

On the Sedimentation and Accreditation of Social Knowledges of Difference: Mass Media, Journalism, and the Reproduction of East/West Alterities in Unified Germany

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No, an identity is never given, received or attained; only the interminable and indefinitely phantasmatic process of identification endures.

—Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH WHEN THE MIRROR / REVEALS THE ENEMY.

—Heiner Müller, *Volokolamsk Highway*

My research on the professional consequences of the post-1989 restructuring of the eastern German media system came to an abrupt halt when I realized that my initial assumption of generalizable East/West differences in professional culture was not being borne out in my interviews and workplace interactions. Of course, there is nothing unusual about a fieldworker's crisis of faith. Ethnography is not a precise business like mathematics, we like to say, and many of us take solace that our paradigms are inevitably always works in progress. But this discovery was particularly troubling to me because East/West difference had always seemed *so certain* to me as a point of departure for understanding the dynamics of contemporary German society. After retracing the steps of this conviction to see where I had gone astray, I became even more uneasy when I recognized to what degree my "expert" academic judgment of difference was nestled on a foundation of commonsensical notions about German culture and identity. In Germany, this common wisdom, what I would term "intuitive public knowledge," held and still holds that because there are German citizens of eastern and western origin, East/West is a meaningful axis of social classification from which one can infer stable distinctions of culture, behavior, and character, such as East German dim-wittedness versus West German creativity or West German austerity versus East German humanitarianism.¹ I was

wittingly imitating and reproducing this logic of social difference largely because, in my own education, I always had known there were two oppositional and inverted Germanys. East/West difference was a “fact” that had been sedimented into intuitive certainty first by countless newspaper articles, school lectures, and informal conversations and later by reading the accredited secondary literature on German society and through my first professional correspondences with German academics. Thus, when it came time to draft my dissertation research proposal, I relied on East/West difference like a prosthesis for my methodology. I never had to “choose” it as a structuring principle because it seemed so perfectly and naturally suited to understanding professionalism in postunification German society.

How public, informal, and professional knowledges of difference co-elaborate one another is the general topic of this article. I will engage this theme largely by focusing on German identity and its East/West alterities. In doing so, I will describe identity formations as dynamic settlements of social knowledge that must be sedimented through multiple recursive operations of articulation, accreditation, and dissemination before they attain the intuitive currency and substance of a category of social belonging like “easterness” or “westernness.”

Of course, identifying the constructed “facticity” of collective identity is by no means a novel direction for social science. My recognition in this essay that the typified, stable meanings of “being East German” or “being West German” require actively negotiated identity categories builds on the insights of ethnomethodology and sociolinguistics extending back to Harold Garfinkel (1967) and Harvey Sacks (1992).² As the ethnomethodologists correctly assert, investigating the negotiation of social categories in everyday situations must proceed apace with discussions of the meanings with which actors invest these categories (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998:2–6). In a seminal essay, Richard Handler further calls for the need for a “destructive analysis” of the common wisdom of cultural difference as composed of bounded ethnic forms and substantive ethnic contents like cultural values, cultural traits, and cultural meanings (1985:172). Handler observes that both academic and indigenous ideologies of social belonging quietly elaborate one another by emphasizing the presence of timeless ethnic-national traits, thus making the quest to attribute discrete cultural meanings to particular collective identities not a context-bound practice of interpretation and representation in its own right but, rather, a kind of archaeology of natural distinctions.

Although the case for coupling the study of differentiation to the study of difference has been made convincingly, we lack analyses that map the full spectrum of social contexts and “semiosocial” exchanges (that is, intersubjective exchange undertaken via signification or language) through which particular schemes of social differentiation become objectified and accredited as meaningful, “natural” modes of cultural identification. In particular, what is still largely missing from contemporary research on social identities and alterities is focused ethnographic attention on the complex of institutions and practices

that mediates the cross-fertilization of everyday categories of cultural difference and expert knowledge of cultural difference.

This article offers insight into how a professional intellectual practice like journalism selectively formalizes intuitive and informal schemes of differentiation, factualizes the schemes as objective knowledges of identity difference and relational appurtenance through the specialized intellectual skills of “professional expertise,” and then publicizes the results of its labors as accredited knowledge of social self and other through institutional apparatuses such as the mass media. The article thus seeks to retrieve and to forefront the too-often neglected social agency of knowledge specialists in the negotiation, determination, and circulation of orders of identification and classification. In this way, the article points not only to the artifice of factitious identity differences but also to the artisanry of how those differences come to be refined, rationalized, and reproduced as objective “distinctions-in-nature.” The ethnography of intellectual professionals,³ among which we might include academics, journalists, consultants, advertisers, teachers, and writers, is therefore vital, I maintain, for understanding the everyday codification and sedimentation of social knowledges of difference.

By explicating the internal politics of expertise and identification within the profession of journalism in eastern Germany, one finds that professional intellectuals such as journalists index the same intimate knowledges of difference and appurtenance that saturate private and informal contexts of sociolinguistic interaction. Yet, in bringing their intimate knowledge to bear on the objects of their intellectual labors, they legitimize, rationalize, and disseminate more informal schemes of knowledge as incontrovertible expert judgment. In this respect, I argue that professional intellectual practices should be seen as crucibles of epistemic rationalization and objectification because their expert knowledge products mask—as Marx criticized the camera obscura of German philosophy—the “actual life-process” of the artisanal intellectual labors that created them (1978:154). Instead of identifying knowledge forms as the craftwork of knowledge specialists working in context, we tend (in both our everyday and our expert lives) to occlude those concrete epistemic labors on the grounds that the professional is simply indexing or elaborating absolute, objective, and immutable standards of distinction and value. I am arguing that professional intellectuals create an accredited formality for particular social knowledges of difference through the recursive elements of their knowledge labors, even if they do not, because of their own social and situational exigencies, create those formalities exactly as they please. How individual actors participate in the epistemic “feedback mechanism” (see Figure 1) demands more focused ethnographic attention.

The broader theoretical goal of this article is to illuminate this feedback mechanism as a constitutive *but by no means deterministic* aspect of the social formation of knowledge. I am not advancing a functionalist thesis that situates the sedimentation and accreditation of certain social knowledges through professional intellectual practices as a necessary function of political hegemony or

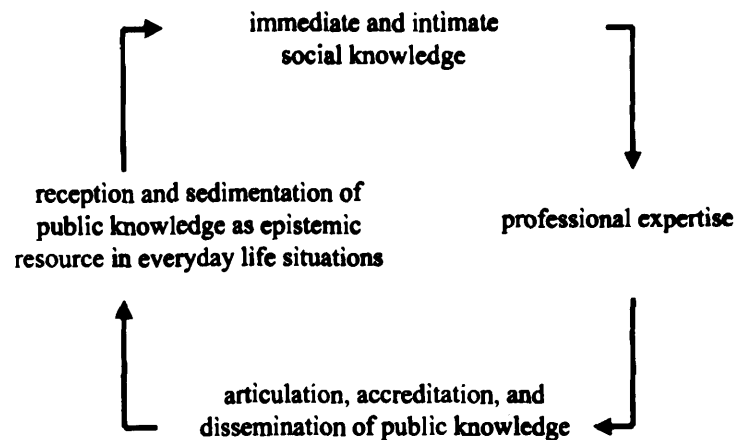


Figure 1
Epistemic "Feedback Mechanism."

of social cohesion. Quite the contrary, the kind of feedback mechanism I will explore is highly dynamic and highly attenuated to the complexities of factionalism in public culture, to the politics of institutional legitimacy, and to the idiosyncrasies of individual intellectual engagement. Thoroughly context dependent, the professional filtering and objectification of selected modes of everyday differentiation into naturalized public knowledges of difference suggest no more than the potential of a powerful system of cultural reproduction. It is only when shared ideologies of social belonging and social difference—crystallized in (1) public culture and its myriad representations, (2) professional standards and practices, and (3) everyday informal distinctions of self and other—co-elaborate one another that a fundamental diversity of individual permutations of broader social knowledges gravitate around preferred, dominant typifications of identity and alterity.

In this sense, what I have in mind is a more agent-centered version of Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge whereby the social "relationality" of knowledge formation returns as an explicit object of ethnographic interest and attention (1955:269–275). Studying professional intellectual practices in institutions like schools and the mass media as modes of epistemic accreditation and reproduction offers insights into the complex social life and historicity of identities and alterities. Such an approach demonstrates that identities and alterities are not free-floating symbols emanating from the essences of social groups. To the contrary, it shows us that social knowledges of identity and alterity are the crafted products of cultural specialists whose typifying symbolic forms testify to the agency, interests, and contexts of their makers.

To return to the ethnographic case at hand, in this article I will discuss three aspects of the formation of social knowledge of East/West difference in postunification Germany. First, I will try to provide some sense of the ubiquity of the significations of, and attestations to, these differences in everyday life by briefly introducing the complex semiotics and interests involved in the cultivation of a popularly, professionally, and governmentally acknowledged

"East German identity" fixed on former citizens of the German Democratic Republic. Second, I will discuss the institutional politics and phenomenology of difference in professional interactions between eastern and western German journalists and investigate how often unspoken yet structurally legitimated "facts" of easternness and westernness rationalize informal East/West differentiation into a putatively objective bifurcation of professional competence. Finally, to answer the historical question of how East/West distinctions originated and have become so visceral and widespread in everyday knowledges of self and other, I will explore how contemporary East/West differentiation is indebted to the Cold War German states' epistemic strategies of distinguishing one ethnotypically positive German nation from an ethnotypically negative national mirror image. The article concludes with the argument that professional intellectual labors mediate and seek to harmonize intuitive and public, informal and formal knowledges of difference in complex societies.

Signs and Shifters of East/West Identities and Alterities in Postunification Germany

Common wisdom in most social settings in Germany holds that East Germans and West Germans are culturally different from one another. Even though one was hard-pressed to find a physical remnant of the Wall in late-1990s Berlin, a perduring *Mauer im Kopf* (wall in the head) was said to exist. The fact of Cold War division had led to the fact of oppositional socializations that, in turn, had led to the indisputable efflorescence of two substantive yet inverted "cultures" of being German.

For the visiting ethnographer, public signs and expressions of East/West difference were hard to miss. One was literally confronted in the street with crime being blamed on "East German vandals" or with social malaise being imputed to "West German politicians." Whether indexed in informal discussions among friends, overheard on subway cars, or encountered in newspaper headlines, "East German" and "West German" identities and alterities are signified ubiquitously, and their validity as a logic of distinction is virtually never publicly contested. To clarify, one may quite freely contest what it means to be East or West German but not the social categories of "easternness" and "westernness" themselves, which are taken as cardinal a priori. Indeed, East/West (or what I term "longitudinal") identification is a common strategy for the distinction of social self from other in a multitude of different communicative situations, especially in eastern Germany, where most Germans report that distinctions of "East" and "West" appear more overt to them than in the territory of the former Federal Republic.

Among friends, variations on the stereotypes of the *Jammerossi* (whiny East German) and the *Besserwessi* (know-it-all West German) arose relatively often in conversation. For many of the western Germans I knew, eastern Germany remained the byzantine and ominous domain it had been for them before 1989, a negative mirror imaging of the conceived relations, qualities, and standards of the West (see also Althaus 1996). Thus, for any distinction of selfhood, a negative

"East German" inversion could be called into play.⁴ These were articulated in more or less subtle and serious ways: It was joked that East Germans were somewhat ape-like in their clumsy imitation of western norms or, more seriously, that they were feminine in their social passivity. Species, racialized, and gendered idioms further clustered around the axis of East/West, recalling Sander Gilman's work on difference and pathology and the semiotic fluidity with which alternative idioms of social difference coordinate one another (1985).⁵

My eastern friends and interlocutors meanwhile routinely indexed the fact of "westernness" to contradistinguish positive traits of selfhood from the competitive and hyperindividualistic aspects of national culture they attributed to West German socialization. I often heard that West Germans "wore masks," that their "western life" had made them "harder, more distant" and had given them "that awful quality of westernness: no capacity for self-doubt." When West Germans were conversationally denied humanity, it was on the basis of their mechanized habits of accumulation and consumption and because of their putative inability to forge genuine empathetic bonds with other persons because of compulsive competitiveness and individuality.⁶

The saturation of signs of East/West identity and alterity in everyday life, alongside the routine reliance on East/West distinction as a preferred mode for classifying and interpreting everyday events and actions, would seem at first glance to support the common wisdom that what is occurring in contemporary Germany is the informal symbolic negotiation of underlying cultural differences that arose from the divided path of Cold War socialization. Along those lines, psychologist Stefan Strohschneider suggests the following "standard" guide to East/West difference:

Even as those in the East experienced the behavior of the West Germans as marked by conquistadorial arrogance, inconsiderate destructive urges, and an egotistical craving for personal advantage, West Germans saw in East Germans a hypocritical double morality, cowardly petit bourgeois dullness or as Erpenbeck and Weinberg (1993:32) conclude, "a peculiar combination of post-authoritarian moroseness, unjustified delusions of entitlement and flagging personal initiative." [1996:32]

In point of fact, many eastern and western Germans reflexively acknowledge that being East German "means" something—such as being more communitarian, more local minded, and less flexible than being West German.

But the distinctions do not end here. There is no bounded set of associations that defines the "essence" of easternness or westernness. A by no means exhaustive list of associations I recorded during my field research would also include the following: East is to West as formulaic is to creative, as consensus minded is to conflict minded, as pessimistic is to optimistic, as backward is to cosmopolitan, as deductive reasoning is to inductive reasoning, as erotic is to unerotic, as warmth is to austerity, as maternal is to paternal, as idealism is to pragmatism. Indeed, there are few other idioms of differentiation for which a longitudinal homology cannot be discerned. The historical fact of Cold War division has been appropriated to organize an entire cosmology of intranational distinctions in morality, behavior, and character.

There are two points to be made about this cosmology that are relevant to our discussion. The first is to emphasize that longitudinal differentiation operates like a referential index or “shifter” in common usage (Gal 1991:444; Silverstein 1976). That is to say, associations of “easterness” and “westernness” are primarily indexical rather than symbolic, and their meaning is therefore highly dependent on communicative context. William Hanks describes “indexical” features of linguistic signification as those that reflect the heterogeneous “context embeddedness” of language, such as pronouns (we/they) and spatial deictics (here/there) (1996:176–184).⁷ For my purpose, the general point of emphasizing the indexicality of East/West distinction is to highlight that neither “easterness” nor “westernness” predictably symbolizes a given set of distinctions in nature. Rather, their symbolic values and semantico-referential properties (often glossed as “meaning”) are significantly mutable and shift according to the communicative contexts in which they are employed.

Yet this is not how attributions of “easterness” and “westernness” appear to social actors who seek to form meaningful associations in everyday situations. In any given context, East/West distinction appears intrinsically and generalizably meaningful to its articulators. The ideological fusion of the function of language (as unmediated reflection of natural reality) with the semantic content of language (East and West German identities are stable markers conditioned by distinctions in nature) occludes the context embeddedness of East/West identities and alterities behind stereotypical (and thus, by extension, metapragmatically “natural”) semantic clusters like western arrogance or eastern docility (see Silverstein 1979). Therefore, the common wisdom that East German and West German identities are symbolic expressions of socialized behaviors or essential cultural distinctions-in-nature is ideological more than it is empirical. Cosmological knowledge of East/West difference is likewise foremost an intersubjective, social knowledge (that is, a context-dependent classificatory knowledge of self/other relations).

The second point is that the reflexive “naturalness” of these informal distinctions of East and West masks a vast field of representational and interpretive labors that both optimize particular typified meanings and reproduce them in semiosocial practice. Again, common wisdom would hold that individual German citizens arrive at the same kinds of East/West distinctions independently because they can all recognize the innate cultural differences of their brethren from the hither side of the Wall. But it is my contention that the move to classify everyday experiences and relationships in longitudinal terms is rooted, in the first place, in the saturation of German public culture with these signs of identity and alterity. Because institutions of German public culture—specifically, in this case, corporate, academic, media, and governmental research and publication—issue forth a continuous stream of representations of everyday life in which East/West difference is a priori knowledge, longitudinal differentiation becomes a thoroughly publicly saturated and thus often intuitive mode of classification, inference, and judgment.

Thus, these serialized expert representations “feed back,” as discussed above, into the constitution of everyday knowledge and judgments of difference, and vice versa. Part of what makes academic research on East/West relations and differences in contemporary Germany such a fruitful industry is the pervasive and reflexive nature of East/West identifications and distinctions in settings of everyday life in Germany. In exchange, accredited knowledge of social difference produced in public cultural institutions like universities and the mass media by professional intellectuals like researchers and journalists helps stabilize and prioritize everyday longitudinal differentiation, giving it factual “substance” and validity. Expert knowledge and everyday knowledge share a certainty that meaningful, generalizable East/West cultural difference is real. The former grants the latter expert legitimation, while the latter buoys the former with intuitive assumption.

A few concrete examples will be helpful here. The industry of statistical research on German-German differences offers perhaps the clearest examples of how corporate, academic, and governmental interests have legitimated a widespread public perception of lingering East/West differences. Corporate research programs have actively sought to objectify “East Germans”—if often with only limited success—as a niche consumer audience and to target them with special product brands aimed to exploit their presumed nostalgia for pre-1989 social relations. Western companies have revived GDR-era brands such as Rotkäppchen champagne because of the perceived correlation between the “brand” of East German identity and the brands of GDR-era production. Public policy institutes meanwhile have sought to locate and verify stable traits of easternness and westernness in nearly every domain of opinion and action.⁸ One survey claimed to offer evidence of East/West aesthetic differences with data such as 36 percent of West Germans found “tall old trees” beautiful as opposed to only 25 percent of East Germans, and that 18 percent of East Germans judged “neon advertising” beautiful compared with only 6 percent of West Germans (Staab 1998:118). Ten-point gaps in survey results are routinely taken as evidence of broad and significant longitudinal differences in behavior, character, and opinion. My concern is not to debunk the existence of such correlations or even the methods used to obtain the data (almost entirely multiple-choice surveys); rather, my concern is to point out that this kind of intellectual labor is spinning golden knowledge of generalizable difference and semantic determinance from the straw of, at best, partial and ambiguous associations. Another study concluded, for example, that “in the former GDR, the feelings of disorientation, senselessness, loneliness and anxiety are more widespread than in the west” (Landua 1993:102), based on results of a survey of anxiety symptoms such as 17 percent of East Germans reporting that they were “constantly keyed up and jittery” compared with 12 percent of West Germans.

In a more damning indictment, a recent social-psychological study concluded, based on the results of a computer diagnostic, that East Germans were “reactive minded” and “formulaic” in their problem-solving abilities in comparison with more creative West German problem solvers (Strohschneider

1996:92–95). This study pointed to differences in “deep consciousness structures” between East and West Germans that mediated decision-making actions that, in turn, were said to be indebted to stable differences in *Kultur* (culture) that had cultivated divergent cognitive paradigms and abilities.

Likewise, mass media representations of longitudinal difference are routinely woven around academic and governmental findings and provide a conduit for their determinations of the factuality of eastern difference to be disseminated widely and in serial form. The weekly *Die Wochenpost*, which before its demise in 1997 advertised itself as a periodical specializing in the exploration of East/West relations, printed as its “Fact of the Week” for September 12, 1996, that “66 Percent of all East Germans are afraid of being deceived, swindled, beaten or raped” (1996:24). One wonders, Is the reader meant to extrapolate that such anxieties are pathological, that West Germans never fear being beaten or raped, or both? The circulation of such alleged statistical truths (in this case, the origin of the data was not even cited) in complete absence of contextual explanation demonstrates how fluidly “objective reportage” aids the objectification and codification of intuitive assumption.

And, beyond statistical distillations of difference, qualitative academic narratives further elaborate an epistemic backdrop conducive to generalized assumptions of East/West identities and alterities. Within the historiography of German unification, for example, there is something very like a master outline structured around a tidy historical teleology.⁹ In its first phase, pre-1989 socialization in the two Germanys imposes different expectations, lifestyles, values, and identities on the citizens of each state. In the second phase, the euphoric period during 1989, German-German “sameness” proves itself to be fleeting as an economic prosperity gap rises between East and West in 1990 that, coupled with skyrocketing eastern unemployment, generates an atmosphere of rising alienation and dissatisfaction within the eastern German populace.¹⁰ Finally, as alienation intensifies, longitudinal relations in Germany enter their most recent phase: antagonism. Anxious and unemployed former GDR citizens begin to accuse their western counterparts of duplicity and even deliberate malfeasance in their incapacity to fulfill the glorious promises of 1989. Stung by such insinuations, western Germans in turn accuse their eastern counterparts of ungratefulness, naïve expectations, and an instinctive longing for the return of Stalinism. Political scientist Andreas Staab further emphasizes, as many social scientists do, that the GDR state inculcated values or “traits” of harmony, subsidy, and communality in its citizens that stood profoundly at odds with the demands of what he terms the “Western culture” of “individuality, performance, flexibility and mobility” (1998:156).¹¹

Thus, the standard outline provides an encompassing social-historical rationale for any informal knowledge of East/West difference one might desire to verify. The outline explains that compulsive negotiations of difference arise naturally as reflections of the unhappy historical juxtaposition of an East German “culture” of socialism into the West German institutional, social, and economic “culture” of capitalism.¹²

To summarize, German public cultural institutions have assiduously generated vast fields of cross-referenced qualitative and quantitative knowledge of East/West difference. In turn, this knowledge is filtered in serial fashion into other subsidiary systems of circulation such as media reports, state initiatives of retraining and reeducating eastern Germans, and corporate advertising strategies that, all taken together, represent a powerful semiosocial resource for the reproduction of accredited social knowledge of East/West difference. When reading statistical analyses or watching the nightly news continuously conditions the reader or viewer to accept the factuality of East/West difference, it is perhaps not difficult to imagine why, in an everyday moment of outrage, a western citizen conjures the epithet of “East German vandal” to integrate his or her emotions with the powerful indexical and semantic potentials of the longitudinal idiom. In other words, the sheer ubiquity of signs of difference makes it difficult both not to assume that East/West reflects a natural ontology of difference and not to acknowledge the optimality of utilizing longitudinal distinctions to situate one’s selfhood in a meaningful context.

The question may be fairly asked: But is the typification of longitudinal difference not simply a function of western German hegemony in the postunification reconstruction? It seems clear in many of the examples I have offered that the “East German” is being positioned not only as different but also as deficient with respect to the “West German.” In practice, East/West differentiation has indeed helped legitimate the politics of German unification as a western project of civilizing the morally and culturally bankrupted East. And yet, as we also have seen, expert knowledge of German-German alterities mirrors strategies of identification that are already practiced by both eastern and western Germans in everyday sociolinguistic interactions. Thus, the problem is not quite so simple as the argument that western Germans mobilize their superior access to institutional systems of social reproduction like schools and the media to perpetuate stereotypes of East German inferiority to maintain their social hegemony in eastern Germany. That eastern Germans use these same strategies of stereotypification to positively differentiate themselves from “West Germans” suggests that East/West differentiation is more complexly woven into German collective identity and its indexical stabilizations than the political hegemony model would lead us to believe. In other words, the social categories of “East German” and “West German” are comfortably established as natural historical variations in a more broadly shared intuition of social belonging as *Kultur*—in the sense of “culture” understood as a bounded, reproducing, linguistically sustained, and referentially conservative mode of belonging.¹³ East/West difference is experienced as a natural form of cultural difference, not simply as the product of western colonial authority.

The Intimate Experience and Objectification of Difference in the Work World of an Intellectual Profession

How and why do informal distinctions of selves and others become formalized into objective knowledges of difference through professional intellectual

labors? As I have proposed, public cultural institutions such as mass media organizations and universities are significantly responsible for both formalizing and accrediting informal knowledges of identity difference. Now we must look more closely into the dynamics of the professional intellectual workplace to understand the actual contexts wherein knowledges of difference are rationalized and codified by social actors whose own daily lives intersect fields of both professional expertise and common wisdom. We must peer behind the many layers of textuality in public culture at the professional relations and intra-organizational dynamics that condition how public cultural forms like media reports are composed, selected, and disseminated.

Observing the daily interactions of eastern and western German journalists working side by side in German media organizations, I was often struck that, contrary to communicative convention outside the newsroom, longitudinal differentiation and identification seemed hardly present. It is extraordinarily rare to hear a journalist openly referred to by colleagues as being "East German" or "West German" or to hear East/West differences discussed audibly in workplace settings. When both eastern and western German journalists discussed the ubiquity of East/West stereotyping in German society at large, they usually expressed disdain for such crude generalizations and argued that journalism is the kind of profession in which such obsessions with difference are ill-afforded. Journalists work closely together in teams, under severe time constraints, and—as I heard again and again—there is no time and less energy for talking about the past. Journalistic professional standards of achievement, it was said, were not influenced by "Cold War mentality" and applied equally to both eastern and western journalists. As one young journalist put it to me, "There aren't, in my opinion, East and West German journalists any longer, only good and bad journalists, and then it doesn't matter where they come from."

Explicitly, within professional discourse in eastern German media institutions, the identity of professional fraternity is meant to supersede the axis of longitudinal differentiation. East/West logic is commonly held to be a nonprofessional, indeed, a vulgar, interpretive resource for classification and judgment. Yet the social situation of eastern German journalists within professional journalism since 1990 has not been as equitable as these overt descriptions of professional conviviality purport. The lack of open signification of longitudinal difference in the newsrooms of eastern Germany has (1) historical contingency in the unfolding of the unification process of the two German media systems since 1990, (2) institutional contingency in the hierarchical social relationships between eastern and western Germans in most media institutions, and (3) professional contingency in a naturalized bifurcation of jurisdiction and expertise along longitudinal lines. As one scratches beneath the surface of professional collegiality, one finds a familiar intimate social knowledge of difference muted by a professional code of silence that polices any spoken challenge to the workplace social-political status quo.

Like most former GDR institutions, the GDR broadcast and print media networks were assimilated to western German standards in the first few years

after German unification. The reforms that eastern German journalists had themselves initiated through grassroots uprisings in their institutions during the fall of 1989, when the socialist command apparatus of media production was rapidly dismantled, were largely tertiary to the unification process of the GDR and FRG media systems. There was little question of an eastern German "third way" of socialist journalism being seriously countenanced. Instead, a complete transposition of the GDR media to western German institutional and professional styles, standards, and systems was undertaken (see Sandford 1995). GDR television and radio stations were fully integrated into the FRG public radio system as of January 1, 1993, and most former GDR state and party print media organizations entered into partnership agreements with FRG-based media conglomerates, some of them as early as the first half of 1990. After unification, all GDR state property, including media institutions, was transferred into an enormous holding company, the Treuhand, which was responsible for matching eastern investment opportunities with responsible western investors. The politics of the Treuhand is an article in itself, but in the print media domain there is significant evidence, including off-the-record testimony I was given by western German media consultants, that the major western German media conglomerates quietly agreed to divide up the regional newspaper market of the former GDR so as to reward themselves with lucrative newspaper monopolies.¹⁴

What followed the buyouts of the eastern print media and the governmental takeover of the eastern broadcasting media was an intensive period of professional *Umerziehung* (reeducation) in which western German managers largely replaced eastern German chief editors and managerial staffs and entered into a crash course in reprofessionalization to western standards of practice. The western journalists who came East after 1990 most often did so out of a genuine commitment to "the rebuilding of the East" with the help of their western know-how. Yet, as one eastern German radio journalist recalled to me in an interview, some of the western journalists "didn't know what to expect. They thought they'd find a bunch of Stalinist functionaries who didn't even know how to speak into microphones properly. So they initially had a very arrogant attitude about us." Journalists of all origins described the period from roughly 1991 to 1994 as rife with all manner of professional and personal tension, misunderstanding, excitement, disappointment, and conflict. Most senior former GDR journalists, especially those over the age of 50, were encouraged to retire or were laid off. Overall, journalists "who could not adjust to the new system" or "who had too much of their lives invested in the old system," as presently employed journalists explained it to me, were gradually let go and replaced by western Germans or younger eastern Germans who were not perceived to be tainted by a pre-1989 professionalization as "agitators, propagandists, and organizers of the party of the working class."¹⁵ There is also evidence that, in some media organizations, questionnaires and reviews of GDR-era portfolios were used to determine that eastern German journalists were "too red" to be rehabilitated to democratic journalism after 1989.¹⁶

After 1995, the structural and institutional features of postsocialist transition had stabilized at most media organizations. New capital investments had been made by western owners to update newsroom technology and printing and broadcast facilities. New editorial teams were in place; new layouts had been completed—and the eastern German journalists who remained were a highly self-selected group of individuals who either actively encouraged the rapid imposition of western journalistic models or who at least did not criticize it openly. In 2000, I would estimate that fewer than one-third of the journalists who held fixed-contract positions in the GDR media in 1989 (some eight to ten thousand individuals) continue to be practicing journalists in any capacity. Precise employment statistics are difficult to determine, however, because of the large number of former GDR journalists who now work as freelancers, combining professional writing with other labor.

The complete economic control of western Germans over the management of the eastern German media has translated into explicit western German social and institutional control over most eastern German media institutions, with only a few exceptions in the print media domain.¹⁷ Western German journalists still overwhelmingly occupy the higher editorial ranks (publisher, chief editor, assistant chief editor, department head) at most eastern German media institutions, even though many openly expressed to me their feelings of alienation from eastern values and social life. This accounts in part for why western German journalists at eastern German media institutions often represent a semi-itinerant caste that maintains households in western Germany and then commutes to eastern jobs that are often several hours away. Western journalists tend to rotate in and out of positions in eastern Germany, usually for contracts of less than five years, and then return to other institutions owned by the same media group. In this sense, eastern Germany is still identified as a “bush post” for many western German journalists who expect to be compensated for their demonstration of organizational loyalty and commitment.

Eastern German journalists meanwhile experience a far more limited degree of job mobility and decision-making authority. Although certain individuals have advanced as far as chief editorial or assistant chief editorial posts in some media institutions, the majority of eastern German journalists are aware of unspoken glass ceilings (especially for older eastern German journalists). These barriers to vertical mobility normally limit eastern Germans to lower status positions such as department head, assistant department head, and journalist—not to mention the abundance of eastern German freelance journalists who are paid on a per-contract basis and receive none of the generous benefit packages accruing to fixed-contract journalists. At most eastern German media institutions, eastern German journalists have attained a somewhat subaltern form of job stability in the late 1990s, conditioned by a relatively stable labor market in the eastern media, a consummate lack of access to western German labor markets (where being identified as “an East German journalist” virtually dismisses any hope of job opportunities), and glass ceilings to vertical advancement within home media organizations. Significantly, western German

journalists often attribute stultified eastern German careers to stereotypical inflexibility and unwillingness on the part of locally minded East Germans to try new things, move to new places, or take the requisite professional risks for advancement.

Finally, more to the immediate concern of this article, intraprofessional evaluations of journalistic professionalism in eastern Germany openly construct "East German journalists" as (sub)professionals with different performance capabilities, attitudes, and areas of expertise than "West German journalists." Although journalists, as discussed above, rarely openly differentiate among one another on the basis of origin within the spatial and temporal boundaries of everyday work routines, all are well aware that virtually every post-1989 treatise on journalism in Germany makes explicit reference to generalizable differences in professional competence between East and West German journalists. This chartering of differential capabilities of knowledge and expertise is critical because, as Andrew Abbott observes, "jurisdiction is the defining relation in professional life" (1988:3). For example, the essential handbook to journalistic practice in Germany, the *ABCs of Journalism* (Mast 1994)—a volume one finds placed prominently in nearly every journalist's office in Germany—states definitively that

East German journalists differ, as a survey of Eastern German media organizations has shown, in their performance capabilities from their West German colleagues. There are deficits in their production of news bulletins, in their research skills, and in their ability to think and act in a competitive fashion. The strengths of East German journalists lie in their superior regional knowledge, as well as their familiarity with the people who live there, and in a sensitive approach to their public. In opposition to the western journalists, who are said to be lone agents and individualists, eastern journalists are more compromise oriented and integrate themselves more easily into teams. Journalists from the west, however, continue to significantly exceed their East German colleagues in specialized knowledge of functional mechanisms and institutions of a free political and economic system. The growing together [*Zusammenwachsen*] of the two German professional cultures is still a long way off, as clear traces of principles of political affiliation [*Parteilichkeit*] and tractability, residue of their former socialist propaganda work, have been left behind in the professional ranks. Moreover, the demands of the market and of a plural society have not yet been completely internalized. [1994:81, my translation]

The *ABCs of Journalism* is used and cited widely as a canonical authority on both the theory and the practice of journalism as an intellectual profession. For "East German journalists," its positive classification that they are more context sensitive, team oriented, and regionally knowledgeable sweetens no less sweeping, but more professionally and intellectually injurious, typifications. For example, judgments such as that East German journalists have not yet internalized the "demands . . . of a plural society," are politically tractable, loathe to question authority, and are unable to think creatively on their own virtually exclude journalists of eastern origin from being taken seriously as professional intellectuals. Even the faint praise of "superior regional knowledge"

suggests that easterners generally lack competence and expertise in international issues or even national political, social, and economic concerns—all areas of journalistic knowledge that are regarded as elite in Germany as elsewhere.

It is not difficult to imagine how the politics of polarizing expertise localizes the broader longitudinal logic that East Germans experience the unified German lifeworld according to a different *Kultur* from West Germans at the level of daily professional practice. The *ABCs of Journalism* excerpt explicitly denotes the existence of two parallel and distinct professional *Kulturen* (cultures) that have been conditioned by different histories, economies, and norms. Because they are accepted as culturally distinct social clusters, East and West German journalists are expected to have differential professional capabilities owing to divergent socializations. Of course, many eastern German journalists are intimately aware that the typification of people's professional skills based on place of origin and education disadvantages them, especially when the profession's codex of good professional practice identifies "the East German journalist" with an underdeveloped skill set and marginal areas of expertise. One journalist in her late twenties described her dissatisfaction "that it is so difficult to lose this title of 'East German journalist,' even if, for many of us in the younger generation, who were scarcely trained in the GDR, it doesn't really make any sense."

Yet the expert documentation of professional difference functions as a kind of structural charter for professional routines. Such routines integrate the signification of different "cultures" of skill and expertise with congeries of intra-institutional actions and divisions of labor that inscribe wider assumptions of East/West difference in daily professional practice. Indeed, the contemporary division of labor in most eastern German media institutions segregates East German journalists as subprofessionals with limited local and regional expertise, whereas West German journalists are expected to contribute critical and analytical skills and a much broader comparative base of factual knowledge. Both eastern and western interlocutors confirmed that eastern German journalists continue to be assigned stories and research based on the perceived superiority of their knowledge of local and regional issues—work that was condensed under the rubric of so-called *Ostkompetenz* (eastern competence). Meanwhile, western German journalists are far more often assigned editorial and lead story work and tend to report on national issues because it is presumed as a matter of implicit editorial policy that "national issues" are equivalent to "West German issues" and therefore require an intimate knowledge of western political and social life that East Germans are neither expected or—put more cynically—encouraged to have.¹⁸ On several occasions, eastern German journalists expressed frustration to me of a certain "ghettoization" of their talents: "I don't know why in 1997 it matters whether an East German or West German writes about Bonn politics, but there are still these lingering prejudices on the part of some people." This cycle of the expectation, experience, and elaboration of professionally prejudicial differentiation involves what Sartre might have termed the "practico-inert" predication of easternness as a condition of

alterity a priori to all professional practice and knowledge (1976:318–320; see also Goldberg 1990:309). Because eastern German journalists rarely are selected to write lead editorials, it is presumed by their conspicuous absence that they do not have the requisite skills or knowledge to do so.

The irony of the factuality accorded longitudinal difference in professional discourse is that, in practice, journalist and ethnographer alike had to search for verification of these prejudices. I often encountered a curious lacuna when I encouraged eastern and western journalists to tell me what specifically their longitudinal others did differently than they did when it came to actual journalistic *Praxis*.¹⁹ Some western German journalists pointed to deficiencies in the *Handwerk* (craft, trade skills) of eastern Germans because of the lack of emphasis on research in the GDR media. Others mentioned that East German journalists had problems thinking independently and critically because they had been trained to be obedient to authority figures. But, even then, specific cases were rarely narrated to me, and only a handful could recall a specific instance that supported their general intuition of professional alterity. This I took to be a cue, as with so much of East/West differentiation, that assignments of difference primarily reflected recourse to a longitudinal idiom to empower situational determinations of selfhood and alterity. Eastern German journalists also did not commonly identify specific professional or expertise-related weaknesses among specific western German colleagues but, instead, tended toward glosses like, “Wessis seem a bit too career oriented sometimes,” or “They always have to show their readers how clever they are instead of trying to teach them something.” In general, I found western Germans more willing to typify “easternness” while in their workplaces than eastern Germans, who favored allegorical or analogical strategies when they openly acknowledged difference at all.²⁰ It was clear to me that this was not due to intrinsic western “critical sensibility” but, rather, owed to the relative critical flexibility enjoyed by the “West German journalists” who feared no organizational repercussions for articulating what amounted professionally to common sense.

Coming from an “East German journalist,” however, such critical sentiments immediately were interpreted by western journalists as expressions of nostalgia for the socialist comforts of the GDR. Several journalists told me that speaking out “as an East German” regardless of topic or statement was something they were loathe to do. Any recourse they made to a longitudinal identity, even simply to make a comparative point of interpretation, was taken by their western colleagues as dissatisfaction with the “democratization” of eastern Germany after unification. As strictly “regional experts,” East German journalists were deemed to be overstepping their jurisdiction by pretending to possess critical expertise on the national social-political status quo. One eastern German journalist in her late thirties summarized her experience with the censure that accompanied such perceived transgressions in expertise:

The only time I think being East German works negatively against you is when you express opinions that perhaps this bourgeois-democratic system does not represent the end of history. And when you suggest that something may come after it.

Because, like any system, it's going to come to an end sooner or later, maybe in 50 maybe in 100 years, and then one has to think about what will come after it and what kind of a society that should be. But that's completely taboo to talk about the end of this system because the moment they hear you say something like that they think, "Oh, she wants the GDR back," which isn't the point at all. . . . The West Germans have no problem asking us how we could have lived in the GDR, but I don't think they've ever thought about how they would answer an outsider's question 50 years from now who would ask them, "How could you have lived in the Federal Republic of Germany with its unemployment, with hunger, well not much hunger, but with homelessness definitely?"

Pragmatically, such censure means that eastern German journalists continue to be fundamentally disallowed the kind of creative critical engagement in journalistic writing that western German journalists typified as the best genre of western democratic journalism. The double bind of the "East German journalist" can be captured succinctly: Saying nothing means one is a passive functional intellect who still prefers to be told what to think; yet criticizing the status quo in the way that western German journalists routinely do means that one is dissatisfied with the rigors of democratic life and wants the GDR back. Such are the paradoxes that pin eastern German journalists into the social category of the "East German journalist." The silence of longitudinal differentiation that is meant to be both polite and professional also protects the pragmatic salience of East/West difference by undermining any attempt in daily communicative practice to challenge its naturalized logic. By the late 1990s, the great majority of employed eastern German journalists have acquiesced and come to accept their regional role as a perfectly normal function of their eastern subjectivity. One man in his late forties told me, "I'll never know the West like they do—so much of their knowledge came to them in their mothers' milk." The image of suckling expert knowledge from the breast of western socialization is a particularly apt metaphor for how professional dynamics contribute to the naturalization and reproduction of social knowledge of difference.

The division of domains of expert knowledge and journalistic tasks replicates, in the microcosm of the newsroom, the informal and accredited knowledges of longitudinal difference that we already have encountered. Journalists both bring informal knowledge of East/West difference to work with them and mediate it through journalistic practices such as gathering and selecting statistical data, interpreting the dynamics of unified German life, editing their texts for clarity and accuracy, and putting their representations into circulation.

Placed within the broader contexts of professional discourse, however, the professional bifurcation of expertise, even coordinated and reproduced by divided professional routines, does not represent a perfect hegemony. Media organizations do a fairly thorough job of policing any audible or visible negotiation of difference in the workplace, and these absences both stabilize and legitimate the social and economic hierarchies in the eastern German media. Yet both eastern and western journalists continuously and openly signified and debated essentialisms and typifications of the "character" of longitudinal difference to me in other settings—bars, coffee houses, and their homes—as often

as not reinscribing stereotypical figurations in the very effort of deconstructing them. Positive stereotypes of national-cultural belonging emerged again and again; western Germans embraced the cosmopolitanism and freedom of thought inherent in their conception of western intellectual selfhood, whereas eastern Germans embraced the warmth and humanity of their intellectual lives compared with what they saw as the spiritual hollowness of West Germans. Regardless of origin, my interlocutors were prone to sigh, "I don't mean to be crude, but they really are different from us." What is difficult for me to convey in written form were the nuances in speech that accompanied this motion from silence to voice, even outside of the workplace. There were pauses, backtracking, murmurs, and uncomfortable comportment as both eastern and western German intellectuals attempted to articulate their intimate knowledge of difference. This was no simple matter as they sought idioms that were not excessively vulgar or stereotyped, yet were perceived as familiar to an American interlocutor and were still true to their intuition that elusive traits of "easterness" and "westernness" existed that could be pinned down in interpretation and rationalized by logic.

Look, an East German! Bodily C(l)ues to the Reproduction of Difference in Professional Life

There is a tendency to approach professional intellectual life as though its salient dynamics are limited to oral discourse and cognition. Yet, to completely analyze the context of the professional intellectual workplace, it is important to note, as Michel Foucault (1997) does with his concept of "governmentality," that discourse resolves itself to the ethics of the self in both corporeal and intellectual dimensions.²¹ In eastern German media organizations, spoken and unspoken knowledges of longitudinal difference were co-elaborated and codetermined by bodily knowledges of difference. As is observed above, my interlocutors' bodies became restless when the subject of East/West difference arose in conversation. With the situational inhibitions to vocal challenge, the body became a remarkable instrument for registering difference, for expressing uneasiness with the natural distinctions coveted by social knowledge, and, finally, for nevertheless codifying the semiosocial distinctions into a bodily knowledge of difference.

Again, a brief example will be helpful here. Once, while at a newspaper office in Berlin, I provoked a discussion of how the experience of western-style journalism might be quite different for eastern and western German journalists given that eastern German journalists have the comparative advantage of having undergone professionalization twice over. My own complicity in objectifying longitudinal difference was that at this stage in my research I continued to accept "easterness" and "westernness" as natural categories of analysis. The departmental newsroom where we sat belonged to a major West Berlin daily newspaper that had hired a few dozen eastern German journalists since 1990, primarily to provide expertise on the history and nuance on the lifeworld of the eastern half of the city. Desks were laid out openly, without dividers. Cluttered

bookshelves ringed the walls. The setting was informal and bustling like any newsroom in the late afternoon.

Andreas, a journalist from the Rhineland in his late thirties, slouched back in his desk chair considering my cautious suggestion that the virtues of western journalism might lie somewhat in the eye of beholder. After a few moments he said, "You know, I think East and West German journalists basically have had the same experience of western journalism because it benefits all of us in mostly the same ways. But then, of course, I'm a West German, so I really shouldn't try to speak for them." He rocked back in his chair, pausing, and then quickly spun around in his chair, calling out to Matthias, also a journalist in his thirties, who had been hired from a former GDR paper and who was at just that moment opening a filing cabinet some twenty feet away.

"Matthias," Andreas said affably but loudly, "*You're* an East German, why don't you give Dominic the East German perspective?" Matthias visibly winced, and his eyes focused on a point somewhere behind me. I felt a knot in my stomach for having put him in this situation. Flushed, Matthias then looked back down into the filing cabinet and said somewhat softly, "Well, you know, I can only speak for myself. But I don't see much difference." Andreas shrugged nonchalantly and turned back to me while Matthias avoided further eye contact.

One explanation for Matthias's wince is that the exchange had been a rare transgression of the code of silence in the professional workplace and one for which Matthias was not prepared. The other explanation, and the one that I feel is more probable, is that Matthias's motor reflex of recoil suggests an intimate familiarity with the fluid parameters of the code of silence. He knew reflexively that whether difference is spoken or not, the factuality of eastern alterity is a constitutive presence in the workplace. For this reason, Matthias's wince at being interpellated with the "fact" of his easternness reminded me immediately of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, in which repeated iterations of "Look, a Negro!" gradually penetrate the narrator's epidermal "signifier" of otherness and create a bodily nausea, a somatic registration of his indexical appurtenance (1967:111–112). As Fanon writes, the black man discovers the tradition of his "ethnicity," inherits the fact and meaning of his "blackness," at that moment of alienation from his own body, at the moment that he physically recoils from his interpellation. So, following Fanon, it is the gesture of identification, the pointed finger and statement, "There you are, my East German friend," through which "easternness" is learned by, and anchored to, particular bodies in particular places and times.

In our case, we see how an eastern German journalist winced at being cast as a subprofessional "East German journalist" and politely tried to assert his own individuality. Nevertheless, his face flushed because the damage had been done—his efforts to "pass" as simply a "German journalist" failed. The western German journalist meanwhile, unaware that his simple "statement of fact" could provoke such feelings of anxiety and hopelessness, shrugged and settled comfortably back into his indexical position as a critical, free-thinking, expert "West German journalist."

The professional intellectual's body thus collects and cements a multiplicity of everyday intimations of difference into a silent bodily grammar of gestures that ultimately make the calm, confident "West German" and the recoiling, retiring "East German" even more easily identifiable. One journalist explained to me that one could always tell an East German by his or her uncertain and slightly stooped posture. Much like the body of the Jew that was depicted in German public culture not so long ago as twisted and misshapen by the extraction of German wealth (Newborn 1994), the body of the East German both knows its difference and is known for its hexis. It registers a deep phenomenological knowledge of alterity even when, for reasons of politeness and professionalism, difference must remain unspoken.

Longitudinal Schismogenesis and the (Re)Production of National Culture

I have now fleshed out a professional context within which professional intellectuals formalize, objectify, and accredit knowledge of social difference. I have noted how intraorganizational dynamics in eastern German newsrooms replicate the same differential logic present in both public culture and informal interactions but in a disciplined professional register. This helps us to understand how journalists working in media organizations can reproduce knowledge of East/West difference as seamlessly and unreflectively as I did when I scripted my research funding proposals. But the question of why East/West identities and alterities constitute such a powerful, salient, and preferred knowledge of difference in postunification Germany remains.

My argument here is historical and concerns the unhappy collision of collective memory with knowledge of ethnotypical collective belonging (German national *Kultur*) in postwar Germany. As John Borneman presciently identified at the time of German unification, "durable forms of division" already had been built into the East/West distinction whose semiotic purchase would far outlive the fusion of the Cold War German states (1992:334). Following Borneman's argument, the legitimizing roots of contemporary longitudinal differentiation lie in the language each Cold War German state developed to define its other, an epistemic systematization of intranational alterity that was transferred to the consciousness of its citizens. Indeed, looking carefully at each of the Cold War German state's narratives and public discourse about the character and quality of the other Germany, one finds an exchange system of accusation for the perverted national culture of the Nazi state.²² Neither state was able to rationalize away the dilemma that, in the logic of timeless "national belonging," even Germans who were born after 1945 were part of the same ethnic-national collectivity responsible for the Holocaust. Put another way, if Germans were said to be too intolerant or too willing to take orders as matters of national essence, then something had to be done with those traits to make certain that history would not repeat itself.

Still, each state wished to identify itself as the historical vehicle of a collective of civilized and modern Germans who were either victims themselves or had purified themselves of the dangerous national traits that had "caused"

the Holocaust. The ideologies of language and culture described earlier in this article served the German states well as each used a currency of stereotypes to determine both flaws and virtues in German national character that could then be easily apportioned between the state's own citizens and those of the other Germany. Each state indexed and accredited metonymic tokens of German cultural character—those both embarrassing and reassuring “ethnotypes” like “Germans are intolerant” or “Germans are inward”—that draw on what Michael Herzfeld calls national-cultural intimacy (1997:3, 26–32). And each state actively converted these tokens into essential metaphors of longitudinal difference. Citizens of the Federal Republic were denoted to be “typically German” in their arrogance, revanchism, and comfort with the exploitation of the weak and poor. Citizens of the German Democratic Republic were interpreted as “typically German” in their readiness to obey another totalitarian strongman, march in youth brigades, and spy on one another for the secret police. The contingency of both FRG and GDR domestic and foreign policies on U.S. and Soviet geopolitical influence was recognized but usually only accorded the position of a mediating influence on Germans being observed “behaving as Germans are prone to behave.”

In postwar Germany, national identity therefore developed a bipolar character. The good traits were cultivated carefully at home, while the nightmarish survivals of Nazi culture were imagined to be perversely exploited on the hither side of the Wall. Bernhard Giesen makes the interesting, if somewhat sweeping, point in his excellent study of the social agency of intellectuals in cultivating language(s) of nationalism that “the modernization of social relations brings the stranger into one's own society” (1998:62) and that this dilemma drives the imagination of principled “national” (that is, translocal) belongings to recalibrate the intimate awareness of difference to the necessity of maintaining social coherence. Giesen's observation that processes of identity differentiation aim to cultivate collective sameness through difference valuably illuminates the case of the sameness of German national identity being distilled through what might be termed “longitudinal schismogenesis.”²³

Since 1990, there is only one German state, one set of institutional systems, and, theoretically, a homogeneous set of national distinctions, values, and standards. But, unsurprisingly, two “cultures” of being German are still widely recognized, one positive and one negative depending on whom one happens to be and in what context one is speaking. Although such generalization is always dangerous, it seems that a great deal of East/West differentiation in Germany since unification still has to do with the fabrication of knowledge of national sameness through the broadest we/they indexicals of “being German.”²⁴ Even after the collapse of the Cold War geopolitical order that offered the East/West axis as an easy compass to the topography of German national character, East/West differentiation is still widely used as a cardinal axis for defining social selfhood in innumerable everyday encounters. And this fact of East/West difference allows both eastern and western Germans to maintain the ontologies of national history and national culture preferred by post-Enlightenment European

ideologies of language and culture without sacrificing their ability to distance themselves culturally from the horrors of the Holocaust. So long as the phantasmatic figures of the Jammerossi and the Besserwessi stalk German public culture, the “bad Germans” will always be indexically elsewhere.

Of course, although both eastern and western Germans participate equally in the cultivation of selfhood and alterity through longitudinal differentiation, it bears reminding that the politics of difference do not reflect a level playing field. Today, in all elite national forums of public knowledge, westernness is the ideal. The fact of an “eastern other within” continues to providentially allow both for the localization of symptoms of essential national infirmities in the East and for the resignification of the unified “national culture” as essentially western, democratic, and cosmopolitan. All these traits are imagined to be antithetical to the “East German.” Is it any wonder, then, that the “East German journalist” is professionally determined to be incapable of accurately articulating these qualities that are believed to be so intrinsically foreign to him or her?

The perduring legitimacy of social knowledge of East/West difference remains interwoven with the legitimacy of knowledge of German national character, national culture, and national history. Contrary to the wisdom of the socialization model of longitudinal difference that East/West identities and alterities will melt away with the future socialization of “unified Germans,” my argument is that knowledge of East/West difference will likely remain a potent identificatory, interpretive, and representational resource both inside and outside of Germany for some time to come. This is precisely because East/West differentiation is not a symbolic outgrowth of socialized differences in behavior and character; rather, it is at once a more abstract and intimate semiosocial means of articulating, stabilizing, and reproducing the typifying distinctions of German national culture.

Conclusion: From Intuitive Assumption to Public Knowledge and Back Again

It seems rather more than accidental that we have encountered identical knowledges of East/West difference and similar semiosocial practices of differentiation in private, professional, and public contexts. Indeed, the link between the complexities of public discourse on the character and fate of the German nation and the complexities of everyday negotiations of identity and alterity through stereotypes is stronger than oppositional conceptions of “objective” and “everyday” knowledges would have us believe. In this article, I have theorized that professional contexts mediate everyday knowledges and public cultural forms in the German nation-state. My argument can be summarized as follows: Professional intellectuals occupy a unique mediating position in the formation of social knowledges of difference because their knowledge labors straddle private and public knowledges of identity and alterity. In praxis and identity, professionals bridge local, national, and transnational spheres of social belonging. Outside the office, as my interlocutors did, they index the vulgate stereotypes of alterity that saturate private and public knowledges of social difference. In the

workplace, they engage more elite, nuanced, and silent strategies of differentiation. Yet it is precisely through the currency of longitudinal distinctions that differentiated workplace regimens are licensed and through which the intimate significance of the East/West idiom is reproduced by eastern Germans being disallowed critical voices and, as a result, being interpellated always again with their “innate” professional deficiencies. From within such daily practices and workplace dynamics, media representations are born. Quantitative and qualitative knowledge of the facts of East/West difference are read, distilled, and incorporated by journalists who intuit such relations surrounding them both at home and, perhaps all the more strongly through rigorous silence, at the office. And so, to follow my argument, an accredited version of everyday intuition becomes recursively sedimented into public knowledge, and the semiotics of difference flourish.

This article is by no means intended as an exhaustive exploration of how knowledges of social difference are codified and accredited through professional intellectual practices. I have, for example, not even scratched the surface of the various kinds of individual and intersubjective “counterknowledges” that resist and deflect, to a greater or lesser extent, the dominant epistemic settlements of difference that saturate our professional and private lives. Rather than delineating a typology of knowledge forms and operations, this article hopes to challenge all of us ethnographers of more or less “complex” societies to revisit the problem of the “construction” of seemingly natural knowledge formations such as “national character,” “western identity,” or “professional expertise.” Yet, rather than being satisfied with exposing the inventedness of these formations, I would urge us to take the next step and (re)discover the social agency and intellectual labors embedded in these “objective” knowledges and to study the social life of those responsible for articulating and calibrating them (see Suny and Kennedy 1999). As I have argued elsewhere, German national culture did not spring from the earth, to paraphrase Marx, like a mushroom but, rather, developed historically and to a great extent through the artisanal knowledge labors of a translocal cultural and professional elite (Boyer 2000; see Marx 1967:122). Likewise, in the present case, we have seen that East/West differentiation is not an instinctive function of ethnotypical “German intolerance” but, rather, evidence that many Germans draw on a similar widely circulated and legitimated idiom of classification and inference to “fill the frame[s] of everyday social experience with meaning” (Fernandez 1986:45). Exploring the relationality of social knowledge formations—that is, the everyday practices of knowledge making that bridge intimate situational certainties with generalizations of collective character and essence—will help us to better understand the historicity of particular knowledges of self and other. By taking seriously the idea that these knowledges are resources and not determinants of future semiosocial practice and epistemic order, we may further appreciate knowledge-making practices not simply as deputized functions of political hegemony or as replicators of cultural order. Instead, we may approach the

social formation of knowledge in its full complexity of context embeddedness, creativity, and conservatism.

Notes

Acknowledgments. I wish to thank the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation in Bonn and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research for generously funding my field research in eastern Germany during 1996 and 1997. Research was undertaken concomitantly at several media organizations in Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Gera, Chemnitz, Cottbus, Suhl, and Rostock, consisting of observation combined with an extensive series of interviews with both eastern and western German journalists. A shorter version of this article entitled "Longitudinal Schismogenesis and the 'Fact of Eastern-ness' in the Eastern German Media since 1990" was presented at the Society for Cultural Anthropology meetings in San Francisco in May 1999, and I would like to thank Caroline Humphrey, Louise Lamphere, and Martha Lampland especially for their responses to that version of this work. For their helpful comments on earlier drafts of the longer version of the essay, I owe a debt of gratitude to Dan Segal and four anonymous reviewers for *CA*, who made a number of insightful observations as to what this article is "really about." I also would like to express thanks to the Anthropology of Europe Workshop at the University of Chicago and particularly David Altshuler, Patrick Eisenlohr, Krisztina Fehervary, Susan Gal, Frank Romagosa, and Michael Silverstein for their help in defining and framing the problem under consideration and to Barbara Boyer and Johanna Schoss for their careful proofreading of the final manuscript.

1. I define individuals as "eastern German" when they were born in the German Democratic Republic and raised to adulthood there. I make no further assertion about the influence of this socialization process on individual values or behavior. I define and employ "western German" along parallel lines. I reserve "East German" and "West German" for more pointed reference to stereotypical social categorizations about longitudinal difference. It should also be mentioned that Germans make use of several substantive pairs for differentiating longitudinal identities including, in order of decreasing formality, *Leute aus den neuen/alten Bundesländern* (people from the new/old federal states), *Ostdeutsche/Westdeutsche* (East/West Germans), *Ostler/Westler* (easterners/westerners), and *Ossis/Wessis* (easties/westies). Each of these indexical sets suggests a stable substantive distinction, which is another reason why I prefer the somewhat more contingent adjectival connotations of "eastern" and/or "western" German.

2. In this line of inquiry, a compelling argument has been developed (for example, in Antaki and Widdicombe 1998; Moerman 1974; Schneider 1997; and Strong and van Winkle 1996) that complex politics and poetics of social differentiation are dialectically related to the constellations of perduring social and cultural "differences" that we navigate in both our professional and our everyday lives.

3. By "intellectual professional" I intend to describe individuals for whom operations (articulation, negotiation, dissemination, criticism, etc.) of public knowledge are a matter of socially legitimated jurisdiction. I therefore counterpose this category to non-professional intellectual agency like street poetry and likewise distinguish it from non-intellectual professional agency like military officership, medical specialization, or legal practice. My conception of the intellectual as "knowledge specialist" remains, in general, close to Bourdieu's discussion of the bourgeois cultural capitalist in *Homo Academicus* (1988). Still, limiting the analysis of intellectual life and agency to the deployment of forms of cultural capital in fields of action seems to unnecessarily reduce and/or

universalize human creativity to utilitarian motivations. Stereotyping, an issue I deal with at length in this article, for example, seems scarcely intelligible simply as distinction for individual gain. Stereotyping is also about the indexical figuration of the self in context and the cultivation of routinized forms of social belonging as ends in themselves. Thus, I would encourage accepting Bourdieu's work on cultural distinction (1984) as one important feature of the (self-)constitution of intellectual lives and identities, but I would also urge greater reflection on the diversity of motives and effects of intellectual agency as well as greater attention to the idiosyncrasies of particular local, institutional, and national contexts of intellectual life.

4. The most total of these was the identification of the East German as a "Zone-Zombie," a social malefactor sleepwalking through the networks of the western German lifeworld, who is restless and dissatisfied with the virtues of democracy and freedom and longs, one supposes, for the return of the corrupt totalitarian regime that birthed him or her. This image had marginally less popularity during the period of my fieldwork than it had a few years earlier but was nonetheless one of the most telling and disturbing idioms I encountered.

5. Judith Butler makes a similar point in *Bodies that Matter*:

It seems crucial to resist the model of power that would set up racism and homophobia and misogyny as parallel or analogical relations. The assertion of their abstract or structural equivalence not only misses the specific histories of their construction and elaboration, but also delays the important work of thinking through the ways in which these vectors of power require and deploy each other for the purpose of their own articulation. Indeed, it may not be possible to think any of these notions or their interrelations without a substantially revised conception of power in both its geopolitical dimensions and in the contemporary tributaries of its intersecting circulation. [1993:18]

For further evidence of the tessellation of "tributary" alterities in different places and times, I would recommend Boas 1940, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:86–125, Finzsch and Schirmer 1998, Gould 1996, Haraway 1989, and Stocking 1968.

6. Yet eastern Germans also are intimately aware that criticism of the West immediately hardens their discursive interpellations as "whiny and ungrateful" Ossis, so many further distinguish a second negative indexical category of "Ossi"-ness, situating themselves in a positive middle ground between the stereotypical poles of western arrogance and egotism and eastern stubborn inflexibility (cf. Berdahl 1999:180–181). I likewise encountered some western German journalists, particularly those who worked in eastern German media institutions, who distinguished themselves and their work through a negative indexical of "Wessi"-ness that typified careerist West Germans who allegedly worked in the East solely for personal advancement. Sometimes these individuals referred to themselves as *Wossis*. I noticed, however, that in both the eastern and the western cases, the "we're neither east nor west" strategy of counterdistinction from one's supposed longitudinal essence was quite unstable and was often abandoned halfway through a conversation because my interlocutors seemed to feel it required too many caveats to sustain its relevance. In retrospect, I consider such moments more as gestures of resistance toward a dominant axis of classification than as stable strategies for identity formation in their own right.

7. This distinction between "index" and "symbol" as different types of signs is rooted in the work of linguist and philosopher Charles S. Peirce (1955). Peirce, according to Michael Silverstein, defined the index as "in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object, on the one hand, and with the sense of memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand," creating a "contextual contiguity between

sign-vehicle and entity signaled" (Silverstein 1976:27). The symbol meanwhile establishes an analogical or metaphorical relationship between "sign-vehicle" and object, the classic "arbitrary" sign. In modern European language ideologies, symbolic features of language are typically privileged above indexical features as the "essence" of language because symbols purport to signify more stable and "true" semiotic correspondences than indexicals that are thoroughly embedded in the dynamics of social-cultural context and therefore semantically mutable (Silverstein 1979). On the relationship of indexicality to meaning, see also Putnam 1975.

8. There are very few German research institutes that have not funded some form of East/West research since 1989. Public and private sector funding has been abundant for explorations of the behavioral habits, opinions, and values that differentiate East and West Germans.

9. This outline is profoundly interdisciplinary and has been employed widely in academic research from economics to sociology, to psychology, to history, to political science. For examples, see Dennis 1993, Fulbrook 1994:214–218, Landua 1993, Maaz 1990, Maier 1997:298 ff., Rinke 1995, and Wagner 1996. The basic interpretation of events is so commonplace and intuitive in scholarly and popular literature that it is very difficult not to find an appeal to it in any text on postunification German-German relations.

10. See Dennis 1993 and Drost 1993 for data on the economic collapse in eastern Germany in the early 1990s.

11. Qualitative narratives also more pointedly elaborate knowledge of eastern difference and moral appurtenance. Excellent examples are the countless media reports in western Germany, in western Europe, and in the United States on skinhead violence in eastern Germany. For recent examples of this media discourse, see Cohen 1999, Moseley 1998, Pfeiffer 1999, and Thomas 1998. Again, a conventional interpretive outline is rarely challenged: unemployed young eastern German men with few prospects, hatred of everything for which the West stands, and an instinctive nostalgia for the stability of their socialist youth are represented as only the most visible edge of a general eastern threat to the democratic values of (West) Germany catalyzed by economic marginalization. Importantly, neither the symmetrical presence of well-organized right-wing movements in western Germany nor the involvement of western German neofascists in the organization of eastern German attacks is often reported. Such evidence would cast doubt on the comfortable association of right-wing activity with "easterness" (that is, with a social category already distanced from the semantic cluster of westernness, civilization, democracy, and so forth). Here, it is interesting to compare homologies between media representations and academic debate. Media representations tend to offer more monochromatic interpretations of East/West differences in xenophobia. They normally point to disillusionment with democratic reforms and economic crisis in the East as explaining why "East Germans" are turning in large numbers to nationalist parties. Although *Ausländerfeindlichkeit* (animosity toward foreigners) in western Germany is also a fairly common media theme, the East German case is always portrayed as a more extreme or pathological variant of stereotypical German "intolerance." Academic research on right-wing activity within Germany also clearly situates it as a problem for both eastern and western Germany. Yet even scholarship that offers a complex and nuanced account of the contextual factors influencing right-wing activity, and that explicitly denies the thesis that East Germans are more likely to be xenophobic than West Germans, often contains paragraphs that specify how the combination of authoritarian socialization and post-1989 *Orientierungsverlust* (loss of [social] orientation) in the former

GDR has contributed especially to xenophobia and violence there (Aschwenden 1995:196–204; Becker et al. 1992:98 ff.; Schnabel 1994:84–85; Sippel 1994:72–73). Researchers often feel that this is a progressive message because it stresses how East Germans are effectively victims of their socialization rather than simply born criminals (Pfeiffer 1999).

12. Let me be clear that I am not denying the impact of pre-1989 socializations on the semiosocial repertoires and social orientations of German citizens after 1989. But I am asserting that it is an ideological manipulation of empirical evidence to continue to use longitude as an independent variable of generalizable cultural difference ten years after unification. Daphne Berdahl has recounted initial differences in practice—patterns of consumption, for example (1999:122–135)—that identified eastern Germans as lacking a fluid engagement with the societal norms of the FRG in the months after the Wall came down. But Berdahl likewise observes, as I encountered as well, that differences in actual practices were rapidly overtaken by practices of differentiation that thrived on an ideology of the existence of fixed, differential traits and habits in the *Alltagskulturen* (cultures of everyday life) of East and West Germans (1999:137, 173–175). Informal social knowledge nevertheless has insisted that essential features of social and cultural difference have persisted despite the decreasing utility of longitude as a principle of classification from which one could make accurate empirical predictions about the behavior or values of an individual social actor.

13. Kultur is the classic shifter of German national belonging. Following Louis Dumont (1994) and Norbert Elias (1994), we could say that it is typified by pietistic traits of inner virtue and moral purity that are commonly opposed to profane materiality and the exercise of power. As Elias correctly observes (1994:3–28), the secret of Kultur's significance for the modern German nation-state is that it was made to emblemize all the positive traits of the German cultural bourgeoisie, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, as they sought to distinguish their social identity in the late 18th and early 19th centuries from the qualities they imputed to the German aristocracy and to the German industrial, artisanal, and working classes. As I discuss elsewhere, Kultur stabilizes a conception of positive human sociality as a harmonious systematicity of inner spirits (*Geister*) that is externally (socially) mediated by a system of ideally pure linguistic referentiality (Boyer 2000). Kultur, although not quite the Kultur of the 19th century, still occupies this central position as the totem of the corporate identity of the German nation rooted in language, bloodline, and territory.

14. On the *Treuhand*, see Jürgs 1997. For more controversial and critical insights into the mechanics of the unification process in different domains of German society, see Dümcke and Vilmar 1996.

15. The GDR pursued an explicitly Leninist model of the mass media as a tool for cultivating a revolutionary consciousness within its citizenry (see Lenin 1961:22). The Socialist Party understood journalists as privileged mediators who harmonized the ideas of individuals with the ideology of the state. Journalists, to a large extent, accepted this role and believed in the virtue of a socialist alternative to West Germany. On the other hand, many felt very ambivalently about their actual daily practice because they were expected to endure heavy censorship and self-censorship (see Blaum 1985; Steul 1996).

16. One progressive employment trend in the eastern German media since 1989 has been the conscious effort on the part of many western German owners to recruit and rehabilitate eastern German journalists who had received so-called *Berufsverbote* (exclusions from professional practice) during the Honecker regime.

17. There are still a few small print periodicals like *Neues Deutschland*, *Freitag*, and *Junge Welt* that remain almost entirely free of western German corporate influence. This should be seen less as a heroic defense of socialist heritage than as a profound lack of interest on the part of western German corporate interests for investing money in what they perceive to be scarcely solvent, fringe publications. As the editor-in-chief of *Neues Deutschland* said to me on more than one occasion, "You know, I'd be thrilled to publish an advertisement by Mercedes-Benz. Ideology isn't the reason why we don't have advertisements in our newspaper. We don't have advertisements in our newspaper because Mercedes-Benz has no interest placing ads in a newspaper that's critical of capitalism."

18. The structural opposition of *Meinungsjournalismus* (opinion-oriented journalism) to *Nachrichtenjournalismus* (news-oriented journalism) has been a status distinction in German journalism since the 18th century (see Requate 1995). During my research, I was told several stories by eastern German journalists about their struggles to be allowed to write op-ed pieces for their newspapers. One story in particular involved an informal political examination in which an eastern German journalist who had formally been an editor-in-chief at another paper was asked a number of questions along the lines of "Do you know what democracy means?" He recollected, "It was so clearly an embarrassment that the editor-in-chief himself came up later and apologized to me." The happy ending to this story was that the journalist in question passed his examination and became the editor in charge of the opinion/editorial page for a year—evidence that, indeed, professional decisions are not universally dictated by longitudinal logic.

19. *Praxis*, in the context of German professional discourse, denotes both "practice" in its standard English usage and the experiential, habitual knowledge that a professional gains through the actual practice of his or her profession.

20. Once a journalist responded to my direct questions about workplace relations between East and West German colleagues in subtle allegories of her son's transition to school in West Berlin and the tensions he initially had with teachers and classmates.

21. Foucault defines *governmentality* as the "encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self" that links discourse to ethics (1997:225).

22. The dialogical relationship between the Cold War German states, their convivial politics of identity and memory, and their strategies of contradistinction and negative stereotyping are all discussed at greater length in Borneman 1992, Boyer 2000, and Herf 1997.

23. I borrow the term *schismogenesis* from Gregory Bateson's (1935) expansion of the analysis of situations of "culture contact" to include equilibrated and disequilibrated relations between groups in the same society. The reciprocal strategies of opposition that Bateson terms "symmetrical schismogenesis" (1935:181–182) illuminate how semiosocial practices of longitudinal differentiation create, at once, visions of both timeless cultural sameness and historical cultural difference (see also Sahlins 1999:410).

24. This perpetual project of cultivating and distilling essential principles of national identification has been under way in one mode or another since the German bourgeois intelligentsia came to differentiate itself as a distinct enlightened caste in the late 18th century (Boyer 2000). The German nation-state, long the political-institutional embodiment in which the German intelligentsia sought to house the spiritual systematicity of its *Kultur*, has likewise been part of the discourse on German intellectual identity for centuries. After 1990, I believe we have seen an indexical modification within a long-standing discourse on the cultivation of more perfect intellectual and national belonging that has now elevated East/West to a primary idiom of differentiation in which, to select well-known examples, the oppositions of German and Jew or German and Slav used to

be far more abundant in popular and public discourse (see Gerhard 1998 for an excellent discursive analysis of German national identification).

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