficiency.

However, even something as straightforward as dance can become an issue of discussion between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia. One of the school principals, for example, criticizes the approach taken by a post-independence immigrant in teaching dance classes at their school due to the loose interpretation of Latvian dance choreography. The school principal suggests that there is no need to call this a dance a folk dance, if it is not taught in “authentic” manner. According to her, the altered and adapted type of dances should rather be labeled simply as dance classes or aerobics.

Realizing the great potential that Latvian folk dance creates for bringing people together, one respondent from the East Coast tells of a formula that has been respectful to both parties: “The repertoire contains dances that have been created both outside of Latvia, in old Latvia, as well as in contemporary Latvia” (Respondent: AL – LV 71282697).
7.5.6. Christianity.

A stark difference in the views of Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia appears along the category of Christianity. Where 7.8% of Latvian American respondents see Christianity as a core marker of Latvian identity, only 1.6% post-independence immigrants from Latvia (one respondent) indicated Christianity as such. As presented already in Chapter 6, for Latvian Americans the role of Christianity in Latvian culture appears to be much more prevalent than for post-independence immigrants. As schoolteacher Hermanis Kreicers had expressed it five decades earlier: “Christian and Latvian upbringing is inseparable” (Kreicers, 1961, p.89).

Often belonging to the Latvian church is seen as integral part to one’s sense of Latvian identity. Documentary analysis suggests that Christianity was engrained in many Latvian Americans’ mindsets. First, the majority of Latvians that came to the U.S. directly from displacement camps in Germany were sponsored by different congregations in the U.S. Secondly, Christianity had become a defining element of Latvian American community as a stark contrast to the “ungodly” and “godless” Soviet Union. Thirdly, Latvian churches established in the U.S. in many places became the heart of Latvian community life, providing a place not only for spiritual resort, but also for socializing and culture preservation efforts among the Latvian community members.

Religion is a big part also of today’s school curriculum. In the Minneapolis and St.Paul Latvian School, each school day starts with a prayer. In New Jersey, the school day starts with a gathering in the main church hall. In Washington, D.C., children are regularly participating in the sermons of Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church.
addition, many Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. teach a class called “ticības mācība” or “a study of faith”.

In Latvian supplementary schools that operate under auspices of Latvian churches, criticism of too much emphasis on religion is not uncommon. Some of the interviewees reveal that they have stopped sending their children to Latvian schools because they disagreed on the grounds of religious teachings. While the survey data suggests that there are some Latvian Americans who identify Christianity of paramount importance, there are others who strongly object to it. Not all Latvian Americans involved with the Latvian schools share the same view, some of them stating their objections rather openly.

The issue of Christianity does not present itself only when it comes to “ticības mācība”, but rather it resonates throughout the everyday school culture. In many cases, especially in the East Coast and Midwest, Latvian supplementary schools convene in church venues, regardless if they claim official affiliation with church or not. If in some of the schools those children who, for example, belong to Dievturi are waived from attending morning prayers or participating in “ticības mācība”, Christianity still resonates through school’s everyday life, celebrated festivals, and other customs.

7.5.7. Contemporary politics and issues.

Among all respondents 15.9 of percent post-independence immigrants and 6.7 percent Latvian Americans stated that knowledge of contemporary politics is an important marker of one’s Latvian identity. It is implied that for somebody to be
perceived to be Latvian, he or she would have to keep up with developments in the homeland’s political and social domain.

Several interviewees state that they have a hard time engaging in a meaningful dialogue with the representatives of the other group due to the lack of shared background and knowledge base. The problems usually arise after the initial introductory conversations are over and people seek other topics for discussion. As one of the post-independence immigrants critically said:

When you try to conduct a conversation with them, the conversation does not lead anywhere, because they know nothing about Latvia. They have no idea about the situation in Latvia. (Interview: LL – LV, May 3, 2010)

As presented in the example above, some of the post-independence immigrants said they believe that Latvian Americans do not know much about the real life in today’s Latvia. According to some of them, Latvian Americans have been brought up with an idealized image of Latvia.

It has to be noted, though, that there are many Latvian Americans who very actively follow developments in Latvian politics, they visit Latvia frequently, and subscribe to publications in Latvia. They represent the same category of transnational migrants as many post-independence immigrants from Latvia do, who claim belonging both here and there. During the last several months before 10th parliamentary elections in Latvia, which took place on October 2, 2010, a flow of e-mails was circulated between Latvian community members, local Latvian communities organized pre-election discussions, and overall spent a lot of time debating contemporary Latvian politics. Many Latvian Americans, who are dual citizens of the United States and Latvia, were actively
engaged in recruiting voters both in Latvia and the U.S. Many second and third generation Latvian Americans who do not have dual citizenship expressed their regrets for not being able to vote. Even though, as noted in the survey responses, voting in parliamentary elections is not seen as a central expression of Latvian identity, around the last parliamentary elections in Latvia it very much seemed so20.

Realizing the need to obtain a more up-to-date image of life in Latvia, some of the Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. have introduced weekly news reports from Latvia presented by one of the children or families in the beginning of each school day. Some other schools have had the luxury of engaging representatives from Latvia more directly. As one of the teachers of Latvian Sunday School in Washington, D.C., explained:

The local children [in Washington] would know who the president of Latvia is, because the president usually visits the school during his visits to Washington, D.C. (Interview: AL – LV, March, 2010).

This latter kind of category that ties Latvian identity with knowledge of contemporary Latvian politics highlights the emergence of transnational Latvian communities more than any other expression of Latvian identity. It requires following developments in Latvia, as well as an active involvement in discussions surrounding topical issues in Latvia.

20 The Latvian parliamentary election procedure allows every citizen of Latvia, who has reached the age of 18, to vote at any polling station in Latvia or abroad, or by mail. In the 10th Parliamentary elections of Latvia that took place October 2, 2010, there were 15 polling stations set up in different cities around the U.S. Altogether, 2,531 citizens of Latvia voted in one of the polling stations in the U.S.
7.6. Creating Shared Identity Through Boundary Drawing

Building on the illuminated similarities and differences in expressions of Latvian identity among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants, one can get a better sense of the role Latvian supplementary schools play in fostering intergroup relationships. As a site where the two groups come together, Latvian supplementary schools provide an opportunity for Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants to practice and celebrate their ethnic and linguistic identity in a shared environment.

From reading the survey responses to the question: “How important is Latvian identity to you,” it becomes apparent that both Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants cherish their Latvian identity. According to the survey, half of Latvian Americans stated that Latvian identity was “extremely important” to them, 30% said that it is “very important”, and 20% indicated that it is “important” to them. Among post-independence immigrants from Latvia, 35.5% respondents stated that Latvian identity is “extremely important” to them, 43.5% said it is “very important”, and 21% - “important”.

Table 8: Self-assessed importance of Latvian identity among Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia

<table>
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<th>Very important</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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* Question: „How important is Latvian identity to you?“
Even though, Latvian Americans more frequently chose to indicate that Latvian identity was “extremely important” to them, the overall picture is that both Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants feel about their ethnic identity very passionately, which serve as an important background in attempts to establish relationships between the two groups.

Since Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants have been socialized in different cultures and, as presented in earlier in this chapter, emphasize different expressions of Latvian ethnic identity, Latvian supplementary schools become the main site where these two Latvian cultures and identities are negotiated. In addition, Latvian supplementary schools also provide an opportunity to foster a more inclusive Latvian identity, which would be shaped by drawing clear boundaries between Latvian and American cultural and spiritual realm.

Essentially, Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. can be seen as the epitome of boundary drawing between Latvians and the surrounding American society. Due to their focus on Latvian language and culture preservation, Latvian supplementary schools become the one place where Latvian identity is being built, strengthened, and reinforced both among the children, as well as the parents.

First, Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. create linguistic boundaries. Once a Latvian child steps across the threshold of a Latvian supplementary school, he repeatedly hears statements like: “We speak Latvian here!” In some schools such a request is posted on a wall; in other schools it is included in a manual, which is
distributed to parents at the time when they enroll their child or children in the Latvian school. There is an expectation that by enrolling one’s child in the school, parents would agree to the policies and rules of each of the Latvian school, whether they are outlined explicitly or not.

Second, Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S create cultural boundaries. Right around the time when Americans celebrate Halloween, Latvians have a festival called “Mārtiņi”. In e-mails circulated among parents one can read statements like “Please leave rock stars and Spiderman at home!” A response by another parent explains that only traditional Latvian costumes should be worn: “Things found in nature i.e. animals, vegetables, trees, acorns etc..” (E-mail correspondence, October, 2010). Another parent elaborates, the costumes should be traditional and preferably handmade: „Usually they incorporate folk-costume pieces: Latvian mittens sewn on to a headdress as ears, and stuff like that“ (E-mail correspondence, October, 2010).

An American spouse of a Latvian American states that she was fed up with hearing statements, like “this is the Latvian way”, “this is how Latvians eat”, or “this is what Latvians do” (Interview: September 7, 2010). For her it becomes tiresome to be excluded from the community in such a way. What the previous arguments point out are the multiple ways that the Latvian supplementary schools try to set and maintain boundaries between their cherished Latvianness and the surrounding environment. They are set up for the specific purpose of ensuring Latvian language and culture preservation among the second, third, and fourth generation Latvians in the United States.
Consequently, while agreeing on a shared notion of an external “other”, which in the case of Latvian community in the United States are all the assimilationist forces outside of the Latvian schools and families, Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia start to build an in-group identity. Building onto Erdman’s (1998) argument, that “the cultural content alone does not contain or maintain ethnicity. It is the understanding of a ‘we’ negotiated against ‘them’ that produces salient group identities” (p.6), the role Latvian supplementary schools play in bridging Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants becomes more noticeable.

As a result of different rites of passage and socialization in different environments, Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia have developed different approach to Latvianness, as well as expressions of Latvian identity. In the school settings they are given the opportunity to explore these similarities and differences and negotiate their Latvianness and develop a shared sense of Latvian identity. In addition, Latvian supplementary schools as an institution that draws clear boundaries between the Latvian and American culture create an opportunity to establish a shared in-group identity among representatives of both groups in opposition to the external other – the all-surrounding American environment.
8. Towards a More Inclusive Latvian Community in the U.S.

The introduction of this research outlined a vignette of an encounter between a post-independence immigrant from Latvia and the local Latvian American community, drawing attention to some tensions that exist between the two immigrant waves from Latvia. Even if the situation outlined in the vignette is not universal (but is also not uncommon), this study aimed at understanding what are the relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants and expose the salient and latent barriers that keep the two groups apart.

First, even though there is an observable improvement in relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants, as more and more newcomers from Latvia have joined and have become an integral part of the established Latvian American community, overall relationships between the two groups appear to be complicated. As emerges through this study, the two groups, despite their ethnic, linguistic and cultural commonalities, are to a large extent disconnected one from the other as they have arrived in the U.S. at different times, under different conditions, and for different reasons. As outlined in Chapter 5, the overlaps between the two groups in
terms of their institutional involvement and circles of friendships are limited. However, the frequency of interaction and the assessed quality of relationships between representatives of the two groups is contingent to age and geographic location. Where some Latvian communities in the U.S. appear to be fairly well integrated, there are others where the two waves of immigrants to a large extent keep to themselves. Particularly complicated are relationships between the first generation immigrants of the two migration waves – those persons who experienced fleeing Latvia and life in DP camps firsthand and those persons who left Latvia after 1991 in pursuit of their personal happiness.

The answer to the second question, as is illuminated in Chapter 6, is that intergroup relationship building between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants is a complex and multidimensional process, as there is no one sole factor that defines the success or failure of building meaningful relationships between the two groups. Rather it is a complex set of interconnected factors – such as migration type, motives and pattern, as well as age, socioeconomic status, and socialization in different environments others – that shape the relationships between the two groups.

The first generation of Latvians who went into exile after WWII arrived in the U.S. en masse. After having abandoned their homeland as political refugees, they devoted their lives to fighting communism and preserving Latvian language and culture in exile. In contrast, post-independence immigrants from Latvia arrived in the U.S. for the most part driven by their individual motives and ambitions. Throughout this study it becomes very evident that the migration type – forced vs. voluntary – as well as the migration
pattern – *en masse* or scattered over time – play a crucial role in how these persons identify themselves, how they build relationships with their in-group and out-group, as well as how they adapt in the host society. The shadows thrown by the Iron Curtain over the five decades of Soviet occupation also appear to have created great perceptual, emotional and cultural barriers that stand in-between the two groups.

### 8.1. A Clash of Worldviews

The study of relationships between two immigration waves from Latvia also reveals the huge generational gap that exists between the two groups in terms of age, as well as their worldviews. When talking about generational differences and generational barriers, one essentially deals with a clash of worldviews. It is not the age itself that creates the biggest barriers in intergroup relationships, but the outlook and the worldview that each group holds on to. Already in 1950s the prominent Latvian professor Jurevičs published a series of articles under a title: “Conflicts of generations and worldviews”. One of the main points Jurevičs made was that there appears to be a conflict between the spiritual realm, which according to Jurevičs (1956) is represented by the elder generation, and the material focus and worldview of the more recent generations. Adding to the same argument, Nikolajs Picka (1988) emphasizes that the first generation Latvians in exile weren’t spoiled like their children who have grown up among „materialism oriented consumer society“, but rather „idealists, who believed in the truth and the freedom of Latvia“ (p.76). When elderly Latvian Americans direct critical comments at post-independence immigrants about their concentration on material wealth, one can ask if
these comments are primarily targeting post-independence immigrants from Latvia as such or if they reflect more general disillusionment about the ongoing priority shift from spiritual to the material realm.

The tension that exists between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants (but not necessarily confined to these borders) points out a tension that at exists at a much higher and paradigmatic scale. It is a tension that surrounds the debate of assimilation, selective acculturation, and transnationalism. It is a tension that emerges between Latvians in America based on the choices that they make to assimilate into the host society or preserve their linguistic and cultural identity - and maintain durable ties with their homeland.

This choice is also directly linked to the questions, “Where do these people belong?” and “What is their motive and purpose of preserving Latvianness?” Among the second, third and fourth generation Latvians, is it a destiny passed down the bloodline or is it a mere source of cultural enrichment, cultural capital and marketability, or a principle of inertia? How do they relate to their homeland and host society? From this study it emerges that the least problematic are the relationships among those Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants who are aware and knowledgeable about the situation in the present day Latvia. The closest intergroup relationships have emerged between those people who honor their shared Latvian ethnic background and respect Latvian language and culture, which appears to be the strongest bond between the two groups.

For many Latvian Americans who came to the U.S. as a result of World War II and who fought for Latvia’s independence and were committed to preserving Latvian
language and culture, straight-line assimilation has been unacceptable on principle. These unassimilated Latvian Americans have created a self-sufficient and self-supported idealized version of a borderless Latvia-outside-of-Latvia, which is epitomized in Latvian community structures that have been set up all around the United States.

The younger generation Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants represent a much more mobile and fluid social identity than the one of elderly Latvians whose identity is centered largely in their exile experience. As migration scholars point out, contemporary migrants differ from the earlier immigrants as they do represent a greater level of transnationalism and circular migration (Foner & Kasinitz, 2007, p.271). Many post-independence immigrants, as well as a growing number of second and third generation Latvian Americans, appear to represent this transnational migratory flow, being in one place one day and in another place – the next day, belonging „here“ and „there“ at the same time.

These transnational migrants are keeping up with contemporary Latvia as a source of their Latvian language and culture learning, whereas many Latvian Americans are holding onto a particular kind of Latvian culture, which could be labeled as “trimdas latvietība” or “exile Latvianness” that focuses on the traditionalism, perceived authenticity and is intertwined with religiousness.

From the scholarly literature we can learn that “immigrant parents often hold up an idealized version of traditional values and customs, even though these values and customs have often undergone considerable change since immigrants left the home country“ (Foner & Kasinitz, 2007, p.277). Pessar (2007) refers to this as „a
museumization of practices“, which is a term introduced by Monisha Das Gupta in her study of Indian immigrants. Building on to Gupta’s study, Pessar (2007) argues that “first-generation immigrants invent what they understand to be ‘authentic’ homeland customs in order to distance themselves from what is perceived to be American” (p.265). As explained in Chapter 4, in the context of Latvian émigrés’ in the U.S., preserving cultural authenticity was heightened during the Cold War by the dangers that Latvian émigrés saw to Latvian language and culture survival in Soviet-occupied Latvia.

8.2. What Brings Some People Together, Sets Others Apart

This study reveals that Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia appear to have a different perception of what being Latvian means. If Latvian Americans approach it as a communal experience, built and strengthened via friendships with other Latvians and through participation in Latvian community events, relatively more post-independence Latvians appear to approach it in more cognitive way – by knowing the language, the history, the folk songs. For many Latvian Americans who have been removed from Latvia by three generations, their main source of Latvianness has been the Latvian émigré community. For them being Latvian is linked to being involved and invested with the local Latvian community. For many post-independence immigrants the sense of Latvian identity is internalized – they believe they “are” Latvians as a result of being born in Latvia and they do not necessarily have the need to reinforce it through participation in Latvian community events or organizations.

Paradoxically, some of the things that ought to bring Latvians together actually set them apart. Latvian language, which both post-independence immigrants and Latvian
Americans quite uniformly claim to be one of the strongest markers of Latvian identity, in reality creates one of the most heated discussions and identity contestations. Where many Latvian Americans hold on to the Latvian language of the prewar Latvia, post-independence immigrants from Latvia speak the present-day Latvian, which differs in grammar, orthography, and vocabulary. It is not that these versions of Latvian language would be by any means unintelligible to one another, but it is their users’ insistence on correcting the other person that becomes a root of potential tension between the two groups. Latvian language, in a way, appears to be one of the boundary-creating elements not only between Latvians Americans and the surrounding American environment, but also between them and Latvians themselves. As pointed out by Foner and Kasinitz (2007), language is the one area in which „there clearly are strong generational differences among almost all contemporary immigrant groups“ (p.272), which are also reflected in heated discussions about the rights and wrongs of the Latvian language.

Another paradox in relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia is the church. Latvian churches and parishes in the U.S., which have played a significant role in keeping the Latvian American community together for six decades, appear to keep many post-independence immigrants at bay. Coming from an atheist background and being suspicious about religious affairs, many post-independence immigrants do not realize the vast importance that the churches have played by not only serving people’s spiritual needs, but also by keeping the community together. As Alba, Raboteau, and DeWinde (2009) explain this construct through an example of Catholic immigrants in the United States:
Religious institutions, within which the mother tongue was the secular language of communication between clergy and laity, served as visible representations of the establishment of an ethnic community and sometimes of its material success. They provided spaces where this community qua community could congregate and recognize itself beyond the individual needs and mundane activities that dominated everyday life. (Alba, Raboteau & DeWinde, 2009, p.6)

Until post-independence immigrants comprehend the particular role that Latvian churches and parishes have played in preserving Latvian language and culture, as well as Latvian community spirit in the United States, it will be very hard to reconcile the contrasting views on Latvianness and Christianity.

8.3. Children as an Avenue for Building Relationships

In the context of limited social interactions between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, assessed by the limited overlaps in terms of respondents’ circles of friendships and institutional involvement, Latvian supplementary schools become an important avenue in fostering intergroup relationships as they provide an opportunity to cross perceptual borderlines and overcome cultural differences between the two groups. By making such a statement, this study does not intend to diminish the importance of Latvian churches, dance groups, choirs, sports groups and other Latvian organizations in the U.S. in fostering relationships between the two groups. Nevertheless, this study points out the ways that the Latvian supplementary schools help to negotiate Latvian identity between the two waves of immigrants from Latvia.
First, as emerges through interviews with parents, children create an impetus for parents to seek out Latvian society. If post-independence immigrants generally claim Latvian identity based on the fact that they are born in Latvia, then they are aware that this rule does not apply to their American-born children and hence they need to utilize all available resources to introduce their children to Latvianness. Where there is otherwise little shared interest among Latvian Americans and recent immigrants from Latvia, children provide a shared goal – passing on to the next generation Latvian values, language, and culture.

Second, Latvian supplementary schools that bring together parents with this shared goal also emerge as a site for continuous and ongoing interaction. Importantly, “it is that interaction that structures the field, thereby obviating categorical judgments” (Wilder & Simons, 1998, p.38) and helping to foster better understanding between the two groups. As one of the survey participants puts it: “Children of both groups are growing up together, forcing parents to pursue relationships that they may not have otherwise”. There are others who define children as “the deciding factor” in fostering relationships between the two groups: “Those who brought their children to Latvian school developed closer friendships with American-born Latvian families.” As another survey respondent concludes: “It is always easier to get to know somebody else and establish friendships via children.”

Third, as a result of the previous two factors Latvian supplementary schools become the place where the notion and understanding of Latvian language and culture is negotiated in its most direct and explicit ways. As noted through this study, many of the
practices among Latvian Americans appear to be traditional and not commonly practiced in Latvia, hence the schools become a site where this cultural differences become articulated and negotiated. Similar to the way many ethnic minorities in the U.S. choose to follow the path of selective acculturation, many Latvians choose to embrace certain cultural customs and omit others.

Hence, Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. represent an example of selective acculturation, where Latvian families are fully immersed in American economic, professional, and social life, but still “choose” to stay ethnic and cherish their Latvian identity by actively participating in Latvian community life and sending their children to Latvian supplementary schools. For Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, who come together with a shared aim of Latvian language and culture preservation, Latvian schools provide a space for “creating common cultural backgrounds and imagining common ancestry”, which Frontier (2000) notes as an essential part of fostering ethnic identity (p.7). They also provide a perfect space and environment for developing an inclusive “imagined community” for those Latvians, who choose to join and abide by the rules of this community.

8.4. A Tribute to the Past and a Call for the Future

In the end, it has to be noted this study of intergroup relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants is an attempt to reconcile the past. It is a tribute to all the émigrés who tirelessly fought for the freedom of Latvia from afar, and helped to ensure the freedoms that Latvians enjoy today – having the rights to travel and being able to choose where to live. Without scrutinizing the motives that over the last
twenty years have brought thousands of Latvians to the United States and without questioning Latvian Americans’ choices not to return to their self-proclaimed homeland, this study seeks out ways to bring together Latvian communities wherever they are in celebration of their shared ancestry, language and culture.

Even though much of this thesis focuses on existing differences between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants, which some readers might translate as a quest for sensation and problem amplification, this research is intended to be exactly the opposite. It is a search for a better understanding of issues that affect relationships between the two groups to encourage discussion and hopefully lead to more empathy and mutual integration. No matter how many differences there are between the two waves of Latvians in the U.S. resulting from their socialization in two different environments, the two groups share a major commonality – their Latvian ethnic background. Some would call it a fate, others – “God’s will”. Yet others would name it “asinsbalss” or “a blood call”. Whatever it is, as presented in multiple successful examples of established relationships, its capacity to unite is much stronger than the differences that set people apart.

8.5. Implications for Policy Work

One of the most important contributions of Latvian supplementary schools to building relationships between the two groups is that they do provide an opportunity for building an inclusive group identity, which is not categorical (determined by some specified characteristics, such as the immigration type or time), but dynamic – based shared goals, on mutual and ongoing interaction, and interdependence. As explained by
Wilder and Simons (1998), when people are engaged in an interpersonal interaction defined as dynamic group, “the out-group is simply not present as a category in their field” (p.39). When it comes to interaction within a dynamic group, the guiding elements of interaction are the common goals and not necessarily the preconceived group members’ characteristics. When applying this concept to the Latvian school community, having shared goals creates an opportunity to develop a dynamic in-group identity, from where the two groups can proceed to building an in-group identity at a much deeper level and overcome all the perceptual, social and cultural differences that appear to keep the two groups apart.

Building on Gordon Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis, scholars point out that to build effective intergroup relationships there is a need for range of independent factors, such as equal status, personal interaction, cooperative interdependence, and supportive norms, which are critical to reducing bias and conflict (Dovidio et al., 1998). Based on the facts outlined in previous sections, Latvian supplementary schools serve this role in a very direct way. They provide a platform for personal interaction and cooperative interdependence between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia both in the capacity as teachers, as well as parents. They foster regular interaction between parents and teachers of both groups and put them in a supportive role to each other as all of them face the same set problems in regards to Latvian language and culture transmission and preservation amongst their children who are subject to all the assimilative forces surrounding them.
8.5.1. Need for change in attitudes.

In order to ensure equal status and put in place supportive norms that would strengthen relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants, there needs to be a change in attitudes. This study revealed that one of the biggest barriers to the relationship building between the two groups is the perceptual barrier. Social scientists point out that in order to forge conceptually coherent integration between various, ostensibly distinct groups, as it happens to be the case with two waves of immigrants from Latvia, one would first need to challenge the use of „stereotypes“, „prejudice“ and „discrimination“ as „conceptually distinct aspects of intergroup relations“ (Schaller & Asp, 1998, p.11). In order to build effective intergroup communication and relationships, both groups should step away from second-hand impressions that they have obtained from others and approach each person individually.

As explained by Hogg and Terry (1998), „attitudes are the apotheosis of social cognition, because they are unobservable cognitive constructs that are socially learned, socially changed, and socially expressed“ (p.1). Building onto Hogg and Terry’s (1998) arguments, one can see that the change in attitudes can also foster change in behaviors. What is needed, then, are increased first-hand contacts between the two immigrant waves from Latvia.

8.5.2. Need for increased interaction.

Rothbart and John emphasize (1985) that an individual’s beliefs about another group can be changed through interaction with representatives of this distinct group and subsequent modification of beliefs about this group of people as a whole. Similarly, as
Linville and Fischer (1998) point out, “other things being equal, greater familiarity means that perceiver is likely to encounter a more varied set of exemplars of a group, which should lead to a more differentiated and variable representation of a group” (p.129). There are also other psychological processes that affect intergroup relationship building, such as second-hand exemplars commonly conveyed through mass media messages or oral descriptions by family, friends or community members. Linville and Fischer (1998) point out that “second-hand exemplars frequently represent widely shared stereotypes about groups” (p.130), whereas first hand exemplars “more truly reflect the diversity within social groups” (ibid.). When it comes to Latvians in the U.S., one of the most vivid examples of this is the perception commonly shared among Latvian Americans of post-independence immigrants from Latvia being economic migrants, which, as argued in Chapter 4, in reality is far more heterogenous group of people. This overgeneralized and often misconceived image, as a result, has created a prejudice towards post-independence immigrants from Latvia as desperate and needy people, driven by financial motives, whereas in reality the group is far more heterogeneous. Hence, there is a great need for increasing the complexity of intergroup perceptions, which as argued by Brewer and Miller (1988), involves seeing the social categories as heterogeneous, rather than homogenous. This in return can only be achieved by increased interaction and mutual exposure.

Wilder and Simons (1998) argue that “persons are likely to be viewed as individuals when we actively interact with them. Our judgments about them are then guided by the outcome of that interaction” (p.38), in contrast to judgments that people
base on second hand knowledge of the other group. Based on the fact that 24 Latvian Americans in this survey claimed having no friends who have arrived in the U.S. after 1991, it becomes apparent that their knowledge of post-independence immigrants is limited mainly to second-hand exposure through news stories and stories told and retold by other Latvian Americans.

If one wants to bring closer Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia, the established Latvian American community, which has the advantage of having an organizational network and institutional base, should open its organizations and infrastructure to the newcomers and be willing to tailor some of its activities towards the needs of newcomers. In return, post-independence immigrants from Latvia should respect the work done by Latvian Americans in setting up the institutional framework and be willing to adapt to the rules of the organizations they are attempting to join, while working on creating a new set of rules that would take into account the needs and interests of both groups. Nevertheless, one has to take into account potential risks associated with liberalizing Latvian community organizations and practices too much. The Latvian community that has survived to this day is essentially the community of hardliners, who took the task of preserving Latvian language and culture to the depths of their heart and made it one of the core missions of their existence. Requesting this group to become more lenient on its interpretation of Latvianess, requirements for language use and Latvian cultural practices could potentially mean increasing the risk of diluting the Latvian language and culture knowledge and practice among Latvians in the U.S., who are on a daily basis exposed to a foreign and assimilating environment.
8.5.3. Need for decategorization.

Another important move in the direction of fostering intergroup relationships would be decategorization or getting rid of derogatory categorizations, such as often negatively perceived “Latvijas latvieši” (Latvians from Latvia), “laimes meklētāji” (fortune seekers), which create perceptual barriers between the two groups (see Chapter 4 and 6). Brewer and Miller (1988) explain that „decategorization occurs when we communicate with strangers based on their individual characteristics, rather than the categories in which we place them (i.e., communication is mainly interpersonal, not mainly intergroup)“ (cited in Gudykunst, 1998, p. 137). To accomplish that one has to differentiate the individual from the rest of the group. In order to achieve such a decategorization, there is a need for increased interaction between the two groups. As Wilder and Simon’s (1998) point out: “Persons are likely to be viewed as individuals when we actively interact with them” (p.38). As it is argued throughout this study, Latvian supplementary schools along with other Latvian community organizations in the U.S. provide such an opportunity of interaction on regular and continuous basis.

8.6. Suggestions for the Future Research

The complete lack of scholarly literature on post-independence immigrants from Latvia in the United States encountered in this study exposes the great need for a further research in this area. If the Latvian government and non-governmental organizations would really want to reach out to this population, there is a need to gain a better understanding of the motives of their migration, the pattern of their migration, their
socioeconomic background, the main areas of their settlement, acculturation process, as well as their attitudes and expression of belonging to homeland and the host-society.

As over the last decade Latvia has experienced a mass exodus of Latvians to Ireland and United Kingdom, each of which currently host a number of Latvians that is comparable to the number of Latvian refugees that arrived in the U.S. after WWII, studying these two populations comparatively could reveal interesting data about the impact of social, political, and economic factors on ethnic community creation and diaspora formation. Studying emergence of Latvian communities comparatively across time and across geographical space could also potentially yield a much better understanding about Latvians as a nation.

Studying Latvians as an ethnic group, along with the still functioning Latvian supplementary schools in the United States that have survived longer than some heritage language schools of other ethnic groups, could potentially be a fertile ground for research on heritage language and culture preservation among the third and fourth generation immigrants, which subsequently would strengthen arguments of assimilation opponents.

There is also a great potential in studying Latvian supplementary schools or heritage language schools more broadly as the ultimate boundary creation institution – were the social, cultural and political boundaries ancestral homeland and host-society are established and maintained.

Latvian supplementary schools as well as other heritage language schools can also be studied as a marketplace for exchanging culture and social capital between different immigration waves. Such study could potentially speak also to other ethnic groups,
coming from a similar historical background and encountering situations of wave-like diaspora formation process.

Studying Latvians in the U.S. potentially contributes to studies of whiteness in the United States. Arguments outlined throughout this study that Latvians can be invisible to each other largely resonate arguments made by Waters (1990) and Song (2003), who speak of ethnicity among whites as a „choice“. However, the case of Latvian émigrés problematizes such an assumption. Throughout the entire period of Soviet occupation, for many political refugees and their descendants ethnic identity was not really a choice, but rather a „duty“, “obligation” or mission inherited from their parents and imposed by historical developments. A further study in ethnic identity formation among white refugee populations would contribute to the discussion, whether ethnicity among white Americans is or is not a choice.

Another potentially rich research area would be placing the internal dynamics of two waves of Latvian immigrants in the U.S. in the context of other post-Soviet countries that experienced a similar fate to Latvia. Furthermore, studying economic migrants in relation to political refugees, would potentially contribute to a better understanding of intersection between forced and voluntary migration.

In conclusion, this study of relationships between Latvian Americans and post-independence immigrants from Latvia exposes the complex nature of relationships between people of the same ethnicity but who have been separated in time and space, and who have at some point of time become subjects of a fierce ideological power wrestling, as it was the case between the so-called free world and the communist world. This study
presents a vivid example of an inclusion and exclusion, the inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic boundary creation, or the conscious or subconscious ways of creating a sense of belonging to different reference groups, which change according to the broader context and external environment. This study also demonstrates an example of heterogeneity in perceived homogeneity, or rather, the existing diversity among people from the same race, ethnic group, and even immigration cohort of the same ethnic group. The intersection between forced and voluntary migration is a fertile ground for mutual mistrust and misunderstanding, as each type of migration forms a different attitude among the migrants towards the homeland and the host society. Additionally, this study speaks to the much broader question of the ethnic and cultural ownership, in other words, - who decides who are the true ethnics and what is the authentic culture, which serves as a boundary marker between people of different ethnic groups, whether it is Latvian, Finnish, Cambodian, or Guatemalan.
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Appendix 1: Community survey

============================================= ENGLISH VERSION =============================================

Greetings!

I invite you to participate in this Web-based survey, which is part of a larger study that explores the relationship between Latvian-Americans and newcomers from Latvia, and that attempts to understand how the relationship is affected by the way members of each group identify themselves, what values they hold and what expectations they have of one another. Your responses would help to better understand the similarities and differences in views and values of Latvian-Americans and newcomers from Latvia, and thus will hopefully help to build better relationships and foster collaboration between representatives of both groups.

Your responses to this survey will be strictly confidential and will only be reported in an aggregated form. This survey should be easy to complete and will take approximately 20 minutes of your time. Upon the completion of the survey, you may enter a raffle and win a $25 gift card from Amazon.com, where you can order your favorite Latvian (or any other) books or records. Please note that there will be a room for comments at the end of the survey.

If you have any questions regarding this survey, feel free to contact Ilze Garoza via e-mail: garoz001@umn.edu

Sincerely,

Ilze Garoza

M.A. candidate, Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development
Immigration History Research Center Graduate Fellow
University of Minnesota
Consent Form

Please read this document and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this survey. The researcher is Ilze Garoza, who is a graduate student in the Department of Organization Leadership, Policy and Development at the University of Minnesota.

Background Information:
This survey is part of a larger study that explores the relationship between Latvian-Americans and newcomers from Latvia, and that attempts to understand how the relationship is affected by the way members of each group identify themselves, what values they hold and what expectations they have of one another. This survey is conducted among representatives of the Latvian school community in the United States.

Procedure:
Throughout this survey you will be asked several questions about your involvement with the Latvian school in your area and the Latvian community more broadly. You will be asked a few questions about your ethnic identity, cultural values and expectations, as well as your views on relationship between Latvian-Americans and newcomers from Latvia. You will also be asked to provide some demographic data that will provide important contextual information to your responses.
Upon completion of the survey, you may enter a raffle of $25 gift card from Amazon.com by sending the researcher your contact information and a code that you will get after submitting the survey. Your enrollment in the raffle is optional so you may choose if you want to share your name and contact information with the researcher or not. As the raffle will be conducted separately from the survey, your name will NOT be linked to any particular survey responses and they will remain anonymous and strictly confidential. Your contact information will not be used for any other purpose than contacting the winner of the gift card.

Risks of Being in the Study:
This study carries a risk of making you think about things that you might not think about in your everyday life. You might find some of the questions sensitive, as they address issues related to your sense of identity, your cultural customs, as well as your views about relationships between Latvian-Americans and newcomers from Latvia.

Confidentiality:
Your participation in this survey is strictly confidential and the data obtained through the survey will only be reported in an aggregated form.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. If for any reason you do not want or cannot answer some of the questions, you may skip to the next ones.
Contacts and Questions:
If you have any questions regarding the survey or the study in general, you may contact Ilze Garoza via e-mail: garoz001@umn.edu.

1. I have read the above information. I have asked any questions I had and received answers to my satisfaction.
   ( ) I consent to participate in this survey
   ( ) I do not consent to participate in this survey

Involvement with the Latvian schools in the U.S.

2. Have you ever been involved with any of the Latvian schools in the U.S.?
   ( ) Yes, I am currently involved
   ( ) I used to be, but I am no longer involved
   ( ) I have never been involved with any of the Latvian schools in the U.S.

Involvement with the Latvian schools in the U.S.

3. Which Latvian school in the U.S. are you involved with?
   ( ) Boston Latvian school
   ( ) Chicago Latvian Saturday School
   ( ) Denver Latvian school
   ( ) Latvian school of Philadelphia
   ( ) Indianapolis Latvian school
   ( ) Kalamazoo Latvian school
   ( ) Cleveland Latvian Sunday school
   ( ) Connecticut Latvian school
   ( ) Los Angeles Latvian school
   ( ) Los Angeles Latvian secondary school
   ( ) O.Kalpaks Milwaukee Latvian School
   ( ) Minneapolis and St.Paul Latvian school
   ( ) New Jersey Latvian school
   ( ) New York (Bronx) Latvian school
   ( ) New York (Long Island) Latvian school
   ( ) New York (Brooklyn) Latvian school
   ( ) Oregon Latvian school
   ( ) Seattle Latvian school
   ( ) Latvian school of Washington DC
   ( ) Northern California Latvian school
   ( ) Other
4. What is your involvement with the Latvian school in your community?
   ( ) School administrator
   ( ) Teacher
   ( ) Parent
   ( ) Prefer not to answer
   ( ) Other

Motivation to send children to Latvian school

5. If you are a parent of a child / children who attend one of the Latvian schools in the U.S., what is your motivation to send your child/children to the Latvian school? Please rank the following options 1 to 5 according to the priority! (1 represents the highest priority)
   _____ Learning Latvian language
   _____ Learning Latvian cultural traditions
   _____ Socialization with other Latvian children
   _____ Ensuring that my child/children would be able to return to Latvia
   _____ Other

Ethnic belonging and Latvian identity

6. Which of the categories below best represents your immigration status in the United States?
   ( ) My family came to the U.S. before World War II
   ( ) My family came to the U.S. as a result of World War II
   ( ) My family (or I) came to the U.S. during the Soviet Times
   ( ) I arrived in the U.S. in 1991 or later

7. How do you identify yourself in terms of your ethnicity?
   __________________________________________________________

8. How frequently do you travel to Latvia?
   ( ) At least once a year
   ( ) Once in three years
   ( ) Once in five years
   ( ) Once in ten years
   ( ) I have not been back to Latvia since my arrival in the United States
   ( ) I was born abroad and have never been to Latvia
   ( ) Other ____________________________________________
9. Do you speak Latvian at home?
   ( ) Always
   ( ) Most of the time
   ( ) Sometimes
   ( ) Never

10. Do you speak any other language/-s at home?
    ( ) No
    ( ) Yes (Please specify) ____________________________

11. How important is Latvian identity to you?
    ( ) Extremely important
    ( ) Very important
    ( ) Important
    ( ) Of little importance
    ( ) Not important

12. Are you a member of any Latvian community groups or organizations in the U.S., other than the Latvian school? Please select all that apply!
    ( ) Church
    ( ) Fraternity or sorority
    ( ) Academic group
    ( ) Dance group
    ( ) Folk music ensemble
    ( ) Choir
    ( ) Sport's club
    ( ) Book club
    ( ) I am not involved with any Latvian organization or community group
    ( ) Other ____________________________

13. Which sources of information you most commonly use to find out about Latvian events in your community? Select all that apply!
    ( ) Newsletter
    ( ) E-mailing list
    ( ) Local website
    ( ) Latvian friends
    ( ) Other
    ( ) I am not following information about Latvian community events
14. Which groups your friends represent? Try to assess the approximate percentage out of 100!

[ ] Americans
[ ] Persons of Latvian origin who settled in the U.S. before 1991
[ ] Latvians who arrived in the U.S. in 1991 or later
[ ] Recent immigrants from other countries
[ ] None of the above

15. What are the main Latvian cultural customs that you practice in your family? (Please use the space below to indicate the main Latvian holidays that you celebrate and the main Latvian customs do you practice at home!)

Holidays

Everyday customs

16. Please select up to THREE of the most important things that in your opinion identify an individual as Latvian!

( ) Voting in Latvian parliamentary elections
( ) Latvian language proficiency
( ) Knowledge of Latvian history
( ) Ability to recite from memory and sing Latvian folk songs
( ) Eating Latvian food
( ) Having Latvian friends
( ) Participation in Latvian community events
( ) Knowledge of contemporary Latvian politics
( ) Following Christian faith
( ) Other

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Relationships between Latvian-Americans and newcomers from Latvia
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17. How would you describe the relationship between Latvian-Americans (persons of Latvian origin who came to the U.S. before 1991 or were born in the U.S.) and Latvians who came to the U.S. after 1991?

____________________________________________
____________________________________________
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18. Please name up to THREE characteristics that you believe best describe Latvian-Americans? (Persons of Latvian origin who came to the U.S. before 1991 or were born in the U.S.)

____________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________

19. Please name up to THREE characteristics that you believe best describe those Latvians who came to the U.S. after 1991?

____________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________

20. Can you think of anything that in your opinion encourages the relationship between Latvian-Americans and newcomers from Latvia?

____________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________

21. Can you think of anything that in your opinion hampers the relationship between Latvian-Americans and newcomers from Latvia?

____________________________________________
____________________________________________
____________________________________________
Expectations

22. Please name up to THREE things that you expect from your involvement with the Latvian community in the U.S.?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Demographic information

Before you proceed to the last section of this survey covering demographic information, I would like to remind you that the survey is strictly confidential and the data obtained in this survey will only be reported in an aggregated form. If you do not want to identify your status, you may check “Prefer not to answer”.

23. Gender
   ( ) Female
   ( ) Male

24. What age group do you fall within?
   ( ) <18 years
   ( ) 19 to 24
   ( ) 25 to 34
   ( ) 35 to 44
   ( ) 45 to 54
   ( ) 55 to 64
   ( ) 65 to 74
   ( ) 75 and above

25. What is your current marital status?
   ( ) Married
   ( ) Divorced
   ( ) Living with partner
   ( ) Single (never married)
   ( ) Widowed
26. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
   ( ) Primary education
   ( ) High school degree
   ( ) Some college but no degree
   ( ) Bachelor's degree
   ( ) Master's degree
   ( ) Ph.D.
   ( ) Other ____________________

27. In what area do you work? You can select several if you have several jobs.
   ( ) Accounting/Finance/Banking
   ( ) Advertisement/PR/Marketing
   ( ) Architecture/Design
   ( ) Arts/Leisure/Entertainment
   ( ) Beauty/Fashion
   ( ) Sales
   ( ) Construction
   ( ) Education/Research
   ( ) Health Care
   ( ) Human resources management
   ( ) Enterprise Management
   ( ) Mass media
   ( ) Logistics
   ( ) Production
   ( ) Real Estate
   ( ) Restaurant/Food service
   ( ) Technology/Programming
   ( ) Student
   ( ) Other ____________________
   ( ) Homemaker/housewife
   ( ) Retired
   ( ) Currently am unemployed
   ( ) Prefer not to answer

28. What is your legal status in the United States?
   ( ) Citizen of the United States of America
   ( ) Permanent resident
   ( ) I have an employment visa
   ( ) Student
   ( ) Tourist
   ( ) Other
   ( ) Prefer not to answer
29. What is your legal status in Latvia?
   () Citizen of Latvia
   () Am Latvian non-citizen (have alien’s passport)
   () I have no legal relationship with Latvia
   () Prefer not to answer

=============================================  Comments and suggestions  ===============================================

30. Thank you for completing this survey. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this survey, you may leave them here. Otherwise please click "Submit your survey" button!

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

=============================================  Thank You!  ===============================================

Thank you very much for taking time to fill out this survey. Your responses are greatly appreciated!
If you want to participate in the raffle of a gift card at $25 value, please send a code "Ilze's survey completed" to the following e-mail address: garoz001@umn.edu. The drawing will be done on April 15, 2010. The raffle results will be announced by e-mail.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the survey, please contact the researcher using the above indicated e-mail address. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Ilze Garoza
Labdien!

Jūs esat laipni aicināts piedalīties aptaujā, kurās mērķis ir Amerikā darbojošos latviešu skolu kontekstā izzināt attiecību veidošanos starp Amerikas latviešiem un jauniebraucējiem no Latvijas, noskaidrot kādas ir abu grupu pārstāvju vērtības un izpratne par latviešu. Jūsu sniegtais atbilde šausaudz labāk izprast līdzības un atšķirības Amerikas latviešu un t.s. Latvijas latviešu uzskatos un vērtībās un tādā veidā, cerams, palīdzēs veicināt attiecību veidošanos un veidot pēc iespējas labāku sadarbību starp abu grupu pārstāvjiem.


Ja Jums rodas kādi jautājumi attiecībā uz šo aptauju, Jūs varat sazināties ar šīs aptaujas veicēju pa e-pastu: garoz001@umn.edu

Cerot uz Jūsu atsaucību,

Ilze Garoza

Magistrs grāda kandidāte Minesotas Universitātē, Organizāciju vadības, politikas un attīstības departamentā
Piekrišanas forma

Pirms dodat savu piekrišanu piedalīties šajā aptaujā, lūdzu Jūs izlasīt šo dokumentu un uzdot Jūs interesējošos jautājumus šī pētījuma veicējai Ilzei Garozai, kura mācās Minesotās Universitātē, Organizāciju vadības, politikas un attīstības departamentā.

Informācija par pētījumu:
Šī aptauja ir plašaka pētījuma sastāvdaļa, kura mērķis ir izzināt, kādas attiecības pastāv starp Amerikas latviešiem un jauniebraucējiem no Latvijas, un veicināt izpratni, kā šīs attiecības ietekmē tas, kā abu grupu pārstāvji raksturo sevi un citus, kādas ir to vērtības un savstarpējās ekspēktācijas. šī aptauja tiek veikta Amerikā darbojošos latviešu skolu pārstāvju vidū.

Aptaujas norise:


Riski, kas saistīti ar dalību pētījumā:
Šīs pētījums ietver risku Jums likt aizdomāties par lietām, par kurām Jūs, iespējams, ikdienā nedomājat. Daži no jautājumiem Jums, iespējams, liksis jūtīgi, jo tie saistās ar Jūsu identitātes izpratni, kultūras paražām, kā arī Jūsu uzskatiem par pastāvošajām attiecībām starp Amerikas latviešiem un jauniebraucējiem no Latvijas.

Konfidencialitāte:
Jūsu dalība šajā aptaujā ir strikti konfidenciāla un šajā aptaujā iegūtie dati tiks izmantoti tikai apkopotā veidā.

Aptaujas brīvprātīgais raksturs
Jūsu dalība šajā aptaujā ir brīvprātīga. Ja kādu iemeslu pēc Jūs nevēlaties vai iespējat atbildēt uz kādu no aptaujā uzdotajiem jautājumiem, Jums pastāv iespēja pārlēkt uz nākamo jautājumu.

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Kontaktinformācija un jautājumi
Ja Jums radušies kādi jautājumi saistībā ar šo aptauju, lūdzu, sazinieties ar tās veicēju Ilzi Garozu pa e-pastu: garoz001@umn.edu

1. Es iepazinos ar augstāk norādīto informāciju. Es uzdevu mani interesējošos jautājumus un sanāmu mani apmierinošas atbildes.
   ( ) Es piekritu piedalīties šajā aptaujā
   ( ) Es nepiekritu piedalīties šajā aptaujā

Saistība ar latviešu skolām Amerikā

2. Vai Jūs kādreiz esat bijis saistīts/-a ar kādu no latviešu skolām Amerikā?
   ( ) Jā, es pašlaik esmu saistīts/-a (Ja jūsu atbilde ir “jā”, lūdzu, skatīt
   ( ) Es kādreiz biju, bet vairs neesmu saistīts/-a
   ( ) Es nekad neesmu bijis saistīts/-a ar nevienu no latviešu skolām Amerikā

Saistība ar latviešu skolām Amerikā

3. Lūdzu, aztimējiet, ar kuru skolu Jūs esat saistīts?
   ( ) Bostonas latviešu skola
   ( ) Čikāgas Krišjāņa Barona latviešu skola
   ( ) Denveras latviešu skola
   ( ) Filadelfijas latviešu skola
   ( ) Indianapoļes latviešu skola
   ( ) Kalamazū latviešu skola
   ( ) Klīvlandes Apvienotās ev.-lut. draudzes skola
   ( ) Konektikutās latviešu skola
   ( ) Losandželas latviešu skola
   ( ) Losandželas latviešu vidusskola
   ( ) Milvoku Plkv. O. Kalpaka latviešu skola
   ( ) Mineapoles un St. Paulas latviešu skola
   ( ) Ūdžersijas latviešu skola
   ( ) Ūdžersijas ev. lut. Bronksas (Jonkeru) latviešu skola
   ( ) Ūdžersijas ev. lut. Longailendas latviešu skola
   ( ) Ūdžersijas latviešu ev.-luteriskās draudzes Bruklinas skola
   ( ) Oregonas latviešu skola
   ( ) Sietlas latviešu ev. lut. draudzes latviešu skola
   ( ) Vašingtonas draudzes pamatskola
   ( ) Ziemeļkalifornijas latviešu skola
   ( ) Cita
4. Kāda ir Jūsu saistība ar vietējo latviešu skolu?

( ) Skolas pārzinis/-e
( ) Skolotājs/-a
( ) Vecāks
( ) Nevēlos norādīt
( ) Cits

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Motivācija sūtīt bērnu latviešu skolā

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5. Ja Jūsu bērns vai bērni apmeklē kādu no latviešu skolām Amerikā, kāda ir Jūsu motivācija sūtīt Jūsu bērnu / bērnu latviešu skolā Amerikā? Lūdzu, atzīmējiet atbildes prioritārā secībā no viens līdz 5 (cipars 1 apzīmē visaugstāko prioritāti!)

_____ Latviešu valodas apguve
_____ Latviešu kultūras tradīciju apguve
_____ Socializēšanās ar citiem latviešu bērniem
_____ Lai nodrošinātu bērnam/iem iespēju atgriezties Latvijā
_____ Cita

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Etniskā piederība un latviskā identitāte

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6. Kura no zemāk minētajām kategorijām vislabāk raksturo Jūsu ieceļošanas statusu ASV?

( ) Mana ģimene ieceļoja ASV pirms Otrā pasaules kara
( ) Mana ģimene ieceļoja ASV Otrā pasaules kata rezultātā
( ) Mana ģimene ieceļoja (vai es ieceļoju) ASV PSRS pastāvēšanas laikā
( ) Es ierados Amerikā pēc 1991.gada

7. Kāda ir Jūsu etniskā piederība?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

8. Cik bieži Jūs apmeklējat Latviju?

( ) Vismaz reizi gadā
( ) Reizi trīs gados
( ) Reizi piecus gados
( ) Reizi desmit gados
( ) Kopš manas ierašanās Amerikā, es ne reizi neesmu bijis/-usi atpakaļ Latvijā
( ) Esmu dzimis/-usi ārupus Latvijas; ne reizi neesmu apciemojis/-usi Latviju
( ) Cits variants
9. Vai Jūs mājās runājat latviešu valodā?
   ( ) Vienmēr
   ( ) Lielākoties
   ( ) Dažreiz
   ( ) Nekad

10. Vai Jūs mājās runājat arī kādā citā valodā vai citās valodās?
   ( ) Nē
   ( ) Jā (Lūdzu, nosauciet kādā/-s!) ______________________

11. Cik nozīmīga Jums ir latviskā identitāte?
    ( ) Ārkārtīgi nozīmīga
    ( ) Ļoti nozīmīga
    ( ) Nozīmīga
    ( ) Maznozīmīga
    ( ) Nav nozīmīga

12. Vai, atskaitot latviešu skolu, Jūs esat kādas latviešu organizācijas vai grupas biedrs Amerikā? Ja, jā, lūdzu atzīmējiet kādas!
    ( ) Baznīca
    ( ) Studentu vai studenšu biedrība
    ( ) Akadēmiskā kopa
    ( ) Tautas deju grupa
    ( ) Tautiskās mūzikas ansamblis
    ( ) Koris
    ( ) Sporta klubs
    ( ) Grāmatu klubs
    ( ) Es neesmu iesaistīts nevienā latviešu organizācijā vai grupā
    ( ) Cits ______________________

    ( ) Ziņu lapa vai apkārtraksts
    ( ) E-pasta ziņojumi
    ( ) Vietējā mājas lapa
    ( ) Latviešu draugā
    ( ) Citi
    ( ) Es nesekoju līdzī notikumiem vietējā latviešu kopienā

14. Lūdzu, novērtējiet, cik liela proporcija (procentos) Jūsu draugu ietilpst zemāk minētajās kategorijās? (Aīlitē norādiet aptuvenos procentus!)
    [ ] Amerikāni
    [ ] Latviskas izcelsmes personas, kas ASV apmetās pirms 1991.gada
15. Kādas latviešu paražas Jūs praktizējat savā ģimenē?
(Lūdzu, ierakstiet zemāk norādītajās aīlītēs, kādu svētkus Jūs atzīmējat un kādas latviešu paražas Jūs praktizējat ikdienā!)

Svētki

Ikdienas paražas

16. Lūdzu, atzīmējiet TRĪS nozīmīgākās lietas, kas, Jūsuprāt, visspilgtāk izsaka kādas personas latvisko identitāti!

( ) Piedališanās Latvijas parlamenta vēlēšanās
( ) Latviešu valodas prasme
( ) Latvijas vēstures pārzināšana
( ) Spēja no galvas skaitīt un dziedāt latviešu tautas dziesmas
( ) Latviešu ēdienu gatavošana
( ) Draudzēšanās ar citiem latviešiem
( ) Līdzdalība latviešu kopienas pasākumos
( ) Latvijas pašreizējās politiskās situācijas pārzināšana
( ) Piederība kristīgai ticībai
( ) Cits

Attiecības starp Amerikas latviešiem un jauniebraucējiem no Latvijas


[ ] Latvieši, kas ASV ieradās kopš 1991.gada
[ ] Nesenie imigranti no citām valstīm
[ ] Neviens no augstāk minētajiem

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________


______________________________________________________________________________
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______________________________________________________________________________

20. Vai Jums nāk prātā kaut kas, kas, Jūsuprāt, veicina attiecību veidošanos starp Amerikas latviešiem un jauniebraucējiem no Latvijas?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

21. Vai Jums nāk prātā kaut kas, kas, Jūsuprāt, kavē attiecību veidošanos starp Amerikas latviešiem un jauniebraucējiem no Latvijas?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________

Ekspektācijas

_________________________________________________________

22. Nosauciet līdz TRĪS būtiskākās lietas, ko Jūs sagaidāt no līdzdalības latviešu kopienas dzīvē Amerikā?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

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Demogrāfiskā informācija

Pirms Jūs atbildat uz nākamajiem jautājumiem, vēlos atgādināt, ka Jūsu atbildes uz jautājumiem ir strikti konfidenciālas un tiks izmantotas tikai apkopotā veidā. Ja Jūs atsevišķās vietās nevēlas norādīt savu statusu, norādītajās vietās izmantojiet opciju “Nevēlos atbildēt”

23. Dzimums
   ( ) Sieviete
   ( ) Vīrietis

24. Kāds ir Jūsu ģimenes statuss?
   ( ) Precējies/-usies
   ( ) Šķīries/-usies
   ( ) Dzīvoju ar partneri
   ( ) Neprecējies/-usies
   ( ) Atraitnis/-e

25. Vecums
   ( ) <18 gadi
   ( ) 19 līdz 24 gadi
   ( ) 25 līdz 34 gadi
   ( ) 35 līdz 44 gadi
   ( ) 45 līdz 54 gadi
   ( ) 55 līdz 64 gadi
   ( ) 65 līdz 74 gadi
   ( ) 75 gadi un vairāk

26. Atzūmējiet, lūdu, Jūsu augstāko iegūto izglītību!
   ( ) Pamatskolas izglītība
   ( ) Vidusskolas diploms
   ( ) Iesākta, bet nepabeigta augstākā izglītība
   ( ) Bakalaura grāds
   ( ) Maģistra grāds
   ( ) Doktora grāds
   ( ) Cits

   ( ) Grāmatvedība/Finanses/Bankas
   ( ) Reklāma/Sabiedriskās attiecības/Mārkettings
   ( ) Arhitektūra/Dizains
   ( ) Māksla/Izklaides industrija
   ( ) Skaistumkopšana/Mode
( ) Tirdzniecība
( ) Celtniecība
( ) Izglītība / Pētniecība
( ) Veselības aprūpe
( ) Cilvēkresursu vadība
( ) Uzņēmuma vadība
( ) Masu medīji
( ) Logistika
( ) Ražošana
( ) Nekustamie īpašumi
( ) Restorāni / pārtikas industrija
( ) Tehnoloģijas / programmēšana
( ) Studente/-s
( ) Cits
( ) Mājsaimnieks/-ce
( ) Pensionārs/-e
( ) Šobrīd esmu bez darba
( ) Nevēlos atbildēt

28. Kāds ir Jūsu legālais statuss Amerikas Savienotajās Valstīs?
   ( ) Amerikas Savienoto Valstu pilsons/-is
   ( ) Pastāvīgais iedzīvotājs/-a (zaļā karte)
   ( ) Nodarbinātības vīza
   ( ) Students/-e
   ( ) Tūrists/-e
   ( ) Cits
   ( ) Nevēlos atbildēt

29. Kāds ir Jūsu legālais statuss Latvijā?
   ( ) Latvijas pilsons/-e
   ( ) Esmu Latvijas nepilsons/-e
   ( ) Man nav legālu saistību ar Latviju
   ( ) Nevēlos atbildēt

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Komentāri un ierosinājumi
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________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________

Ja Jums ir kādi papildus jautājumi vai komentāri par aptaujas saturu, rakstiet, lūdz uzu augstāk norādīto adresi.

Ar cieņu,
Ilze Garoza
Appendix 2: School survey

SCHOOL SURVEY

This study aims at exploring what is the relationship between Latvian Americans and recent immigrants from Latvia and promote understanding how it is affected by the way each of the group identify themselves, what values do they hold and what expectations do they have towards one another. As Latvian supplementary schools in the U.S. as have become the one place where the two communities come together, they provide a unique opportunity to study two groups in relation one another.

1) What is the age of the children that are enrolled in your school?

2) What population does your school serve? (Please indicate the number of children in each group)
   - Latvian American
   - Recent immigrant from Latvia
   - Other ethnic groups
   - Total:

3) Who is teaching in your school?
   - Latvian American
   - Recent immigrant from Latvia
   - Other ethnic groups
   - Total:

4) Does your school have a mission statement? If yes, what is it?

5) Would you be interested in participating in the follow up of this study, consisting of parental and teacher survey, interviews with parents and teachers, and onsite observations at schools?

Thank you for your cooperation in answering these questions!

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