

The perpetual minority: A case study of Volga German migrants in Germany

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Abstract

Descendants of Volga Germans are faced with an identity crisis. Persuaded by Prussian-born Catherine the Great to settle in Russia during the 18th century in order to cultivate farms, they migrated to Russia and settled along the Volga River. During World War II, Volga Germans were associated with the enemy (Nazi Germany) by the Soviet government and as a result, a large number of them were deported by Joseph Stalin to Siberia and Central Asia. In the years leading up to, and following the fall of the Soviet Union, a number of descendants of Volga Germans have migrated “back” to Germany. These individuals often felt like "the other" during their time in the Soviet Union, however, upon migrating to Germany, a number of them discovered that they did not have a strong connection to their ancestral homeland.

Through a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with first-generation Volga German descendants who migrated to Germany at a young age, this research explores the factors that help to shape people’s perception of their sense of belonging. This project looks at how communicative and cultural memory, language and shared customs contribute to the formation of individuals’ sense of belonging to a certain place and culture, with language being one of the strongest factors in creating a sense of belonging and the sense of “otherness” that the individuals experienced upon migrating to Germany preventing some from feeling like they belonged there.

Introduction

During the 18th century, Prussian-born Russian Empress Catherine the Great led an immigration campaign aimed at what now constitutes modern Germany. Germans were promised free land, protection against conscription and the right to preserve their language, culture and religion; this particularly appealed to Mennonite Germans who were pacifists and were opposed to military service. They mostly settled along the Volga River in Russia, which gave rise to the term “Volga Germans.” Other places where German migrants settled in the former USSR were Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, Poland, Moldova and the Caucasus.¹ This migration continued and reached its peak during the late 19th century. Living in mainly self-contained communities, ethnic Germans were able to effectively preserve their language and religion, which was either Mennonite, Lutheran or Catholic. In 1924, the Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was established, following a decree of the Soviet government titled “Volga German Workers' Commune” on October 29, 1918. The capital of the newly established Republic was the city Engels (formerly known first as Pokrovsk and later as Kosakenstadt). The Republic was abolished when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in 1941 and was divided between the Saratov and Stalingrad oblast.² All individuals of German descent were deemed enemies of the state and deported to Siberia and Central Asia. People were given just a few hours' notice to gather whatever possessions they could carry with them and sent on trains to their new destination, with many individuals dying along the way. These were called “preventative deportations” and were targeted at individuals who had “an ethnic background of a

¹ Norman Saul, “Documenting Non-Russian Immigrants from Russia,” *Slavic & East European Information Resources* 7, no. 2-3 (2006): 140. http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J167v07n02_08.

² Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004, 125.

foreign nation that is at war or may join the war on the enemy side.”³ Approximately 222,000 Russian Germans were forced to work in the labour army camps.

In the former Russian German settlements, all traces of German culture were removed, with German institutions being repurposed for other uses. Although the conditions for ethnic Germans living in the Soviet Union improved after the death of Stalin in 1953, there was still a considerable amount of prejudice towards this minority group in the Soviet Union. Whereas prior to WWII, German culture and language were not just tolerated, but protected, during the 1960s and 1970s, there was a process of “social and cultural assimilation” that was enforced upon those with a German background, making it forbidden to speak German in public.⁴ These restrictions, coupled with the high rate of mixed marriages between Germans and other Soviet nationalities, led to a gradual loss of German language and culture amongst many of the ethnic Germans living in the Soviet Union.

In 1953, Germany passed The Federal Expellee and Refugee Law the goal of which was “to provide a homeland for ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, who had experienced forced resettlement, ethnic discrimination and expulsion during and after World War II.”⁵ Starting from the late 1970s, individuals of Russian German descent started to migrate “back” to Germany and claim German citizenship. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the loosening of restrictions on emigration, more individuals immigrated to Germany. Between 1989 and 1990, 400,000 individuals of Russian German background migrated to Germany from the

³ Polian, *Against Their Will*, 130.

⁴ Barbara Dietz, “German and Jewish migration from the former Soviet Union to Germany: Background, trends and implications,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26, no. 4 (2000): 636, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713680499>.

⁵ “Gesetz über die Angelegenheiten der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge (Bundesvertriebenengesetz - BVFG) [Law on the Affairs of Displaced Persons and Refugees (Federal Expellees Act - BVFG)]”, Federal Office of Justice in Germany, 1953, <http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bvfg/index.html>.

former Soviet Union.⁶ By the time these individuals were given the chance to return to their ancestral homeland, for the vast majority of them, their last name was the only thing connecting them to Germany. Currently, there are approximately three million individuals of Russian German descent living in Germany.

This paper will focus on my master's thesis research, which examined how communicative and cultural memory, language and shared customs contribute to the formation of individuals' sense of belonging and national identity through the case study of first-generation Volga German migrants in Germany. I conducted this research as part of the Master in World Heritage Studies at the Brandenburg University of Technology in Cottbus, Germany from 2016-2017. I will begin by explaining the methodology, then present the findings and conclude with a discussion on how I am expanding upon this research in my current PhD research.

Methodology

This research project employed a qualitative approach with the data being gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews which meant that there was a list of open-ended questions prepared for the interview, however, they served more as a general guide. The reason for choosing semi-structured interviews is that they allow for more flexibility and encourage people to talk more, which is useful for understanding people's experiences. The research questions that I focused on in my research were as follows:

1. What factors influence individuals' perception of their national identity?

⁶ Dietz, "German and Jewish migration," 638.

2. Specifically, what role do language and shared customs play in the formation of individuals' sense of belonging to a certain place and culture?

The target group for this research project consisted of first-generation descendants of Volga Germans who were not born in Germany but immigrated to Germany with their parents prior to the age of 18 and attended school in Germany. It was important that the individuals were young enough to go to school in Germany because this meant that their sense of national identity was more malleable than of those who came to Germany as adults in addition to the fact that school is an important socializing agent. The sample group for the interviews was selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques, both of which are a type of non-probability sampling techniques. In purposive sampling, "participants are selected because they are likely to generate useful data for the project."⁷ I contacted several organizations dedicated to Russian Germans and Russian speakers in Germany in hopes of finding some individuals of Volga German descent. An open call was also put out on social media asking if anyone knew of Volga German descendants that would be able to participate in this research project. After getting a few responses through a combination of the announcement on social media and the Russian-speaking organizations, the interviewees were asked if they knew of any more people that could be interviewed for this project, which is what is known as snowball sampling. This is how two interviewees were selected. The limitation of non-probability sampling is that it is not possible to infer from the sample to the general population. Overall, 11 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted, but only 10 interviews were used for analysis because after conducting one of the interviews, I discovered that the interviewee did not

⁷ Uwe Flick, *Designing qualitative research*, London, UK: SAGE, 2007, 182.

fit the target group for this research project because he came to Germany when he was 19 years old and did not attend school there.

The interviews were conducted between June and August 2016. The primary language that the interviews were conducted in was Russian, however, some interviewees used a mixture of Russian and German during their interviews. The age of the interviewees ranged from 30 to 40 years old. The interviewees' identity was anonymized with the exception of their first name initial, their gender and age. After receiving the consent of the interviewees, the interviews were audio recorded. In addition to that, notes were made during the interviews based on some specific responses of the interviewees that were considered important. Following the conclusion of all of the interviews, I transcribed all of the interviews verbatim and translated them from Russian to English. Afterwards, I conducted content analysis of the interviews. Content analysis is "a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data."⁸ This method is characterized by the reduction of data, its systematic and flexible nature. Content analysis reduces data because it forces the research to focus only on the aspects of the data that are relevant to the research question. The specific type of content analysis that was employed in this research project was coding. Coding has to do with "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data."⁹ The first step in coding is to create a coding frame. After reading over the transcripts of the interviews a number of times, memos were made in the form of comments and reflections based on the findings and there were certain patterns that began to emerge. These patterns are known as phenomena. These phenomena were then assigned a conceptual label and became a code. The conceptual labels

⁸ Uwe Flick, *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data analysis*, London, UK: SAGE Publications, 2014, 170.

⁹ Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded theory," In *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research* edited by Jonathan A. Smith, London, UK: SAGE, 2003, 43.

selected were based on either direct words of the interviewees or were terms that were close in meaning to the terms the interviewees used. The main codes that emerged from the data were language, cultural ties, feeling of belonging, feeling of otherness and national identity. These were further divided into more specific subcodes, which will be discussed in the following section.

Language

Language was a recurring theme in the narratives of the interviewees: it was brought up by the interviewees not only in the context of specific questions that pertained to language, but also in questions that dealt with other topics. When coding the interview results, language was divided into the following subcodes: mother tongue, desire to maintain mother tongue, language spoken with the family, dominant language, parents struggling with learning German and mixing languages.

There are several definitions that exist when it comes to the term “mother tongue”. While some dictionaries define mother tongue to be the language that one speaks from early childhood, Cambridge Dictionary defines it as “the first language that you learn when you are a baby, rather than a language learned at school or as an adult”.¹⁰ When asked what they considered to be their mother tongue, almost all of the interviewees responded by saying Russian without any hesitation, except for one interviewee, for whom this question proved to be slightly more difficult to answer:

¹⁰ Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. “Mother tongue,” accessed March 3, 2017, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/mother-tongue>.

German, well actually no, when I have to say what my mother tongue is, I say 'Russian', but I speak German with my children and my husband. But with my dad, I sometimes speak German, sometimes Russian, this kind of 'mix' of two languages - two words in German, three in Russian.

- J., female, 35 years old

The younger someone is when they start learning a language, the easier it will be for them to become fluent in it, with children often mastering a language after only a few months. This is something that was true for the interviewees of this research project as well. For all of the interviewees, language was one of their central connections to Russian culture. At the same time, it was their ability to learn German quickly once they came to Germany that helped them in their successful adaptation to their new environment. All of the interviewees had very little knowledge of German prior to immigrating to Germany but all of them were able to master it quite quickly after arriving in Germany - something that the majority of the interviewees reported their parents struggling with. This struggle led to many of the participants' parents associating in mostly Russian-speaking circles. For one interviewee, his father was of Volga German descent, but his mother was Russian, which resulted in his parents having differing levels of knowledge of German.

Well, to tell you the truth, my father is German and he knew German before coming here. I mean before he went to school, they spoke only German at home...but later on he of course forgot some of it. He was born in Kazakhstan and when he went to school, he went through the process of "Russification" and during the next 20 to 30 years that he lived in the USSR, he lost some of his German, but of course it was easier for him to adapt here [in

Germany]. *My mom still has difficulties with it. She understands a lot but, of course, she has problems speaking German and she prefers to socialize more within the Russian-speaking community.*

- K., male, 33 years old

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, due to the fact that outward displays of German culture were prohibited in the Soviet Union following World War II, many individuals of Volga German descent lost the connection to German culture and language. This is demonstrated in the following example of an interviewee whose parents were both of Volga German descent and yet both still struggled in learning German.

Well, he [interviewee's father] did speak German but his German was the one usually spoken by construction workers. They still don't speak German fluently. Their accent is awful, and their grammar. I don't know why it happened like this with them. And of course they don't use any articles while speaking [reference to the German articles 'der, die, das'].

- V., male, 35 years old

All of the interviewees reported having some contact with the Russian-speaking community outside of their family either through friends and/or work. Some interviewees specifically tried to seek out this connection with the Russian-speaking community, for others this connection happened more by chance, meanwhile one interviewee reported deliberately wanting to distance himself from this community upon first arriving in Germany.

I went to a music school...started my first band and thanks to that, I became involved with other young German people. As opposed to many of my fellow countrymen, I didn't really want to remain in the Russian-speaking circle, despite the fact that there were many Russian-speakers where I used to live but I tried to distance myself from them. Whether it was a good or bad thing, I'm not sure.

- I., male, 34 years old

All of the interviewees except for one reported having Russian-speaking friends. In general, interviewees reported having mixed friend groups, consisting of both Russian and German speakers. However, one interviewee reported having a friend circle that consisted only of individuals who belonged to the Russian-speaking community.

I was 12 [upon arriving in Germany] and I picked up the language [German] very fast. Six months later, they already sent me to a German school, well a German-speaking class, and there were some sort of difficulties there, but actually even after six months, I don't know, I could already speak to and understand Germans, but again, even in the German school there some Russian-speaking guys and we would still stick together. I think that it's absolutely normal, after all it's your diaspora, you find 'your people'...Actually, all of my best friends, my main circle of friends, are Russian-speaking people...When I go to visit Russia or some former Soviet countries, I feel better when I hear Russian being spoken around me.

- S., male, 38 years old

Shared customs and cultural ties

The findings regarding the interviewees' connection to German culture were centred around memories of their childhood/adolescence prior to coming to Germany. The interview results revealed a wide-ranging level of connection to German culture amongst the interviewees with some interviewees having no prior connection to German culture before migrating to Germany, while other interviewees reported having strong cultural ties to Germany through their family. The extent of the interviewees' connection to German culture rested mainly on how connected their family was to German culture because this connection was fostered while they were growing up. Meanwhile the connection to Russian culture was something that was originally developed due to their family and/or the place where they grew up, but the choice to maintain the connection to their culture was more of a personal one. This code was divided into two subcodes: connection to Russian culture after migrating to Germany and connection to German culture prior to migrating to Germany.

No, the thing is there was no connection [to German culture] so to speak of. Well, there was a point where I realized I'm German because of my last name, because where I used to live, there were a lot of Germans and if you didn't have a Russian last name, then you must be German.

- K., male, 33 years old

My dad used to go to the 'German Centre' in our city and everyone used to congregate there. I also went there a couple of times, but we didn't celebrate any particular [German] holidays or anything like that.

- D., male, 33 years old

[While growing up in Kazakhstan] my grandma spoke to me only in German and she also cooked German food. If there was any kind of international football match taking place, we always cheered for the German team.

- E., female, 39 years old

The term “shared customs” was specifically chosen because it was mentioned as being one of the key characteristics of national identity by a number of theorists.¹¹ While the results from the interviews with the Volga German descendants revealed that language played a very important role in their sense of belonging, shared customs did not appear to be as consequential in creating a connection to either Russian or German culture for the interviewees. There was only one interviewee who mentioned that the practice of certain cultural customs and traditions made her feel connected to both Russia and Germany.

I have something connecting me to Russia, 'sprache' [interviewee used the German word here] and different cultural ties with Russia. Well of course there are some 'rituals' which connect me with Russia: our Russian weddings, songs, but still, I belong to Germany.

- J., female, 35 years old

National identity

The multifaceted topic of national identity has been debated by many theorists throughout time. Benedict Anderson used the term “imagined community” to describe a nation, “imagined

¹¹ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991; Anna Triandafyllidou, “National identity and the ‘other’”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21, no. 4, 1998; Tim Edensor, *National identity, popular culture and everyday life*, Oxford, UK: Berg, 2006.

as both inherently limited and sovereign”.¹² Anderson described the nation as an “imagined community” because he believed that it is the cultural roots of nationalism that make individuals feel a deep connection to other individuals, whom they have never met, based on their supposedly shared values. Meanwhile, Michael Billig emphasized the value of everyday rituals in the formation of cultural practices as opposed to just “spectacular cultural effects” in what he called “banal nationalism”.¹³ Billig argued that there has been too much attention being paid to “overt displays of nationalism”, which ignore the “routine and mundane reproduction” of the nation.¹⁴ He saw the nation as being omnipresent, always ready to be expressed through “the numerous signifiers and reminders of the nation that form part of everyday spaces, routines and practices.”¹⁵ This sentiment was reiterated by Tim Edensor who focused on the “more mundane aspects of national identity” such as the role of everyday life and popular culture.¹⁶ What this research project is concerned with is the nation-building process itself - what exactly shapes people’s belonging to a certain nation. According to Miroslav Hroch, the ties created through the nation-building process are based on three main factors: memory of a common past, cultural or linguistic ties and conception of equality of all members of the society.¹⁷ This research project focuses on exploring two of the main factors: memory of a common past and cultural or linguistic ties. Although Hroch was focused on the nation-building process in Europe, his research can be applied to nation-building in any part of the world.

¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, New York, NY: Verso, 1991, 37.

¹³ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, London, UK: SAGE, 1995, 9.

¹⁴ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 41.

¹⁵ Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 42.

¹⁶ Tim Edensor, *National identity, popular culture and everyday life*, Oxford, UK: Berg, 2006, 3.

¹⁷ Miroslav Hroch, “From national movement to the fully-formed nation: The nation-building process in Europe,” In *Mapping the nation* edited by Gopal Balakrishnan and Benedict Anderson, London, UK: Verso, 1996.

Association to a nation can happen by the individual themselves or an individual can be associated to a nation by others. In order to allow for a detailed analysis of this complex code, it was divided into the following subcodes: association to nation by others through (last) name, association to nation by others through citizenship, association to nation by self through citizenship, association to nation by self and others through accent, associating self with a European identity and difficulty in associating self with a national identity due to Volga German ancestry.

Language and accent proved to be quite central to the formation of a number of the interviewees' sense of belonging and national identity. This was demonstrated particularly in the case of one interviewee who immigrated to Germany from Russia when he was 17 years old.

National identity, I don't know, well I guess, firstly it's language. I still have a Russian accent [when speaking German]. Many people can't guess where I'm from in the beginning but they hear that I'm not a 'native' German. I still belong more to Russia, to my roots so to say but again it's because of my language and accent, maybe.

- K., male, 33 years old

The interviewee felt that his Russian accent, which he used to feel shy about, but has since embraced, is something that marked him in a way by making it clear he was not a “native German” (the Russian word that the interviewee used was *коренной*, which the closest English equivalent would be is “native” but could also be understood in the sense of “true” or “real”). At the time that the interview was conducted, the interviewee had been living in Germany for 17 years, spoke German at a native-speaker's level and reported associating with a friend group of individuals of various ethnic backgrounds, the majority of which were non-Russian speakers.

For one interviewee, who was originally from Kazakhstan, her citizenship and life in Germany is what helped define her sense of national identity.

I think everyone has their own individual understanding of their own national identity. 'Zum bei spiel' [For example] there's a discussion now that Turkish people have a Turkish passport and a German passport. I'm German and I only have a German passport. I'm living here now and I feel German.

- J., female, 35 years old

Having Volga German ancestry made it difficult for some interviewees to identify with a particular national identity. In the following interview excerpt, the interviewee expressed why he did not equate citizenship with national identity.

Well, I have a passport that says I'm German but I just think that nowadays because of everything what's going on in our world, I'm a man of a new time, so to speak, who think that borders aren't necessary at all...But I think that my story, the fact that I used to be considered German before coming to Germany and now I'm considered Russian here, has had an influence on this...I feel neither German nor Russian. I understand that even though I didn't grow up in Russia, I still feel closer to the Russian-speaking regions but I don't tie myself completely to anything.

- V., male, 30 years old

Although some interviewees reported feeling German, the majority reported feeling that they had a multitude of identities. However, what they struggled with the most is not how they identified themselves, but how others identified them. The common trend that was reported by the interviewees is the feeling of “otherness” that they felt both while growing up in the Soviet Union and also upon moving to Germany. The notion of “the other” has been widely discussed in academic literature starting with Simone De Beauvoir’s introduction of this notion in 1949 in reference to how women were perceived by men, followed by Edward Said’s concept of “orientalism” in 1985 to most recently, Anna Triandafyllidou’s discussion of the “significant ‘others’.” Triandafyllidou defined the concept of the “significant ‘others’” as “another nation or

ethnic group that is territorially close to, or indeed within, the national community and threatens, or rather is perceived to threaten, its ethnic and/or cultural purity and/or its independence.”¹⁸ The author divided this concept between internal (individuals that belong to the same political entity with the ingroup) and external (individuals that form a separate political unit) “significant ‘others’.” Some of the interviewees reported being made to feel like “the other” in the country where they lived prior to migrating to Germany, some reported this feeling after they migrated to Germany and some reported feeling it in both places. Both the former Soviet Union countries and Germany created ingroups and outgroups, with the interviewees often being put in the outgroup category in both countries. There were several accounts by the interviewees of how other individuals made them or their family feel as if they did not belong to the “in-group” based on their perceived ethnic identity.

There were some small jokes that people made about me [because of the German ethnicity] but I didn't take them to heart, there weren't really any problems with this. Maybe my father had some problems because of this and of course, my grandfather, especially when they were relocated to Siberia. He would tell me lots of stories about being forced to get into fights, etc. and that he was called a Nazi and this sort of thing. I was luckier in that sense, but still I was known as a German while growing up and you come here, and for them [the Germans in Germany], you're still Russian.

- S., male, 38 years old

I can't say that I consider myself a Volga German. I have a neutral attitude towards this topic...When I was still living in Latvia, they called me a German and when I came here [to Germany], at first, of course, I was considered a Russian, of course I socialized with the Russian-Speaking diaspora and I felt Russian, but now, thanks to the circumstances, I feel more tolerant and neutral towards this.

- D., male, 33 years old

¹⁸ Anna Triandafyllidou, “National identity and the ‘other’,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 no. 4 (1998), 596.

While the interviewees mentioned many instances of where the feeling of “otherness” was forced upon them, one interviewee talked about how his own family internalized and embraced this quality.

My family has always been proud that they are German. They used to live in their own community with their own schools, organizations where everything was in German. When they were deported to Siberia under the Stalin regime, this idea that they are German helped them survive and made them stronger. And my parents are proud that they are German. Well, how are they proud? They think that Germans are hardworking people, they are not lazy - that's what it means that they are proud of it...For example, my family would explain to me that Germans are hardworking and that's why they're successful and that's how they differ from Russians and Kazakhs.

- V., male, 35 years old

Here, the concept of the “significant ‘others’” is invoked in a way that distinguished individuals from the ingroup in a positive way, demonstrating how this notion can be used as a nation-building tactic amongst minority groups.

Conclusion

One of the difficulties in conducting qualitative analysis on interview data is selecting the units of analysis from the rich emotive narratives that are present in the interviews and reducing personal accounts to a few excerpts. The question of belonging and national identity can be a complicated one for any individual, however, as demonstrated in the selected interview excerpts, it can be particularly challenging for individuals of Volga German ancestry. One of the key conclusions I arrived at following the completion of this research project was the need to move away from viewing national identity and belonging as absolute concepts and move towards seeing them as relative ones. Although many of the interviewees reported feeling as if they did not have a concrete national identity, they nevertheless mentioned feeling some sense of

belonging to one or more nations. The feeling of belonging that was present in their narratives was in juxtaposition to the feeling of otherness that a number of the interviewees reported feeling both in their countries of origin and the countries they migrated to due to their hybrid national identity.

While the results of this research answered my research questions to a considerable degree, they also brought up new questions on this topic - questions centered on how these transnational migrants interpret the feeling of being at home, which I am currently exploring in my PhD research that is focused on Russian German migrants in Canada. The fact that the migrants that I interviewed in my previous research were in a way coming back to their ancestral homeland, they only had a choice between integrating and adopting a German national identity or choosing to segregate themselves and maintaining their Russian/Soviet identity. If there was a third country that was involved, this would create more of a conflict in terms of integration and national identity as these migrants would have an alternative to just reverting back to the national identity of the country they were born in or adopting the national identity of their ancestral homeland.

Whereas my previous research featured a rather small sample size and focused only on descendants of Volga Germans, in my current PhD research I am aiming to have a much larger sample size (60-80 interviews), greater gender distribution (the majority of my interviewees were male) as well as opening up the research to the wider Russian German community - not just Volga Germans. While the research presented in this paper focused on individuals who migrated to their host country as children, in my current PhD research, I am planning to interview

individuals who migrated to their host countries at various ages to see if age is a significant factor.

My current PhD research builds on the existing scholarship on Russian German migration and opens up new perspectives by looking at multiple country migration (migration to more than one country).¹⁹ The results of this research would provide insight into the acculturation process experienced by migrants in Canada and could be applied to other transnational migrant groups as well as minority groups who have faced a history of displacement. This would contribute to a greater understanding of transnational migration and the ways in which migrants build and reactivate their communities abroad while negotiating the challenges of belonging to multiple cultures.

¹⁹ Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger, “Long-distance citizens: Ethnic Germans and their immigration to Germany,” In *Path to Inclusion: The Integration of Migrants in the United States and Germany* edited by Peter Schuck and Rainer Münz, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998; Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger, *Diasporas and ethnic migrants: Germany, Israel and Post-Soviet successor states in comparative perspective*, London: Frank Cass, 2003; James Casteel, “Transcultural Memories among Russian German and Russian Jewish Migrants in Germany: Literature, Museums, and Narrations of the Soviet Past,” In *Jenseits der “Volksgruppe.” Neue Perspektiven auf die Russlanddeutschen zwischen Russland, Deutschland und Amerika* edited by Victor Dönninghaus, Jannis Panagiotidis and Hans-Christian Petersen, Oldenbourg: DeGruyter, 2018; Jannis Panagiotidis, *The unchosen ones: Diaspora, nation, and migration in Israel and Germany*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019.

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