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Introduction
Over 200 years ago, Catherine the Great invited Germans to populate and cultivate the Volga Region of Russia (Levykin, 1995). With a few notable exceptions such as periodic demands for military service, they were generally treated as privileged citizens and by World War I, a total of 1.5 million Germans had moved to Russia (Lutheran Church Services, 1995). However, with the German invasion of Russia in 1941, Stalin declared the ethnic Germans traitors and conspirators (Downey, 1993 p1038). He had them all deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan within 24 hours, separating many families in the rush (Brauer, 1995 p22). Despite the dispersion, after the war many families settled near one another, continuing to speak German and practising the Lutheran religion in their home.

With the easing of the Cold War during the 1970s, ethnic Germans in Russia began to re-immigrate to Germany. There were few re-immigrants at first, but since ‘The Wall’ fell in 1989, there has been a large influx. Today the German government sees its immigration policy for these people as a way to compensate them for the dispersion they suffered as a consequence of World War II (Child Welfare Services, 1995). Nonetheless, because of the large number of
potential immigrants, the German government felt compelled to change its immigration laws in 1993. It only allows 220,000 re-immigrants from Russia per year and each must meet stringent qualification criteria (Lutheran Church Services, 1995). Then, due to red tape, and the large numbers of people applying, it may take up to two years to be accepted (Brauer, 1995 p22). Although they often have many material possessions in Russia, many ethnic Germans are willing to give them up for the freedom and opportunity that Germany has to offer (Lutheran Church Services, 1995). After obtaining citizenship in Germany, the re-immigrants are referred to as ‘Aussiedler’.

Aussiedler face many challenges in Germany. Families are sometimes separated because of the immigration qualifications. Their years in Russia are evident. They celebrate Russian holidays, wear Russian clothes and eat Russian food. Many younger people do not speak German, and the German of the older generation is antiquated. They also have a difficult time finding jobs because their educational backgrounds are often not accepted. Many must undergo additional training and certification in order to work. Together, these factors make assimilation to life in modern Germany difficult. However, of the various immigrant groups coming to Germany today, the Aussiedler are the most privileged. They can obtain full German citizenship and are seen as having a legitimate claim to social housing and assistance (Faist & Haußermann, 1996 pp87,91).

Social housing is the responsibility of the German government. Although people are not entitled to housing in Germany, by providing it, the government believes that it can fulfil its obligation to maintain order in society (Housing Authority, 1995). However, since 1995 there has been a shortage of social housing. In that year, there were 6,000 people on the waiting list in Hannover alone (Housing Authority, 1995). Typically, Aussiedler spend the first three to six weeks after their arrival in the country in transitional housing. Then families move into compact housing and singles move into barracks-type housing, where six or more people share a room. With the housing shortage, it may be several years before they are able to move into permanent social housing. Even so, they often may obtain permanent social housing before native German citizens because of their privileged status (Faist & Haußermann, 1996 p88).

Today, the goal of the government housing policy in Germany is not home ownership. Instead, it provides rent allowances and tries to stimulate the supply of private sector housing. Eligibility for government housing is determined by ‘household income and size’ (Heisler, 1994 p212). Tenants are not required to move when they begin to earn more, but must pay a larger percentage of the rent. The German government does not own the social housing. It gives contractors tax incentives in exchange for rent control and the right to use for social housing the new units (Heisler, 1994 p212). However, this agreement runs out after fifteen years and most developers are unwilling to renew it because they believe that immigrants are not reliable tenants (Housing Authority, 1995).

Spargelacker is an apartment complex in a suburban area south of the city centre of Hannover, Germany, that serves as permanent social housing. About 60% of the residents are native German citizens, 30% are Aussiedler, and the remaining 10% are others of foreign origin. Although the Aussiedler and native Germans may appear different from a variety of perspectives, from the review of literature it is clear that little research has been done comparing them, or the social housing that both groups live in. Therefore, the study is
exploratory in nature. The goals of the study were broad, focusing on three main areas. The first was to see if there was an objective difference between the demographic characteristics of the Aussiedler and the native German group. The second objective was to see if there was a subjective difference in the perceptions of the physical and social environment between native German residents and Aussiedler. The final goal was then to define which variables were most helpful in predicting the residential satisfaction of each group.

**Procedures and Methods**

**Questionnaire**

A number of prior, well-documented studies, concerning both the quality of housing and the relationship of health and well-being to stress have developed and refined a variety of self-report data collection techniques - i.e., Drakakis-Smith & Fisher (1975); Anderson et al (1986); Selby et al (1987); Wolf, Wolf & Hare (1950); Langner & Michael (1963); Holmes & Rahe (1967); Levine & Scotch (1970); Hinkle (1974); Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend (1974); Bourestom (1984); and Janes (1990). Therefore, it was felt that a questionnaire would be the most appropriate data collection method. The questions from the Langner & Michael (1963) article, as well as from the studies by Speicher & Potter (1994) and Potter (1993, 1995) were particularly relevant as they provided many questions that could be easily adapted for conditions in Germany.

The questions regarding quality of the physical and social environment consisted of both objective questions about the respondents’ residence as well as evaluative questions about their perceptions of the residence. Additional issues regarding the social environment were probed through both objective questions regarding the respondents’ health and evaluative questions regarding the stress and strain of their lives. All evaluative questions utilised a five-point Likert scale (from strongly agree to strongly disagree). In addition to the substantive questions, a variety of demographic questions - e.g., age, marital status, employment, income and schooling - were included to provide a means of comparing the similarity of the two groups of respondents.

As mentioned, the quality of housing issues relate to both objective questions regarding the respondents’ residence as well as evaluative questions regarding their perceptions of the residence. The objective questions dealing with their previous residence and current residence, asked them to provide factual information about the residences - e.g., rental cost, total area, number of people living in the apartment, the size of the apartment, the number of total rooms, and number of bedrooms. The evaluative questions, regarding their perceptions of their current residence, are divided into groups of questions with the following headings: Adequacy and Personalisation of Space, Utility Functions, Comfort, Privacy, Outdoor Space, Perception of Others, Friendship Formation, Safety, Management and Resident Satisfaction.

Similarly, issues regarding the relationship of health and well-being to stress were considered both with objective questions regarding the respondents’ health and evaluative questions regarding the stress and strain of their lives. The evaluative questions regarding their perceptions of stress and strain in their lives focus on both the positive and negative stresses - e.g., worries about job, benefits of living in Hannover, frustrations of daily life - as well as any stress-related symptoms they have experienced - e.g., trouble sleeping, dizziness, nervousness.
These evaluative questions were divided into two major groups of variables titled Stress and Strain, respectively. On the other hand, the objective questions dealt with health or, more precisely, its converse, incidence of illness - e.g., high blood pressure, heart condition, depression. Many of the respondents were extremely reluctant to answer the health-related questions. As a consequence, the amount of missing data makes the statistical analysis of the relationship between health and well-being impractical. Therefore, it has been deleted from the analysis.

Selection of Interviewees
The sample was drawn from two distinct but similar populations. Potential interviewees were either ethnic Germans from Russia (Aussiedler) or native residents of Hannover, Germany. The key idea in selecting the two groups was to have a pool of interviewees who were probably different with regard to life experience but were presently living in the same social housing complex. Identification of an appropriate housing complex was assisted by discussions with the director of the Lutheran Church’s Child Welfare Services, representative of the Hannover City Council, a specialist regarding re-immigrant concerns, various social workers from the Lutheran Church as well as faculty at the University of Hannover, familiar with social housing in Hannover. The group of residents selected live in a relatively new social housing complex called Spargelacker. The complex is in a suburban residential area consisting primarily of single family dwellings, twenty - thirty minutes by public transportation south of the city centre.

The following criteria were used for selecting potential interviewees: (i) only adults (at least 21 years old) were interviewed; (ii) to insure a more balanced perspective on the impact of re-immigration both males and females were interviewed; and (iii) Aussiedler were considered for the study if they had moved to Hannover less than three years ago.

The actual selection of the interviewees was facilitated by social workers at Spargelacker who help the Aussiedler at Spargelacker adjust to life in Germany. The social workers were able to introduce the interviewers to potential respondents. Generally, when approached with an introduction by the social worker, people were willing to participate. The response rate was approximately 93%. However, there was a marked degree of hesitancy in answering questions related to health issues as noted previously.

The sample group was, therefore, chosen because the respondents met the selection criteria previously mentioned, rather than as a randomly selected group from the complex. Marans (1987 p64) refers to this method of selection as purposive sampling. Due to the exploratory nature of the research and the fact that the groups under investigation are idiosyncratic, it was felt that a purposive (non probability) sample was appropriate.

In comparing the Aussiedler (A = 27) and the Hannoverans (H = 34) (with a total N of 61), they were roughly similar in education (approximately 10 years) and household income (mode = 10,000 DM - 19,999 DM per year), but differed on a number of other characteristics. The Aussiedler were more likely to be older (average age: A = 42.5 years, H = 36.0 years). Eighty percent (80%) were married, as opposed to the Hannoverans, of which only approximately 40% were married. It was significant that within each group, the Hannoverans displayed greater variation, while the Aussiedler tended to be more similar. It should be noted that there were nearly 10% more males than females within the Hannoverans, while there was only a
small difference in the ratio of males to females within the Aussiedler. This may be explained by the fact that more of the Aussiedler are married. Finally, within the male respondents, a larger percentage of Aussiedler were employed (A = 69%; H = 56%) and within the female respondents, a larger percentage of Aussiedler are not employed (A = 73%; H = 69%). Whether or not these differences are significant is unknown, but they should be considered when reviewing the analysis of data and results.

Data Collection Procedures
The entire questionnaire was translated into German to facilitate the data collection. An interview was deemed the most efficient means of administering the questionnaire. Prior to the interviews, however, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of people similar to the residents. The pre-test group consisted of five (5) people from the Spargelacker. The main intent of the pre-test interview was to determine whether the questionnaire was comprehensible to the respondents. It was learned that the response categories were reasonable, the organisation was logical and a few questions needed refinement. Minor rewording of these questions was done prior to the final data collection phase to eliminate any confusion.

The interviews were done by students from the University of Hannover who were native speakers of German. Nonetheless, to insure the reliability of data collected and reduce the chances that interviewers might introduce bias into the interview process based on their behaviour, they were trained to present the information in a straightforward, standardised manner each time and, more generally, to treat all respondents similarly. They were taught to be professional, helpful and respectful of the interviewee. The final collection of data took place at Spargelacker. The average amount of time required to interview a respondent was about twenty-five - thirty-five minutes.
The Residential Environment
In an area of fairly traditional suburban single-family housing, Spargelacker stands out as identifiably different. It consists of four story buildings with blocks of apartments divided into two or three segments by conveniently located stairs towers. There are fifteen such buildings with from twelve - forty apartments in each. The construction is of concrete block, exposed in places, combined with painted plaster. A grid of metal tubing is attached to the exterior on which vines can grow. There are projecting decks on most of the above grade apartments. Roof lines vary with some flat and others sloped, but there are no peaked roofs. There is parking below the apartment blocks but it can not accommodate all the cars. Thus, there are also parking spaces along the streets at the periphery of the project. Landscaping of grass, trees, shrubs and vines with benches placed at strategic locations near children’s play areas creates a pleasant exterior environment.

Analysis of Data
With the previously mentioned goals in mind, a number of stages of statistical analyses were required. First, frequency analyses of the Resident Satisfaction questions were run. The analysis compared responses based on origin to determine whether there were differences in resident satisfaction between the native residents of Hannover and the Aussiedler. In comparing the results of each, there appeared to be some potential differences. Additional frequency analyses compared the objective housing conditions of the Aussiedler and the Hannoverans. For all of the t-tests with significant results, frequency distributions and histograms were run. These seven variables were then tested together in a multiple regression analysis, which again compared the Aussiedler and the Hannoverans. The factor Resident Satisfaction was used as the dependent variable. (The factor Resident Satisfaction was composed of the responses to
Table 1: t-test Comparison by Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>d.f.</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>SAFETY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spargelacker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aussiedler (N=25)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-2.5</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.0152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannoveran (N=34)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERCEPTION of OTHERS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aussiedler (N=25)</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>0.0311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannoveran (N=34)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRIENDSHIP INFORMATION</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Adj. Bldg.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aussiedler (N=27)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>-2.1</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.0408</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hannover</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aussiedler (N=27)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannoveran (N=34)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>STRESS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aussiedler (N=24)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<td>-2.3</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0.0227</td>
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<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
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<td>Values Challenged</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aussiedler (N=22)</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
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<td>0.0361</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Different Life</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.3</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>0.0475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannoveran (N=28)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) The means were calculated from a five point scale, where 1 = Strongly Agree and 5 = Strongly Disagree, except for the Friendship Formation items, in which 1 = All and 5 = None.

four variables. They were: I am very satisfied with my current residence; I would like to continue living here as long as possible; I would recommend Spargelacker to a friend; and If I moved, I would choose another residence similar to this one.) For the Aussiedler, three items were considered significant by having a β coefficient of .2 or greater. Three items were also revealed in the group from Hannover.

Results and Discussion

If we compare the two groups on objective measures that describe the residents' housing situation, it is clear that they are similar in some ways. For example, in both groups, each household owns one car, each household has one child under five years old and each household has been in their apartment for about five months. On the other hand, there also are some consistent differences between the two groups. For example, per household the Aussiedler have more family members (average number: A = 3.2, H = 2.7), have more total area in their apartment (average: A = 58.8 m², H = 54.2 m²), and they pay more rent per month (A = 1127 DM vs. H = 934 DM). Combined with the previously mentioned demographic information, the similarities and differences exhibited by the two groups helps provide a qualitative view of the
Aussiedler and Hannoverans that will be elaborated and enhanced through the following quantitative analysis.

Differences Between Groups

Shifting attention to the t-tests comparing Aussiedler and Hannoverans, the results indicate that social issues are the key for distinguishing the two groups of residents (see table 1). There are four categories of questions represented in the t-tests that exhibit significance: Safety, Perception of Others, Friendship Formation and Stress. If we assume that 3.0 is the neutral point of the 5-point Likert scale, the Hannoverans tend to be worried about being victims of crime while at Spargelacker, whereas the Aussiedler feel safe from being victims of crime, Spargelacker. Neither the Hannoverans or the Aussiedler are likely to believe that their neighbours have similar interests to theirs. The Aussiedler express a more negative position on this item, Interests. Although neither group has many friends in adjacent buildings, the Aussiedler appear to have more than the Hannoverans, Adjacent Building. Additionally, both are inclined to have more friends in another area of Hannover. This is especially true for the Hannoverans, who are likely to have many friends in other areas of Hannover, Hannover. Even though it is a concern for both, the Aussiedler are much more worried about getting or keeping a job than the Hannoverans, Job. The Aussiedler are also likely to find their values being challenged daily by others’ values, while the Hannoverans are not inclined to feel this way, Values Challenged. Finally, the Aussiedler more often feel pressure to adopt a different way of life, whereas the Hannoverans are not likely to feel this way, Different Life.

1) The underlined terms refer to the label given to variables during the analysis of the questionnaire. To see the exact wording of each variable, refer to Table 1.
Predictor Variables

The multiple regression analysis revealed three items of importance for each group (see table 2). All of the items for both groups are social issues, with one exception. In descending order of importance, the items for the Aussiedler were: Job, Different Life and Spargelacker. These three predictors were able to explain 60% of the variance in the factor Residential Satisfaction. For Hannoverans, the items Different Life, Values Challenged and Interests, explain 40% of the variance.

For both groups, the analysis indicates that variables from the category related to Stress are very important predictors of resident satisfaction. Two out of three predictors for each group of residents are from the Stress category - i.e., Job, Values Challenged and Different Life. The item Different Life - i.e., I feel pressure to adopt a different way of life - which is second for Aussiedler and first for Hannoverans, reveals there is an inverse relationship between the experience of pressure to change and residential satisfaction. In other words, both groups feel that when there is less pressure on them to adopt a different way of life, they are more satisfied with their residence.

The most important variable for Aussiedler was Job, suggesting that as Aussiedler become less worried about getting or keeping a job, they will be more satisfied with their residence. The third variable for Aussiedler - Spargelacker - indicates that if they feel safe from being victims of crime while at Spargelacker they also will be more satisfied with their residences. The second variable for Hannoverans was Values Challenged, revealing that if Hannoverans do not feel as if their values are being challenged daily by others’ values they are more likely to be satisfied with their residences. Finally, the variable Interests suggests that Hannoverans are more likely to be satisfied with their residences if they believe that their neighbours have similar interests.

As mentioned, the predictor variables are predominantly social in nature. They have to do with social concerns such as adopting a different way of life, feeling safe from being a victim of crime, feeling one’s values are not being challenged daily by others, and whether or not neighbours have similar interests. The one variable that is an exception is Job - being worried about getting or keeping a job - which may have a social component but is primarily an economic variable. It is interesting to note that there are no physical variables in the list of predictors for the residents. But this exclusion may be merely a function of what variables help to discriminate between Aussiedler and Hannoverans, rather than what may be most important in predicting each group’s desires. This concern will be explored further in the subsequent discussion.

Conclusion

As noted in the introduction, Aussiedler face a variety of difficulties and challenges as they attempt to be assimilated into the mainstream of German culture. They have to struggle to either modify their antiquated use of German or, in some cases, learn the language. They have the challenge of getting and keeping a job. Due to the shortage of social housing, they may have to wait several years to get into an apartment. This study reinforces the initial perception that for Aussiedler the transition from Russia to Germany is a difficult one. More specifically, it helps us better understand some of their concerns regarding the social and physical
environment and how these aspects of the environment can either contribute to or detract from
their residential satisfaction.

From the results, it appears that practically speaking all seven variables that assist us in
discriminating between Aussiedler and Hannoverans embody a social component. Five
variables clearly relate to the social concerns: whether my neighbours have similar interests to
mine (Interests); whether I have friends in adjacent buildings (Adj. Bldg), or in other areas of
Hannover (Hannover); whether I find my values being challenged daily by others (Values
Challenged), and whether I feel pressure to adopt a different way of life (Different Life). The
two items that exhibit slightly different dimensions are Spargelacker and Job. While the
research by Newman (1972, 1975 & 1981) would lead us to the conclusion that, whether or
not one feels safe from being a victim of crime at Spargelacker (Spargelacker) could have
implications for the physical design of the project, it is essentially a concern related to the
social environment - i.e., one’s perception of the threat from other people. On the other hand,
although being worried about getting and keeping a job (Job) has a social dimension, it is
probably most importantly an issue that hits at the heart of the economic viability of the
household.

When attempting to fulfil residential satisfaction, it seems likely that it will be a difficult task
when comparing the responses of Aussiedler and Hannoverans. The variables that help to
predict resident satisfaction for Aussiedler and Hannoverans do not overlap often between the
groups. In fact there was only one variable - Different Life - which was common to the two
groups. Further, as mentioned above, the variables tended to deal with social concerns and had
little to do with the built environment. Such items are beyond the ability of designers to satisfy
quickly by modifying an existing design or creating an alternative design. The issues are ones
that are primarily about one’s perception of the social environment. To bring about change will
require the assistance of the social workers in building bridges of understanding between the
Aussiedler and Hannoverans, thus modifying residents’ attitudes toward their neighbours and
themselves.

If the study falls short of expectations, it is that there are limited physical issues included in the
final analysis of predictors. As we see from the analysis, the differences between the Aussiedler
and the Hannoverans are what has influenced the predictors of satisfaction and they are
primarily social in nature. However, the items that have been identified as good predictors of
resident satisfaction for each group are not necessarily the items that best predict residential
satisfaction of the total population. In future studies, it would be interesting to see what
variables satisfy a random sample of residents. The line of argument may also be extended to
examine what satisfies people of other immigrant groups in Germany. In addition, future
studies of Aussiedler might explore more social issues, such as the differences in life style
which they feel pressure to accept, ways to alleviate fears about being a victim of crime or
getting and keeping a job. Those which look at the Hannoverans might explore the values
which they feel are being challenged by their neighbours or why they feel that their neighbours
do not have the same interests.
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