

**SEARCHING FOR AFFIRMATION: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ETHNIC  
IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE**

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Despite proposed links between social context and language acquisition (Bialystok, 2007; Hoff, 2008), few studies have explored the role of ethnicity on second language (L2) learning motivation. The present study addresses this issue by investigating the role that the strength of one's ethnic identity plays in the pursuit of an L2. Participants were German language learners who completed a battery of surveys to assess their language histories, the strength of their ethnic identities, and their German language proficiency before participating in a semi-structured interview. Results suggest that students who feel less strongly connected to their ethnic identity are likely to study longer than their more affirmed peers. It was concluded that although integrative and instrumental orientations play a strong role in L2 motivation, effects of ethnic identity are also important.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In a time when increasing globalization requires the ability to communicate with many other nations, the successful command of foreign languages is not only advantageous, but oftentimes an essential aspect of international endeavors. In many parts of the world, multiple language proficiency is the norm, however, in the United States, most people speak only English. Thus, a number of researchers explore bilingualism as a matter of personal or scientific interest rather than for particular political or cultural reasons (Bialystok, 2007; Hoff, 2008). These researchers see multilingualism as a culmination of experiences in which different contexts and environments influence language learning and thereby affect the learners' social and cognitive development.

Whereas the socio-cognitive effects on language learners have been extensively studied, socio-emotional effects related to bilingualism have been explored less (Kim, 2008). Critics argue that there has been no obvious reason that knowledge of multiple languages should affect emotion or social awareness when in fact the experiences of children developing in different environments cannot be understood without understanding the interaction of language with social contexts (e.g. parental attitudes, community status of language) (Nicoladis, Charbonnier & Popescu, 2006).

Despite proposed links between social contexts and language acquisition, there have been few exploratory empirical studies connecting them as this will (Bialystok, 2007). Instead, a great deal of the literature has investigated other contributions to the language learning environment and process. Historically, these studies have focused largely on language learning aptitude; it

was incorrectly assumed that achievement was largely due to linguistic aptitude (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Later in the early language acquisition literature, Gardner and Lambert (1959) posited that motivation played a significant role in second language (L2) achievement. The purpose of this study is to further the line of work that was begun on L2 motivation by incorporating a variable that is missing in all of the following studies: the strength of a student's ethnic identity.

Gardner and Lambert's (1959) study expanded on previous studies asserting that L2 fluency was dependent upon 1) interest in members of the other linguistic community, 2) extent of bilingualism and advanced levels of study, and 3) personal dissatisfactions with one's own group. They reasoned that L2 achievement must depend on motivations similar to those found in children acquiring a first language (L1), integrating attitudes and orientations to the language learning experience.

One such primary language learning factor is aptitude (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Although linguistic aptitude was determined to be a clear factor in Gardner and Lambert's study (1959), integratively oriented students, who desired an understanding of or assimilation into the language's culture or society, were found to be even more successful than those who were instrumentally oriented and desired a grasp of the language for pragmatic reasons. Furthermore, these integratively oriented students were found to have more favorable attitudes towards members of the target language group and to be more strongly motivated to acquire their language.

Motivational behaviors, motivational antecedents and orientations to the acquisition of language have been heavily studied and the dimensions have been expanded on in great detail. For the purposes of this paper, a few will be expounded on.

*Motivational behaviors* tend to be defined by characteristics such as effort, persistence and attention. Kanfer and Ackerman (1989) delineated, defining the concept of motivation as “the direction of attentional effort, the proportion of total attentional effort directed to the task (*intensity*), and the extent to which attentional effort toward the task is maintained over time (*persistence*).” In contrast, *motivational antecedents*, or attributes that were not directly observable, include the learner’s need for achievement, goal-oriented behaviors, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as self-efficacy, valence, causal attributions and goal setting.

*Integrative orientation* refers to the positive feelings that a person has towards a particular group of people (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). This can mean that the learner would some day also like to understand, assimilate, or integrate into the culture or society for which the L2 of study is the mother tongue. *Instrumental orientation* refers to pragmatic desires to learn a language such as for its usefulness in the job market or other practical reasons.

Since the discovery in the late 1950’s that L2 acquisition was related not only to the learner’s language learning aptitude but also to the learner’s motivation, several studies have tried to further determine the role of motivation in acquisition (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Motivational factors have since been determined to be wide ranging, including everything from the learner’s orientation to the language to the learner’s self-confidence. As a result, Gardner (1985) argued for a socio-educational model with three components affecting motivation: 1) the effort expended to achieve a goal, 2) a desire to learn the language, and 3) the satisfaction with the task of learning the language. These three components, however, may be insufficient to explain all factors influencing a student’s motivation to learn an L2; various scholars have argued that they are too specific, neglecting other facets such as the desire to please teachers or parents (Gardner, 1995). Consequently, Gardner’s socio-educational model was expanded to

include other potential motivational behaviors, antecedents and overarching themes found to affect the learner's motivational behavior.

One potentially significant limitation of this study, and most studies regarding bilingualism, is generalizability. Many studies focus on populations affected by factors uncommon in other language learning situations. The population Tremblay and Gardner (1995) studied, for example, was 75 students in French language courses in a francophone secondary school in Ontario. For the location to have a francophone school, law stipulates that the area must already have a sizable French-speaking population. The population is thus presumably somewhat affected by the French language regardless of whether or not it is studied as an L2. It is thus probably not the case suggested by Hoff (2008) and others to be of real scientific interest, because the area is not essentially monolingual, but more like the rest of the world than the United States, linguistically speaking. The attitudes toward the French speaking community (a community the students are more likely to be involved in and view positively because they are not only studying the language but also report it as an L1) would probably be much different than in a population of French language learners who did not report French as their dominant language or have access to a French speaking community. Were the findings based on a population in a location without a sizable French speaking population, the results could have been markedly different. Furthermore, one might expect the integrative and instrumental orientation of a person learning to speak French where French is the secondary language of the area to be much higher in this population than in a population learning to speak the language farther from a sizable French speaking environment, such as within the United States.

Studies intending to expand on Gardner's (1985) models by implementing measures to assess educational and psychological models of motivation have used participants from English-

French bilingual universities (Noels, Pelletier, Clement & Vallerand, 2003). For example, a study conducted by Noels and colleagues incorporated established measures of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for a self-determination based approach to motivation and found that they too validly assess learner motivation. The 159 students chosen for participation in this study spoke English both as their mother tongue and as the language used most often. They were given a three part questionnaire designed to assess various orientations to language learning. The first tested instrumental, knowledge, travel, friendship orientations. The second tested intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation using a number of questions focused on subtypes of these motivations. Finally, a third assessed the students' perceptions of competence in the language, perceived freedom of choice, reported anxiety levels, and intentions to continue L2 studies.

The investigators found that intrinsic and extrinsic subtypes validly assess learner motivation (Noels, Pelletier, Clement & Vallerand, 2003). Instrumental orientations were highly correlated with external regulation, or the performance of an activity as a means to an end, and travel, whereas friendship and knowledge orientations were correlated with intrinsic motivations, or the performance of an activity for the inherent satisfaction that it brings. (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Furthermore, it was suggested that a self-determination continuum might underlie both approaches because for these students, the more internalized the importance of the language acquisition and the more enjoyable the feeling of learning, the more comfortable and persevering they claimed to be.

What is interesting about this study, in addition to the application of educational and psychological motivation constructs on language learning, is that the investigators acknowledge the differences that exist between populations. The role that the students' Anglo-Canadian

heritage had on their study was deemed a likely important factor. As they note, intrinsic motivation varies between cultural contexts. For Anglo-Canadians, high levels of intrinsic motivation are the result of autonomous choices whereas high levels of intrinsic motivation in Asian American children result when choices are made for them by trusted authority figures. This example of cultural differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation illustrates that although multiple factors contribute to motivation, even these do not account for the many social and contextual factors that could make a difference in language acquisition and social development including the role of parents, peers, or heritage.

In fact, there are few empirical studies connecting social contexts and language acquisition and even fewer studies connecting ethnic identity and language pursuit. At the time of investigation, there were no known studies that explored the effects of ethnic identity on language acquisition. As a result, this study will be the first known attempt to explore the relationships between the two.

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of ethnic identity on language acquisition. Instead of examining ethnic identity as a whole, the students' strength of ethnic identity will be emphasized for a number of reasons. Most importantly, to examine the correlations between ethnic identity and language (i.e., with questions such as 'are students who identify as German more likely to take German,) would be far too simplistic to provide useful insight into the motivational factors that truly affect language pursuit. Furthermore, as Noels, Pelletier, Clement and Vallerand (2003) found, the more internalized the importance of the L2 acquisition to the learner, the more enjoyable, comfortable and persevering the learning reported, indicating the importance ethnic identity contributes independently to identity.

As such, the research question to be explored will be: does the strength of a student's ethnic identity influence his or her foreign language learning? This will be explored using correlations between students' reported feelings of belonging towards their ethnic group, the extent to which students report searching for their ethnic identity, the importance that their ethnic identity has to the student's overall self concept, the length of time that the student spent pursuing the L2 and the student's achievement in the L2.

## **1.2 METHOD**

### **1.2.1 Participants**

A total of 31 German language learning college students (55% male) were surveyed and interviewed at the University of Pittsburgh. The students were recruited from undergraduate level German language and psychology courses. Students received either monetary compensation or course credit. One individual's data were excluded from analysis for failing to meet basic criteria for participation. Another was excluded as an outlier.

### **1.2.2 Procedure**

Each student completed a Language History Questionnaire (Tokowicz, Michael, & Kroll, 2004), a Multi-group Ethnic Inventory Measure (Roberts et al., 1999), a Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and a standardized testing tool used by the Goethe Institut for

assessing German language proficiency, then each participant completed a one-on-one semi-structured interview.

### **1.2.3 Materials**

The Language History Questionnaire (LHQ) (Tokowicz, Michael, & Kroll, 2004) collected basic demographic information as well as information about the participants' language background such as the length of each student's German study (length).

The Multi-group Ethnic Inventory Measure (MEIM) (Roberts et al., 1999) is a scale used to measure how strongly an individual is searching for his or her ethnic identity (search) and his or her level of affirmation, belonging, and commitment to the ethnicity (affirmation). This 12-item survey uses a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). For example, a search question may assess a student's quest for information about his or her heritage: "I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs." An affirmation, belonging, and commitment question, on the other hand, may assess a student's devotion to his or her ethnic group, "I feel a strong attachment to my own ethnic group."

The collective self esteem scale (CSE) (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) is used to measure one's positive social or collective identity. This 16-item Likert scale measure was used primarily to assess the importance of the students' race/ethnicity to their over-all self concept (Importance). Sample questions assessing importance include: "Overall, my race/ethnicity has very little to do with how I feel about myself" and "The race/ethnic group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am."

The standardized German language assessment is a tool approved by the Goethe Institute using the levels set out in the Common European Framework (CEF) for language learning. The framework specifies three different ability levels, but for the purposes of this study, the results of the test were converted into accuracy scores (%).

The semi-structured interview was created to serve a number of purposes. First and foremost, the interview is meant to assess a number of factors that cannot be gauged with any known pre-existing measures. Second, it gave the participants a chance to expand on answers to open-ended questions as they saw fit, clarifying and providing examples when necessary. This information will be extraordinarily helpful in explaining both the results found statistically and trying to piece together an idea of what is going on based on the students' self-reported experiences.

#### **1.2.4 Coding and Analysis**

Answers from the LHQ were classified numerically for later analysis. For example, the amount of time reported spent studying the German language was standardized to reflect length in years. Similarly, MEIM and CSE answers were grouped into search, affirmation, and importance subsets and the average for each subset was computed for correlation analyses. As previously mentioned, the Goethe test results were converted into statistically useful scores by calculating the percentage of correct answers.

## 1.3 RESULTS

### 1.3.1 Variables of Interest

Variables under investigation include the student's ethnic identity (German or non-German) and length of German study (length) as determined from the Language History Questionnaire, level of ethnic identity search (search) and level of affirmation, belonging and commitment (affirmation) from the MEIM, percentage correct on a standardized test of German language proficiency (Goethe), and the amount of importance that the student's ethnic identity holds in his or her overall identity (importance) as determined by the CSE.

### 1.3.2 Whole Sample: Correlational Analyses

Initially, correlation analyses were done using the sample as a whole (29 participants) to measure relationships among all variables of interest (for a table of correlations found, see Table 1).

A significant positive correlation was found between students' reported levels of affirmation and importance,  $r(27) = .738, p < .001$  meaning that those who feel a higher level of affirmation, belonging and commitment also report that their ethnic identity is important to their overall self concept, without taking into consideration the students' German or non-German-ness. This means that the more an individual identifies themselves as, for example, German, the more important their German-ness is to their identity as a whole.

Similarly, a student's level of search also correlates positively with the level of importance the ethnic identity plays in their self-concept,  $r(27) = .220, p > .05$ . In other words,

the more an individual searches for his or her ethnic identity, the more important it is to his or her self-concept. This indicates that students who are actively seeking connections to their ethnicity consider their ethnicity to be a large part of who they are, or alternatively, that those who find ethnicity to be an important facet for their self-concept are more likely to seek out connections to their ethnicity. Conversely, this finding could be the result of an unmeasured variable affecting both the extent to which a student reports searching and the importance of the ethnicity to the student.

An important finding that helps in the understanding of subsequent results is that a student's search – affirmation scores are also positively significantly correlated  $r(27) = .362$ ,  $p < .1$ . This indicates that the more a student searches for his or her identity, the more the student is likely to also report that he or she is affirmed and feels a sense of belonging to that same ethnic identity. Conversely, it also could suggest that the more the student feels a sense of affirmation and belonging to their ethnic group, the more likely the student is to search for their ethnicity individually.

In terms of the student's overall length of German language study, two correlations approach significance: one is more likely to study the German language the less one searches,  $r(27) = -.382$ ,  $p < .5$ . Length of study also correlates with percentage correct,  $r(27) = .313$ ,  $p < .10$ . Otherwise, one is no more likely to study German if one is affirmed,  $r(27) = -.198$ ,  $p > .05$ , in the sample as a whole. Length also does not correlate with a student's self reported level importance,  $r(27) = .020$ ,  $p > .05$ . There were no correlations with ethnic identity search on achievement,  $r(27) = -.215$ ,  $p > .05$ . These findings suggest that a person is more likely to study German longer if they are not searching and will likely perform better the longer they study. The

individual is no more likely to study German longer the more affirmed they are or the more important it is to their overall self concept.

Percentage correct, however, does significantly negatively correlate with affirmation,  $r(27) = -.364, p < .1$ . This is particularly interesting because this is affirmation on the whole – not just a subset of those identifying as Germans or non-Germans. This indicates that the stronger a student is affirmed in their ethnic identity and feels a sense of belonging to their ethnic group, the worse they do on the measure of proficiency, regardless of ethnicity.

In sum, correlations indicated positive correlations between the 29 participants' search-importance ratings, affirmation-importance ratings, and search-affirmation ratings, suggesting either that the three levels are linked or that there is another variable affecting all three. A significant negative correlation was found between percentage correct-affirmation ratings suggesting that the more one is affirmed in an ethnic identity the worse they will perform on measures of achievement. A significant positive correlation was found between percentage correct-length ratings. Lastly, no significant correlation was found between percentage correct-search ratings.

### **1.3.3 German Subset vs. Non-German Subset: Comparative Analyses**

An initial note of importance when considering the correlations found in the subsets is that the German subset consists of a mere 5 participants. The ramification of having such a low number of participants is that for a correlation to be significant, it must be quite high. As such, a number of correlations will not be significant based on the sample at hand however could be were the same correlations true of a larger population. For that reason, exact significance levels

for the subsets will be reported. See Table 2 and 3 for the German and non-German identifying subset's correlations, respectively.

The moderately significant yet strong negative correlation between how long students identifying as German have pursued German language learning and their level of Affirmation  $r(3) = -.856, p=.064$  indicates that the more affirmed one is in his or her culture, the less it seems they take the German language, i.e. the more affirmed a student feels in his or her German heritage, the less likely it is that they will study the German language and the less a student feels affirmed in their German heritage, the longer they will pursue German language instruction.

Although there was a correlation between length of study and affirmation in the German identifying group, correlations in the non-German identifying subset were not significant,  $r(22) = -.049, p=.821$ . Despite the lack of significance in the non-German identifying subset, the large difference found between the correlations of the German and non-German subset ( $-.856$  and  $-.049$ , respectively) does suggest that there are real differences between the subsets' length of German study based on their respective levels of affirmation.

The results also indicate that there exists a nonsignificant, negative correlation between German students' length of study and their level of search  $r(3) = -.416, p=.486$ . This correlation is, however, not as strongly negative as the German identifying students' affirmation-length comparison, suggesting that there may again be a real reason for differences in the search-length and affirmation-length scores despite the lack of significance.

Additionally, the students' who do not identify as German show absolutely no search-length correlation suggesting that there must be many other reasons for taking German, other than a search motive  $r(22) = -.334, p=.111$ . The effect of importance on length of study was not significant in the German subset  $r(3) = -.316, p=.605$  or the non-German subset  $r(22) = -.053,$

$p=.807$ , however, the correlation in the German identifying subset suggests that importance could have an effect on length of study in a larger sample.

### **1.3.4 Performance on a standardized German Language Test**

There were no significant correlations between students' reported levels of search and achievement in either the German identifying student subset,  $r(3)=.073$ ,  $p=.908$ , or the non-German identifying subset,  $r(22) = -.271$ ,  $p=.200$ .

There were also no significant effects of students' levels of affirmation on achievement in the German identifying subset  $r(3) = -.666$ ,  $p=.219$ , however there were moderately significant results in the non-German subset  $r(22) = -.328$ ,  $p=.117$ . This indicates that among the non-German students, the more that one is affirmed in their non-German heritage, the less well they are likely to do on tests of German proficiency.

Although only moderately significant, the correlation between the German identifying students length of study and achievement is strong,  $r(3) = -.856$ ,  $p=.062$ . There were no effects, on the other hand, of length of study on achievement in the non-German identifying students,  $r(22) = .229$ ,  $p=.283$ .

## **1.4 DISCUSSION**

Correlation analyses computed with the sample as a whole revealed that both affirmation and search and affirmation and importance were significantly correlated with each other. They also revealed that search and importance were positively correlated. This indicates that

regardless of German or non-German ethnicity, students who feel that their ethnic identity is of importance to their overall self-concept are more likely to feel both a sense of affirmation, belonging, and commitment and also continue to search for connections to their ethnicity. This argues against an idea of a search-affirmation continuum by which one begins by searching and ends with affirmation in favor of a continuum in which affirmation, search and importance are linked: the more one searches, the more he or she is affirmed, and the more important the ethnic identity becomes to his or her overall identity.

This becomes most apparent in interviews with students. For some students, ethnic identity was a fundamental part of their being. These students were not only able to explain quite thoroughly their lineage but also give detailed accounts from where their forefathers came and when. These students were often surrounded by traditions, celebrations and artifacts of their heritage in the home, reinforcing their ethnic identity. As a result, many of these same students became curious about additional aspects of their cultures, leading them to actively research the culture, history and geography as well as travel abroad to visit what they or their forefathers consider the home country.

Furthermore, the link between search, affirmation and importance is dually apparent in students who didn't know exactly where they came from and were thusly unable to connect strongly with their heritage. Oftentimes, students in this situation reported that they felt more American than connected to another ethnicity. The extent of search was generally limited to school projects related to family trees. These students would essentially be at the end opposite strong levels of search, affirmation and importance on the proposed continuum.

Even though this is an interesting find in and of itself, these correlations seem to be indicative of something else going on. Whereas intuition might suggest that a subset of 29

students in the German department might provide fairly equal numbers of students identifying as German and students not identifying as German, this was not the case. In fact, when asked how they identified ethnically and culturally, only one in six students identified as German or German-American. As such, all correlations found in the initial computations are likely to have been heavily influenced by the majority, non-German identifying participants in such a way as to make them somewhat biased.

The results of the combined sample are, however, still interesting and important for understanding the sample as a whole, regardless of German or non-German backgrounds. For example, when examining the correlations of the two subsets independently of one another, the German subset's levels of search and affirmation correlate fairly strongly, yet not significantly,  $r(3) = .577, p=.308$ . Within the non-German subset was found similarly positive, significant, results,  $r(22) = .366, p<.1$ . This not only supports the idea of the link between search, affirmation and importance but also suggests that it is potentially true of either specific ethnicities, given that the correlation was even stronger in the German subset than the non-German subset, or that it is true of ethnicities in general, seeing as it was significant in the population as a whole.

Because of the unbalanced number of Germans and non-Germans, the rest of the correlations were thus computed and analyzed using the two subsets. It is when the results of the German-identifying subset (5 participants) are compared to the results of the non-German subset (24 participants), the most interesting and relevant effects can be seen.

For example, although students who are more affirmed are also more likely to search and find ethnic identity to be important and would in theory be more likely to participate in an activity, such as language study, to connect themselves with their heritage further, this was not

the case; in fact, the German identifying students' search-length and affirmation-length correlations are but moderately negative at  $-.416$  and  $-.856$ , respectively.

What should be noted is that neither of these results was deemed significant at the  $.05$  level, for the sample size was a mere 5 students. Were these same correlations, however, also found in a sample size of 25 students, these correlations would be significant at the  $.05$  and  $.01$  level, respectively. This would indicate that German identifying students are actually far less likely to take German language classes the more they search and the more they are affirmed in their heritage, and that there are even real differences between the two correlations.

This difference in correlations could be for a number of reasons. In addition to those students who are affirmed and potentially no longer interested in learning the language at all because of an already established sense of belonging, it seems that those who are strongly searching are also not necessarily interested in pursuing the language as long. The negative correlation is simply not as strong, potentially indicating that at the onset, one method of searching may be to participate in language study as a means of making a connection with a specific cultural or ethnic group whereas those who are more thoroughly entrenched in the search or affirmation stages of their ethnic identity may see language study/proficiency as only a beginning, or alternatively, simply too superficial for a serious ethnic identity search or meaningful level of belonging to the cultural group.

Furthermore, because students are much less likely to partake in the language learning when reporting a strong sense of search, affirmation and importance, these results may be attributed to a student's comfort level with their ethnicity. For example, students who feel comfortably connected to their German heritage may be more curious and/or more likely to also feel comfortable learning the language of another culture/ethnicity.

This is further illustrated by the proficiency correlations. In the non-German sample, achievement and a student's level of affirmation was negatively correlated. What this means, essentially, is again that the more one is affirmed in his or her heritage, and in this case, non-German heritage, the better one does in German language classes.

Moreover, students who feel connected to their ethnicity and reported that traditions and cultural artifacts were present in the home may be simply more exposed to not only their own heritage, but also cultures of other groups, most specifically, those of their community and peers. For example, a student who matures in the United States in a household prominently featuring a Romanian heritage will nevertheless be exposed to the American culture in day to day life. This student may grow up feeling a strong sense of belonging to his home and family, yet feel comfortable stepping outside of this boundary to experience other customs, such as those of America or Germany.

In such a case, it could be argued that the individual is now searching at a basic, not necessarily integrative level. While not identifying with the 'other,' German cultural group strongly, their curiosity could potentially be seen as one befitting the lower level of the continuum, in which they are neither strongly searching nor strongly affirmed in the 'other' culture. Thus, they would be more likely to take the German language courses longer as a person mildly interested in the German culture as a way of safely broaching the culture than one who was raised to strongly identify with the German culture.

Alternatively, the strong negative correlations between German identifying students' length and affirmation scores suggest that language pursuit may have absolutely nothing to do with the culture itself. When, for example, one who is unattached to a German culture is potentially more likely to partake in and perform better in the language of the German culture

rather than pursuing his or her own, the ideas of integrative and instrumental orientations resurface. Perhaps the reason that students who are unattached to German culture participate in L2 study longer and perform better is that they are interested in the language for pragmatic reasons.

By examining the proficiency levels of the two subsets, we see a stronger positive connection between proficiency and length of German language study in the German identifying subset. Though this could be resultant of basic level attempts to connect with a culture and thus be similarly considered an integrative orientation toward the language: a student takes German despite not feeling strongly German longer than one who feels strongly connected to a German heritage in order to facilitate integration.

This is reinforced by the non-German's weak correlation between length of study and proficiency, suggesting that the same is not true of this subsample. Even though this result is not significant, it merits discussion for its contributions to understanding motivation. German identifying students do much better in the short run than the non-German students. This could be a result of a number of factors affecting the non-German identifying students including variables that were not investigated such as instrumental orientations, general apathy, or simply a lack of German motivational influences. Because of this difference in proficiency levels, quality of German study and length spent in German speaking areas should be further studied.

The key limitation to this study is the number of participants, especially within the German identifying subset. At the start of this study, it was unclear not only that there would be so few Germans taking German language courses at the collegiate level but also that the most interesting results would come from dividing the sample into the two subsets. Further studies

and replications should seek to include at larger amounts of students in order to safely substantiate claims.

Moreover, because this study was meant purely to assess the role of a student's strength of ethnic identity, other measures that could have further assessed integrative and instrumental orientations were not included. In order to get a more complete picture of the role of ethnic identity, studies should examine the effects of ethnic identity on integrative and instrumental orientations to L2 learning as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Because, for example, Gardner and Lambert (1959) found integratively oriented students who had favorable attitudes towards members of the target language community tended to be more strongly motivated to acquire the language, yet this study found that German identifying students, who felt to a certain extent as if they were searching for their identity, were less inclined to study German, it suggests that a student's strength of ethnic identity may play a role in motivation in addition to orientation. Conversely, this difference could be a reflection of the samples studied: the sample in Gardner and Lambert's (1959) study was located in an area with a sizable French-speaking population whereas the students in this study are less likely to be directly involved with a local sizable German-speaking population.

Further studies should seek both to replicate this study with other ethnicities and improve on its limitations in replications with German students. Once more solid results are confirmed, the information should be used to improve language instruction within the language learning environment. A better understanding of the motivational factors could help instructors to incorporate various facets of this motivation into the classroom, including but not limited to basic exploration of the culture, exploration of the history of the culture or nation, and interaction

with the cultural and linguistic community, all in an effort to facilitate the kinds of connections with the community that low level searchers also seek.

In conclusion, this study was intended to explore the role of ethnic identity in language acquisition in an environment that is not necessarily as connected to the language/ethnic community of the L2 as Tremblay and Gardner's (1995) study, but more monolingual in nature. Results suggest that students who feel that their ethnic identity is of particular importance to their overall self concept also report higher levels of searching for their identity and affirmation, belonging, and commitment to their identity. Findings also suggest that students who do feel higher levels of these three factors may be likely to participate in L2 study for a shorter period of time when the L2 is spoken by members of their ethnic community. Results indicate that a student's strength of ethnic identity does have an effect on L2 acquisition yet further studies are required in determining exactly what that role is in regards to proposed orientations.

**Table 1.0. Language History Questionnaire**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>German</b>		<b>Non- German</b>	
	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Number of Participants</b>	5		25	
<b>Time Studied L2 (years)</b>	4.00	2.55	3.16	3.42
<b>Search</b>	2.16	.75	2.57	.57
<b>Affirmation</b>	3.11	.90	2.88	.51
<b>Goethe Score</b>	.40	.09	.38	.11
<b>Importance</b>	2.35	1.69	3.63	1.5

**Table 2.1. Correlations between Reported Levels of Ethnic Identity Were Compared to Length of German Language Study and Achievement on a Standardized German Language Test in the Sample as a Whole**

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1. Length</b>	1.00				
<b>2. Search</b>	-.38*	1.00			
	-.66 to -.02				
<b>3. Affirmation</b>	-.20	.36^	1.00		
	-.53 to .18	-.01 to .64			
<b>4. Proficiency</b>	.31^	-.22	-.36^	1.00	
	-.06 to .61	-.54 to .16	-.64 to .00		
<b>5. Importance</b>	-.02**	.22	.74**	-.25	1.00
	-.38 to .35	-.54 to .16	.51 to .87	-.57 to .13	
<b>Mean</b>	2.90	2.48	2.89	.39	3.74
<b>SD</b>	2.45	.59	.06	.11	1.51
<b>Range</b>	0-7.00	1.00-3.80	1.86-4.00	.13-.57	1.00-7.00
<b>*<math>p &lt; .05</math></b>					
<b>**<math>p &lt; .01</math></b>					
<b>^ <math>p &lt; .1</math></b>					

**Table 3.2. Correlations between Reported Levels of Ethnic Identity Were Compared to Length of German Language Study and Achievement on a Standardized German Language Test in the German Identifying Subset**

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1. Length</b>	1.00				
<b>2. Search</b>	-.42 <sup>^</sup> -.95 to .74	1.00			
<b>3. Affirmation</b>	-.86 <sup>^</sup> -.99 to .11	.58 <sup>^</sup> -.62 to .97	1.00		
<b>4. Proficiency</b>	.86 <sup>^</sup> -.10 to .99	.07 -.86 to .90	-.67 <sup>^</sup> -.98 to .52	1.00	
<b>5. Importance</b>	-.32 <sup>^</sup> -.94 to .79	.64 <sup>^</sup> -.56 to .97	.67 <sup>^</sup> -.52 to .98	.02 -.88 to .89	1.00
<b>Mean</b>	4.00	2.16	3.11	.40	4.70
<b>SD</b>	2.55	.75	.90	.09	1.24
<b>Range</b>	1.00-7.00	1.00-3.00	1.86-4.00	.30-.53	3.25-6.00
<b><sup>^</sup> marginally significant</b>					

**Table 4.3. Correlations between Reported Levels of Ethnic Identity Were Compared to Length of German Language Study and Achievement on a Standardized German Language Test in the Non-German Identifying Subset**

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>1. Length</b>	1.00				
<b>2. Search</b>	-.33 <sup>^</sup>	1.00			
	-.65 to .08				
<b>3. Affirmation</b>	-.05	.37 <sup>^</sup>	1.00		
	-.44 to .36	-.04 to .67			
<b>4. Proficiency</b>	.23	-.27	-.33 <sup>^</sup>	1.00	
	-.19 to .58	-.15 to .61	-.65 to .09		
<b>5. Importance</b>	-.05	.26	.80 <sup>**</sup>	-.32 <sup>^</sup>	1.00
	-.45 to .36	-.16 to .60	.58 to .91	-.64 to .10	
<b>Mean</b>	2.67	2.54	2.85	.39	3.54
<b>SD</b>	2.42	.55	.49	.11	1.50
<b>Range</b>	0-7.00	1.6-3.8	2.14-4.00	.13-.57	1.00-7.00
<b>**<i>p</i> &lt; .01.</b>					
<b><sup>^</sup> marginally significant</b>					

## 1.5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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