ABSTRACT

RESILIENCE AND SHADOW OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA: THE MENNONITES' GREAT TRAUMATIC TREK TO CANADA

Mennonites living in Russia at the start of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 entered into a climate of almost relentless violence. Mennonites are a Protestant group that formed during the 16th century Reformation. Long-term psychological implications of these events continue for remaining survivors and their offspring to this day. In this study, four memoirs of Mennonite survivors were analyzed to learn how traumatic experiences were narrated in their lifetime. A literature review explored features associated with individual and collective experiences of trauma. Placing each writer into their shared historical context was presented to understand both collective and unique features of their experiences. Common themes that emerged in the memoirs demonstrated both resilience and challenges in expressing emotions, facing physical challenges, processing transitions, and coping. Lastly, differing experiences with attachment were discovered for each writer and inferences were drawn to the intergenerational transmission of trauma. The findings of this study can speak to how social workers may contextualize trauma with biopsychosocial intakes that are broad in scope. Therapeutic interventions were presented that take collective features of trauma into consideration instead of solely individualizing trauma outcomes. Macro-level social work practice with geriatric populations, organizational transformation, and policy change were recommended.

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RESILIENCE AND SHADOW OF COLLECTIVE TRAUMA: THE MENNONITES' GREAT TRAUMATIC TREK TO CANADA

by

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When I was 25, I ventured from Canada to the United States to embark on a journey to become a therapist. Fresno became a seedbed where I became an educator, wife, and mother…but not a therapist. The adage, *Know thyself,* became so important that detours in my quest were necessary. Now, half a lifetime later, I am becoming a therapist. Knowing my own story plays a critical role in my effectiveness to help contain the suffering of others. Therefore, this thesis represents my earnest pursuit to do that.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Mennonites living in Russia at the start of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 entered into an almost relentless climate of violence (Krahn, 2011, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). These Mennonites originally hailed from a reformation group that broke with the Catholic Church in the 16th century in Switzerland (Urry, 2006). In 1800, Mennonites seeking freedoms moved to Russia and their numbers grew in their new land of opportunity. However, their glory days were replaced with political violence. All were touched on some level by a typhus epidemic, famines, murders, rapes, collectivization, imprisonment, exiles, communist indoctrination, and executions. No Mennonite family was immune to disappearing family members. Many fled Russia in 1943 with the retreating German army. Once in Germany, most of the men were forced to join the Nazi army by German officials. Therefore, once World War II was over, the majority of the Mennonite men were dead and the women and children were left to find a place to emigrate to. The minority resettled in Canada, Paraguay or Germany to start new lives. The majority were repatriated to Siberia with little hope for survival. For those who survived these ongoing waves of traumatic experiences, some narrated ways they coped by writing memoirs towards the end of their lives. This research studied how four people narrated their exposure to trauma in their lifetime.

While each Mennonite survivor navigated turbulent times in unique ways, common themes emerged. In navigating traumatic experiences, emotional, developmental, physical, transitional, and coping themes are explored. Mennonites' reflection on traumatic experiences shed light on the role of resiliency in making meaning of their suffering as well as ways coping may have been inadequate and relegated to the shadows.

Mental health practitioners, while trained to assess for trauma, may not go far enough in biopsychosocial assessments and treatments. Including lenses that consider the collective features of trauma shared by a people group, intergenerational transmission of trauma, and cultural and systemic factors that impact the trauma may strengthen assessment and interventions.

Currently, there are an estimated 68.5 million people worldwide who have been forced from their residence (UNHCR, 2018). Of that group, 25.4 million people have become refugees, and many are forced from their home from oppression, clashes, brutality or violations of human rights. While this research did not focus on current refugee groups, it explored historical data concerning Mennonites who faced political violence and were displaced starting in the 1910s. As mental health practitioners work with refugees or children of refugees, better understanding these layers may prove to be vital components in becoming more culturally competent providers.

Historical Context of Mennonites: Journey to Russia, Nazi Germany, and Beyond

In exploring factors that impact Mennonite identity, the ecological systems theory served as a framework to explore systemic features that shaped the experience for those Mennonites who endured trauma in Russia and Nazi Germany. An examination of the historical context of Mennonites shed light on multiple systems that influenced them.

According to Reynolds (1998), Mennonites are both an ethnic and religious community. Their origins can be traced back to the sixteenth century (Epp, F. H., 1962; Goossen, 2017; Urry, 2006). Early reformers called for living out their radical Christian beliefs in ways that were humble, simple, communal, justice-oriented, non-resistant, stewardship driven, and non-conformist to societal norms.

In 1525, a Swiss group within the Catholic Church called for reform (Urry, 2006). This group believed the church and state should be separate. The early reformers believed

the state had brought corruption to the church. The reformers called for adult baptism as a countercultural response to infant baptism that was used to seal newborns' allegiances as subjects of the state. The newly forming group would not align their baptism with membership in the state. Instead, they called for a baptism upon thoughtful confession of their faith that was separate from any state allegiance. It is upon this belief of baptism that they came to be called Anabaptists. These reformers also would not swear an oath as they believed one's ultimate allegiance was to God. The group upheld a belief of nonresistance and challenged the assumption that subjects must fight for their local powers, uphold leaders' authority, and even kill others if commanded to. This radical group challenged the premise of the day that political leaders were specially anointed by God. The beliefs and actions of this group threatened the powers of the day.

The radical convictions of the Anabaptists was not warmly welcomed by the state and church authorities (Urry, 2006). Consequently, 200 years of persecution ensued where followers were tortured and martyred. A detailed account of the persecutions were written by Thieleman J. Van Bracht in 1685 (Goossen, 2017). *The Martyr's Mirror*, as it was titled, highlighted the stories of over 800 martyrs. Mennonites in this era taught children to be thankful for punishment and do what they were told with love because it was God's will (Reynolds, 1998). They grew to teach their children to accept punishment without fighting back, thus preparing them for potential martyrdom. They believed knowing one's catechism was not enough, their faith required testing from hardship, persecution, and hard work. This document later gave Mennonites a collective sense of their identity that went beyond national borders. They came to see those ancestors from the Reformation era who underwent persecution without expressed hate or retaliation as exemplifying a citizenship that was not linked to the state but to a heavenly allegiance. *The Martyr's Mirror* served to become a communally defining narrative of suffering that

provided a type of roadmap for how Mennonites were expected to bear suffering and hardship in the future.

The end of the seventeenth century marked the end of persecution (Goossen, 2017). There was not one unifying belief within the Anabaptists in their early days and convictions were expressed in a variety of ways (Urry, 2006). A group that came to be called Mennonites grew out of the Anabaptist movement and they were the focus of this study.

Throughout the 200-year persecution, surviving Mennonites migrated and settled throughout Europe (Epp, F. H., 1987; Goossen, 2017; Urry, 2006). Those settling in the Dutch Republic during the 17th century found reprieve and tolerance (Urry, 2006). Although they were not invited to political involvement, many Mennonites became wealthy and learned in disciplines of the sciences, astronomy, medicine, and arts. When political powers shifted in the House of Orange during the French Revolution of 1789 and financial resources diminished, Mennonite privileges were taken away and new settlements were sought.

In 1763, Catherine the Great first invited foreigners to settle in her growing empire (Urry, 2006). After Russia's southern borders were secured in the 1780s, new opportunities arose for Mennonites as they were promised freedom, land, privileges, and the assurance of remaining pacifist. During the 60 years that followed, thousands of Mennonites settled in Russia. Even though they thought of themselves as insular, they were politically astute, advocating for political privileges with Russia's top leaders (Goossen, 2017; Urry, 2006). As hard-working pioneers, Mennonites were held as an example to other foreigners settling in the land as to what can be accomplished as they went from little to great prosperity. G. K. Epp (1987) highlighted that without taxes for 10 years, full freedom, and rich resources, Mennonites became one of the most lucrative and well-developed rural settlements in Russia. For example, he said six percent of all

Russian agricultural machines were made in Mennonite factories. They owned 30% of Russia's rich agricultural land and created over 400 educational institutions.

Mennonites were also selected to serve as leaders in reform movements (Urry, 2006). They entered a period of privilege with the new leadership in Russia. Mennonite leaders had created an elaborate system of organization, sometimes called the "Russian-Mennonite Commonwealth." When a movement in Russia to free privately-owned serfs occurred, Mennonite structures prohibited these new people from owning land or having a voice in their regions. According to Goossen (2017), Mennonites came to see these times of privilege as God's blessing them as a chosen people.

Everything changed when the Bolshevik Revolution began in 1917, bringing a relentless climate of violence (Krahn, 2011, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). This turbulent period of mass killings, confiscation of properties, rape, murder, drought, and a typhus epidemic lasted until 1920. Then, one year later, Mennonites experienced famine (1921-1923). While 25,000 Mennonites emigrated to Canada after this period, 80,000 were left behind as Canada closed its borders in 1929. Those who were not sent to labor camps in Siberia, found themselves in a state of panic from the non-stop trauma that followed. In the middle of the 1920's, the Mennonites who had worked to rebuild Soviet Union were now seen as *kulaks* (a wealthy person) and exiled (Urry, 2006). Mennonite leaders also lost employment or were persecuted and arrested. Church structures were closed or used for other soviet purposes. By 1929, there was no religious tolerance (F. H. Epp, 1962). The Russians moved to wipe out religion because they viewed it to be incompatible with socialism. All personal property was given over to communist leaders and collectives were established. These were groupings of people who would work under communist leadership. All profits would be distributed by the Communists according to their socialist government**.** According to Krahn (2013), Communists formed organizations in the schools where Mennonite children were expected to participate in their activities.

However, their parents feared the indoctrination. In 1933, a forced famine occurred when government officials sent grain grown on the collectives elsewhere (Urry, 2006). During this time, churches were closed. Mennonites went from wealth to living in poverty in the collectives. They were subjected to on-going injustices at the hands of communist leaders and lost their freedom to express their religious and cultural traditions.

In the mid-1930s, Stalin moved to eliminate any threat to his government, which resulted in massive arrests and executions (Krahn, 2013). The Mennonite communities came to refer to this period as *The Great Terror*. It was led by The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD). Later, this group of secret police became the *Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti*, also known as the KGB. During this time, eight to nine thousand Mennonite males disappeared. In 1941, there was a German invasion where thousands of German-speaking Mennonites were forced to migrate to other parts of Russia for fear of being seen as collaborating with the Germans. Two years later, 35,000 Russian Mennonites fled alongside the withdrawing German army. Most of them were women, children, and the elderly because many Mennonite men and boys were lost to the Soviet regime.

Those who fled Russian that year in 1943 participated in what came to be known as *The Great Trek* (G. K. Epp, 1987; Urry, 2006). G. K. Epp (1987) recounted that approximately 150 years prior to 1943, Mennonite forbearers moved from Prussia along a similar route. However, now Mennonites were repeating the journey, “only somewhat poorer, less certain about the future, and in the opposite direction” (as cited in Neufeld, p. 357). He described the wagon trek travelled through winter. Daily challenges of this trek included wagons breaking down, death or exhaustion of horses, elderly and children dying, lack of water, lice, cold, robberies, and air attacks. The women were highly vulnerable to rape by Red Army troops during this migration (M. Epp, 1997). Of the

350,000 total refugees that made it to Polish border, 35,000 of those were Mennonites (F. H. Epp, 1962).

Once in Germany, most of the men were forced to join the Nazi army or be repatriated to Siberia where few survived (F. H. Epp, 1962). The women had to find a way to survive the hostile new environment they found themselves in (M. Epp, 1997). When the war ended, the majority of the Mennonite men were dead or exiled. Women and children were left to find a place to emigrate. Most eventually received passage to Canada and Paraguay to start new lives while leaving everything behind. About 8,000 successfully migrated to Canada, 4,000 to Paraguay, and the remainder returned to Russia, thus, separating families to three continents (Krahn, 2013).

Krahn (2013) proposed multiple systemic features intensified the Mennonites' trauma in communist Russia. For example, multiple dramatic migrations, political violence, health epidemics, food insecurity, sexual violence, collectivization, and disappearing family members impacted Mennonites collectively and individually. How did the various environmental systems impact the Mennonites? Depending on their milieu, political powers spurred on martyrdom, displacements, devastations from civil uprisings, and instability. From their inception as a cultural group, they lived in numerous and diverse countries, experienced multiple displacements, and lived in either privilege or were marginalized in relation to the rising powers of the day (Goossen, 2017). Ideologies such as Enlightenment, Imperialism, Communism, and Nazism, not only impacted the development of their perspectives, there were also forces that shaped how and where the Mennonites lived. Religious identity was another powerful factor in their lives. Convictions about corruption in the church and state started the Mennonite movement and motivated them to find new geographies where they could experience religious freedom. Their persuasions also complicated their lives as they came to see themselves as

God's chosen people. This belief seemed to work well during favorable times but brought confusion about the role God played during traumatic periods.

Theoretical Literature

This research explored how Mennonites narrated their experiences of long-term traumatic experiences in Communist Russia and later in Nazi Germany. Several theories undergirded the research. These included attachment theory, narrative theory, ethnographic theory, and ecological systems theory.

Multi-layered traumatic events, such as war and displacement, were found to impact people's ability to form healthy attachments (de Jong, Komproe, & Van Ommeren, 2003; Reynolds, 1998). Drawing on Bowlby (1969), children who do not have a responsive and accessible caregiver internalize their experiences. This, in turn, impacted how they interacted with the world throughout their lives and how they later separated from their caregivers (Årseth, Kroger, Martinussen, & Bakken, 2009; Rholes, Simpson, & Friedman, 2006). For children growing up in communities ravished by almost unrelenting traumatic experiences like political violence, displacement, famine, and war, successfully navigating the separation-individuation process was found to be challenging (Kira et al., 2018; Krahn, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). When one generation struggled with attachment, it was found to be transmitted to subsequent generations (Krahn, 2013; Reynolds, 1998).

Attachment theory has also been researched as it relates trauma to the development of the self and neurology (Saxe, Ellis, & Brown, 2015; Schore, 2002). Children who securely attach with an emotionally attuned and responsive mother are more likely to regulate their world. However, early childhood trauma impacts healthy brain development and future mental health. While trauma influences individuals and their families, it is also critical to consider broader systemic influences.

People are interconnected with multiple systems in their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Considering social, cultural, historical, family, and individual systems was found informative in understanding a person's experience with trauma (Saxe et al., 2015). Writing narratives served as one way people can attempt to articulate their multi-faceted traumatic experiences and position themselves within systemic injustices (Andrews, 2014).

This research explored possible theories that emerged in Mennonite memoirs. This was evaluated to determine themes that aligned with the aforementioned theories, and where contradictions or alternative views were found.

Empirical Literature

While the empirical literature has focused predominantly on individual trauma, some research addressed the impact on individuals and collective groups who experienced repeated, multi-faceted, on-going, systemic trauma (Danieli, Norris, & Engdahl, 2016; Sonne, Carlsson, Elklit, Mortensen, & Ekstrøm, 2013). For example, the current criteria in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-5* (*DSM-5*) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) for a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is based on a single-traumatic event. This criterion does not fully capture the extensive psychological harm associated with prolonged trauma. Trauma profiles that touched on ongoing, complex, and collective features was explored in numerous studies (Danieli et al., 2016; Kira et al., 2018). These findings were focused mainly on veteran or Holocaust survivors. While potentially applicable to other cultural experiences, this qualitative study contributed to the few studies that focused on the Mennonite experience (Krahn, 2013; Reynolds, 1998).

Mennonites experienced many features that intensified their trauma in communist Russia (Krahn, 2013). These included multiple dramatic migrations, having their villages

occupied by revolutionists, living through a typhus epidemic, food insecurity, murders, rapes, political turmoil, being forced to abandon family members, collectivization, imprisonment, exiles, communist indoctrination, executions, disappearing family members, German invasions, war, and chaos. For Mennonite born in Russia any time after World War I, that was the only life they knew.

Studies that considered the impact of collective trauma of Mennonites on their adult children found increased disconnect within the family, emotional unavailability, challenges with attachment and the separation-individuation processes (Krahn, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). Kira et al. (2018), in their study of six groups from non-Mennonite cultures also found that attached disruption and identity traumas were transmitted intergenerationally for the children of those who experienced multi-layered, lifespan trauma. Developmental disruptions in their identity formation predicted future traumatic experiences. Reynolds (1998) found that collective trauma impacted normal progress through developmental stages and significantly induced psychopathology.

Studies that researched the impact of collective trauma on Mennonites were built upon to include male survivors and emigrants living in broader geographic locations. Reynolds (1998) suggested that future research investigate how faith impacted the experience of trauma. This study drew on data from a sample who experienced additional layers of trauma. It also considered the role faith plays in negotiating traumatic experiences. It was also imperative to consider the role intersectionality played in the experience of trauma as people were defined in ways other than Mennonite. Therefore, the goals of this study were to analyze themes that emerged in a new sample of memoirs that shed light on how to shape social work services to this particular population.

Method

This exploratory study was concerned with examining the research question: how do memoirs of the Mennonite experience in Russia before World War II narrate trauma throughout the lifespan? This qualitative exploratory study utilized narrative and ethnographic approaches to analyze data. It studied historical memoirs of individual Mennonite men and women who lived through the trauma associated with upheavals in Communistic Russia and Nazi Germany.

A convenience sample of four memoirs was selected from the from the Mennonite Brethren Archives at Fresno Pacific University. These memoirs were chosen from those Mennonites whose families lived in Russia from 1900, escaped Communism to Nazi Germany, and then either immigrated to Canada or were repatriated back to Russia. Only memoirs that were translated into English were included in the sample.

The study explored themes that emerged in historical literature of Mennonites to determine potential connections to ways trauma became narrated. The texts were interacted with by coding and looking for deeper structure. The data was layered into social context. The texts were worked with to re-narrate and distill them as trauma narratives.

Conceptual Definitions

Considering there are multiple ways to conceptualize the terms used in this study, relevant vocabulary pertinent to the study were defined.

Trauma

Rogers and Leydesdorff (2002) argued a definition of trauma is no simple matter. When something is described as traumatic, Garland (2002) highlighted the etymology of trauma reaches back to a Greek concept referring to breaking the skin or a body's container. She cited Freud who utilized the term as a metaphor for how the mind can be

punctured or harmed by traumatic experiences. Consequently, such events increases protective features in the brain that can make someone more sensitive to stimuli from the outer world.

People respond to traumatic exposure in diverse ways. Trauma disorders have primary symptoms that develop after a person is exposed to a one or two direct or possibly life-threatening acute traumatic situations such as war, assault, or sexual abuse (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The *DSM-5* states while symptoms generally do not appear immediately following the traumatic experience, they usually manifest within three months after the trauma. It may take additional months or even years before all the symptom criteria is met. Petrovich and Garcia (2015) highlighted transformations of affect and behavior as a result of exposure can impact people's ability to cope and regulate. The *DSM-5* predominantly focuses on individual trauma with some attention given to psychosocial challenges. Saxe et al. (2015) argued that the PTSD criteria describe states of affect and the associated behavior, but they fall short in mentioning the significance of a person's context. The *DSM-5* does not consider the intergenerational transmission of trauma nor does it consider the impact of multi-faceted, generational, collective trauma (e.g. war, displacement, genocide). A more comprehensive theory must also be considered. Therefore, this research explored themes of collective trauma Mennonites narrated from the vantage point of their particular contexts.

Collective Trauma

Real differences seem to exist in what constitutes trauma (Kira et al., 2018). For example, upheaval of war and structures of violence seem to be different on face value from something like domestic violence. While all are to be taken seriously, some have more complex systems and timelines attached and may require broader engagement. Mennonites experienced trauma both individually and as a people. Kira et al. (2018)

found features of trauma that touch on cumulative, complex, and collective dynamics that may impact people throughout their lifespan. They suggested trauma profiles to better understand of how groups of people who were exposed to similar on-going and multiple traumas were impacted. Collective trauma takes structures of injustice and collective features into consideration. For this research, collective trauma referred to multidimensional, complex trauma that was shared collectively by the Mennonites.

Mennonite

Urry (2006) offered a description of Mennonites, a Christian reformation group that began in 1525. He highlighted that their salient distinctives include non-infant baptism, nonresistance, and identifying themselves as separate from the world. Their sense of belonging and identity historically centered in their insular religious community. Their foundation is based on the interrelatedness through their shared narrative of persecution and reformation. Their shared identity is also built upon both their genealogies that stretch back to their founding fathers and from their commonalities of being a community of faith throughout their history.

While Mennonites do not technically constitute an ethnic group, Urry (2006) argued theirs is a culture of religious beliefs. In other words, their *peoplehood* is their identity. He also highlighted the term "Russian Mennonites" does not signify they were living for a long time in Russia or were of Slavic ancestry. Instead, they descended from those who emigrated to Russia from Prussia in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Mennonites formed many splinter groups (F. H. Epp, 1962; Goossen, 2017; Urry, 2006). This research will concern itself with a particular group that came to be called Mennonite Brethren. Of this group, large groups of Mennonites who sensed the tides changing in the nation, exited Russia up until 1926 (F. H. Epp, 1962). At that point, all doors to emigrate were closed tight. This study focused on those Mennonites who had to

remain in Russia as it transitioned to communism. They fled Russia to Nazi Germany in 1943 and immigrated to Canada or were repatriated back to Russia post World War II.

Memoirs

Andrews, Sclater, Squire, and Treacher (2002) stated that narratives are a primary avenue for self-construction. Writing one's story provides a platform for people to give significance to what they have gone through. Memoirs are a form of narrative that offers a way of reflecting on personal experience and representing the narrative in written form. Narratives also build interpersonal connections. People chose which aspects of their pasts that they want to present in what was described as "narrative identity" (p. 78). Memoirs offer a platform to subjectively reconstruct personal history and imagine into the future.

Rogers and Leydesdorff (2004) reasoned written narratives have the potential "to reveal, represent, and unravel trauma" (p. 13). They found these accounts to be beneficial in gaining insight into the role trauma plays in people's lives. One reason is, partly because narratives gives space for contradictions and systemic influences. Narratives also explores "the relation between personal and collective experience, by focusing on remembering and forgetting as cultural processes" (p. 13). Memoirs also have power to capture ethnic practices, culture, and public systems. One way to build collective memory is by examining archived memoirs (Kroeker, 2000). Memoirs place the Mennonite experiences in a particular time in history and shines a spotlight on influences such as culture, politics, and society in the narrative (Krahn, 2011). This research will utilize memoirs that are publicly available in a Mennonite archive.

Russia

Catharine the Great, in seeking to build her empire, invited groups who were known for their entrepreneurial spirit and hard work to settle in her land (Massie, 2012). The Mennonites were among these groups (Urry, 2006). They settled predominantly in

modern-day Ukraine. They were drawn there because she promised freedom, land, privileges, and assurance of remaining pacifist. However, numerous forces reshaped the Russian empire during the first half of the 20th century and the country transitioned to a communist nation (F. H. Epp, 1962; Goossen, 2017; Urry, 2006). These included the Bolsheviks (Marxist) Revolution, civil war, the establishment of Communism and the invasion of Germans during World War II. Though once referred to as the Russian Empire, its name shifted to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and is currently referred to as Russia. This research will utilize the current English name for Russia since the name, Ukraine, does not capture the same historical significance that Russia does.

Low German

Mennonites largely spoke Plautdietsch, which is a Dutch German dialect translated as "Low German" (R. Epp, 1993). Many of the memoirs were originally written in Low German or German. Such writings have been translated into English, usually by the offspring of the authors.

Spirituality

Since spirituality is a multidimensional concept, there are many ways to conceptualize it (Crisp, 2011). Spirituality promotes interconnections within one's person, with people, and with the world. Spirituality may find its expression in private or corporate rituals, ethics, service, acts of social justice, prayer, or environmental connectedness. Conveying one's spirituality may incorporate religious, inherited customs or be redefined for each emerging generation. Inclusive definitions that honor diverse ways of expression can help build a broad base for social work practitioners (Canda & Furman, 2010). While definitions can be diverse and all-embracing, spirituality for Mennonites is strongly rooted in their communal traditions that was often closed to

outsiders (Goossen, 2017). Mystical experiences that transcend the bounds of language and rationalization can also be included in a definition of spirituality (Canda & Furman, 2010). Even though working out their confession of faith was central and ongoing, Mennonites wrote of mystical experiences (Funk Wiebe, 2014; Janzen & Janzen, 1990).

Ethical Issues

Since this study analyzed public data, consent to conduct the research was not needed. However, potential risks remained. The California State University, Fresno, Human Subjects procedures were followed to assess potential benefits and risks of the study. As an historically inward-looking group, Mennonites do not readily share their struggles within or outside the community (Krahn, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). Therefore, emphasizing their traumatic experiences and the interrelated mental health issues could be viewed as threatening to Mennonites who may read this research study. Furthermore, people reading about trauma as highlighted in this study could be potentially triggered or re-traumatized if they went through similar experiences themselves (Andrews et al., 2002; Saxe et al., 2015). Lastly, while the memoirs are public documents and all but one author have since passed away, their original intent was likely not to have their narratives analyzed. This study may be seen by some individuals, such as descendants of the authors, as failing to honor the legacies of their family members.

Summary

Today, there are hundreds of thousands of Mennonites living around the world, many of whom are offspring of survivors of collective trauma. There is small body of literature specifically related to this population that explores the impact of their traumatic experience on their mental health. This study has the potential to build on prior research. Furthermore, collective trauma potentially has recurring themes that are applicable to other populations who have experienced trauma (Kira et al., 2018).

Social workers will likely work with people who have been impacted from multi-faceted trauma. They will also engage with offspring who may have experienced intergenerational transmission of trauma. Recognizing the complexities of such people is critical. For some, telling their story could re-trigger the traumas. For others, there really is not a language to express themselves. For those in subsequent generations, they may not be aware of how they too carry the effects of the trauma within. They may experience depression, anxiety, separation-individuation challenges, identity development issues, attachment disruptions, and spiritual experiences that may be impacted from a trauma they did not directly experience. In working through assessment and intervention, social workers can be sensitive to not just personal matters regarding trauma, but also to the collective historical context. To build cultural competence and greater understanding of the complexities of trauma experienced by unprecedented numbers of refugees, the literature was explored.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Several theories, including attachment theory, narrative theory, ethnographic theory and ecological systems theory, apply to the examination of trauma. Empirical literature broadens the definition of individual traumatic experiences to include multi-faceted considerations. Exploring the psychological impact on the survivors along with intergenerational transmission of the trauma was considered.

Theoretical Literature

Attachment Theory

Studies found that people who experienced multi-faceted traumatic events such as war, displacement, political violence were more likely to have problems with attachment (de Jong et al., 2003; Reynolds, 1998). Further, subsequent generations also had significantly higher incidences of insecure attachment (Reynolds, 1998). Having a clearer understanding of attachment theory shed light on the impact of trauma for the first generation and how it transmits intergenerationally.

According to Bowlby (1969), children's experiences with primary caregivers becomes internalized in relation to whether their needs were responded to by an accessible caregiver. The determining factor of the type and strength of children's attachment experience is related to their sense of whether they are acceptable in the opinion of their attachment figure. In other words, if they feel worthy of their parents' love, and if that person is available, responsive, emotionally attuned, and accessible, secure attachments then develop. If not, a failure of attachment results. Children, Bowlby argued, build internal working models of how they interact with their world. This influences their perceptions of situations, personal plans, and expected future outcomes. Although his work centered primarily around describing infant attachments, he

speculated about the impact early attachments may have on future relationships. If children experienced rejection from caregivers, it becomes integrated into the working models of their self-perception in relationship to their social world. He argued that traumatic attachments negatively influence the child's normal development throughout life. Their self-esteem may also be impacted negatively and they may come to expect the same interactional pattern in their subsequent relationships.

Based on his work, four dominant styles of attachment were described by Ainsworth, Blehar, and Waters (1978) in their ground-breaking work. They delineated attachment into four categories that propose distinct differences in how children experience their relationships with their primary caregivers. Children, they found, formed attachments that are (1) secure, (2) anxious-preoccupied, (3) dismissive-avoidant, or (4) fearful-avoidant. Their work was the first to provide empirical evidence for Bowlby's theory and expanded on his work. Securely attached children who had positive internal working models saw themselves as worthy of respect and experienced others as helpful. Children who were avoidant thought they themselves were not worthy and acceptable which paralleled the perceived rejection of their primary caregiver. Ambivalent children were most likely to view themselves negatively and expressed their emotions in extreme demonstrations in order to receive attention. Finally, those with insecure attachments had the greatest risk of relational and emotional behavioral problems.

Other researchers (Årseth et al., 2009; Kins & Soenens, 2013) have more extensively developed a life-span approach to attachment. Kins et al. (2013) found that those who scored on the attachment scale as either anxious or avoidant were significantly more likely to have depressive personalities. Årseth et al. (2009) researched the relationship between the level of intimacy women experience and their attachment style. Those who internalized a dismissive attachment style were uncomfortable with intimacy, struggled to trust and rely on others, and tended to avoid others. Last, they found those

who were unsure about their attachment figure's availability became preoccupied later in life with wondering if others will be dependable. They craved intimacy while worrying about rejection and being unlovable. Those in intimate relationships had statistically significant higher scores on the attachment measure compared to those who were not in pseudo-intimate relationships (Årseth et al., 2009). They also had significantly lower score on the fearful attachment measure than both the pseudo-intimate group and those who were in the merger-preoccupied group. There were no significant differences between intimacy status groups for the dismissing or preoccupied attachment dimensions. This suggests an ability to experience intimate relationships is related to secure attachment. In light of these studies, attachment has bearing throughout one's lifespan and those who struggle with intimacy as adults may also find problems in their ability to parent. Rholes et al. (2006) found that parents who experienced attachment insecurity were significantly more likely to experience parenting anxiety, marital dissatisfaction, and symptoms of depression. Experiences with early attachment impacted people's ability to engage with others whether the experiences are positive or negative.

<u>Separation-individuation</u>. Depending on a child's internalized attachment type, they will then be faced with a developmental task of moving away from their parent (i.e., separation) and becoming their own person (i.e., individuation) (Kins et al., 2013). According to Jung (1963), the aim of one's psychological development concerns the formation of the self. He proposed the path to that core task is the journey of individuation.

Kins et al. (2013) found children successfully moved through the separation-individuation process in stages. During the first stage, some gradually progressed from psychological dependency on their caregivers while maintaining a connection with them. The symbiotic relationship with the caregiver helped them move to becoming an

individuated child. For the first time, they had a “sense of identity” (Kins et al., 2013; Mahler & Mahler, 1985). However, they described a back and forth movement during this period. They wanted to defend their newly achieved independence while still possessing a desire to be reunited with their caregiver.

Puberty is a marker for children to enter the second phase of separation-individuation (Blos, 1979). As bodies and minds grow, adolescents no longer perceive themselves as children and their caregivers no longer seem to loom so large and idealized. This increased independence offers new freedom to look outside of their family system for their own sense of identity. As in the first phase, they are likely to feel conflicted about this process where they enjoy their new-found independence and yet long to stay connected with their caregiver. To overcome this challenge, Blos (1979) argued a slow process enacts, moving the teen from a hierarchical relationship with their parents to one of collegiality. He noted that in western culture, where the adolescence stage is stretched out, the redefining of this relationship may well become a developmental task of emerging adults.

Successfully navigating the separation-individuation stages is critical for the development of the self throughout the lifespan (Ashford & LeCroy, 2009). A unique sense of self emerges in this stage that is separate from others. Individuated adolescents are able to sense and honor others’ perspectives with openness and receptivity. While common patterns are viewed, individuation is mitigated differently depending on one’s cultural background.

Blos (1979) provided a theoretical foundation for the importance of a successful separation-individuation process during adolescence to initiate intimate relationships in adulthood. He stressed the important task in adolescence where the power of the internalized parents is given up in order to gain increased autonomy. While this does not necessarily require severing family bonds, it is vital to be independent psychologically

and be able to develop intimate relationships beyond the family circle. Without this disengagement, friends and partners would serve as substitutes for the original attachment figure who had failed them, creating a dysfunctional system.

Årseth et al. (2009) explored whether there is variance between experienced intimacy for adolescent separation-individuation themes. They found that separation-individuation impacts the intimacy women can experience later in life. However, one limitation in their study was utilizing female university students who may have been more likely to respond to a study on intimacy if they themselves were in fulfilling relationships, thus, creating sample bias. They also used a homogeneous sample who were likely more articulate than the broader population. Their subjects may have demonstrated greater exploration of their identity and have stronger parental support than the norm.

Since separation-individuation is concerned with both relatedness and individuality, there may be dysfunctional dependence when difficult separation-individuation has occurred. Kins et al. (2013) compared dysfunctional dependence and independence. They used measures for pathological separation-individuation, attachment, and personality vulnerability. They found that dysfunctional dependence was correlated with separation-individuation pathology and depressive symptoms. They also found that only dysfunctional dependence was significantly correlated with separation anxiety disorder.

Separation-individuation is an internal psychological process that impacts a person throughout their lives (Kins et al., 2013). Establishing a sense of self that is separate from other objects of affection (i.e., separation) and acquiring one's singular individuality (i.e., individuation) is a critical developmental task. Other studies also linked one's ability to separate and individuate with the type of attachment experienced with their primary caregiver (Årseth et al., 2009; Romano, Fitzpatrick, & Janzen, 2008).

Likewise, those who experienced dysfunctional dependence as a result of difficulty with separation-individuation, tended to be more vulnerable to depression (Kins et al., 2013) and those who descend into depression often found the journey out took time and incredible courage (Fidyk, 2016; Odorisio, 2015). This lifelong process of healing often required a death of the ego and a new union in the self.

Critical developmental tasks, like the separation-individuation process, were found to be challenging not only for the people who experienced trauma, but for subsequent generations (Kira et al., 2018; Krahn, 2011, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). Krahn (2013) found that those adult Mennonite children who struggled with differentiation expressed the need to find ways to express their individuality later in life. Since traumatic experiences have the potential to negatively impact attachment and individuation, it is important to understand more of what occurs neurologically with these tasks.

Neurological impact. Recent studies that link neurology and psychology have contributed to a broader understanding of attachment theory, trauma, and the self (Saxe et al., 2015; Schore, 2002). Schore (2002) highlighted research that recognizes ways neurological systems impact attachment and development of the self. Building on attachment theory, he proposed that parents serving as mature models for their children provide regulatory functions for infants who have underdeveloped identity structures. The mother-child dyad is an interdependent, unconscious system that allows the infant to regulate his/her environment and emotions with inner balance. This process allows for the development and continuance of the self. In time, the child grows capable of regulating their drives and to adapt in similar ways as the mature parent. During the first year of life, a type of dance between an attuned mother and her infant’s rhythms is performed that results in the child’s ability to reflect the mother.

The essential task of the first year of human life is the creation of a secure attachment bond of emotional communication between the infant and primary caregiver (Schore, 2002). A highly responsive mother, even when she misreads her child, helps the child regulate as she becomes mirrored in her infant. The development of the self is arrested when the mother is not emotionally attuned. Thus, transmission of a healthy self is not possible. Instead, when the child experiences the caregiver as traumatizing, their right brain, healthy attachment, and development of self are negatively impacted.

The right brain houses the body's ways of regulating affect communication between the self and the mature adult (Schore, 2002). This portion of the brain creates connections with the limbic system responsible for handling emotions that impact actions, adaptation, and new understandings. If the child is securely attached to the "good-enough mother," the child's ability to cope provides protection against mental illness that is triggered by trauma. However, Schore explained dissociation from the outer world and heightened focus on one's inner world can occur when the mother shows distress and withdraws from her child. This child, with disorganized attachment, then mirrors this emotional state of the mother that becomes written in the right brain's response system. Healthy development may be thwarted when these early social and emotional encounters inhibit the brain's natural trajectory. Schore (2002) highlighted there is a strong belief that the "dysfunctional and traumatized early relationship is the stressor that leads to PTSD that severe trauma of interpersonal origin may override any genetic, constitutional, social, or psychological resilience factor" (p. 462). This has further negative impacts on the brain's development of stress response systems. He reported that people with unhealthy attachments from their past are more likely to show disorders around empathy since they lack the ability to discern emotional states. They do not have highly developed social cognition of both external cues (e.g., understanding facial expressions) and internal cues (e.g., their own inner emotional state).

Consequently, a right-brain dysfunction impacts an ability to adapt to signs of safety and risk that become encoded in the brain over time and may impact future mental health.

Attachment experiences in early childhood experiences can impact their development throughout the lifespan. Traumatic experiences complicate the creating of healthy bonds and negotiating the developmental task of separation-individuation. Considering the neurological impact of early infant attachment also builds understanding of how trauma can predict future issues with mental health and transmit trauma intergenerationally. However, in the case of trauma that concerns other features beyond the mother-child dyad (e.g. war, displacement, genocide), a more comprehensive theory must also be considered.

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) brand of ecological systems theory identified four levels of systems that considers the interconnectedness of people with each other and their environment. He likened the systems to a nest within which the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro- systems are layered. The microsystem can be seen as housing the developing individual and the immediate surrounding that normally consists of one's family. The mesosystem consists of the interrelations of the settings where the social life is experienced such as family, friendships, and school. The exo-system is comprised of social structures that are both formal and informal (e.g. employment, community, government, social networks). Bronfenbrenner argued that, while broad systems do not directly hold the individual, they do impact what individual experiences in the microsystem. The macrosystem is the outermost layer of the system. While he described the macrosystem as being the furthest away from the person's immediate system, it has significant influence. This layer concerns the symbols, tangible objects, and institutional motifs of the cultural groups and subcultures involved in the lives of the individual.

Features like politics, economics, laws impact how a person is treated in an environment and interacts with others. The challenge, he posited, is that human development must consider the environmental systems and the interactions that occur within and among them.

Multiple facets of trauma can be more fully considered when viewed through the framework of the ecological system theory. An understanding of the complexities of trauma can include the interconnectedness of the systems that interplay with how the trauma is experienced (e.g., environment in refugee camps, communism, victim of genocide, host culture, faith expression, patriarchy, war, view of God). This theory offers a kaleidoscope-like perspective to tease out the complexities of trauma.

Saxe et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of considering all the systems in their Trauma Systems Therapy approach. They found that a diagnosis of PTSD does not provide sufficient information about the relationship between symptoms and social systems. They argued it helps to know the players required in the treatment service systems (e.g., mental health services, welfare) as they can help navigate the stressors, aid in recovery, and help to buffer from life's challenges. Threats in any of the systems can impact healthy development. However, people with traumatic stress will often have weaknesses in their ecological systems. Knowing these systems assists in offering a broad treatment plan.

Narrative Theory: How a Story is Told

Telling one's story offers a mode to capture both the psychological and social features of a person (Andrews et al., 2002). Personal narratives may incorporate people's social conditions and their lived experiences in a subjective expression of their hopes, sense of self, and community identity. Narratives offer a way to reconstruct personal and

collective histories and imagine into their future. While there are many ways of approaching narrative, Andrews et al. (2002) outlined its historical development.

In the 1960s, there was an intuitive approach to narratives that seemed to give value to the dominant story (Andrews et al., 2002). With the rise of globalization, emerging voices from the margins challenged those biases which called for greater objectivity to lift out these new voices and consider new ways to study narratives. According to Ricoeur (2010), personal experience is sequenced and situated in history in ways that form people's yearnings, hopes, assumptions, and memories. With that in mind, an objective telling of the events in one's chronology is not possible; rather, the narration is similar to fiction in that it provides a creative way of capturing and understanding reality (Andrews et al., 2002). Narratives have plots with the beginning, middle, and end of the sequence that take the material of life and places it in a telling of past, present, and future. Andrews and associates argued that humanity is focused on "creating and maintaining meaning at center of all human activity" (p. 7). As such, memoirs offer a way to reflect on how a person lived their life. These writings may include rationalizations or unconscious features, holding aspects of what is both real and subjective. Narratives also move towards closure which show how people are helped or hindered in their capacity for action.

Narratives are impacted by factors in a person's environment that are broader than the micro-system (Andrews et al., 2002). For example, people either accept or act in opposition to a meta-narrative, the story that structures a belief system from societal norms or cultural expectations. There can be collective stories where a group of people who share similar experiences also relay similar impressions instead of individual difference in their reflections. In his work with trauma narratives, Wolkowitz (2004) found shared aspects in how people introduced their narratives, recounted their arrival story, reflected on suffering, and addressed moral predicaments.

Memoirs offer opportunities to explore multiple questions. Andrews et al. (2002) discovered people's construction of narratives helped flesh out the relationship between lived experience and reflection. Writing also created connections between how daily events were organized in the self and reshaped to present to others. Major influences that have impacted people throughout their lifespan can be uncovered in memoirs. Malson (2004) found analysis of the discourse was informative when personal narratives were studied. She based her findings on categories created from both the literature review and an assessment of the data.

Andrews (2014) suggested that outsiders to a traumatic event sometimes cannot accept, truly understand, nor accurately interpret the way the stories are told. The telling of the story is not the same as healing. In fact, Andrews (2014) proposed that some people can become retraumatized from the telling. Further, a person's story can become a type of template that others adopt, making it a collective story. When this occurs, the individual may become silenced as the focus shifts to the collective.

Ethnographic Theory

While narrative theory considers how a story is told in ways that incorporate personal and communal histories, ethnographic theory focuses specifically on a group that shares a particular culture. Ethnography is concerned with studying and interpreting common and learned motifs in a cultural group's ethics, actions, belief system, and language (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ethnography provides a framework to both guide the study of a culture-sharing group and to present the findings in writing. This qualitative approach finds its origin in the work of anthropologists in the early part of the 20th century. Based on a meta-analysis of published ethnographies, Creswell and Poth (2018) highlighted key features of ethnographies. These include determining patterns that shape the culture more than on the culture itself. The group's cognitive actions can be studied in

ways they express their ideological beliefs or convictions. The research begins with an expansive theory that outlines what the researcher hopes to discover. Fieldwork plays an integral role in ethnography and data is often collected by conducting interviews and making observations. The people being studied provide an inside view on the group. Therefore, their comments are reported verbatim and the researcher interprets these findings.

In some instances, the researcher of an ethnographic study is positioned as both an insider and outsider of a culture-sharing group. Autoethnography is an approach to research that makes a connection between personal experience and how it can contribute to the particular field it addresses (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2016). This form of ethnography can raise issues that have long been kept secret in the person's culture and illicit contributions from audiences beyond the context. Krahn (2013) suggested autoethnography offers a perspective for inviting those who have been marginalized to share their personal stories. Collective narratives are then constructed that may inform how generations have been impacted throughout their lifespans. One reason autoethnography is so helpful in garnering insight into the intergenerational impact of collective trauma is that the second-generation researchers have been positioned as both insiders and outsiders to their parents' trauma and therefore, can become a type of bridge between the two worlds.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Application of Selected Theories

There are strengths and weakness of attachment, narrative, ethnographic, and ecological systems theories. Attachment theory helped explain how the trauma impacts someone on an individual level. It also aided in understanding how trauma can be transmitted intergenerationally. This theory informs treatment for those who have experienced trauma. At the same time, some of the literature (Saxe et al., 2015; Schore,

2002) looked at attachment trauma that may result from child abuse or significant deficiencies of the parents. While there may have been maltreatment of Mennonite children from their parents, this paper focused on how trauma, associated with war and political violence, was narrated by Mennonites. Based on themes that emerged, its impact for subsequent generations was speculated on. Attachment theory, on its own, is limited. The theory does not account for broader systemic factors that impact someone's experiences with trauma. Neurological impacts of trauma, while they may be connected to attachment issues, also need to be considered when studying trauma as it may shed light on why individuals who experienced trauma may develop unhealthy ways of experiencing and responding to their environments (Saxe et al., 2015; Schore, 2002). Understanding the impact of trauma on neurological development also offers a treatment path to facilitate repairing the dysfunctional patterns established in the brain. However, neurological impacts from collective or systemic trauma can only be suggested from what people expressed in their memoirs.

Conducting narrative research offers opportunities to analyze stories that are experienced and told by individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). There were several challenges in utilizing this approach. Substantial background information about the individual and his/her context must be collected. Knowing what to include in the data requires careful scrutiny. Researchers need to be aware of their own biases and stories when reworking the text. In telling their stories, people may leave out or loose the most important pieces of the story (Andrews, 2014). Language is often linked with power, thereby limiting oppressed groups from sharing. There are times when words may be too simple and the atrocities too awful to capture, for both the survivor and the listener. When something is too horrific to even say, then it is sometimes used as an excuse to not imagine or speak. At other times, victims have shared their horrific stories, however, their audiences were not ready to hear and the sharing stopped. Yet, such stories potentially

hold within them a gift and offer an awareness of universality. These factors were considered when coding the memoirs for this research.

Incorporating ethnographic approaches in research has the potential to discover why a group of people behaves or thinks in a certain way (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This can provide a deeper understanding for how contexts impact an individual's experience. At the same time, challenges are also present. Researchers often do extensive fieldwork and must be mindful of how that impacts their perspective. Conducting a pilot autoethnographical study can help to control biases. This research drew on aspects of ethnography and did not address all aspects of the approach.

The ecological systems theory provides a framework for understanding trauma at the individual and collective levels. This lens also gives breadth to other variables that may impact how trauma is experienced. Some of these variables may include faith, culture, gender, and communism when examining the Mennonites memoirs. The people who live through similar traumatic times may have their own ecological system to contend with. While individuals may share some similarities within their environment with others, they also have different impactful systems. This approach is broad in scope and helped assist in identifying critical factors in how the trauma was experienced.

While understanding systems that were particular to Mennonites can shed light on how they may have experienced trauma, it is important to note that they were not only Mennonites. Shimmin, Wittmeier, Lavoie, Wicklund, and Sibley (2017) emphasized the importance of an intersectional perspective that examines multiple social categories. With that in mind, while the cultural experiences of Mennonites may have significantly shaped them, other factors were considered such as gender, the culture where they resettled, age of traumatic events, status in their community, socioeconomic status, and spirituality.

With its emphasis on understanding people in their environments, attachment theory potentially brings a balance to the broad perspective of the ecological systems

theory. Attachment theory can explain how the trauma may have impacted the individual's attachment with a significant other and their separation-individual process.

While there are strengths, weaknesses and gaps with each model, each theory incorporated in this study offered a perspective which provided breadth to the understanding of the traumatic experiences that the Mennonites experienced while living in Russia and beyond. These theories provided frameworks for viewing the multi-faceted aspects of contributing factors to the way the suffering was experienced and potentially transmitted intergenerationally.

Impact of Trauma

Trauma can be impacted by both individual and collective experiences. According to the *DSM-5* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), criteria for PTSD includes exposure to a traumatic event, intrusive symptoms, consistently avoiding related stimuli, negative alterations in thought processes and affect, and changes in arousal and reactivity.

Rogers and Leydesdorff (2002) argued a definition of trauma is no simple matter. They highlighted it has been defined in numerous ways by researchers. When something is described as traumatic, Garland (2002) highlighted the etymology of the word, trauma reaches back to a Greek concept referring to breaking the skin or a body's container. She cited Freud who utilized the term as a metaphor for how the mind can be punctured or harmed by traumatic experiences. Consequently, such events increases protective features in the brain that can make someone more sensitive to stimuli from the outer world.

People respond to traumatic exposure in diverse ways. Trauma disorders have primary symptoms that develop after a person is exposed to a direct or possibly life-threatening event (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). PTSD is listed under Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders. It outlines its etiology as developing particular symptoms preceding one or two exposures of acute traumatic situations such as war,

assault, or sexual abuse. Symptoms include reliving the trauma regularly and attempting to avoid dwelling on it as it may bring up bodily sensations or emotional anguish (Morrison, 2017). While the symptoms generally do not appear immediately following the traumatic experience, they usually manifest within three months after the trauma. It may take additional months or even years before all the symptom criteria is met.

For those who develop PTSD, Morrison (2017) highlighted they will relive the trauma regularly and attempt to avoid dwelling on it as it may bring up bodily sensations or emotional anguish. This, he said, is true especially for people who have endured more atrocious traumas. They may be diligent to avoid associations with the trauma, become depressive in their thinking, lose interest in meaningful activities or detached from others. They may also experience symptoms of heightened arousal, and become short-tempered, overly vigilant, distracted, or have trouble sleeping.

Not all people who are exposed to trauma develop trauma-related disorders (Danieli et al., 2016). There are multiple ways people adapt to traumatic experiences that have bearing on their lives throughout their lifespans. The treatment of refugees who experienced repeated trauma has not been extensively researched (Sonne et al., 2013). Since the DSM-5's current diagnosis of PTSD is based on a single-traumatic event, the criteria fails to adequately capture the serious psychological harm associated with prolonged, collective trauma.

For refugee groups who have experienced multi-layered, on-going trauma, an examination of the aspects that touch on the cumulative, complex, and collective dynamics trauma is needed (Kira et al., 2018). In their quantitative study, they found attachment trauma and sustained collective trauma predicted the occurrence of future trauma. Secondary trauma also projected identity development. They suggested considering people's trauma profiles can be especially helpful for populations who experienced complex, multiple, on-going trauma.

Large-scale systemic trauma calls for multidimensional, complex frameworks to assess its impact (Danieli et al., 2016). In their study of Holocaust survivors, significant correlations between numerous factors were found. For example, aspects of family history (e.g. age of parent, transition of resettlement), family milieu (e.g. status in socio-cultural environment, family dynamics, social connections), ways parents adapted after the trauma (e.g. victim, numb, fighter) were significantly related with the level of their offspring's ability to repair and adapt.

Krahn (2013) stated that considerable research exists regarding individual trauma, while there is a dearth of macro-level research that explores a community's trauma narrative. Furthermore, a literature search on the Russian Mennonites' collective trauma revealed only one quantitative (Reynolds, 1998) and one qualitative study (Krahn, 2013).

Neurological Impact

What happens neurologically when multi-layered trauma is experienced by individuals? Refugee children who experienced multiple traumas of war or political violence, self-reported traumatic losses of various forms (Betancourt et al., 2012). These traumas often included losing or being separated from a loved one, displacement, and violence in the community and the home. In an analysis of clinicians' ratings, Betancourt and colleagues found evidence of PTSD, generalized anxiety, depression, dissociation, separation disorder, and traumatic grief to be related with experienced trauma. To further complicate matters, they significantly found comorbidity to be prevalent. This may make it challenging for clinicians to arrive at a clear diagnosis during the initial assessment. They found clinicians reported children struggled with behavior issues at school and home and demonstrated problems with attachment and trust that stem from separation from significant others. Unlike children who experienced trauma in America, traumatized refugees did not engage in high-risk behaviors-such as running away, risky sexual

behavior, crime, and substance abuse. While the children in their study reported horrendous stress from war, the clinicians saw the importance in assessing ongoing stressors associated with resettling in a new country. Similarly, in their quantitative study, de Jong et al. (2013) found that exposure to violence was significantly related with PTSD and anxiety disorders. PTSD was also associated with a variety of stressors from their refugee experiences that impacted children beyond the actual violence itself.

Impact on Mental Health

Developmental stages and trauma. Kira et al. (2018) studied the impact of four different levels of trauma on identity formation. The four levels of trauma are: role identity trauma, survival trauma, secondary trauma, and personal identity trauma. Those who experienced multi-layered, long-term trauma were more likely to experience challenges in their identity formation. They found that when people experienced traumas that were continuous and had touched on their identity such as discrimination based on ethnicity or religion, they were more likely to predict future traumatic experiences because the trauma impacted their identity formation. They suggested the importance of early assessment of the multiple systemic factors that impacted the severity of the trauma.

Reynolds (1998) found that trauma can impact normal progress through developmental stages and can induce psychopathology, depending on when a person's traumatic experiences began. Trauma that begins in utero can impact the baby upon birth. If significant trauma occurs in the first four years of life when the psyche is still immature, a child may develop strong defense mechanisms, such as splitting and become overly anxious and conflicted. For those who experience trauma before developing language mastery, the traumatized person may not be able to put their experiences into words later in life.

Psychological impact. Several Mennonites have written their stories of their traumatic experiences in Russia and their flight to Europe during World War II (Krahn, 2011, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). In utilizing a qualitative narrative approach, Krahn (2011) noted that Mennonites generally included thick descriptions of their challenges and survival, while they offered thin, or "flattened" emotional and psychological storylines. All the women in her study reported being born during historically traumatic times that were relentless throughout their time in Soviet Russia. They reported experiencing repeatedly forced famine, exiles, bombings, murders, food insecurity, terror, and chaos. Many shared experiences of losing children, fear of invasion, and group rapes. By denying their own personal suffering, this defense against pain can make one emotionally distant.

Krahn (2011) also found that the majority of the female survivors and their offspring interviewed for her study did not communicate psychological or emotional attunement in past, present, or future components of their narratives. Instead the collective aspect of the narratives that emerged construed their survival as the dominant result of mental strength and faith. Many internalized a spirituality of suffering, seeing hardship as normal and expressed it in rigid and legalistic religious practice. They related the belief that strong mental states allowed for coping. Once they moved to Canada, some of the Mennonites experienced guilt related to unresolved trauma as the result of their personal belief that they were not strong enough spiritually to endure the trauma. There were also stories of resilience. When atrocities happened, they resourcefully pulled together as a community and persevered. This, she said, suggested their persona's strength underneath the underlying, unprocessed trauma. Mental health issues were viewed by some participants as a weakness in faith. Furthermore, she noted the telling of these narratives was done in a mechanical manner. Instead of emotionally processing

hardship, most utilized the chronological manner of re-telling the events that focused on protecting their families and navigating their survival.

In Reynolds' (1998) research with Mennonites, she found a significant interrelationship between their collective trauma questionnaire and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2). Higher incidences of insecure attachment, an inability to display psychological or emotional attunement, increased inhibition of aggression, over-controlled hostility, anxiety and depression, somatic complaints, need for affection, and PTSD. Challenges with the separation-individuation processes and ego development were identified. Half of their respondents knew someone who was raped but none personally reported being a victim themselves. Similar to the study by Krahn (2011), features in Reynold's interviews also suggested a lack of emotional processing. For example, some participants reported dire poverty with minimal emotional response. Others wondered if their experiences would drive them to insanity while others reported nightmares. In reading three memoirs by Reynolds, horrific accounts of trauma were given, yet each memoir made only one fleeting reference to emotions and then quickly returned to comments regarding faith and then moving on with their stories.

Intergenerational transmission. Krahn (2011) argued that history has a way of planting itself into people's beings. By that she meant most of her interviewees presented with unresolved trauma that was triggered throughout their lifespan as evidenced by descriptions of adult children of survivors linking their mother's trauma to their physical and psychological health. Offspring commented that internalized, unprocessed trauma of parents had intergenerational consequences concerning familial expectations regarding roles, rules, ways of behaving, and attachment. Kira et al. (2018) also found that attachment disruption and identity traumas were transmitted intergenerationally to children of those who experienced multi-layered, lifespan trauma. In Reynolds' (1998)

sample, personal and collective repeated exposure to trauma had a significant impact on the second and third generations. In comparison with the norms in the general population, the second generation experienced a significantly higher inhibition of aggression, over-controlled hostility, anxiety, and depression though they did not live in the traumatic situations of their parents or grandparents. It is interesting to note they showed higher levels of depression than their parents, reporting that they were more likely to worry, exhibit low self-confidence, be dysphoric, and become passive and ready to make concessions to avoid conflict at all costs. Further, the third-generation experienced significantly higher anxiety and depression than cultural norms, although their symptoms showed a gradual decline from the previous generation. Both Krahn (2011) and Reynolds (1998) found adult children reported an increased emotional disconnect within the family, emotional unavailability, and challenges with attachment and the separation-individuation processes.

While one could assume that collective trauma, with its intense emotions, could result in an outpouring of expressions later in life, studies showed that the opposite tends to be true (Krahn, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). Mennonite parents were experienced by their adult children as emotionally distant, even though the parents strongly emphasized the importance of family togetherness and community. In addition, it was reported that parents appeared to shut down deep emotions in order to utilize the mental strength they needed to survive. Krahn (2013) noted that several adult children reported internalizing their parents' unspoken difficult emotions, including high levels of "anxiety, fear, mistrust, difficulty expressing emotions, underlying anger, resentment, guilt, or grief" (p. 59). In her interviews of survivors, Reynolds (1998) learned that parents attempted to hide their suffering from their children. As a result, some of their offspring reported they felt they were not allowed to think for themselves and also repressed thoughts related to their parents' traumatic backgrounds. One female participant, who was torn from family

members and fled to China, shared that her mother would not let her be sad and expected her to be grateful for her situation and show strength to move on. Many respondents expressed concerns about their own undiagnosed issues such as anxiety, depression, and paranoia and often correlated their issues with their mother's lack of emotional attunement (Krahn, 2011). Emerging themes around difficulties with separation-individuation were expressed by adult children in separating from their mothers regarding the roles and expectations of their families and transitioning into independence.

Krahn (2011) found themes of intergenerational impact related to mental functioning. Adult children reported experiencing their mothers as resourceful as well as mentally and spiritually strong. All reported their mothers just moved on from the suffering. While none reported accessing mental health facilities, they were described as merely functioning in life. There were also themes related to faith. While the adult children viewed their mothers' stories as evidence that God did not abandon them, most described ways their mothers wrestled within the churches of their new communities in Canada. For example, the church devalued subjective and controversial narratives such as their fathers' conscription into Nazi army and expected church members to silence emotional suffering through acceptance of one's experiences as God's will. In addition, the participants reported that it was unacceptable in their faith community to have a mental illness. Their mothers may have demanded high moral standards and complete adherence to the expectations of the Mennonite doctrine and lifestyle. Simultaneously, collective identities took precedence over personal identities.

Gaps in the Literature

Of the thousands of Mennonites living in Canada today, many are offspring born to survivors of collective trauma. There is paucity of literature specifically related to this population with one quantitative study that researched the impact of their traumatic

experience on their mental health as well as that of the second and third generations (Reynolds, 1998), and one qualitative study (Krahn, 2013). This study built on this limited body of literature.

Krahn (2013) focused her study on mental health and aging with the female survivors and their offspring in her qualitative sample. She did not include male survivors nor emigrants to geographic locations beyond Manitoba, Canada. Her study drew participants who were brave enough to come forward. It is important to address Mennonite memoirs of both males and females who hailed from a similar period and slightly different migration routes.

Reynolds (1998) suggested that future research investigate how faith impacted the experience of trauma. The sample in her study included Mennonites who immigrated to Canada and avoided Communism and Nazi Germany. This study drew on data from a sample who experienced additional layers of trauma. It also considered the role faith played in negotiating traumatic experiences. While Mennonites had shared traumatic experiences, they were simultaneously experienced individually. Features of individual trauma were explored. It was also imperative to consider the role intersectionality plays in the experience of trauma as people were defined in ways other than Mennonite.

Therefore, the goals of this study were to analyze themes that emerged in a new sample of memoirs that shed light on how to shape social work services to this particular population. It also shed light on features that other cultural groups experience when faced with multi-faceted, long-term trauma. The goal of this study was to discover if an analysis of Mennonite narratives may broaden an awareness of how collective trauma was experienced and potentially transmitted.

Collective trauma potentially has recurring themes (Kira et al., 2018) that are applicable to other populations who have experienced collective trauma. This thesis built

on previous studies, examining themes that emerged in historical material using a narrative-based methodology.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Many Mennonites wrote memoirs detailing their experiences in Russia starting from post-World War I onward. These narratives gave accounts of the multi-layered experiences the authors encountered. Stories included personal histories, including exposure to systemic injustices and trauma. The literature supports that trauma impacts the way people interact with the world (Danieli et al., 2016; Kins et al., 2013). For Mennonites who encountered ongoing, complex, and collective trauma, psychological harm associated with these exposures was often evident as are themes of resilience (Krahn, 2011; Reynolds, 1998).

Research Question

There is strong evidence in the literature that mental health issues stemming from individual and collective trauma are transmitted intergenerationally (Kira et al., 2018; Reynolds, 1998). With this in mind, analysis of Mennonite narratives may broaden an awareness of how trauma was experienced and potentially transmitted. This exploratory study was concerned with examining the research question: how do memoirs of the Mennonite experience in Russia before World War II narrate trauma throughout the lifespan?

Narrative research does not presume that the literature review alone shapes the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Instead, the data may inform the literature review and assist in reshaping the research question. With that in mind, this study focused on a convenience sample of pre-existing archival data to explore the research question and reshape the literature review.

Target Population and Sampling Plan

A convenience sample of four public memoirs was selected from the Mennonite Brethren Archives at Fresno Pacific University. Memoirs were chosen from those Mennonites whose families lived in Russia from 1900, exited via *the Great Trek* to Nazi Germany, and then emigrated to Canada or were repatriated back to Russia. Both male and female historical material was utilized. At the same time, this study did have a large enough sample to speak broadly to gender differences in conceptualizing trauma or to generalize its findings. Only those memoirs translated into English were included in the sample. In addition, this study did not include other sources of information such as personal interviews or archival data, nor did it collect data from subsequent generations of Mennonites. Therefore, only inferences about the impact of trauma on mental health for Mennonites and the intergenerational transmission of trauma were made.

Data Collection and Analysis

Pre-existing historical data was collected and analyzed using narrative theoretical approaches. Following a qualitative format offered by Creswell and Poth (2018), a database was created from the memoirs that were condensed into themes through the use of memoing and coding to describe “what happened.” Analysis and interpretation sought to make sense of the collected data by suggesting motifs, themes, and groupings. These interpretations were compared to theories outlined in the literature review and with the cultural context of the Mennonites.

Preparing and assembling the data in the text was outlined. Wolcott (1990) said that creating a description of the cultural group and their milieu is an important place to begin. Historical accounts of Mennonites were read before the methodology was written. This information helped create a description of preliminary themes and historical context that facilitated the methodology design. Two memoirs were read and field notes were taken to get a sense of potential themes that may emerge. Key words were notated.

Creswell and Poth (2018) highlighted how memos can help condense the data. Since the memoirs ranged from 140 to 280 pages in length, memos were taken while reading the memoirs and managed by creating a separate word document for each memoir. Decisions were made whether to include a few words, a phrase, or an entire section during the collection stage. One of the key components in narrative research is creating specific descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Reflective notes were added in the document that captured personal thoughts or reactions. Information that seemed particularly relevant to the research question were highlighted in bold.

To manage the large quantity of memos, Creswell and Poth (2018) offer a system for sorting in the analysis stage of research. Headings were created for each memo to aid in accessibility for analysis purposes. A summary of the field notes was drafted for each memoir. A description of the data was formed in conjunction with themes inherent in the literature, theory, and culture.

Once the data was organized, analysis proceeded by rereading the field notes. The memos served as way to capture the deeper meaning of the words as they related with themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Instead of using a linear approach, a spiraling dialectical tension was utilized. The research question guided what was looked for in the data, while being sensitive to antitheses that needed to be incorporated to arrive at some kind of synthesis.

A provisional list of 25-30 codes was created from the summaries to crystalize large amount of data in the memos and place them into succinct words that aligned with the text (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Codes were created from information that was anticipated, unexpected, or unusual. False dichotomies, use of silence (e.g., use of plural pronouns, subjects avoided), contradictions, peculiarities, metaphors that could have alternative significance, innuendos, and biases was considered at this stage. This list was reduced to five or six themes that were later discussed in the narrative. Once the themes

were determined, a code book in chart format provided the confines for each code. Color-coded headings included themes and examples from text segment. Summary statements underscored repetitions or noteworthy features in the data.

The next phase in the methodology focused on interpreting codes. At this point, the literature, theories, and cultural context were revisited to determine what aligned with the emerging themes. This included highlighting contradictions or alternative views found. The data was searched again in the light of the study's research question. Decisions were made regarding which quotes or phrases best captured the essence and faculty members were consulted for feedback. Moving from describing the data to explaining the data was the final stage.

Trustworthiness

This exploratory research took several issues into consideration concerning the trustworthiness of this study. As a Mennonite daughter of a father who lived through the Great Trek, the researcher was positioned as an insider to the narrative. Born in Canada during a time of political peace, she was also an outsider. Given the researcher's unique social location in exploring the research topic, she potentially served as a bridge between two worlds (Krahn, 2013). To help address researcher bias, an autoethnographic study was done by the researcher to identify how the researcher was positioned and potential biases before beginning the research. Jones et al. (2016) highlighted autoethnography as a research approach that connects personal experience of the researcher and its contribution to the particular topic of study. This approach can raise issues that have long been kept hidden within the person's culture or group and invites on-going, reciprocal conversations with others to elicit contributions from audiences beyond the context.

There are multiple challenges in translation when using narratives. According to Andrews (2014), some of the most important information may not be included and may

have also become lost in translation. Second, there are limitations to using everyday language to describe unspeakable atrocities. Words can be too simple that so much is left unsaid. If something is deemed inappropriate to communicate or imagine, especially for a particular cultural group, then the cultural expectation can sometimes be used as an excuse to not imagine or speak of it. Third, since language is linked with power, communication by oppressed groups can be impacted. While these limitations challenge the dependability of the narratives, Andrews (2014) argued that it does not matter what words are used to express the trauma as long as something is being articulated. The sharing may not capture the full trauma; however, the effort of communicating can create a space to begin expressing. The expression shows that words are avenues to convey something, even if such articulations may be inadequate in painting the full picture. She emphasized the importance of "the event of language" as significant in and of itself (p. 41).

The memoirs used in this research are translations from German or Plautdietsch. Due to the researcher's lack of understanding in the aforementioned languages and the public unavailability of the original sources, reliability of the translations could not be verified. It is possible that translators may have been biased in what was translated and how it was translated. At the same time, translations were often done while the author was alive and they could have verified translations. Translators were also fluent in the languages. Some of the memoirs stated their methodology of translation and had an outside source proof the translations.

Memoirs were generally written at the later part of life, long after the historical trauma. Some authors stated that their purpose for writing their story was for the benefit of the next generation. Their intended audience possibly impacted their voice and objectivity in sharing their narrative. Tone would also be difficult to decipher in written narratives as inflection, use of silence, and emotions could only be inferred from word

choice. The memoirs chosen for this research were lengthy, so greater focus on the topic of study guided the selection of which sections were relevant and those that were less pertinent.

Other features built on the trustworthiness for this study by involving experts in several areas. First, consultation with a Mennonite historian at the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) in Clearbrook, BC, Canada was conducted. In addition, a social worker who has researched the Mennonite narrative was consulted regarding thematic material and applications to social work practice. The thesis chair assisted with scrutinizing the study's methodology and trauma themes. Faculty members who specialize in narrative methodology, clinical psychology, and anthropology were consulted.

Community Vulnerability and Research

As there is a dearth of material concerning trauma and Mennonites, this study had the potential benefit of adding to the body of literature. This may aid mental health practitioners in being more culturally competent when working with Mennonites. Furthermore, themes that emerged may be tentatively applicable to other groups who underwent similar traumatic experiences. Understanding the features of collective trauma may assist practitioners in carefully considering factors that may be contributing to a person's presenting problem that may reach beyond the level of the individual.

The study had minimal risk potential given that archival data was collected. Even though this study analyzed public data, potential risks remained. The California State University, Fresno Human Subjects procedures with human subjects was followed to minimize risk. Potential benefits and risks, along with the academic qualifications of the researcher and readers was addressed.

Being an historically insular group, Mennonites do not want their struggles to be known outside the community (Krahn, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). Therefore, shedding light

on their collective trauma experiences and the related mental health issues while proposing alternate ways to read the narratives could be viewed as threatening to Mennonites who may read this research study. Furthermore, highlighting the trauma in narratives could potentially trigger others who have gone through similar experiences and re-traumatize them (Andrews et al., 2002; Saxe et al., 2015). Lastly, while the memoirs are public documents and all but one of the authors have since passed away, their original intent was not likely to have their narratives analyzed. This study may be seen by some individuals such as descendants of the authors as failing to honor the legacies of their family members.

Limitations

There are strengths and weaknesses in narrative research. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), there needs to be a clear understanding of context, the multilayered pieces that impact unique individual experiences, and potential biases of the researcher. Researchers need to be personally reflective and consider their own background which may impact how data may be restoried, or in other words, reconstructed. Power must also be considered such as who owns the story, who can tell or change the story, whose version can be trusted, and what may be done when competing versions exist. While power structures were explored from within the Mennonite memoirs and historical accounts, observations in the field was not conducted, thus limiting the data collection. Narrative approaches can benefit from gathering background information about individuals and their cultural group. Utilizing historical material does not afford going back and interviewing authors of memoirs because they have passed away. Further, extensive fieldwork and assessment of artifacts was not conducted in this research. With large amount of data presented in the memoirs, decisions about which parts to focus on meant certain data was utilized as primary and others as secondary.

An alternative analysis process method could potentially utilize other components in the data collection and analysis. Non-literary artifacts from Mennonite archives could be selected and analyzed. Personal interviews with subsequent generations could be conducted to build on themes that arise from this study. A mixed-methods approach could also be helpful to determine how the data lifted from the memoirs may correlate with quantitative personality instruments that measure features of attachment and mental health.

Summary

This study utilized narrative and ethnographic approaches to lift out themes related to how the Mennonites in Russia wrote about their experiences, especially as it relates to trauma. This research collected and analyzed data from a convenience sample of Mennonite's memoirs. Data was coded and analyzed to present emerging themes. Patterns or possible comparisons in the data were explored and compared with the historical analysis of Mennonites and the literature review. Based on the study's findings, interpretations of the data were proposed and interplayed within the literature review and the study's theoretical frameworks. The data was displayed in charts where a particular vantage point was conceptualized. New themes, patterns, and understandings continued to surface throughout the analysis of the data which was incorporated in the study's findings. In the next chapter, the findings of this study were presented.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The particular story of the Mennonite experience of navigating trauma in Russia and Germany has been of personal interest throughout my adult life. As part of this research, travel to Canada to visit the Mennonite Heritage Center provided further historical context for the Mennonite experience. This visit provided insight into where the Mennonite experience fits in the larger chronology. Interviewing Richard Thiessen, the director of the center, provided an opportunity to reflect on the role history plays in shaping a people who share collective experiences. While in Canada, it was also invaluable to visit Elizabeth Krahn who has extensively researched this historical portion of the Mennonite narrative (Krahn, 2011, 2013). As a social worker, she has seen how the identified themes from her research impacted the Mennonites throughout their lifespan. She gave input into the coding of the four memoirs selected for this study.

Four Mennonite memoirs were read, analyzed and coded to learn how traumatic experiences were narrated. Aganeta Janzen Block (Funk Wiebe, 2014), Jacob Janzen (1990), Maria Foth (1981), and Waldemar Janzen (2007) all wrote memoirs, narrating their personal experiences as Mennonites who were born in Russia and escaped Stalinist oppression with retreating Nazi troops (see Table 1). All were refugees in Germany during and after World War II. All but Aganeta emigrated from Germany to Canada between 1948 and 1952. She, however, was repatriated to Russia where she spent the next 11 years in harsh labor camps. Her path to greater freedom began in 1956. Given names are used to identify each author.

Table 1

Descriptive Details of Each Author

Name	Date of Birth	Political Milieu at Birth	Displacements	Resettlement	Reason for Writing
Aganeta	1908	Peaceful	13	Moscow	family
Jacob	1916	1 at BR[1]	17	Canada	family
Maria	1918	BR	9	Canada	community
Waldemar	1932	Stalin's famine	7	Canada	family and friends

Each writer narrated personally significant events in their memoirs late in life. While they did not all explicitly share when their written reflections began, they expressed why they wrote. Aganeta, Jacob, and Waldemar dedicated their narrative to family. Maria wrote that after sharing her story with thousands of people around the world, she was repeatedly asked to write and publish it. Maria stated, "I started several times to write my memoirs but never got far. It is not easy to open your innermost feelings and experiences to the public" (Foth, 1981, p. i). When Waldemar retired, he discovered a desire to write about his life in a story format that was rooted in personal recall.

> My aim has been to write an experienced story rather than a researched history. The experiences told are my own, set in the context of the people around me, …seen from my perspective. If someone should say, 'But that is not how it was,' I can only respond, 'But that is how I remember it!' (W. Janzen, 2007, p. xi)

What follows are findings of four memoirs, outlining how four distinct people narrated trauma during similar time periods. As each wrote later in life, their memoirs were penned with years separating them from their past trauma-filled years.

A chronological overview first places Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar in a particular historical context. Next, traumatic themes that emerged in the narratives are presented. Similar to a Mennonite quilt, an attempt is made to honor ways they

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[1] Bolshevik Revolution

individually experienced the trauma within their shared context while stitching together the collective pieces.

Chronological Placement of Memoirs

Mennonites in Russia lived in relative freedom during the late 19th century until the Great War of 1914. Many prospered during this time period before the Great War in what some described as a "golden age." Born in 1908, Aganeta, wrote:

> Living in the village as a child was wonderful on a Sunday morning. Everyone walked slowly to church. The atmosphere was quiet. The acacia tree-lined streets were clean and beautiful. Singing rang out from the church. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 1)

While there was a range in wealth and status for all four biographers, they all came from family lines who had at one point established themselves in Russia with prosperity. Maria wrote:

> Although [Mennonites] had been given unusual privileges by Catherine the Great when they first settled in Russia, their wealth had not come without effort: they prayed and worked until they became prosperous. Grandfather Jakob Driediger was one who had worked his way up. (Foth, 1981, p. 24)

The Great War brought a shift in their existence. Mennonites were given noncombative medical and forestry roles to serve their country in 1917. But when the Bolsheviks made an agreement with the Germans, Russia went into a period of chaos. This marked the beginning of an intense 3-year period of struggle between the White and Red armies. Aganeta, 9 years old at this time recalled, "We had enough food to eat and enough clothing to wear until the revolution started" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 2). Jacob, born in 1916, would have been one year old when the revolution began and Maria was born one year into it (1918).

At the end of the Bolshevik Revolution, civil war ensued and there was a lack of political structure where Aganeta, Jacob, and Maria lived. This political vacuum created an opportunity for a man named Nester Machno to take political control over southern Ukraine (Epp, 1962). Machno had once worked for wealthy Mennonites who treated him poorly. He led a group of anarchists and wreaked havoc among the people, especially targeting rich Mennonite landowners. During this time, hundreds of Mennonites were raped, murdered, and their homes were confiscated. In their memoirs, the Machno bands are referred to as revolutionaries, anarchists, or bandits. Aganeta recalled:

> Then came the terrible day …They beat Mama and Papa because they wanted my sister. …The revolutionaries lined the whole family and workers up against the wall and threatened to shoot us, but a woman hit the pistol out of the man's hand and it slid under the bed, and our family was saved. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, pp. 3-4)

Jacob recounted his experience of the revolutionaries, "…each group took their turn at robbery, plunder and murder in the peace-loving Mennonite communities" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 8).

Spurred on by the revolutions and World War I, famine followed the period of anarchy from 1919-1923. In 1920, the Mennonite Central Committee was created in North America to respond to the need of their fraternity. Jacob, Maria, and Aganeta all recalled the incredible hunger they experienced that was, at times, periodically relieved by foreign aid.

Approximately 25,000 Mennonites emigrated due to the political turbulence and trauma from 1918 through 1929. After this period, the opportunity to migrate was no longer allowed by Russian officials. Families and communities experienced separation, death and loss. Maria, Jacob, and Aganeta all recounted separations from family members during this time, who immigrated to Canada. Jacob wrote:

> My brother, Jasch, and his bride, Lena, left for Canada in 1926, three years after Anna and Jake Funk and their two daughters left. Mama said it was just as if she had buried them, but if it was God's will, maybe we would see each other again. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 6)

Some Mennonites, like Jacob's paternal grandparents, escaped to China with their youngest son in hopes of later emigration to America. He later learned they likely died of starvation after 17 years of attempting to emigrate.

In the aftermath of World War I and the revolutions, the Mennonites who had worked to rebuild Russia were now targeted in a movement that was postured against both Germans and those who were considered wealthy (*kulaks*) and many were exiled (Urry, 2006). Mennonite leaders also lost employment or were persecuted and arrested. The families of Aganeta, Jacob, and Maria were considered wealthy and Waldemar's father was a Mennonite leader, putting all of them in a higher category of risk. Because Waldemar's father was a pastor, the government restricted him from taking a job and required him to renounce his position. Due to his non-compliance, their family moved from place to place to get away from trouble.

At this point in Russia's history, Vladimir Lenin's goal was to establish a communist system that distributed accumulated wealth among all people. In 1929, Lenin's successor, Joseph Stalin, moved to fully distribute all of the nation's wealth and a period of collectivization ensued. During this period, Waldemar was born in 1932. Therefore, all four writers lived through collectivization, having people from their family and community arrested, exiled, and sent to forced labor camps. During this time, Russian authorities were "purging" their land of those seen as opposing their regime and *kulaks.* An estimated 20% of the Mennonite population were exiled to Siberia and Kazakhstan by the end of 1931, many dying on the journey. Jacob narrated, "and so began a lifestyle of drudgery, unbroken in its monotony…day in, day out, without a

break" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 20). Most of those exiled were men who were randomly taken without notice and usually never seen again. Consequently, Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar were personally impacted by this move. Jacob's family got rid of all their possessions overnight to avoid being discovered as a *kulak.* Waldemar's father was imprisoned for being a pastor. Aganeta's husband fled to Siberia with his relatives because they were *kulaks*, and the last lost her family when they fled to another region. *Dekulakization* tore apart the fabric of Mennonite institutions, economies, and social and religious systems.

Mennonite schools underwent a shift during collectivization. Where once Mennonite teachers were free to teach their own curriculum, now Communist youth organizations began indoctrinating students with communist agendas. Maria continued in school while Jacob dropped out because of the communist indoctrination. Aganeta did not mention schooling. By the time Waldemar began school in 1940, it was completely steeped in Communism and religious expression was forbidden. Mennonite teachers were expected to play active roles in the socialistic reconstruction of Russia. Collectivization marked a time where Mennonites were forced to lose the distinctives that bound them together such as freedom of religion, separation of church and state, and patriarchy. With the loss of social bonds and religious freedoms, many risked creating clandestine ways to continue expressing their values and spirituality.

A drought in the spring of 1932, coupled with a forced famine brought about a period of hunger and starvation that impacted each four of the writers. While Waldemar was too young to remember, the others recount this period of relentless hunger that killed up to four million people in the region where most of the Mennonites lived. Any food found by communist personnel in Mennonite homes was viewed as anti-Russian so they had to become resourceful to survive.

The middle 1930s marked a period that came to be referred to as *The Great Terror*. Under the leadership of Stalin, mass arrests and executions were carried out by Stalin's secret police that accounted for the disappearance of eight to nine thousand Mennonite men and boys (Krahn, 2011). Each writer narrated what it was like for them to live in the face of terror. Waldemar wrote:

> Thus, my grandparents had now lost all their three children …to the Communist rule of terror, and now also their son-in-law. For the adults, the painful thoughts of their loved ones in concentration camps, the meagre subsistence with barely a minimum of food and clothing, the long line-ups to buy necessities, the loss of all their social and spiritual support structures, and the apparent futility of any hope for change must have made this time the low point in their experiences thus far. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 18)

In 1941, the Germans invaded Russia where 100,000 Mennonites lived. Russians moved quickly to exile the ethnic Germans to labor camps in Siberia and Kazakhstan in the effort to avoid collaboration with the German army. In this group were 20,000 Mennonites. However, Russian efforts were blocked by the German troops' advancement. To this remnant of Mennonites living in the west of which half of the households had lost their husbands/fathers, the Nazi regime was viewed as a reprieve from the terror of Russian communism. Each author wrote about this period of freedom from 1941-1943 to practice their religion when labor was not as harsh as under the Russian leadership. While the arrival of the German occupation in Russia was welcomed by Mennonites, it also marked a separation between all four writers from their relatives who remained on the eastern side of the German front lines. However, the German troops did not hold their ground long and retreated in the fall of 1943.

Of those Mennonites in the German-occupied Russia, 35,000 fled with the retreating German army to Poland. Aganeta and Jacob, along with their families,

embarked on what came to be called *The Great Trek*, a perilous winter journey that took approximately three months. The two other writers, Maria and Waldemar, left Russia by via train. All four writers arrived in Poland and then continued onwards to Germany where they became naturalized citizens under the Third Reich. They each wrote about their short-lived good times. Shortly after their arrivals, Jacob and Aganeta's husband were both conscripted into the Nazi Regime whereas, Maria and Waldemar navigated their way through war torn Poland and Germany.

In 1945, the Russian army advanced into German territory where Aganeta, Maria, and Waldemar were living as refugees, as well as the family of Jacob while Jacob was away with the Nazi army. As a result, many Mennonite families were again split apart as some members, like Maria, fled from Russian troops and others were repatriated either forcibly or voluntarily, like Aganeta. When the war was over in 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin gathered at the Yalta Conference and decided that Russian citizens would be repatriated. Of those Mennonites who survived *The Great Trek* and World War II, 23,000 were forced back to Russia where they were enslaved in primitive, harsh labor camps for years. Aganeta was among those banished to Siberia where she started a new chapter of trauma.

Through the advocacy work of Mennonite Central Committee from 1947 through 1952, approximately 12,000 Mennonites successfully emigrated to Germany, Canada, and South America. With the exception of Aganeta who remained in the labor camps, the other three entered a resettlement period in Canada.

After Stalin's death in 1953, a new law closed the Siberian labor camps and Mennonites could move into the Ural, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan regions that were once a part of the Soviet Union. Churches were allowed to reopen, although they were scrutinized by Soviet officials. The late 1960s, created immigration opportunities for Mennonites who were repatriated. Starting in the 1960s, thousands of Mennonites, called

Aussiedler or *Umseidler* resettled mainly in Germany and some to Canada. Aganeta resettled in Moscow where she lived until her death at age 94. Some, like Maria's father, were reunited with lost family members after over 30 years. Maria's father travelled to Canada when he was 80 where they were reunited. Waldemar's father was released from exile in 1954 or 1955 and lived with Waldemar's Aunt. In a postscript, Waldemar wrote:

> We carried on an extensive correspondence with him. He also began to preach again. He applied repeatedly for permission to leave the Soviet Union, but his applications were always denied. …He died in Karaganda on May 15, 1957, shortly after he was struck by a truck while crossing the street on the way to the post office to mail a letter to us. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 273)

Jacob had opportunities to reunite with family members who were permitted to emigrate to Germany from Russia beginning in 1976. He wrote, "What has made us particularly happy is that our brothers and sister have all emigrated from Russia" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 249). Then in 1977 he flew to Frankfurt to visit more relatives, saying:

> What a reunion! We experienced great joy to see all our dear relatives and to talk with them, face-to-face. We thought we had experienced a lot, but they went through much, much more! But God delivered them from everything. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 250)

Traumatic Themes Experienced

The substance of each memoir focused on describing the recurring theme of loss – loss of family, place, identity, and ability to meet basic needs from childhood through to resettlement. While Maria and Aganeta dedicated one chapter to their resettlement experiences, both Jacob and Waldemar gave more substantial voice to their resettlement in Canada. In their stories, four themes that emerged involved emotions, physicality, transitions, and coping (see Table 2).

Table 2

Trauma Themes from Four Memoirs

Emotional	Physical	Transitional	Coping
Death of family	Hunger	Displacement	Community
Separation from family	Poverty	Dissonance	Resiliency
Terror	Danger	Emigration	Faith
Loneliness		Resettlement	Love of land
			Gratitude

Emotional Themes

Under this theme, four thematic categories surfaced: death of family, separation from family, terror, and loneliness.

Death of family. Each author experienced disruption to their family units when they were children. At the age of four, both Maria and Jacob had lost a parent to the typhoid fever that was unintentionally spread by Machno's band. In addition, Jacob lost his twin brother. Jacob reflected on missing his "dear father," (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 10) but did not explicitly say how it impacted him emotionally. However, he included one sentence about the loss of his twin that conveyed deep sorrow, saying, "Oh how I missed him. We shed many a tear because of his loss" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 11).

Maria described what it was like when her mother died:

> On that May day, when trees and meadows were dressed in their best, the sweetest spring fragrance and singing of birds filled the air, there was sorrow and grief at the Driediger homestead. …my mother…had just died at age 27. (Foth, 1981, p. 21)

Maria recalled responding with tears and fury but was met with resistance by the adults in her life:

> I would often cry myself to sleep…there were other days when I would hide behind a bush or some flowers in the garden and cry my eyes out. When my babysitter tried to comfort me with the hope of getting another good mother if I

> stopped crying and behaved, I would scream with fury: 'But I do not want another mother.' (Foth, 1981, p. 22)

She would throw temper tantrums about her mother's death.

Both Aganeta and Jacob described themselves as orphans after losing their second parent when they were young adults. At the age of 20, Aganeta's mother died. Already married, she was abruptly awakened by what she described as "a voice." It told her to quickly visit her dying mother but her husband refused and she missed her mother's death:

> We hadn't obeyed God's voice. I did not get to see her before she died…her death affected me greatly because I was struggling with disobedience. That is how disobedience is punished. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 13)

One year later, her father died. She includes details surrounding the cause of his death. The only emotion she expressed was joy that he became a Christian on his deathbed. However, she wrote, "When he died, an old wall clock, which always hung over his bed, stopped forever. Turda [her sister] wanted to get it fixed, but she was told it was beyond repair" (p. 25). Jacob's mother died when he was 19, saying, "[Death] ruthlessly ripped our Mother from among us and instantly transformed us into poor orphans" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 36).

Both Aganeta and Jacob experienced death in the families they established. One year after her father's death, she wrote of her compounding grief, "I was grieving over my father's death when our Eva died at the age of 1 year, 4 months…I could never understand this as God's way with us" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 26). After arriving in Poland via *The Great Trek* with her husband and four children, Aganeta thought they would safely settle. However, a few months later, her husband was conscripted into Nazi army:

> I will never forget that walk. …He said good-bye to me quickly, and the officers pushed him onto the train…I stood alone, in the dark, rainy night, a stranger, and cried…I never saw my husband again. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 44)

Jacob also lost his young daughter:

> Leni died the day before we fled from Russia…In this situation we could expect help from no one. I hired two Russians to dig a grave. I prepared a casket. Mrs. Penner came to help Lena dress Leni. Lena had made a little bib on which she had embroidered *Mamas Leibling* (Mama's Darling)… We thanked God for hearing our prayers. Our poor, sick Leni had gone home and need suffer no more. We had been dreading the complications of coping with a sick child while fleeing as refugees. Those concerns had been resolved. Upon returning from the cemetery, we hurriedly prepared to flee. (J. Janzen, 1990, pp. 82-83)

In his narration, he left out the emotion. He moved on to tell the events of *the Great Trek*. However, the footnote, written by Jacob's son, said:

> Years later, Dad's eyes still filled with tears and his voice trembled with emotion as he told us about the bib they put on Leni. To say her death broke their hearts is an understatement. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 83)

Each writer experienced death of relatives due to the traumatic milieu. Some died of starvation, suicide, or murder by various political forces. Others died during their escapes to new lands.

<u>Separation from family</u>. Loss in their families was not always by way of death. Each experienced ambiguity, uncertain of the fates of family members that were separated from them. Aganeta experienced uncertainty when separated from her immediate family. Her husband fled to Siberia to evade being exiled as a *kulak* while Aganeta stayed behind with their son. Years later, as she described traveling in the dark

on a train to be reunited, she wrote, "I thanked God that our Eva was an angel in heaven" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 28). Her immediate family survived the Great Trek to Poland and Germany. She lost her 16 year old son for one week when they are later forced to move from their place. They found him again; however, she did not narrate her emotional response to finding her son. Then her husband was conscripted into Nazi army:

> I will never forget that walk. …He said good-bye to me quickly, and the officers pushed him onto the train…I stood alone, in the dark, rainy night, a stranger, and cried…I never saw my husband again. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 44)

Considering her many losses, she was not allowed to show emotion in the labor camps or she could be killed. "It was difficult, very difficult," she wrote. "I cannot count the tears that were secretly wiped" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 55). After 1956, when Aganeta was granted freedom to leave the labor camps, she slowly made her way to be reunited with surviving family members and to visit the graves of other family members. She recalled going to find her living sister:

> I saw a woman, tall, think, and very erect. I thought at once that had to be Tina and decided to call her name in German. …I told myself that if I called her name and she remained standing, it would be Tina. I called out, "Tina." She stumbled but kept walking. I called again, "Tina." She stood still and looked around. I crossed the street and said, "You are my sister," and hugged her. We both cried. …Tina said, "Come, Neta, let's go home." There we cried ourselves out and rejoiced. …Tina kept saying, "After 25 years I can put my arms around you." (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 93)

Aganeta moved in with her daughter and her family in Moscow and created a simple daily routine. By the time she got to the kitchen, everyone was gone for the day. "I have been in no one's way. …Then I knit socks from things I have ripped or I crochet. …often I cry, for I sorrow for them [the people she watches from the window]" (Funk

Wiebe, 2014, p. 110). At this point in her memoir, she did not write about crying for herself, but instead, for the unknown people in her city.

When Maria was 14, she recalled Stalin arresting people. Consequently, no one felt safe. She returned from boarding school only to discover her family was gone:

> Although I did not want to believe it, they were gone and no one could tell me how, when, or where. There was no use inquiring. …Most of my relatives were already banished, …and now it had happened to my folks. …Crushed and crying, I dragged myself back to [school] in the dark, not knowing if I would ever see my family or hear from them again. Back at school I studied and acted as if nothing had happened. (Foth, 1981, p. 34)

However, inside, she was struggling to live. She wrote, "If there's a God, let me die!" (Foth, 1981, p. 36). Months later, she received a letter from her parents. She responded to their invitation to come live with them in a cave in Crimea, even though they were starving. After receiving aid from relatives living abroad, the family regained their health. Maria went away to boarding school again. When Crimea came under German occupation, she was not able to contact her family. Her principal arranged for her to hitch a ride on a boxcar. When she arrived, she discovered she had lost them for a second time. She learned they were sent via freight trains to an unknown place. "What a shock! Sitting on a sack of salt, I cried all the way back to Krivoj-Rog. But what help were my tears? None! It was war and one couldn't do anything about it" (Foth, 1981, p. 75).

Maria's only remaining family member with her was her grandmother. Her grandmother, too, was later exiled and after a time, was released:

> I could hardly wait to see dear Grandma again. But, my heart sank when I finally did see her. She must have lost two hundred pounds…while her spirit was not broken, her body was. (Foth, 1981, p. 49)

Maria and her grandmother became refugees in Germany, leaving Russia with questions of uncertainties whether her family was still alive. While fleeing from Russian officials in Germany, Maria lost her Grandma for a second time. And yet again, they were reunited. After World War II, Maria was granted passage to emigrate to Canada. She agonized over whether to leave her Grandmother behind. "But Oma [Grandma], how could I leave you behind – alone and sick?" (Foth, 1981, p. 120). She chose to leave her Grandmother and work on emigration documents for her once settled in Canada. While on boat to Canada, she recalled how she mourned her losses:

> But in spite of the great expectations about a new life in a great new country, there was a heavy burden on my heart – my family. Every minute the steamer was carrying me further and further away from them, if they were still alive. Would I ever be able to trace them? I had not heard from them since the beginning of the War in 1941 and now it was January 1948. (Foth, 1981, p. 132)

In an epilogue, Maria wrote, "After 31 long years of separation the Lord granted me the great joy to be reunited with my father (then 80 years old)" (Foth, 1981, p. 135).

Like Maria, Waldemar also experienced great ambiguity surrounding the loss of his father. When he was four, his father was sent to prison camp in 1935 during Stalin's purge because he was a pastor:

> After a few months…my father was arrested…how did we feel?...there was no such drama in our case…Mother must anxiously have expected this to happen sooner or later. She must have cried that night, and no doubt during many other nights. To the best of my knowledge, however, she did not cry or lament in my presence on that evening, and she seldom did so later. Neither did I. Life had to go on, and it did. (W. Janzen, 2007, pp. 5-6)

Waldemar was permitted to visit his father once a month. His last visit to the prison turned out to be the very last time Waldemar saw his father alive. Waldemar and

his mother fled Russia for Germany, uncertain if his father was still alive. After six years of uncertainty, he wrote, “And then, on October 4, 1947, …News of Papa !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! He is alive! Is free!” (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 158). He moved on with his narrative, giving no voice to how he felt about this news. While his father had to be cautious about what he wrote, they received some correspondence for four years. During this period, they left Germany for Canada, without knowing if his father was still alive. In Canada, they received a telegram from their father after four years of silence:

> We learned, however, that Father had again been arrested, this time for communicating with us in Canada. …Sometime after Stalin’s death in 1953, he was released again (in 1954 or 1955) and communicated freely with us through long and relatively open letters. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 254)

Again, Waldemar did not share how he felt about the communication and moved on to talk about his citizenship process in Canada and his continued studies:

> We never saw my father again. After his release from his second exile …we carried on an extensive correspondence with him. …we received permission from Canada for him to join us here, but that had little meaning in view of the Soviet refusals. He died in Karaganda on May 15, 1957. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 273)

In an epilogue, he offered this reflection on his complex emotions associated with his loss in the Ukraine:

> I am often asked whether I have revisited the Ukraine. …When I answer in the negative, many …wonder why I have not done so. …the main reasons have to do with complex emotions. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 273)

In addition to being separated from immediate family members, all four writers were split apart from relatives. Some relatives were exiled to Siberia, others to China, some dug trenches for Russians and never returned.

Terror. Each memoir recounted the terror they experienced, especially referring to Stalin's leadership as a reign of terror. Aganeta recalled the time when all the men of her neighboring village were shot. Consequently, the men in her collective went into hiding:

> While the men were gone, our village…was very quiet. Nothing stirred. …sometimes the dogs howled so much at night, their barking struck terror in my soul…when we woke up in the morning, we were still tired…the atmosphere was strange and uneasy, almost eerie. We lived in terror in the silence. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 37)

Jacob recounted this period as full of "fear and horror" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 8). Maria also wrote:

> Soon after Grandfather died, an indescribable time of terror and suffering engulfed our whole land…it is estimated that about 21 million died of starvation in an artificial famine created by Stalin's rule. …in the 1930s conditions worsened to the extent that no one knew at night when he went to bed if he would still be there next morning. All too often the night brought a dark car… the house was searched, and the head of the house arrested. (Foth, 1981, p. 31)

During *the Great Terror,* when Waldemar was young, his father was taken to prison. "Thus, my grandparents had now lost all their three children …to the Communist rule of terror, and now also their son-in-law" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 18).

Loneliness. Each Mennonite wrote of times they or their family members felt lonely. Aganeta wrote of her mother's loneliness and of the time she watched her husband walk off to war. "I stood alone, in the dark, rainy night, a stranger, and cried…I never saw my husband again" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 44).

Jacob, determined not to become alone, refused to leave his prisoner of war (POW) camp without his friend, Gerhard. When a farmer came to offer him work instead

of prison camp, Jacob said, “Then I’m not going either. …We will not be separated” (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 114). He wrote that this choice could deny him an opportunity to get out of prison where he observed most prisoners dying. Later, as post-war refugees in Germany, he wrote about his wife, saying, “Lena, got very lonely because I was gone from home for such long days” (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 183). He did his best to use all his spare time to be with her.

Waldemar wrote more extensively about his struggle with loneliness and depression, especially during his resettlement in Canada:

> Today is my twentieth birthday. It was very lonely at our place; no visitors. Mother is trying hard to help me get over this loneliness, but on days like today that doesn’t help much. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 219)

As a graduate student in Chicago, he returned home one Christmas and attended a social gathering. He was surprised at how he still was dealing with loneliness:

> Although I had become an active participant in the youth group in my last year in Waterloo and had lost some of my shyness and sense of isolation, these very feelings were suddenly there again. I stood around, felt tongue-tied and alone, and eventually left before the evening was over. …Apparently the impact of the lonely years had not left me altogether. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 261)

Compared to the other writers, Maria was not as explicit about loneliness. However, she expressed her desperate feelings of wanting to die when she was separated from her family.

Physical Themes

Under this theme, three thematic categories arose: hunger, poverty, and danger.

Hunger. All four Mennonites wrote about what it was like to experience loss of food. Hunger played a predominant role in the narratives. Three of the writers lived

through famines in the early 1920s and all four survived Stalin's forced famine. Waldemar was the only writer who did not mention relatives or family members who died of starvation. He recalled:

> It was a time of poverty…they [the adults] tried to make the best of it, however, and to offer us children what they could under the circumstances. …virtually absent from our diet were meat, butter, eggs, and sugar…but during the times I remember we did not really experience hunger. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 8)

The others recalled the hunger. Jacob wrote he was "very, very hungry" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 11), scrupulously gathering food:

> In summer, just before harvest, food was so scarce that a number of villagers, including my brother Hans, were swollen due to starvation. … we ate acacia tree blooms, liquorice root. …Our poor mother had no idea as to what to bring to the table - her cupboards truly were bare. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 23)

On top of this, communist personnel regularly inspected whether each collective was meeting their quotas. When they came, they took whatever they had left, using:

> a broom to sweep up the last of everything and cleaned us out…Sheer robbery! Our biggest regret was that we hadn't hidden more. In spite of this, the Lord stood by us and carried us through the winter. (J. Janzen, 1990, pp. 24-5)

Aganeta wrote about her experiences of exile post World War II. "You can't even imagine or believe how poor we were…some women had 10 children of which 8 died of starvation" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 59). After being reunited with her missing parents, Maria found them starving and sick in Crimea.

Poverty. In addition to hunger, each experienced homelessness and intensely cold winters. Maria slept in the fields of the fields of her village. "Night after night I would pray and cry myself to sleep" (Foth, 1981, p. 36). At times when the writers did have

shelter, they recalled temperatures of -40 degrees and no access to a heater. Jacob recalled collecting Russian Thistle in summer for heating fuel in winter. Unfortunately, the plant proved to be insufficient for providing warmth.

Aganeta wrote about her trek to the first of her many labor camps in the Ural mountain regions where she was left to fend for herself:

> We women with all our children, and the many older people with all their frailties, were dumped at the end of the railway line…we were left to survive under the open sky. …I looked us over. It was heart-rending. [In the winter] all of us wore *Lapjchen* (shoes made of woven strips of inner bark of trees stuffed with straw). I had traded two pairs of men's underwear for one pair of these shoes. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 51)

Danger. Each author narrated physically being in harm's way. The women were threatened with sexual violence throughout their years of survival. Maria recounted a period when Moroccan soldiers would come out after periods of air raid.[2] "Not a single woman or child was safe on the street when those soldiers came out of the wine cellars" (Foth, 1981, p. 95). At the end of war Aganeta reflected, "for 24 hours the military was completely without authority or discipline and exercised freedom to do as they wished. It is too horrible to write about. Thank God I was not molested" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, pp. 47-48).

Jacob's wife faced sexual threats and Waldemar was aware of threats to the women in his life. His first exposure to sexuality was overhearing adults talking about exploitation:

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[2] Moroccan troops played a strategic role in World War II, aiding France in their invasion of Germany (Maghraoui, 2014).

> The front was coming closer, and there was widespread talk among adults at all kinds of gatherings about what the Russian soldiers did to women and girls. That older children … knew enough to understand what it meant. The frequency and vividness of reports of rapes by Russian soldiers increased as the front approached. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 87)

Each writer experienced being on the front multiple times with armies from Russia or Germany. Jacob and Aganeta both brought children into the world during times of scarcity and danger. Waldemar was a growing boy during the periods of great instability. He recalled a time when the front was approaching his village. “The mood of the town…was eerie…A sense of impending momentous events filled the atmosphere” (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 41). However, when in Germany, Waldemar recalled the front was again approaching but “life continued with some semblance of normalcy” (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 74). Maria wrote, “No war ever brings joy – only bloodshed, horror, death, loss, suffering, tears, and more despair!” (Foth, 1981, p. 69). Aganeta lived through periods where there was no safety in Russia, Germany, and then when repatriated back to Russia again. “No one wanted women with children,” she wrote, “so they were sent to the forest to die of hunger. But our great God watched over many of his children” (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 48).

Jacob was conscripted into the Nazi regime. As a pacifist, he took the encouragement from a Mennonite leader who wrote, “Even at the front, one can bind wounds and do good!” (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 94). He was sent to the front lines where he was a machine gun operator. He was captured and taken as a prisoner of war. Reflecting on the camp experience, he wrote:

> I was told that in the past few weeks, as many as 40-50 men had died of starvation every day...I told my friend, ‘We’ve got to see to it that we get out of here, because if we don’t, it won’t be long, and we’ll be gone.’ (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 112)

While each experienced physical hardship from the Revolution through post World War II, their experiences then diverged. Waldemar and Maria resettled in Canada where they were able to meet their basic needs such as food and shelter. Jacob worked seasonal jobs as a refugee in Germany. Later as an immigrant in Canada, he often lived away from his family to provide for his growing family's needs. However, the journey for Aganeta took a turn for the worse. Her basic needs would not be adequately met until long after World War II as she endured exile in Siberia.

Transitional Themes

Under this theme, four thematic categories surfaced: displacement, dissonance, emigration, and resettlement. Each author recounted what it was like losing the places they lived in. At times, each made entries about how they experienced the land. Other times, they made emotional reflections about what it was like to leave the places they loved. Sometimes, they relayed details without emotion about their displacements.

Displacement. While born in Russia, all four writers experienced loss of place in various ways. With collectivization came the loss of homeownership. Each moved from collective to collective, either trying to secure better living conditions or attempting to avoid exile. After revolutionaries attempted to kill her family, Aganeta fled the next day to a new village. Waldemar was born as a refugee. He too fled several times from one geographic locale to another while his father was still with the family. After his father was sent away to prison camp, Waldemar continued to relocate numerous times with his mother. Each memoir recounted the many geographic locations they lived in throughout the politically tumultuous times in order to survive.

Each memoir dedicated significant reflection on leaving Russia for Poland with the retreating German troops. All four writers reflected on the pivotal transition of leaving Russia for Poland signified to them. Aganeta wrote, "On October 1, 1943, we had

to leave our villages in the Ukraine and begin the trek to Poland. …we arrived in Nangard on December 20, 1943" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 43). Aganeta was the only author to omit recounting the beauty of the place she left behind. On *the Great Trek*, she recalled her flight from Russia when her daughter was only 5 months old. "I ask myself today why we didn't holler to God as loudly as possible, instead of just a quiet sobbing (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 40). While on the journey, she wrote, "I became sick with abdominal typhus and couldn't walk. I had no milk for my infant, so she cried" (p. 42). While living in refugee camps established by North American Mennonites in Germany, she recalled, "Many children died in that camp. I was often terrified for my children, and one day it happened [they became ill] …My mother-heart quaked" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 44). When her children lived, she said it was God's grace.

Jacob too recounted what it was like to leave his country:

> We left our home village of Blumenfeld on April 6, 1939. There we had spent our childhood and teenage years. There we had buried our mother. There we also left behind many a cherished memory. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 46)

He reflected on what he saw as the most difficult part of his journey, "to leave behind our beloved and familiar places, surroundings and things it is not easy to bid farewell expecting never to return. In that case, every tree and bush becomes precious" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 85).

Maria commented on what it was like for her people to leave their homeland:

> January, 1943, marked the beginning of the end for the Third Reich…The Mennonite settlers who had turned the barren steppes of the Ukraine into the granary of Europe, now left it. During the hundred and fifty years in the region they had established some fifty settlements with a total population of some 120,000 in four hundred villages and estates. Now they left it all behind. (Foth, 1981, p. 78)

She also personally reflected on leaving behind the beauty she had experienced:

> The most beautiful spot and the loveliest name on earth, Gnadental (Valley of Grace), about a hundred kilometers from the Black Sea, at the southern part of the Ukraine, formerly called the 'Breadbasket of Europe.' (Foth, 1981, p. 20)

On the day Waldemar left, he recalled feeling conflicted. "I remember only a sense of relief that we were actually getting away before the Russians could capture us and send us to Siberia" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 55).

While in Germany, each author did not settle in one place but lived in many milieus in a country at war. These included Mennonite refugee camps, strangers' homes, rooms in abandoned Jewish homes, boarding schools, Nazi war camps, and prison camps. After World War II, Aganeta was repatriated back to Russia in 1945 where she lived 1,000 miles northeast of Moscow in harsh labor camps in Siberia. The other three authors described their particular journeys while awaiting opportunities to open to emigrate to Canada. Their waiting periods varied as they moved to multiple refugee camps, boarding schools, and rented rooms in various German towns. Jacob relocated to Canada in 1952, whereas Waldemar and Maria left earlier in 1948.

Dissonance. Living in places of political turmoil and moving to different countries involved many layers of struggle. For these authors, crossing national borders also marked a transition in their cultural identity. When faced with ethical dilemmas, each recalled shifts in their belief system.

When the German army arrived in Russia, they were seen as a relief from the tyranny of communism. Jacob wrote that the arrival of the German troops "marked a turning point of massive proportions and significance in our lives. The arrival of the German troops changed our lives forever" (Janzen, J., 1990, p. 74). While welcomed on one hand, the German presence also meant that he would be separated from his remaining

siblings who lived on the other side of the German line. Waldemar reflected on the complexities of how he viewed German soldiers:

> Of course, there were Hitler loyalists and fanatics, but the majority of German soldiers did not fight so much *for* Hitler as *against* the enemies. …We learned to distinguish then, …between Army and Party, culture and politics, hard-core ideologues and the majority of people caught in circumstances they had neither wished for nor could escape. (W. Janzen, 2007, pp. 88-89)

Once in Germany, Maria, Jacob, and Waldemar recalled becoming citizens. In a similar description as the others, Waldemar wrote:

> The naturalization process by means of which we received German citizenship took place in a railway train in Preussisch Stargard. We entered the train at one end as Russian citizens, moved from office to office within the train, and emerged at the other end as German citizens. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 67)

As new German citizens, the Russian soldiers in Germany now turned on them as enemies. Maria recounted a guard saying:

> You German dogs! You are guilty too of this invasion! What did I have to do with Germany? How could I be guilty because I happened to be born into a family of German background, whose ancestors had immigrated into Russia more than a hundred years ago? (Foth, 1981, p. 67)

Emigration. A theme that surfaced throughout each person's narrative was their hope of emigrating to Canada. Each author made attempts to leave while still in Russia. While relatives left, doors were closed for their families. When Jacob was given an open door to emigrate, his dreams were crushed when an eye sickness spread to his family. He recalled, "It was very disappointing" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 15).

After World War II was over, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar realized their dream of emigration to Canada and they shared about their mixed feelings about the transition. It took Jacob several years to clear passage for his family to emigrate for Canada and the day finally came in 1952. He offered a thick description of preparations for travel, food on the ship, and traveling by train to Canada's Midwest. They were first met by a Mennonite leader in Canada who "answered our many questions. Everyone had questions! We were entering a strange land" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 206). When he arrived at his destination, he described how he went from the grandeur of Germany to rural Canada. "Instantly, one makes comparisons. When I thought back to the station at Nikopol, or especially some of those in Germany, this was no likeness. The main thing was, it did the job" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 208). They were reunited with his wife's family, and he wrote, "our eyes swam with tears. Now, at last, we had reached our destination, and a new life could begin" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 209).

Waldemar felt conflicted about leaving for Canada as he was leaving behind his father in Russia and his love for the language, beauty, and architecture of Germany. He wrote:

> As I walked across the narrow bridge from land to ship, I said a last silent prayer and felt all the drama of leaving Europe – forever, I thought then – for a new continent and a new life. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 183)

Maria experienced numerous delays in her emigration process. She received confirmation that she was cleared to emigrate for Canada. Then, when everyone who had clearance were called to prepare for passage, she was shocked to learn that they did not have her visa, even though it had been sent on ahead it months previous. "How many more obstacles? I wondered. But obstacles are to be overcome" (Foth, 1981, p. 130). After much effort to secure her passage, she boarded the boat. In her reflection, she

wrote, “I had ample time to re-examine my life… and to bury my past in the deepest sea. It hurt, but I was determined to start over” (Foth, 1981, p. 132).

Resettlement. Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar gave voice to what it was like to resettle in Canada. For Jacob, making money to pay off their travel debt and provide for his family in a new land became the focus of his narrative. He slowly learned English, took on seasonal jobs, and slowly worked his way out of poverty:

> How excited we were to get my first paycheque. We paid Knelsens for the pig and began repaying our debt for the trip from Germany. We went grocery shopping. How grateful we were not to have to show a card any more. …The weather was beautiful. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 211)

Education played a significant role in the resettlement experiences for Maria and Waldemar. Maria dedicated two pages to her initial resettlement experiences. While brief, she narrated all the reunions she had with relatives and former acquaintances. These people offered her money which she sent back to support her Grandmother whom she had left behind. While still on the train, she found her next step:

> I was introduced to Rev. J. B. Toews, then President of Mennonite Brethren Bible College. ‘What are your future plans in this new country?’ he asked. ‘I have no plans, sir,’ I answered. ‘...Then your place is here with us.’ (Foth, 1981, p. 134)

A week later, she became a student again.

Waldemar wrote extensively about the role education played in both accentuating his feelings of being an outsider and of helping him transition to his new milieu. Initially, students curious about him:

> They asked questions, but seldom at any depth level. How could they? Sometimes I tried to talk about some of my earlier experiences, but soon I consciously

> decided not to speak of my past unless someone seriously inquired about it. That did not happen very often. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 200)

He recounted ways he stood out as different from the other 1,200 students at his school:

> With my German cap, my odd assortment of second-hand clothing received as refugee camp handouts, and my general appearance that totally defied every trend or style, I could be identified as a misfit at first glance. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 201)

Even though another student helped him negotiate the new culture, Waldemar struggled with loneliness and depression. He wrote of his tasks as an immigrant:

> My quick and successful reentry into high school studies may have given the impression that I made the adjustment to life in Canada with relative ease. Such a conclusion, however, would be far from true. My personal and emotional adjustment proceeded along a much more difficult and bumpy road. …I led a kind of dual existence… On the one hand, [others] …saw me as a 'bright and jolly little fellow,' funny in his strange appearance and ways, but willing to learn, to fit in, and, if necessary, even to speak up and assert himself. Emotionally and in my private life, on the other hand, I found the adjustment difficult, suffered loneliness and homesickness, and withdrew into inner depression and outward shyness. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 213)

Coping Themes

Each author found ways to cope with their traumatic experiences. Under this theme, five thematic categories emerged from the data analysis: community, resilience, faith, love of land, and gratitude.

Community. Community played a critical role in helping these four Mennonites survive when their basic needs were not met. Each memoir details times when foreign aid was received from family members or foreign Mennonites. The North American

Mennonites, through Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), arranged refugee camps and each memoir recounted their connection to these camps. Further, through the efforts of MCC, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar received papers and passage to emigrate to Canada.

The authors also wrote about how they relied on others in their community for support. Aganeta recalled, "Each night we had to flee to the cellar because of the bombing. It was a terrible time. …I always said if we will be killed, we will all die together" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 47). Later, when Aganeta was exiled in Siberia, her courageous petition for better accommodations was denied. She gathered with other women for support:

> Frau Kuehn took her guitar and began to play and sing. We sang some songs and prayed together. And cried, cried, cried. No one believe that the dear Lord would help us in the morning. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 60)

Jacob also voiced the importance of being with community. All through his time in the Nazi regime, he found a relative or another Mennonite friend to stick with. At the close of his memoir, while he gave little description of each of his children, he included which church community they are associated with. Maria recalled, "There were about 30 uprooted, homeless Mennonites from the Ukraine who had found each other in this part of North Germany" (Foth, 1981, p. 101). Waldemar relied on his relatives to expand his sense of community. "In addition to my faith, I had one major lifeline through this valley of the shadow: Onkel Hardy and Tante Anna. …When I was with them, I felt home and happy" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 220).

<u>Resiliency</u>. A thematic category that emerged throughout each memoir is resiliency. Each recalled resilient actions they took that were vital to their survival. Each made choices to protect themselves from harm's way. During her exile in Siberia, Aganeta repeatedly became an active spokesperson for the other women and children. "I

had to intervene," she wrote. "I would rather suffer myself than see others suffer" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 54). In every situation she asked, "How can I help things to change?" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 56). She also became a story-teller to keep things positive in their dire circumstances. Jacob too responded creatively to survive. When houses were searched each night by Russian officials, Jacob acted:

> Any man found sleeping in his bed would be shot on the spot. That sounded too hazardous for me. When darkness settled in, I ducked into our corn patch, lay down, and fell asleep. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 72)

The authors also were creative in providing for their physical needs. With pillaging by anarchists in the middle of winter during the famine, Jacob and his brother hid any food they had in snow drifts. Maria avoided being raped several times. One time she faked being sick to scare off a Moroccan soldier who came to her room. After Waldemar's father was taken from him at a young age in Russia, he relied on his mother's action to provide for them.

Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar shared about the repeated measures taken to avoid repatriation. The Americans interrogated Jacob towards the end of the war to determine whether to repatriate him to Russia. He had tags saying he was "from Russia" so, "I immediately approached the commander and protested, 'I am a German born in Russia'" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 107). As Russians, they were seen by Americans as allies and given food and good treatment. But after the war, he figured out that people who were seen as Russians were being repatriated. When he and a friend were interviewed, they agreed ahead of time to not mention Russia. Instead, they said, "We are resettlers and live in the Warthegau region of Germany" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 109). According to the footnote, he cunningly used the German word *Umsiedler* which gave him status as a resettler in Germany and not as a refugee from Russia. Had he been identified as Russian, he would

have been repatriated, separating him from his family and presenting him with new traumatic experiences.

Maria spent months running from Russian soldiers after World War II. They followed her and were determined to repatriate her. In the face of incredible personal danger, she repeatedly demonstrated resilience. One time, she asserted, “I tried to assure him once more that the Russians had absolutely no right to take me back and that I was not afraid of them” (Foth, 1981, p. 2). The next time she was taken by Russians, she boldly says, “Get out of my way! Or I’ll jump on your head!” (Foth, 1981, p. 4).

While Americans arrived in the town where Waldemar was living after the war, Russians later took over the town. His mother feared repatriation so she negotiated a German passport in exchange for her translation services. She brought an alarm clock to bribe any Russian soldier who may stop them in their escape from West Germany toward the British line. Just as they approached the line, Waldemar wrote, “A Russian soldier came running up to us, gun in hand and drove us back” (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 97). Although they were detained, his mother looked for a way out. She found a hole in a bush and slipped through with him, creating a way to escape in the end.

Once in Canada, Jacob, Waldemar, and Maria all took active steps to facilitate their resettlement. Once in Canada, Jacob was determined to provide for his growing family. He immediately found temporary work away from home and started learning English. Banks would not lend money to refugees so Jacob relied on a credit system that Mennonites established with a cheese factory. He and his wife heard of someone selling plots of land and they immediately created a plan. They paid off their entire travel debt in their first year of resettlement in order to purchase land. Jacob also wrote extensively about the hard work and creative means he took to become more established in Canada. Maria, uncertain of what she would do in Canada, accepted an invitation to attend college, setting the trajectory of her life in Canada. She later pursued graduate studies and

took a break from doctoral studies to write her memoir. On Waldemar's first train ride to his new home, he now had to act as his mother did not know English:

> Since I had taken four years of high school English, while Mother did not know that language at all, it was I who had to go shopping. This marked the beginning of a partial readjustment of our roles. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 192)

Faith. Faith was mentioned throughout each of the four memoirs. All four authors gave credit to God for helping them navigate through traumatic experiences. Spirituality played an important role in their identity, coping, and understanding of events.

Each Mennonite wrote about what it was like to lose their freedom to come together for spiritual gatherings and instruction as well as to verbally express their spirituality. When communism took over Russia, Mennonites were no longer permitted to operate their churches or have informal religious gatherings. In time, if they were caught doing anything to express their religious convictions even in private, there could be dire consequences. With a religious ethic at the heart of their identity, they lost formal religious instruction and this social structure.

In the face of trauma, each person turned to God in different ways. Jacob was pillaged by anarchists and wrote, "In spite, God stood by us" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 24). When recalling family members he had lost in Russia, Jacob wrote, "Only God could count all the tears that fell" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 16). Waldemar recounted his conflicted experiences:

> At home, we Mennonites were taught not to betray our Christian practices. …I lived in two worlds, in a state of unconscious compartmentalizing. On the one hand, I heard the Bible stories and believed them…at the same time – and at that age, without a conscious sense of contradiction – I respected my teachers, listened to political instruction, and kept the home world to myself. …I can only imagine

> what it must have meant for Mother …to train their children to maintain this duplicity…There was no other way unless they wanted to risk being sent to concentration camp. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 37)

While Waldemar did not write about relying on God for emotional support, he reflected extensively about processing his experiences theologically. This became so central to him in his resettlement period that he pursued degrees in theology, biblical languages, and German such as: B.A., B.D., M.A., Th.M., and Ph.D. While at a Mennonite Seminary in Chicago, he lived in the heart of an African-American neighborhood. "I often found myself a lone white person among blacks without feeling unsafe" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 258). While in Chicago, he was thoughtful to contextualize his Bible lessons for the children. For instance, he changed words like "Our Father" to the feminine as many of the children came from single-mother households. He also adapted rural images to city metaphors.

While they did not have access to religious gatherings and instruction, they did have dreams, intuition, and a sense of God's presence and intervention. Aganeta heard a "voice" warning her of her mother's impending death. Jacob recounted several dreams that brought him a sense of direction. As a POW, he looked to God to cope and described tangible directives he attributed to God:

> The Lord had protected me. Of this I was certain. Early in my captivity, I heard a voice say to me, 'Be comforted. You will live, and I will carry you into old age.' …This affirmation became my bedrock. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 104)

When he did not know how to relocate his family, he had a thought that he should pray. "Honestly, I had not even said 'Amen' before I heard a voice tell me, 'Write to Mrs. Emilie Jasper, Walsroder Str. 65, Soltau, Hanoverland.' (J. Janzen, 1990, pp. 118-119). During Maria's escape from Russian Soldiers, she recorded many instances of turning to God for help while being hunted. After trying everything she could think of to find a

hiding place in a new city, she turned to God. “I let my feet walk aimlessly until I came to a little rose garden, where I sat down for a dialogue with my heavenly Father. He directed my thoughts to the address book in my purse” (Foth, 1981, p. 13). In it, she found two addresses, “the first addresses was right behind the rose garden where I had stopped to pray” (Foth, 1981, p. 14). When she went to this address, she was welcomed and saw this as God’s intervention. Waldemar, while recounting a few dreams, did not share about mystical experiences.

Each author had a spiritual journey that was impacted by their traumatic experiences. Aganeta was conflicted about how to view God’s role in the atrocities she experienced. At times, she viewed some of the awful things that happened as a direct result of a lack of faith. “We didn’t know whether we would be alive in the morning. The Lord God allowed this to happen in a country, where for a long time no worship services had been held” (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 39). She also experienced the remoteness of God, stating, “Many prayers were directed toward God, crying to him, but God remained silent” (p. 38). She said, “Our whole life was a crying to God” (p. 61). However, in one of her darkest times, where she was separated from her children, dumped in a forest, and waiting without provisions in the winter, she wrote, “Only our heart’s singing and the grace of God carried us along. No one dared speak their thoughts” (p. 53). But, in the end when she looked back on her life story, she wrote, “I am amazed how we managed, but it was only through God’s strength. To him be the glory” (p. 113).

While living in West Prussia, Waldemar was surprised by his change of heart to attend a faith-based service instead of a boys’ activity:

> What had changed within me in so short a time? I recall no special religious experience, nor any conscious influence on my from others that could account for this. The fact remains, however, that from the early months in West Prussia on, it was important for me to be a Christian. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 64)

Maria, while raised in Mennonite villages, was drawn to the communist ideology taught in her Russian schooling. Even though she saw herself as an atheist, when she was all alone and missing her Father, she remembered her Father's parting words to her long after their separation:

> 'Child, remain godly and upright.' I wanted to remain upright, but godly? Where was this God of love who permitted all this unrighteousness around me? …there was no one to turn to in my anguish and confusion. (Foth, 1981, p. 46)

Her turning point came when she found herself in desperation while in Germany. On the brink of being repatriated to Russia, she prayed for help and was rescued. When she experienced a string of remarkable interventions, she found a "new confidence of God's wonderful leading" (Foth, 1981, p. 11). In fact, she structured her memoir around this conversion experience, setting the stage for her whole narrative to hang on the ways she saw her life as orchestrated by God.

Love of land. Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar related times they were taken with the beauty of the land around them. Sometimes their descriptions were of places they were familiar with, other times they shared their first impressions of new lands. While Jacob's troops were being sent to the front lines, they visited Prague for a day:

> So, on a particularly glorious day…the sun shone ever so warmly. We saw the castle which boasts 1268 rooms. …next stop was the concert hall where the Prague symphony …[was] performing. Heavenly music. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 97)

While imprisoned as a prisoner of war, he still saw beauty around him. "April came and went. The sunshine was warm and bright. All of nature was waking in glorious …beauty. The chestnut and fruit trees were in resplendent blossom" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 108). Whenever they had a chance to settle, even if for only one summer, he wrote about the garden.

While in Germany, Maria was in hiding from the Russian soldiers. Even during this turbulent time, she borrowed a bike each Sunday to ride through the beautiful countryside (Foth, 1981, p. 18). She notated her impressions of her new surroundings while escaping on train:

> The trip through Austria and Germany was breathtaking! I marveled at the constantly changing scenery – each view competing with the beauty of the next. The old Gothic and Germanic cities, castles and monuments were sparkling in their pride and splendor. (Foth, 1981, p. 89)

Waldemar's first reference to loving the land came in his reflections while being displaced in Germany. He wrote, "This is when I fell in love with Bavaria" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 104). And later, "I loved the German forests" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 113). So touched was he from the beauty of German architecture and land that his graduate studies partly focused on the German language.

Gratitude. While so many experiences were traumatic, each writer penned their gratitude for surviving multitudes of traumatic experiences. Aganeta was thankful for God's intervention. For example, when her father recovered from being on the brink of death, she thanked God. When she traveled to Siberia for the first time to be reunited with her husband who was hiding there, she thanked God that her young daughter "was an angel in heaven" and, therefore, did not need to be in peril (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 28). When she was not molested by anarchists, she again thanked God.

Jacob mentioned gratitude numerous times. He thanked God that his baby died and did not have to endure *The Great Trek* . He was "dreading the complications of coping with a sick child while fleeing as refugees. Those concerns had been resolved" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 82). He expressed thanks after emigrating to Canada. He was first thankful to have survived and to be reunited with those relatives who were alive in

Canada. "Over and over, we rejoiced that we had emerged from the ravages of war with healthy and able bodies, and that our family was together again" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 161). He was then grateful for what the new land offered. "Here we could live in peace and not fear the threat of Communism!" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 209).

Maria wrote, "After 31 long years of separation the Lord granted me the great joy to be reunited with my father (then 80 years old)" (Foth, 1981, p. 135). Waldemar framed the introduction of his memoir with a description of his thankfulness of God's leading throughout his story. "Now, from the vantage point of retirement, I look back gratefully on a rich if not easy path along which 'The Lord (so I believe) has been my shepherd' (W. Janzen, 2007, p. xi).

Intergenerational Attachment Themes

While the four memoirs utilized for this analysis did not include reflections from their descendants, inferences about attachment were presented. First, the data was presented about their own childhood attachments. Second, comments the authors made in relation to their own children was outlined.

Childhood Attachments

Aganeta was the only author whose parents remained with her throughout her childhood. The other three writers had lost one parent by the age of four. Jacob, Aganeta, and Maria then lost the second parent through death or separation between the ages of 19 and 22. In response to her mother's death, Maria wrote about her ensuing tantrums of grief. The adults in her life did not afford her the space to freely express herself. Instead, the babysitter responded to her outbursts by saying that she would get a new mother. This only served to infuriate her more. One day, her grandfather responded to her fury:

> Picking me up with one hand, he walloped me with the other. I screamed until I became stiff and blue in the face. Grandfather dipped me into a nearby barrel of

> water. I came to my senses as he pulled me out of the water, put me on the ground and left me standing, dripping. The lesson stuck. Never again would I let my temper get out of control. (Foth, 1981, p. 22)

While she may not have shown her fury again, her countenance was sad. “Spring came again in all its splendor and beauty. But I could not sing with the birds. I still missed Mother” (Foth, 1981, p. 22). After her father remarried, Maria was separated from her family twice in Russia from political turmoil. The first was upon returning from boarding school when she discovered them missing. Months later she found them living in a cave in Crimea, starving. When their health improved due to foreign Mennonite aid, she returned to a boarding school in closer proximity to them. When she learned that the Germans occupied the region where they were living, she arranged to leave school to meet them. Upon her arrival, she discovered they had been exiled to an unknown place. Maria was 14 and left to find her own way in the world. Even though her grandmother was also separated from her on two occasions, she served as Maria’s only present family member throughout her escape from Russia and her traumatic times in Germany. However, when she left for Canada, she travelled alone, without any family accompanying her. She never married or had children of her own.

Aganeta wrote about her parents before the Bolshevik Revolution. “My parents were always concerned about us children, for they loved us very much. Papa was very stern” (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 2). After the revolution, when her father became very sick, she did not write about the ways her mother comforted her. Instead, she wrote, “Often I saw Mama, whom we loved so much, crying. She was lonesome and alone, far away from all relatives and friends” (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 4). After her mother died, she wrote about how she played the role of comforting her younger sister and made no mention of others helping to carry her burden:

> I saw Marichen wearing Mama's mantle and her shawl tied around her head. She was crying. I sat down beside her, took her in my arms and, without saying a word, cried with her. …mama was too young to die, and yet we had to say, 'The Lord has done all things well.' She had put on the cloak and shawl to bring Mama's presence closer. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 14)

After her mother's death, she wrote of her lack of support:

> In the morning, Aunt Maria would get up, put on her dress, and lie down on the bench. Often I cried because everything was scarce…Grandma complained I didn't know anything. At 16, how was I expected to know everything? …My nerves were falling to pieces. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 8)

Jacob also wrote about his early experiences with his parents. After Jacob's father died from having contracted typhus from the bandits, he wrote about his mother's fear of the bandits. She thought it would be better to remarry for protection:

> We always viewed Mother's decision as a huge mistake. …We felt Mother would have had a much easier life remaining a widow than to take on the task of caring for an additional 10 people. (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 10)

Jacob's family structure radically changed with added children to care for, additional births, and multiple deaths among her children,. When Jacob was 19, his mother died when, and his step-father became lonely. His prospective wife would only marry if Jacob and his two siblings were sent away. While this marriage did not transpire, his step-father was soon arrested, never to be seen again. Jacob then referred to himself as an orphan.

Waldemar wrote about his impressions of his parents. Even though his father was in prison, he worked to stay connected with his son. At first, he and his mother were permitted to visit him monthly. He remembered slipping through bars of gates that separated them:

> I had a few minutes in Papa's arms. He talked calmly to me, admonished me to be good to Mother, and assured me of his love. Then the time was up, and we had to leave. It was the last time we saw my father, and thus my last personal memory of him. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 7)

His father then wrote letters from prison and took risks to communicate his love and values. Waldemar shared how they all opened and closed warmly. "My dear, dear little son" and "I kiss and hug you dearly" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 29). He described the letters included hand-drawn pictures, educational lessons, descriptions of camp life, lessons about morality and sadness about not being able to give him gifts:

> [Father] mentions repeatedly his wish to give me a real rocking horse but, that being impossible, he draws one for me. …he describes his little pail for soup and tea (with a sketch of it) and tells me that it will be mine once he gets home. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 33)

During this time, Waldemar's mother sought to protect and create opportunities for him:

> Mother…told me one day that even Jewish children were being put to death. As if to shield me from the full impact of this news, she added that a little bit of poison was put on their lips and that they died quite painlessly. …either she was so shocked that she had to express it to someone, and I was the only other family member; or she thought that I might hear about it anyway and might be traumatized by it, so that it was better if she herself told me in as gentle a way as possible. (W. Janzen, 2007, pp. 47-48)

Waldemar also remembered his mother struggling in her response to the excessive traumatic loss she experienced:

> Mother often suffered from what I recognize in retrospect as depression. She also had frequent headaches and occasional moments of despair when she beat her

> fists against her head. That was very upsetting for me, so I grabbed her hands to pull them away and pleaded with her to stop. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 19)

Parental Attachments

Only Aganeta and Jacob became parents of children during this period. While Aganeta lost one child and her husband, the other four children survived. When she ran out of milk for her baby on the Great Trek, she wrote of her interaction with her husband who said, "'Give me Ella. I want to look at her.' …I handed her to him. Then he and Johannes …could smile and kiss her" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 43). After being separated from her children en route to a Siberian labor camp, she described their reunion:

> We found Johannes and Ella and the others. How my little child rejoiced when she saw us, [and] especially Viktor, who was her caretaker because I had to work from early morning until late at night. Viktor is a very good and upright person. …My heart cried out when I saw how she [Ella] again and again stroked his cheek with her thin little hand. She sat on my lap, Nesa on the one side and Viktor on the other. Johannes limped around… he was tall like a candle, skinny, only skin and bones. (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 54)

She was diligent to watch over her children in whatever way she could during their years in the camps. "Sleep was impossible because of the bedbugs. I had to keep guard over Ella all night. I placed a container of water nearby and threw the bedbugs I saw crawling on the children into it" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 56). She was resourceful and found ways to bring her food rations to eat with her children and later found a room without bedbugs where she and her sister could sleep together. She wrote to her relatives in Canada, describing her children during their many transitions from one forced labor camp to another:

> Johannes …is the cause of much anxiety. …he has been suffering from problems with his lungs. In the quiet of my soul, I have often said goodbye to him, but then when things get difficult, I cry out, 'I can't!' …Nesa…is very efficient. She goes to work day after day. …Viktor, my little helper, 11 years of age. …He is in charge of the purse. …Then comes our little one. At one time I would have written 'our sunshine.' Now I come home dead tired from work, and the little one begs. Then I don't know: Are they a burden or will the time come when one will rejoice that they are there? (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 88)

Jacob's firstborn son arrived June 20, 1941. "We were ecstatic! Our firstborn, and a son at that!" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 67). The next day, Germans invaded Russia and "An atmosphere of panic spread throughout the land" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 68). Bombs fall near the hospital where his wife and baby were but Jacob does not mention that. When he travels to bring them home, he refered only to his wife. "At long last we set out to fetch her home" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 69).

Jacob wrote about the birth of each child with minimal details. When a daughter was born, he offered the birth date and name. "We were so glad that we were no longer on the road, that the birth was over, and everything turned out well. Most importantly, mother and child were both healthy" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 93). His descriptions of the other births also did not include his feelings about them. When he arrived back from imprisonment as a prisioner of war, he wrote about his reunion. He noticed, "Jake stood quietly to one side and looked shyly at his father. …he was six …They had no memory of me other than from pictures …it was too much!" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 157). Reflecting on their time as German refugees, he wrote:

> The children did not get treated very well at school. The local children plotted to blame the refugee children for whatever mischief they might perpetrate. …The teacher came round to apologize for a particular incident in which, despite

> knowing full well that Jake was innocent of whatever he was blamed for doing, he had severely punished him anyway, with the intent 'to break Jake's will'…Jake never told us this had happened. (J. Janzen, 1990, pp. 173-174)

He was not aware of the hardships his son faced, nor did he ever relay this incident to Jake to help him navigate his new surroundings.

Summary

The memoirs provided a lens through which themes emerged in how personal and collective trauma was narrated. Placing each writer into their shared historical context was presented. While each Mennonite had unique experiences, there were common emerging themes. Some commonalities included how the writers communicated their emotions regarding the death of family, separation from family, terror, and loneliness. Each writer captured similar physical themes concerning hunger, poverty, and danger. Shared themes surrounding how they narrated transitions associated with the traumatic times were discovered. The four authors expressed what it was like being displaced and experiencing dissonance. Their transitions also included emigration and resettlement experiences. Finally, coping themes were also identified as community, resiliency, faith, love of land, and gratitude as avenues to help them navigate through their suffering. Differing experiences with the developmental theme of attachment was discovered for each writer's relationship with their own parents and, when applicable, their attunement to their own children. In light of these findings, an exploration to analyze, interpret, and discuss implications of how trauma was narrated follows. Considerations of both the literature and practice were applied to the discoveries.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION

This research explored the narrated trauma of four Mennonites who lived in Russia before World War II through their personal memoirs. Writing in the later part of their lives, Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar gave voice to how shared historical contexts impacted them personally. Similar collective trauma themes emerged in their writings that highlighted emotional, physical, transitional, and coping descriptions. At the same time, nuances emerged that suggested uniqueness across the four authors. How they narrated attachment shone a light on ways trauma may have been intergenerationally transmitted. In light of the findings that emerged, the focus will now turn to discussing, interpreting, and analyzing the discoveries. Research outcomes have implications for social work practice on multiple systemic levels and future research.

Chronology – Why it Matters

This research utilized narrative and ethnographic approaches to decipher themes that emerged in the memoirs of Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar. Based on Wolcott (1999), understanding the cultural group and their historical context provides a lens through which to understand the context for the four individuals as set within the broader collective experience. Narratives, such as memoirs, provide a way for people to share their lived experience for a particular audience in a way that is most meaningful to them (Phoenix, Smith, & Sparkes, 2010). Through storytelling, personal identity, ethics, views, and values can be personally expressed. Yet, this narration is also set within a particular context that touches on how their lives were impacted by the political, social, religious, and cultural environments they found themselves in. Drawing on ethnographic theory bolsters an understanding of how the common culture of the Mennonites impacted their morals, movements, convictions, and vehicle of expression (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Analyzing which themes shape the culture and whether the authors' actions were linked

with their group's ethic may build a broader appreciation of their context. That said, a broad framework must be considered in assessment and treatment for people who have experienced collective trauma.

Trauma that is both individually and collectively experienced is best understood in context. While the authors narrated the events that occurred in their lifetime, stretching back to the beginnings of Mennonite history and the development of Mennonite ethics may better inform how they responded to the systemic violence they experienced. Over time, Mennonites came to interpret *The Martyr's Mirror* as a call to be thankful for punishment because it is God's will (Reynolds, 1998). Faith required testing from hardship, persecution, and hard work. No hate or retaliation was necessary because according to their beliefs, Mennonites already had heavenly citizenship.

Perhaps there are two sides to this ethic. If one has been taught nonviolence from persecution, then creativity in survival tactics may arise in the place of physical force. For example, when anarchists beat Aganeta's parents to have her sister and later lined up her family and their workers to shoot them, a lady boldly knocked the gun out of the man's hand, thereby saving everyone's life. Aganeta does not inform the reader if her parents fought back to save their daughter. She also does not narrate whether the lady who disarmed the anarchist was Mennonite, nor does she say how it was that he did not pick up his revolver again. All that is communicated is that the gun was hit, not the man, and that everyone's lives were saved. Giving voice to how she felt about those events and the men who sought to do evil to her and her family remained in the shadows of the narrative. Perhaps a thin emotional storyline served to protect her Mennonite sense of identity as a nonviolent peacekeeper and her view of God as the agent responsible for saving them.

If Mennonites are taught historically to love one's enemy, what responses were given in the face of evil acts done against them? All the authors gave voice to ways they

bore suffering. Aganeta, especially, viewed the onslaught of external forces as God's punishment. "The Lord God allowed this to happen in a country, where for a long time no worship services had been held" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 39). Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar never gave voice to anger or hate toward the enemy in their memoirs. Instead, they focused on how they navigated their survival with God's help.

These Mennonites lived in a context where sexual violence was often a present reality. In her reflection on Mennonite identity, Funk Wiebe (2014) articulated that openly discussing sexuality was viewed as taboo. When hundreds of Mennonite women were raped by anarchists during the Bolshevik Revolution, historians omitted the discourse or reduced it to a thin rendering. It was estimated that 20,000 to two million German women were raped when Germany fell at the end of World War II by Russian troops who overtook the war zone (M. Epp, 1997). According to M. Epp, citing potential evidence that some of the violent acts were ascribed to systemic stimulus from Russian military officials, Mennonite historians gave little voice to the victims' experiences. The manner in which Mennonites narrated their memoirs was impacted by cultural and religious underpinnings and by their identity as women within the Mennonite community.

M. Epp (1997) offered that it is beneficial to view memoirs not just as individual narratives but as a type of "social memory" or "collective plot" (p. 1). For Mennonites who viewed history through the lens of faith, narratives that are thick with personal descriptions of rape do not align with the customary description of *The Great Trek*, thereby thinning or even silencing this significant part of the story in order to uphold the community's "social memory." With voice given to faith in God's provision throughout each memoir, expressing feelings of God's neglect instead of defense would have gone against their religious ethic. Another usual way to talk about rape is to avoid personifying it. Making it an impersonal part of the Mennonite history by referencing it as a fact in the chronology of tragedies Mennonites faced among others omits the voice of personal

experience as a valid expression. The thin description also closes the door to questioning God's will in the matter or expressing that they were not thankful for the suffering they experienced.

The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) helps to frame the importance of the interrelations of social life, formal and informal communal structures, and institutional motifs with personal experience. With this in mind, what was happening in the broader context of their world impacted their internal experiences and social interactions. Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar shared collective experiences in their environment. Among other things, all four were touched by revolutions, communism, socialism, genocide, war, patriarchy, refugee camps, diverse cultures, faith expression, patriarchy, and Nazism. While each navigated their own way, these systems bore on their personal experiences of trauma. Their internal struggles are not to be solely pathologized, rather, context, again, must be carefully considered (Krahn, 2013). Thus, focusing on both the person-in-environment and pathology would be a more balanced approach in understanding and appreciating the challenges the four authors faced.

Narrative and Ethnographic Discussion

Writing one's story is a way of communicating hopes, sense of self, and community identity (Andrews, 2014). The narrative allows for a reconstruction of personal and collective histories that imagines into one's voice into the future. Writing provides a vehicle to express trauma and discover how experiences align with systemic injustices. Narration offers a canvas that is greater than the individual as it paints a picture of how individuals accepted or acted in opposition to the beliefs and norms from society and/or culture.

Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar all wrote their stories many years later which served to separate them from the collective trauma in their lives. While they told

their personal narratives, they all included thick detailing of the systemic forces around them. They all wrote of hopes for freedom and emigration, although they were all conflicted about what it meant for them to leave their communities behind. They authored their memoirs from places where they lived free of systemic violence which may have afforded them the space to restory their histories from that vantage point. Each author portrayed about how they accepted cultural norms, with the exception of Waldemar. Aganeta's subjugation to her husband's instruction that she not act on the "voice" she heard warning her of her mother's impending death upheld the patriarchal Mennonite ethic. Jacob's thick reflection of the physical hardships he endured as a Nazi soldier while omitting all details about whether he utilized his machine gun against others supported his nonviolent conviction. Maria fell in love while a refugee in Germany, yet she turned down an opportunity for marriage because she heeded the instructions of her Mennonite male elders. Waldemar, on the other hand, openly reflected on his inner turmoil over decisions. He was aware of ways he wrestled to make decisions, such as the time he left worshiping in a Mennonite church to join the Lutherans which felt more genuine during his Canadian college days.

Each writer expressed part of their journeys where they opposed norms as well, even their own Mennonite standards. Aganeta, whose voice was notably silenced as a woman in her marriage, shifted her narration while exiled in Siberian labor camps. There she became a leader among other women, all of whom were husbandless. Jacob scripted numerous accounts of ways he cunningly crafted his speech so as to hide the full truth from authorities, challenging the Mennonite ethic of what is considered truthful. Maria's strong acts to oppose Russian soldiers and stand up for herself countered Mennonite values of patriarchy. Waldemar wrote of his appreciation of German soldiers who took him under their wing after occupying his town in Russia. His thick descriptions rendered

soldiers of any side as humans who were also trying to survive challenged the Mennonite nonviolent ethic that views active duty in war as a sin.

Rogers and Leydesdorff (2002) highlighted that narrative helps readers to appreciate the role trauma plays in constructing identity. As writers give voice to incongruities and systemic experiences, their construction plays a role of both remembering and forgetting, a vital part of cultural process. While not explicit and perhaps sometimes unconscious, each writer made choices about aspects of their experience they would include or exclude. Much like having different instruments playing the same symphonic piece, motifs that emerged had consistencies across all four memoirs, yet each placed emphasis on different voices. For example, Aganeta's part highlighted how she negotiated her role in suffering. Jacob emphasized his ingenuity and hard work to overcome ongoing onslaughts of opposition. Maria's voice seemed to sound out ways she courageously acted in the face of loss and threats. A theme flowing through Waldemar's memoir presented how he wrestled with contradictions. Perhaps, their motivation to write their stories came, in part, from how they overcame significant hardships to be able to inspire their readers to be able to overcome their own. Conceivably, their writing helped them make meaning and purpose from the many strands that united to form one unified piece.

Self-constructing a memoir builds significance, provides a space for reflection on personal experience, and helps to build connections with others (Andrews, 2014). All authors stated their purpose for writing their story was to connect with others, be they family or a broader audience. They all revealed aspects of themselves and their times, having the potential of shining a light on influences such as culture, politics, and society in the narrative of which the audience may not be aware. This, in turn, has the potential to build bridges between groups of people who are separated by years, cultures, and systemic influences such as war. The writing also makes one's story tangible (Krahn,

2011). When asked about their story, the authors can point to a book that may serve as a symbol of what they endured. Realizing that they have a story worth telling may have brought greater sense of personal completion and connection to others.

Discussion of Trauma Themes

While themes of suffering, despair, and unprocessed grief were expected, it was a surprise to also read of how much voice was given to resiliency and coping in the face of traumatic experiences. Analysis and discussion of emotional, developmental, physical, transitional, and coping themes follow.

Emotional Themes

Death of and separation from family. Analyzing the data gave rise to considering whether voice was given to expressing feelings that would be anticipated in certain situations (Jokinen, Juhila, & Pösö, 1999). For example, were emotional descriptions offered when facing painful loss, terror, or loneliness? Krahn (2011) found some Mennonite women conveyed noteworthy emotional trauma when they were young, often due to the physical or emotional loss of one or both of their parents. However, if they moved toward expressing feelings of grief about these wounds, they expressed guilt. Thus, their guilt may have subdued feelings of grief in order to boost their mental strength to overcome hardships.

All authors described losing one or both parent(s) to death or separation. When Aganeta's mother died, she wrote how she was significantly impacted, but not with a description of sadness as one would expect. She wrote, "her death affected me greatly because I was struggling with disobedience. That is how disobedience is punished (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 13). She viewed the death of her mother as God's punishment for her own disobedience. When her father died the following year, she did not write about her

grief. Instead, she focused on the family's joy that he became a Christian during the last day of his life. While she did not explicitly share her grief, she included a sketch of how the clock hanging above his bed "stopped forever" and was "beyond repair" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 25). While she did not capture the emotion, she conceivably painted a picture for the reader of an internal metaphor. Perhaps the "clock" represented her heart as beyond repair and her connection with her father as cut off forever. Or, her emotions surrounding this event were evermore unavailable to her. When Jacob's father and his twin brother died when he was four, he wrote about missing his father but did not give voice to how that played out for him. He did describe crying many tears over the death of his twin, possibly exposing that he did grieve this loss. When his mother died, he placed emphasis on death as the main subject and the ensuing identity it brought him as an orphan. Maria, too, offered a metaphor for describing the death of her mother when she was four. She contrasted the sweet scenes of spring that confounded the sorrow experienced in her home. She was the only author to respond with fury, although this was resisted and eventually squelched by the surviving adults in her family. During one of her rampages, her grandfather walloped her and she "screamed until I became stiff and blue in the face" (Foth, 1981, p. 22). He placed her in a tub of water and she expressed that she never again "let my temper get out of control" (Foth, 1981, p. 22). One would expect a child of four whose mother just died to experience intense anger, a natural emotion in the stages of grief (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005).

Waldemar did not recollect any drama associated with his father's arrest. He assumed his mother cried many times, but never in his presence. He wrote that he never cried, rather "life had to go on, and it did" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 6). At first, he stayed connected to his father through monthly visits to the prison and then through warm letters, but then, he experienced years of silence. After six years, he noted receiving news that his father was alive. While he included over a dozen exclamation points, he did not

offer any reflection of how he felt. Instead, he picked up the narrative describing his educational pursuits. In his epilogue, he explained that his complicated feelings prevented him from revisiting the Ukraine. Even at the later part of his life, his complex emotions were impactful.

Terror. Experiencing terror was a common theme for all four writers. Aganeta described a time when all the men in her village went into hiding and the barking of dogs in the eerie silent night struck terror in her soul. She chronologically described a week-long period of terror by outlining details of what happened as she wondered if her husband and the other men were still alive. She brought closure to the discussion by commenting that God's grace allowed her to endure without describing her emotional response any further. However, she did note that her husband's hair went gray and her own physicality had changed, "I was very, very thin" (J. Janzen, 1990, p. 37). Trauma can cause the brain to negatively impact the digestive system and other functions of the body, shutting down awareness of emotions (Van der Kolk, 2015). When someone experiences trauma, their brain releases adrenaline that is proportional to the degree of intensity. This surplus can later translate into heightened precise memories, unless the horror is so intense that it floods the nervous system and breaks down the memory.

Loneliness. In their memoirs, all four authors gave some expression of loneliness. Aganeta described how her husband hurriedly said his farewell to her as the officials shoved him onto the train, "before it quickly chugged off with all its energy" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, p. 44). She stood behind in the rainy dark night, lonely and crying. She realized she could not stay there long as she had sleeping children back at her lodging quarters and they would be waiting for her. She ended by saying that she never saw him again and included a farewell letter he had sent from the front. If someone channels all

their energies towards survival, there is no room to process emotions (Van der Kolk, 2015).

To possibly avoid loneliness, Jacob risked his own opportunity of getting out of prison camp by being adamant that he would only go with the farmer if his friend could also come. Maria, while not explicit about her loneliness, expressed feelings of wanting to die when she found herself alone after being separated from her family.

Waldemar was the most open with his feelings of all four authors in his writing. He offered thick descriptions throughout his resettlement narrative about his struggle with loneliness and depression, emphasizing increased emotions at his twentieth birthday and during several Christmases. While the intensity of his loneliness decreased while pursing higher education, he was surprised that his loneliness ebbed and flowed throughout those years. In Waldemar's case, a psychiatric diagnosis, although potentially helpful, would not fully capture the trauma he creatively survived and how such experiences impacted his identity development (Van der Kolk, 2015).

Physical Themes

Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar all narrated hunger, poverty, and danger, and again, they gave different emphasis to their experiences. People thrive best when their world is secure and foreseeable (de Jong et al., 2003). But for these survivors, security and predictability was clearly not the case.

Hunger. Experiencing famine and loss of food was greatly detailed by Aganeta and Jacob. They described what it was like for them to live through food insecurity and see family swollen with hunger. During times of famine, they did not know where their next meal would come from. They described the painstaking efforts they took to gather food, such as collecting tree blossoms, roots, single grains left behind by communist personnel, and bartering for bread. For them, this seemed to be an all-consuming matter.

While Maria and Waldemar also recalled times of food insecurity, they reflected on these experiences differently. Maria wrote about her finding her family starving in Crimea, ~~but~~ while she had been fed while at boarding school. While Maria struggled to get food staples for her and her grandmother during politically unstable times, she does not write extensively about that. Waldemar wrote, "…virtually absent from our diet were meat, butter, eggs, and sugar…but during the times I remember we did not really experience hunger" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 10). While recounted missing basic staples from his diet, he did not recall experiencing true hunger.

Poverty. In a similar vein as the hunger theme, each author related times of poverty that included homelessness and intense cold. Through hard work in Canada, all but Aganeta slowly worked their way out of poverty. She, on the other hand, endured possibly even greater poverty when she was repatriated to Siberian labor camps. With her four children and without her husband, she had no means to move out of abject poverty. She described this period as agonizing and offered detailed descriptions related to her struggles to provide for the basic needs of her and her children.

Danger. Each author recounted numerous times when they were physically in harm's way. The physical theme bled into the emotional theme as they related how they felt about the dangerous occurrences they had experienced. First, at the end of World War II, Aganeta, Jacob's wife, Maria, and Waldemar's mother were all without their husbands, making them increasingly vulnerable to rape. Aganeta wrote one comment about this topic, saying, "for 24 hours the military was completely without authority or discipline and exercised freedom to do as they wished. It is too horrible to write about. Thank God I was not molested" (Funk Wiebe, 2014, pp. 47-48). Jacob too wrote once about actions his wife took to safeguard herself against soldiers. Waldemar reported hearing about increasing reports of rape by Russian soldiers but neither gave further

discussion nor emotional descriptions. Only Maria gave significant voice to this period, describing with some detail how she verbally stood up to Russian soldiers, feigned sickness when Moroccan soldiers came to her door to sexually assault her, hid, and followed her faith-based intuition to avoid harm. Yet, her narrative focused on her resiliency and did not offer voice to how she responded internally.

A common theme emerged about the political violence and instability they faced. Aganeta and Jacob had the added challenge of caring for their children in times of danger. In fact, both gave voice to their struggles while fleeing Russia on *The Great Trek.* Aganeta became ill and ran out of milk for her infant on this perilous journey and Jacob buried his infant the day before they departed. These two authors faced the dangers of the front lines during the Nazi regime. Aganeta's husband lost his life as a Nazi soldier. Jacob was wounded, later imprisoned, and feared he would die in prison. When he survived the war, Jacob was considered for repatriation and escaped that sentence by what he saw as grace. While Waldemar recalled memories of danger, he also viewed the arrival of German soldiers as adventurous and a part of normal living.

Transitional Themes

Themes of transition surfaced in the memoirs including displacement, dissonance, emigration, and resettlement. Not surprising were accounts from each author about what it was like to lose the homes and places where they lived. What was unexpected, were descriptions of how much they loved the land around them. Sometimes, descriptions were given with a strong sense of connection, while other times they lacked an emotive quality.

Displacement. Displacement during political violent times confounds the layers of trauma (de Jong et al., 2003). While some people have the opportunity of living in the same place throughout their lifetime or for generations, these authors moved many times,

first within Russia, later in Poland and Germany, and finally in Russia for Aganeta and Canada for the others. Communist systemic movements brought about the loss of homeownership for all four authors and set them on a trajectory of moving from village to village to either seek better opportunities or to evade annihilation. Their movements did not hold certainty of survival. Rather, they were often perilous and riddled with dangers. All but Aganeta highlighted precious people and things they had to leave behind. None of the authors held hope of ever returning again. They all left relatives behind in situations where they did not know if they would ever see them again.

While leaving Russia was riddled with danger and loss, this seemed to be mixed with a certain amount of optimism for a better life in Germany. Becoming naturalized as German citizens in short order, they entered into spaces of greater freedom than they had previously known, albeit short-lived. According to Frankl (1992), people are continually met with potential opportunities to act in situations that will either improve or worsen their existence. Each author gave thick details linking their resiliency with the theme of displacement.

Successful navigation of the separation-individuation process was found to be negatively impacted by occurrences of displacement (Kira et al., 2018; Krahn, 2013; Reynolds, 1998). Curiously, Aganeta, Jacob, and Maria all left Russia without their parents. They had to find their way in their changing world without the help of their family of origin. Perhaps this helped them establish a sense of identity that apart from their parents that could mature as they grew older. When Aganeta's husband died and she was repatriated to Siberia, it seemed her sense of identity emerged with new meaning. Her stated goal was to help her children survive as well as other women and children in the labor camps. Waldemar, on the other hand, still had his mother to help him navigate turbulent times and his emigration to Canada he was 16 years old. While in Russia, she protected him from hearing too much about injustices, such as how the Germans were

treating Jews. Once in Canada, his mother repeatedly encouraged him to make his academics primary even though he felt he should put his educational pursuits on hold for the sake of providing for his family. He also recalled experiencing role reversal as only he spoke English, rendering his mother helpless to communicate in their early days. Furthermore, he wrote about his attempts to help his mother cope with her depression and grief. The care and role reversals he experienced may have both supported and challenged his process of differentiation.

Dissonance. Each author's value system was challenged by the trauma they experienced. In a sense, their personal ethics were evolving as their journeys unfolded. These shifts impacted both their cognitions and emotions. There may be many explanations why the authors felt conflicted during political tumult, displacement, and loss. One factor may be linked with identity. Identity is formed in a context. Instead of being a clear-cut process, identity development is full of incongruities and doubts (Cutcher, 2019). For migrants, a sense of belonging in their past homeland was found to be partly connected to their imagination. They both belong and do not belong in their motherland. People who were displaced experienced a shift in their social and ethnic identities that can alter their sense of balance.

On a systemic level, the geographic milieu the authors found themselves in were full of contradictions. For example, Russia did not become communist overnight but transitioned slowly, fraught with conflict. Aganeta, Jacob, and Maria were born before communism took root. They all experienced the unraveling of their homeland that became hostile towards them and their people. It is no wonder that they felt conflicted when German soldiers arrived in their communities. They were spared from the tyranny of the Russians. However, their coming also signified separation from loved ones and leaving their nation. The German troops were experienced mainly as kind and allowed

them to worship freely. At the same time, they heard about how their regime was treating Jews and saw how they interacted with Russian Jews. Throughout their history, Mennonites took on ethnic identities that would serve their religious agenda such as military exemption and freedom to worship (Goossen, 2017). For example, when being German was favored, they identified as German. When the tides turned and being Dutch was advantageous, they branded themselves as Dutch. Taking on new identities for survival purposes may have added to their confusion of who they were and what they believed.

Emigration. While present in the four memoirs, the theme of emigration was given more voice by Jacob than the others. For him, this seemed to be a type of metanarrative that held his story together. In his longing to be somewhere other than where he was, could he be satisfied with where he found himself? There could have possibly been the sense that he could not be content until he got to Canada, signifying that he was not mindful of the present. Perhaps he planted himself where he planned on going, instead of where he was. Research has found that people who are mindful were more attuned to the present moment (Saxe, Ellis, & Brown, 2015; Wolf & Serpa, 2015). This could have potentially impacted why Jacob did not seem attuned to his son's needs while they were living as refugees in South Germany. Jacob described how busy he was, trying to make enough money to buy passage to Canada, that he did not have much time left to spend with his family. When he was home one day a week, he dedicated the majority of his time to helping alleviate the loneliness of his wife.

Concurrent with Wolkowitz (2004), similarities were found in how the authors who emigrated to Canada portrayed their arrival stories. Just as each author gave detailed expression of their transition from Russia to Poland and Germany, their sea voyage was no different. Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar offered in-depth descriptions of their

preparations for the trip, including all the legal dealings that occurred. Once on board, each were struck by the copious amounts of food on the vessel and contrasted that to the want they had experienced for so many years. Upon arrival in Canada, they embarked on a train ride to their final destinations. They were touched by the Canadian Mennonites who arrived at certain stops along the way. While some were relatives eager to be reunited with lost family, others came just to see if they would know the newly arrived passengers. Mennonite leaders awaited them along the way to prepare them for settlement. This reinforced their sense of communal identity even in a foreign land. Notable is Jacob's earnest efforts to make sure his family was washed up as best as possible when they neared their destination on the Canadian prairies. Their first impressions appeared to be very important to him.

While the three authors realized their dream to emigrate, it did not come without cost. They all left immediate family members behind in Russia, uncertain whether they were alive. As they boarded their particular ships, they all recalled reflecting their sentiment that they were leaving behind drama, hurts, and suffering in Europe and were turning towards Canada, a symbol of new life. Jacob and Waldemar were surprised when comparing the simplicity of the Canadian landscape and architecture with the grandeur they left behind.

Resettlement. In their study of the children of Holocaust survivors, Danieli, et al. (2016) found multiple factors associated with the impact of large-scale trauma. The next generation's ability to repair and adapt were correlated with resettlement transitions, the new milieu of the family, and how the adults adjusted after the trauma. Jacob's reflections on his early resettlement period consisted primarily of describing physical work to repay their travel debt and provide for his family in their new land. He acquired a new language, worked whatever seasonal job he could get, and eventually rose out of

poverty. Less voice was given to his ability to emotional repair and adapt in the new environment. He commented on how grateful he was to no longer live under the communism system but does not discuss dissonance in the new culture. Maria offered only two pages in her memoir to her resettlement period, moving any reflection of post-traumatic healing to the margins. Instead, education seemed to play a prominent role in her resettlement as one of her first encounters in her first days in Canada were with the President of a Mennonite College who invited her to come and study. In her introduction, she informed the reader that she was interrupting her doctoral studies to write her memoir.

Waldemar's resettlement experiences comprised approximately one third of his memoir, writing extensively about his challenges in his resettlement. While his return to high school and adjustment to life in his new culture seemed smooth to those observing him from the outside, he struggled internally. "My personal and emotional adjustment proceeded along a much more difficult and bumpy road. …I led a kind of dual existence" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 213). Feeling like an outsider, he gave far-reaching voice to his challenges with loneliness and depression at different stages of his life during the first decades in his new home. Factors that helped him transition in the new culture were highlighted, such as people who served as gatekeepers. Jacob commented on people who helped with the transition but he did not offer much reflection on his inner struggles in different resettlement stages. Maria virtually omitted her resettlement experience from her memoir. One could wonder if she believed she had a story to tell in this phase of her life. She shared that she travelled around the world telling her story of the past. Her narrative left out what her struggle was to make meaning into the future.

Yoon and Park (2012) studied the acculturation process in a new culture and the role narrative played in offering a way of seeing continuity in people's growing self over time, in both consistent and evolving ways. They found that assimilation, a gradual loss

of their past culture, was not achievable for participants. Instead, through narratives, people built their identity in order to know themselves and be known in a way that intermingled their old culture with the new. In the telling, the past and the present were incorporated in their journeys as commonalities were identified. The future was moved forward in a flexible and unfolding process with discernible consistent patterns in the journeys. For immigrant women, their identities came into formation as their life stories unfolded between two cultures, addressing discrimination, reconstructing their identity through their social connections, and establishing a sense of meaning. Stages of molding an identity in the new culture included struggling with self-discovery about their value, choosing to relinquish aspects of their cultural identity, developing new interpersonal connections, negotiating their feelings of misfit, reluctantly giving up certain aspects of their previous culture that no longer fit, and acceptance of living between two cultures as both an outsider and an emerging insider. Waldemar narrated aspects of what it was like for him to negotiate his identity and beliefs in ways that are consistent with his upbringing as well as evolving. Once, when eating at the home of relatives, he was asked how many potatoes he would like at dinner. He replied,

> Five. I had assumed that potatoes would constitute the meal, …I had not counted on meat and vegetables and pie and who knows what else, not to mention the size of the potatoes. …it would not be the last occasion to draw attention to the fact that we were in a different culture and that in countless ways we stood out as newcomers. (W. Janzen, 2007, p. 197)

He pointed out numerous ways he felt like an outsider and ways he was helped in negotiating the new culture, such as friends and relatives who served as cultural gatekeepers.

Depending on how people adapted to the new culture, Danieli et al. (2016) explored how these four lives were impacted and, consequently, examined the rearing

and development of their children. Coining a term, *fixity*, differences were found in holocaust survivors' ability to freely flow from understanding their past life experiences to their current milieu and moving toward the future. Some people viewed themselves as victims trapped in the previous trauma wound. Others expressed numbness in their emotional detachment, silences, and an inability to tolerate feebleness. Still others moved to fight, esteeming and holding on to their Jewish distinctiveness and working to master new situations. Clearly, the work of trauma recovery is a critical piece in the resettlement process that cannot be overlooked.

Coping Themes

Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar found numerous ways to cope with their traumatic experiences. Drawing on community, resilience, faith, love of land, and gratitude were commonalities they shared.

Community. Mennonites elevate the value of community above the individual. Historians outline how faith traditions, decision making at both individual and collective levels, migration, advocacy, and living arrangements are processed through the lens of the community (F. H. Epp, 1962; Urry, 2006). Historically, Mennonites have been an inward-looking cultural and religious community who created their own community systems within the dominant cultures where they lived (M. Epp, 1997). With the rise of communism, their religious and communal structures were dismantled. While the Mennonite community could no longer function as they once did, the value was still evident in the memoirs. Mennonites in Canada moved to support their fellow people in Russia and later in Germany, with financial aid, provisions, refugee centers, and immigration advocacy. Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar all referred to the same Mennonite leaders who helped them secure travel documents. Without these different forms of aid, these authors may not have survived.

As a fragmented community on the run during World War II, the writers expressed clinging to other Mennonites. Jacob had one Mennonite friend he was loyal to, risking personal safety to guard that relationship. Maria recalled banding together with 30 other uprooted Mennonites from Russia she met in Germany. Waldemar also connected with other Mennonites in refugee camps. Once in Canada, he felt less connected to Mennonites there and became conflicted with his social identity. However, he did find belonging with his uncle and aunt in Canada.

The shadow of relying on community to cope was the value given to the community that usurps the voice of the individual. For example, Maria fell in love with a young man outside of the Mennonite community. They made plans to marry. However, when she consulted with Mennonite leaders, she heeded their advice and turned down the marriage proposal. She never did marry nor did she share about her loss of romantic love. In her exile to Siberia, Aganeta was cut off from her Mennonite community. Curiously, her narrative shifted at that point in her subservience. Where she was once submissive to her husband and their rigid patriarchal belief system, she began taking leadership in a broad ecumenical community of widows and their children through storytelling, singing, praying, and mourning together.

Resiliency. A theme that arose in the memoirs was resiliency. Having a pacifist ethic has sometimes become translated as being a *passive* people. However, being a group that chose repeatedly to advocate for freedoms meant that they were assertive with national leaders wherever they went (Goossen, 2017). They were pioneers who worked diligently to establish themselves wherever they settled (Urry, 2006).

All the writers expressed ways of how they displayed human agency. Each was able to think clearly and creatively act in response to assessments of their situations. Whether it was taking action to provide for their basic needs, taking leadership in prison

camps to instill hope, purposefully carrying items they could use as bribes, or standing up to soldiers who were out to harm, they all courageously acted. All the writers were survivors and their resiliency played a role in their survival.

Resiliency can also be a part of the shadow too. In visiting the Mennonite Heritage Center, the Director commented that it was easy to celebrate resilience and strength, but not the hard work of healing or on weakness (R. Thiessen, personal communication, February 15, 2019). If resilience is preferred, then that part of the story can be thickened. The stories of Jacob and Maria, in particular, seemed to reinforce their strength and faith. While Aganeta and Waldemar also gave voice to resiliency, they thickened their narratives regarding feeling conflicted, weak, uncertain, or lacking in faith.

Faith. It is no wonder that faith was mentioned as each memoir was purposefully selected from a religious perspective and in particular, from a Mennonite archive. The loss of their freedom to worship together, and later to even dialogue about faith challenged the role that church and communal worship played in their social lives. Each responded in their own way to the infiltration of communist ideology in their schools. Aganeta was already finished with her studies and does not make mention of it. Jacob was chastised for standing up for his beliefs and he eventually quit school on principle. Maria went against her cloistered Mennonite upbringing and was drawn to atheism and abandoned her faith. However, when faced with dire situations, like discovering her parents were missing, she cried out to God in desperation. She chose to open and close her memoir with her conversion story and the thread of faith ran as a unifying thread throughout her memoir. It is possible that her ability to act with such resilience as a woman, however, may have been girded by not being indoctrinated in Mennonite patriarchal theology but by being drawn to socialist teachings while a student in

communist schools. Waldemar found a way to exist in two conflicting worlds as a boy: what he was taught to uphold at home and respect his teachers and the political lessons he received at school.

What was unanticipated, however, was the amount of questioning in which Aganeta, Maria, and Waldemar were engaged. Aganeta's tenor transitioned throughout her narrative. Where she once believed the atrocities were a result of her unfaithfulness, sometime during her most dire experiences in Siberian labor camps, she seemed to cry out with greater desperation to God while also experiencing God as suffering alongside her. According to Frankl (1992), prisoners in concentration camps who believed that life called something from them, even in bleak surroundings where all choices were denied to them, became survivors. Waldemar responded to his circumstances through his experiences of conflicting thoughts. He commented that his five post-secondary degrees were spurred on to bring some kind of resolve to his confusion surrounding issues of faith and theology.

Further, it was interesting to observe how the writers came to experience their faith when institutional structures were unavailable. With the loss of church structures, spirituality went underground. All four writers experienced serendipitous dreams and intuitions. For example, Aganeta and Jacob heard a "voice" instructing them to act. When Maria found herself facing insurmountable obstacles, she prayed and the solutions seemed to just fall into place. Waldemar, perhaps the least mystical of the group, also made some reference to a dream and conversion experience that moved him in a transcendent way. They seemed to encounter a sense of a living God when they were stripped to their essence. It was interesting to note that this line in the narrative seem to disappear once Jacob was in Canada and part of an institutional Mennonite church. From this observation, it appears that the religious container of the Mennonite church with its

rigidity and rules may limit some people from connecting with the mystical and the living God.

Love of land. When surrounded by systemic evil in his concentration camp, Frankl (1992) discovered that, finding beauty in the direst of situations, helped him heal. In almost poetic prose, Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar all described in detail the beauty of the landscapes they encountered. Throughout their history, Mennonites have wrestled with the land to create life-giving farms (Loewen, 2005). Viewing the land as interconnected with their religion and culture would explain one reason why they were so taken with their surroundings. At the same time, one can wonder if they felt a strong attachment for the land because it was easier than attaching to humans after they lost so many of their closest relationships to death and/or separation. In addition to losing human connections, repeatedly losing their homes could have increased their struggles to find a way to find anchor within and without themselves.

Gratitude. Gratitude can be an expression of what someone has instead of an automatic focus of what is in want (Wolf & Serpa, 2015). Each author expressed gratitude for being reunited with or receiving communication from family after years of separation. They were thankful for something they received such as a letter or a hug from a long-lost relative. They also were thankful when they survived different traumatic events such as being spared from death or exile. To hear that this aspect of their gratitude was an expression of relief from suffering was curious. In this case, their gratitude was focused on the absence or passing of suffering instead of the presence of something like a period of peace. For example, both Aganeta and Jacob were grateful that their babies died just before taking a perilous journey. Normally, the first stage of grief is denial (Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2005). It aids in helping the person to survive the death and endure the next day. One can wonder what it was like for these parents to lose their child and, in

Jacob's case, leave his country as a refugee the following day. They carried multiple layers of compounded grief. The last stage of grief is acceptance if they are able to arrive at that point in their grieving process. Perhaps writing from the vantage point of old age allowed them to revisit the details of these deaths in a way that fostered acceptance, and therefore, gratefulness. On the other hand, gratefulness may have served as a coping mechanism where these parents projected their grief onto God during a time when they could not contain the grief themselves. Waldemar poignantly captured the role that perspective played in gratefulness. He wrote, "Now, from the vantage point of retirement, I look back gratefully on a rich if not easy path" (W. Janzen, 2007, p. xi).

Intergenerational Attachment Themes

While a clear analysis of attachment was not supported by this study, some implications were highlighted. Drawing on descriptions of their relationships with their own childhood attachments and, where applicable, narratives concerning their own children, the role attachment played in their development was contemplated.

Early attachment experiences have suggested the intergenerational transmission of trauma to the next generation (Danieli et al., 2016; Kira et al., 2018; Krahn, 2011; Reynolds, 1998). While the scope of this study focused on Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar, analysis of their narration concerning the nature of their relationship with their parent(s) and, where applicable, their children, was explored.

Children are wired to attach (Ainsworth, Blehar, & Waters, 1978; Bowlby, 1969; de Jong, Komproe, & Van Ommeren, 2003). Having parents who are present, attuned, and responsive to their needs builds healthy attachments. Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar had parents who were experiencing distressing events in their youth or when they were born which would have impacted their attunement. All having lost at least one parent, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar experienced a disruption with an attachment figure

by the age of four. Aganeta recalled her father became very sick after the Bolshevik Revolution and her mother was lonely and often cried. When he was four, Jacob's father was abducted by anarchists and, days after his brave escape, he discovered he contracted typhus from them and died within days. Also, at the age of four, Maria's mother died. When she responded with temper tantrums in the weeks that followed, she was shut down by her grandfather and never again expressed her rage. She later was separated from her father and step-mother on two occasions, the second time being the last she saw them until she was reunited in Canada with her father when he was 80 years old. Waldemar described his mother as taking great care to protect him from the brutal realities of their surroundings. Yet, he also recalled his mother's depression, frequent headaches, and moments of self-harm which he found very disturbing. He described grabbing her hands away and begging for her to stop.

While an analysis of historical data did not support identifying which types of attachment models each writer experienced, research supports that problems with attachment are present during war, displacement, or political violence (de Jong et al., 2003; Reynolds, 1998). Working models from attachment figures were found to play out through the lifespan of people who were not certain of their parents' availability during their younger years tend to wonder later in life if others would be dependable. Thus, they were less able to engage in intimate relationships or be connected enough to secure attachment later in life (Årseth, Kroger, Martinussen, & Bakken, 2009).

Implications for Social Work Practice

In light of this research, there are several potential applications for social work practice. As this study was informed by previous research about Mennonites (Krahn, 2011), the implications addressed below are built on those contributions.

Heightened Awareness in Biopsychosocial Assessment

Social worker are expected to be culturally competent (NASW, 2001). Their code of ethic states that social workers have and continue to grow in their comprehension and awareness of ways issues such as history, ethnicity, immigrations and refugee status, and religion impact particular cultural groups. Based on the findings of this study, those contextual pieces are critical. In addition, understanding socio-political influences and intergenerational histories are important features of biopsychosocial assessments that often do not take such a broad or expansive scope (Danieli et al., 2016; Kira et al., 2018; Krahn, 2011; Reynolds, 1998). Social workers need to also be aware and reflective about their personal identities as related to culture and ethnicity (Petrovich & Garcia, 2015). As Mennonites are a Euro-American group, careful consideration of white cultural identity must be taken into account. There also is great diversity regarding the boundaries and descriptions of whiteness varying across time and space that needs to be considered (McDermott & Samson, 2005).

Significance of Trauma-informed Therapeutic Interventions

While none of the authors in this study mentioned receiving any trauma-informed therapeutic interventions, people who have experienced collective trauma could benefit from having a professional empower them in their posttraumatic growth (Krahn, 2011; Schwarz, Corrigan, Hull, & Raju, 2017). While each author demonstrated considerable resiliency, there was also evidence of shadow, in other words, unresolved issues.

Narrative perspectives. Telling one's story has a way of creating meaning out of the past, highlighting ways people make sense of their suffering (Frankl, 1992). However, merely telling the story is not the same as healing from the traumatic components told in the narrative (Andrews, 2014). As some survivors can become retraumatized in retelling

the narrative, social workers need to proceed with sensitivity. Caution is taken if one person's story becomes a reflection of social suffering, where the narrative takes on a flavor of the corporate and silences the uniqueness of the personal experiences. Social workers can also become aware of the challenge of translation for clients who are attempting to express the traumatic components of their lives in words. Some of the most important information may be omited or even impossible to put into words. However, if something is not articulated or imagined, then people may use the unexpressed experiences as an excuse to leave parts of the narrative in the shadows.

Andrews (2014) also highlights the necessity of hearing the stories. After the Holocaust, many survivors did, in fact, share their narratives. However, some people outside of those experiences did not want to hear their stories and publishers turned down such accounts for publications. To truly comprehend what someone went through, there is a certain amount of joining in the story when listening, making it difficult to imagine something so horrific when the trauma has not been personally experienced. Some survivors do not want others to truly understand their suffering because reading about it may be too awful for anyone to imagine. Yet, sharing one's story can reconnect people "to the world of the living…and to the knowledge that we are not alone" (Andrews, 2014, p. 44). Narratives can draw out broad biopsychosocial features and help people reconstruct their history and move them into imagining a future with possibilities. Narratives help to get the story out of people's bodies (Van der Kolk, 2015). Social workers play a role in validating the stories their clients share which is part of the healing process.

Attachment and separation-individuation. Social workers may draw on therapeutic approaches that address issues of attachment and separation-individuation.

Psychoanalytic interventions have the potential of enacting enduring psychic transformation instead of solely focusing on behavioral changes (Jean, 2003; Jung, 1963). Within the therapeutic alliance, clients are afforded the space to process "the transference-countertransference dynamics, and the pattern of unconscious meaning revealed in the narrative that unfolds in each analytic session" (Jean, 2003, p. 69). This space may open for clients to work out attachment issues embedded in their inner lives. It also provides a vehicle for addressing splitting, projections and projective identification.

Such deep internal journeys offer an introduction to death that is more uncommon in the Western world. Looking to myths from more ancient or non-Western contexts can provide a framework for understanding the tasks related to such profound healing in the depths. VonFranz (1999) offered one such Romanian mythology concerning the feminine redemption of a cat. The myth suggests a path to forge for those struggling with attachment, separation-individuation, and depression. Archetypal symbols relevant to the transformative process include issues of identity, journeys into the dark unknown, awareness of shadow, consciousness of the role both the masculine (i.e., *animas*) and the feminine (i.e., *anima*), and returning "home" as a transformed being.

Garland (2002) highlighted that the neurological impact of trauma is comprehended and addressed through exploring the meaning of the trauma. This is done with an eye to early personal history and how such experiences shaped one's inner life. Treatment needs to understand the past and its bearing on future. Therefore, remembering, rather than ignoring is critical lest the psychological load one carries remains unprocessed and unconsciously transmitted to the next generations. In this approach, the parts of the trauma that became housed in the unconscious, or shadow, slowly becomes incorporated into the conscious. This process of self-discovery occurs as the person is ready to see and understand. The gamut of emotions that range from loathing, fury, or viciousness to good and affectionate feelings are explored. Where

attachment disruptions have occurred within the psyche, the role of the therapist is to help to carry the intense rage and anguish while maintaining a sense of separateness. Also, in time, the client may come to see that some of the shadow lives, not just outside of them, but within them as well. That said, solely addressing the inner world would not do justice to helping clients come to terms with the broader external causes of people's trauma (Segal, Qualls, & Smyer, 2018).

Social workers engaged in a variety of settings may have opportunities to work with the offspring of survivors who vicariously carry the trauma and have experienced challenges associated with their attachments (Krahn, 2011, 2013).

<u>Therapeutic container</u>. Healing can occur within the container of relationships (Schwarz et al., 2017). It is optimal that both the therapist and client be centered and conscious to effectively hold reliving the suffering that comes from addressing trauma. An important component of therapy is the coming together of opposites such as conscious and unconscious, good and evil, grief and joy. However, living in the paradox is exceptionally difficult physiologically and cognitively. The therapist helps build awareness of contradictions that will naturally emerge. Attunement to the client is critical, patiently waiting for the client to unearth the heart of their work in ways that address attachment as a core need to work on. Incorporating breathing exercises, sacred spaces, somatic networks, distress work, and uppermost consciousness are components of this intervention and can offer opportunities for neurological healing.

According to Romano et al. (2008), the therapist can offer a space where clients can feel safe, comfortable, and accepted which is similar to how a responsive attachment figure would be, thereby helping the client to explore their suffering in the context of therapy. The clients' ability to foster secure attachments to the therapist was significantly related to session depth, indicating that clients with more secure attachment to their

counselors were more likely to view the sessions as deep. Clients demonstrating high levels of avoidant–fearful and preoccupied–merger attachment to a therapist negatively associated with session depth.

Social workers position themselves to be aware of traumatic countertransference as "trauma is contagious" (Cunningham, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 140). Cunningham (2012) highlighted that countertransference occurs from interactions with a particular client, but social workers who work with multiple clients who suffered trauma must also be conscious of vicarious trauma. Social workers who bear witness of human brutality, deliberate maltreatment of others, and violent environmental forces may find their own worldviews and beliefs become colored by the work they do. The imagination of the traumatic stories they hear accumulates over time and alters their inner world. Therefore, when clients go through their darkest times with their therapist, spiritual doubts and vulnerabilities may surface for the social worker. In light of the reality of vicarious trauma, Cunningham (2012) stressed the critical role that spiritual practices and soul care plays in offering spaces for reflection and self-compassion for the mental health practitioner.

Understanding the impact of trauma on neurological development. Social workers would do well to grow in awareness of the impact trauma and attachment has on the brain (Saxe et al., 2015; Schore, 2002; Van der Kolk, 2015). Attachment disruptions by themselves can lead to PTSD, let alone enduring collective trauma (Schore, 2002). Treatment deals with "the imprints of the trauma on body, mind, and soul" (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 205). It is not just a narrative from the past but continues to live on in present reactions that are physically disturbing. Limbic system therapy, an approach that repairs what gets triggered and reestablishes the part of the brain responsible for emotional regulation and narrative therapy have been found helpful. Mindfulness work

has also helped to rebalance and transform (Krahn, 2013a; Saxe et al., 2015; Wolf & Serpa, 2015).

Addressing suffering. It is difficult to conceptualize and research suffering, let alone apply it to treatment practices. If it becomes a "category" then there is an assumption that it can be expressed through words (Frank, 2001). Mental health therapists help people to uncover what is sometimes unspeakable or hidden in the shadow. "Suffering is expressed in myth as the wound that does not kill but cannot be healed" (Frank, 2001, p. 355). One of the goals of this research on Mennonites was to better understand their particular cultural and socio-political context, thereby enhancing one's work with them. But in doing so, social workers must not imagine they fully understand the other's suffering. Part of the aim of this study was to find out what got the Mennonites into a position to suffer, how they coped, and then how to prevent others from having to endure the same.

When people experience collective trauma, as in the case of Mennonites, clearly the suffering is a part of their narrative. Careful consideration of whether the suffering is also related to the religious value of suffering is important with different religious groups which may seem contradictory to secular views. Some may portray the severity of one's suffering through a description of the event, but not through the emotional or psychological impact to possibly avoid appearing like one is complaining. The Mennonite ethic of being helpful to others, not paying attention to oneself, and putting others first may have helped them hold their own in face of terrible suffering.

Cognizant social workers are mindful of ways religious groups like Mennonites may minimize their trauma upon intake. Comparing one person's suffering to another may be futile as each individual finds ways of dealing with their own burdens. Can one person's trauma be *worse* than another? Frankl (1992), upon reflection of his experience

in a concentration camp, found listening to his feelings, giving himself to fate/God, actively imagining being with his wife, and seeing beauty helped to ease his suffering, as did practicing humor, solitude, and togetherness. These practices helped him choose as to what he would embrace. He found that through suffering, empathy was later gained. In his work as a psychotherapist, Frankl discovered that knowing how to bear his own suffering was critical in order to be able to sit with others who were working to bear their own.

Fidyk (2016) provided a conceptual framework for finding new paths that lead to beauty that honor deep and dark experiences. The cure to suffering was to suffer more. To travel into the depths of one's soul gave rise to the hope that things can slowly yet surely be put into their rightful places and new experiences can be forged. While there are many names for this descent into darkness, this psychic journey occurs when one's conscious *ego* has used up all its coping strategies in the way the person has been living. This gives rise to a non-western concept that suggests that "the cure for suffering might well be more suffering" (Fidyk, 2016, p. 179). Within the context of depth psychology, someone can embark on a lifelong journey that explores resilience and shadow. However, this is not just an overnight journey, but a stripping over and over that cuts to the core of people's defense mechanisms that helped someone survive collective trauma. When these ways of survival are no longer necessary, opportunity to forge new paths of posttraumatic growth may occur. Until that which is dead within is dealt with, living cannot begin.

Macro Practice Implications for Social Work

Aging. When someone undergoes trauma, the body instinctively protects itself (Krahn, 2011; Saxe et al., 2015; Van der Kolk, 2015). But with the passage of time, some found that they were ready to address their traumatic experiences (Krahn, 2011). The

time to incubate past experiences can offer a new perspective about who they are in the present. Narratives, in particular, can help professionals know why behaviors and/or issues are surfacing towards the end of the lifespan for the older adult. Professionals working with seniors in home care or facilities may be the first to discover mental health issues that were not detected at other stages in the lifespan. In the case of Mennonites who have shunned psychological interventions and preferred sharing with pastoral staff who are often not trained to assess for mental health issues, medical professionals may be the first to detect issues that require mental health referrals. Issues may show up more at end of life as seniors seek medical attention for health issues later in life.

Psychodynamic themes of loss that arise for older adults may lead social workers to assume that depression rates are higher in this life stage (Segal et al., 2018). However, incidences were lower for older adults than in earlier stages of development. Therefore, the life stage alone does not paint a full picture of reasons for psychological struggles in older adults. Losses throughout the life span can complicate developmental tasks. Those who have not surmounted earlier developmental tasks may find challenges as adults to adapt to subsequent stages (Erikson, 1964). Trauma experienced in earlier stages of development may cause wounds that arise as susceptibilities towards the end of the life span (Segal et al., 2018). “An underdeveloped self exacerbates the power of loss to evoke psychopathology in late life” (Segal et al., 2018, p. 45).

While working with geriatric populations who experienced collective trauma, social workers may also find it valuable to gain additional background information from adult children. In doing so, they also begin to recognize that the adult children too have needs as they may have experienced vicarious trauma through their parents.

Organizational transformation. In light of this research, implications for organizational transformation can be addressed. Social workers can sensitively speak to

institutional structures that focus on individual pathology within a biomedical model (Krahn, 2011). Promotion of holistic services, social workers can help educate other professionals within the health care system of ecological factors that bear on a person's experiences.

In the particular context of the Mennonite community, this research offers increased mindfulness concerning the importance to voice emotional impacts of trauma that has been relegated to the shadows (Krahn, 2011). This study can serve as a resource for both professional clergy and laity. With greater awareness at systemic levels, structures that support appropriate referrals, collective awareness, and communal growth can be increasingly developed. Places like the Mennonite Heritage Center may benefit by being better informed of parts of the narrative that have been marginalized or viewed as shameful (M. Epp, 1997). Incorporating the narratives moves beyond solely an individual undertaking, into a collective enterprise.

Policy transformation. Addressing policies that impact immigrants, refugees, and those exposed to collective trauma can be informed by this study. This may incorporate drawing on some of the 12 great challenges social workers face (Uehara et al., 2013). First, social worker value working for equal opportunities for the elderly. Considering those who endured collective trauma, as in the case of Mennonites, may have need of extensive mental health support at the end of life, supporting policy change that increases funding for mental health interventions is critical. Second, addressing social isolation for people who have felt silenced is a challenge social workers. With that in mind, policies that create increased opportunities for giving voice to the silences and connecting with others who can hear their stories is critical. Women in particular, who have been silenced in groups like the Mennonites, require special attention to draw out their marginalized voices. Social workers face the challenge of diminishing the health gap for the aging

population, and promoting long, vibrant lives. This may require social workers to advocate for better health care benefits for the elderly.

Limitations

It was the original intent of this study to analyze both memoirs and prerecorded video interviews of Russian Mennonite survivors. However, due to the voluminous nature of the four narratives selected, this intention of reviewing available archival data went beyond the scope of this study. Second, utilizing historical archival material meant that there were limitations in the data. It was not possible to go back and interview the authors to have specific questions addressed. Observing tone, use of silence, and communication styles was also not feasible as the data was only available in print. Further, field work was not conducted to collect data about the cultural group. The study's interest in intergenerational transmission of trauma could only be implicated as offspring of survivors were not studied. While another researcher and faculty members were consulted concerning emerging themes, the final decisions were arrived at by the primary researcher which weakens the findings due to possible biases and time constraints. While a pilot autoethnographic study was conducted before commencing data collection and analysis, the researcher remained both an insider and an outsider to this group under study.

Implications for Research

Future research with Mennonites and other groups who experienced collective trauma are recommended. First, interviews of survivors and their adult children and grandchildren can be conducted. Incorporating a mixed method that addresses both narrative findings with quantitative measures for trauma and attachment could foster greater understanding. Research that addresses the therapeutic container, with special focus on emerging themes of how the clinician bears their own suffering in their

professional role, could be further explored. A comparative study that investigates emerging themes for those Mennonites who went through traumatic events and those who immigrated to North American one to two generations earlier could broaden the scope of this study to explore whether certain identified themes occur regardless of the specific traumas that was experienced. For example, perhaps religious context is a predictor of difficulty with emotional expression, forming healthy attachments, and individuation. Finally studying emerging themes for aging adults that compares Mennonite survivors' narratives with the broader population could shed light on developmental issues that take stage of life issues in consideration with trauma.

Conclusions

People are so much more than how they present. With the growing number of refugee and immigrant groups around the world, social workers will more likely work with people who have been impacted from first-hand collective trauma or with their children from subsequent generations. Based on this research, Mennonites narrated their trauma at the end of life in ways that uncovered emotional, physical, transitional, and coping themes. Drawing on these themes may contribute to the current body of knowledge with an increased understanding into assessing and treating people who have experienced personal and collective trauma.

Recognizing and understanding the complexities of trauma on people is critical to this line of work. Being sensitive and aware of socio-political, religious and cultural contexts in biopsychosocial assessments is significant. Recognition that for some, telling their story could re-trigger the traumas. For others, there really is not a language to express themselves. Looking for what is and is not said may be helpful in understanding the defense systems established to survive great atrocities. Careful attention to therapeutic micro- and macro-level interventions that are far reaching to address collective trauma is

important. For those in subsequent generations, they may not be aware of how they too carry the effects of the collective trauma within which is also essential to address. Being self-aware to how social workers may be strengthened to provide a therapeutic container that engages people who have suffered greatly adds a layer of humility to the work.

Being a child of a parent who was born two years prior to *The Great Trek,* this research has contributed to a rich and challenging journey of self-discovery. Deeper understandings of what it means to be both an insider and outsider to the story has been transformative. This research trek, so to speak, continues to be a life-long process as new insights come in surprising ways and old wounds are opened with the potential of healing. Aganeta, Jacob, Maria, and Waldemar have become personal heroes in many ways as their writing offered an invitation to journey with them as they narrated both times of resilience and shadow.

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