Migration and Transnationalism: the Complete Picture?
A Case Study of Russians Living in Scotland

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Introduction

The frameworks within which migration is considered have undergone considerable adjustment in recent years.[1] The context within which movement takes place has been transformed by political, social and technological upheaval. Over the past decade approaches to migration have evolved to accent the affiliations 'migrants maintain to families, communities and causes outside the boundaries of the nations-state to which they have migrated' (Vertovec, 2001, p.574). This interpretive shift has required a certain degree of re-conceptualisation vis-à-vis the theoretical approach to migration. Globalisation and the accompanying technological advancements have made it far more likely that migrants will continue to participate in processes taking place in their nation of origin. This likelihood has been recognised in the evolution of theories of transnationalism and the genesis of a transnational framework as a locus for understanding aspects of contemporary migratory practice. While the extent to which transnationalism constitutes a novel field of social praxis is still an issue open to debate (see Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999) it is, nonetheless, a valuable tool for the evaluation of the content of that praxis.

The value of transnational theory is apparent in cases where an immigrant group is small and disparate. The diaspora has long been a fundamental element of migration and, consequently, of migration studies. Certain criteria, to which a potential diasporic group must adhere, have been proposed. Accordingly, a diaspora is characterised as a group which has been dispersed from the homeland to at least two peripheral regions.

Members of the group are bound by retained collective memory of the homeland, partial alienation from the host society, an aspiration to return to the homeland, commitment to the ideal of return and a collective consciousness derived from the relationship to the homeland (Van Hear, 1998, p. 5 quoting Safran, 1991). The Russian presence in Scotland cannot truly be considered as a diasporic one as it does not meet the criteria outlined above, yet questions about migrant identity and their social milieu remain.

> In his work on Caribbean immigrants in Britain, Stuart Hall notes:
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> Identity is not a fixed essence, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark, it is not one-and-for all. It is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final absolute Return. (1999, p.226)

Hall's observation is perceptive, emphasizing the dynamic nature of identity and the potential difficulties of any attempt to problematize or analyse the construct.

The possibility of an absolute Return is made unlikely not only by the changeable nature of identity, on both individual and group levels, but as a result of the unexpected character of post-1991 change in Russia. Indeed, even in cases where changes in the home country have been less far-reaching than those seen in Russia, there is a common tendency for both sides to idealize what is absent (Smith 1999, pp.516-517; Yeoh, Willis and Khader Fakhri 2003, p.209). Where the application of diaspora theory is inappropriate alternative theoretical frameworks may give greater insight into migrant identity constructs. Transnational theory is one possible alternative. Arguably the application of transnational theory affords greater analytical flexibility. While the broader application of the theory is sometimes controversial, a case is made for employing the exploratory possibilities of transnational theory in examination of practices which are not currently included in its theoretical definition. Viewing aspects of migrancy, psychological or cultural, through the lens of transnational theory

generates insights into migrant experience which might otherwise be overlooked.

The empirical data for this paper was collected during March-June 2004. Respondents were accessed through the Scotland Russia Forum (SRF), an Edinburgh based organisation which seeks to foster links between Scotland and Russia. A questionnaire was distributed among ethnic Russian SRF members; those who completed the questionnaire were asked to participate in an interview. In total seven questionnaires were returned and four interviews undertaken. The chair of the SRF, Jenny Carr, was also interviewed. This data was augmented by a press review which was carried out over the research period. Articles containing references to Russia or Russians, asylum/asylum seekers, migrants and/or migration were collected from three Scottish papers: *The Herald*, *The Scotsman*, and *The Daily Record*, by means of a daily Internet search of each publication's web site. The findings from the review provided a contextual basis for the analysis of respondent data. This research was originally presented as an MRes (2004) thesis undertaken in the department of Central and East European Studies as part of an ESRC funded doctoral studentship.

Transnationalism as a Theoretical Paradigm

Transnationalism, as a field of study, has been the subject of much debate within the social sciences. Indeed, whether or not transnationalism even constitutes a 'novel area of investigation' has been much contested (Portes *et al.* 1999 p.219). The field has undergone a considerable broadening since it was first defined.[2] Until recently, social science did not recognise migration as a reciprocal process, rather one which necessitated the migrant to surrender the greater part of his or her involvement and interest in the society of origin (Colic-Peisker, 2002, p.32). Transnational theory was, at its inception, primarily concerned with economic and political interconnectedness that migrants maintained with their home country

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[2] Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc Szanton's 1992 definition is generally acknowledged as the first to recognise transnationalism as a sociological theory.

(Remennick, 2003).

It can be argued that, during the early era of large-scale migration, activities of a transnational type are apparent. At the beginning of the twentieth century Russian, Polish and Italian immigrants retained links with their home countries, sending back money, investing in business, and visiting kin (Portes, 2001 p.183; Colic-Peisker, 2002). Far from undermining the case for transnationalism, it can be argued that recognition of the phenomenon further advocates the need for a solid theoretical framework (see Portes, 2001 p.184). At the forefront of the theoretical casting of transnationalism Portes has suggested that:

> For the purposes of establishing a novel area of investigation, it is preferable to delimit the concept of transnationalism to occupations and activities which require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation. (Portes *et al.* 1999, p.219)

While the above definition does much to guarantee a solid conceptual grounding for transnational theory, it is, arguably, somewhat static and does little to account for alternative dynamics which often colour the migrant experience. The emphasis here is placed upon the regular physical presence of the migrant in both the country of origin and settlement. This somewhat neglects the ever-evolving nature of modern communication technologies. Some theorists have described the development of a network society, in which 'new technologies have virtually created new patterns of social relations, or at least strongly reinforced pre-existing tendencies' (Remennick, 2003, p.371).

Contributors have subsequently redefined the framework in order that it might encompass a fuller range of activities, thus describing the socio-economic milieu of migrancy more completely. One such attempt has led to the delineation of transnationalism from above and below. This conceptualisation acknowledges the hugely dissimilar spheres within which individual migrants/migrant groups and big business pursue their respective interests. It explores and emphasises the differing aspects of continued interaction with the country of origin that are resonant for individual

migrants, acting at a grassroots level – from below – on the one hand, and businesses or large corporations, imbued with greater power and able to influence the polity – from above – on the other (see Smith and Guarnizo, 2003, for alternative emphases see Itzigsohn *et al.* 1999; Mahler, 2003). Further, migration from the same country comprises a 'heterogeneous rather than a unitary group of people possessing distinct personal and social endowments' (Riccio, 2001, p.589). In direct counterpoint to Portes' ideal of physical presence, it has been argued that in the globalized era '"culture" and "community" have become separated from locality…[as a result] distance is no longer an impediment to community' (Kennedy and Roudometof, 2002, p.15).

There are dangers inherent in seeking to broaden the definition of what constitutes transnational activity: in doing so one risks diluting the efficacy of the theory, as one may, in the end, define every aspect of migratory praxis as a cause or consequence of transnational activity, thus encompassing everything yet explaining nothing new (Portes, 2001, p.182). It is, however, important to recognise the full variety of transnational activity. Arguably, this is essential where individual migrants or small groups of migrants are concerned, as one must account for the unique opportunity structure of each migrant group. Willingness to engage in transnational exchange may not always be matched by the possibilities available to a person or group (Smith, 1999). As Al-Ali, Black and Koser (2001, p.624) note in their work on refugees in Europe, contrary to the majority of current claims, it is possible to apply transnational frameworks to refugee experience where the likelihood of return is extremely small, as it is 'not only people who travel between countries, but also ideas, values and cultural artefacts …[these are important] "social remittances"'.

It is apparent that it is unwise, even impossible, to apply strict limitations to fields of transnational activity. A literature has developed to suggest that there are a number of ways to engage in transnationality which do not necessitate the migrant's presence in the country of origin. A primary

consideration is that 'it is only possible [for a migrant] to be integrated to the degree that the integrationist host culture permits' (Askoy and Robins, 2001, p.693). Where a migrant or group is well integrated with regard to language ability and opportunity their *transnational priorities* will be very different to those of a marginalized immigrant or group (see Sampson, 2003, p.263).

In cases where migrants are well integrated, a transnationalism which is predominately cultural in character can emerge (Askoy and Robins, 2001; Carstens, 2003; Hall, 1990; Moorti, 2003). The production and promulgation of cultural products and mindsets can 'produce transnational imageries capable of creating and sustaining new forms of transnational publics' (Carstens, 2003, p.322). This can give rise to a situation whereby,

Visual culture … makes possible another form of identification with the homeland […] one that emphasises kinship and affective relations based on shared affiliations and identifications (Moorti, 2003, p.356).

While a compelling case is made for a broader understanding of transnationalism, it is notable that the cultural understanding of the framework is not as widespread as the more static, essentialist understanding of the theory and its praxis. Below, I will argue that notions of *here* and *there* can no longer be essentialized and need not be regulated by the physical presence of the transmigrant on the territory of the country of origin (Riccio, 2001, p597). Transnational practice is dictated by opportunity structure which, in turn, results from the interweaving of origin/settlement country relations and migrant success both on an individual basis and as a member of an (ethnically defined) extra-territorial collective (Riccio, 2001, p.595).

Transnationalism: Theory and practice, the case of Russian Migrants in Scotland

In the following assessment of the applicability of transnational theory to the case of Russian migrants living in Scotland, transnational theory is used as an explanatory tool with regard to the position of this specific migrant

group. It is apparent that the *limited theory* (which emphasises the regular physical presence of the migrant in home and settlement country) is insufficient as an exploratory framework, yet application of the expanded framework (including a broader field of action under the banner of transnationalism) also has its difficulties.

I examine findings from the press review, followed by an analysis of the role of the Scotland-Russia Forum as a transnational institution. The findings from the press review are combined in part with data from respondents' interviews. Finally, the findings from respondent questionnaires and interviews are presented, which provide a fuller understanding of the practice of transnationalism by Russians in Scotland.

Media Representation vs. Lived Experience

The reportage of issues pertaining to Russia was found to be very wide ranging. A relationship between Russia and Scotland is alluded to in some articles (Jeffery, 2004; MacDonald, 2004), acknowledging both the existence of a Russian community in Scotland and its cultural input into Scottish society, highlighting the degree of crossover achieved by this particular migrant group within the host society. This phenomenon is also seen in reports of increased Russo-Scottish business collaboration (Chamberlain, 2004; Waller, 2004). Direct reference to Russia or Russians is made in articles concerning culture, business and world politics[3]. Arguably, the contents of these articles conform to the stereotype of Russia and Russianness prevalent in the West either as purveyors of high culture (MacDonald, 2004; Smith, 2004; Walton, 2004) or as the cradle of Stalinism (Binyon, 2004).

Articles with a political or military theme draw attention to more traditional views of Russia as inept, secretive, and technologically backwards (Bellaby, 2004; Briggs, 2004; Mather, 2004). While Russia is portrayed positively in some of the articles reviewed, the general tenor of the majority of reportage is ambivalent. Russian migrants are not connected to

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[3] Chamberlain, 2004; Bellaby, 2004; Mather, 2004; Reid, 2004; Smith, 2004: Waller, 2004.

Russia as a political or military entity, rather as a purveyor of high culture. This finding is supported by the interview data: respondent D recounted that she had made the effort of writing to author Orlando Figes to congratulate him on his book charting Russia's cultural history, *Natasha's Dance*. It was, she claimed, 'exactly correct' in its rendering of history.

Articles concerning migrants, immigration and/or asylum were, in overall tone, negative, detailing racism, exploitation or governmental impropriety[4]. It was noticeable that many articles were of a more positive disposition, reporting the Scottish Executive's desire to attract migrant workers to Scotland. Racism, where mentioned, is reported as a phenomenon affecting those migrants who are visibly different from Scots, and Russians do not feature as an affected group (Stewart, 2004). This view is validated by the testimony of interviewees, all of whom reported that they felt comfortable in Scottish society. It may also help to explain some of the unevenness of transnational activity among Russians in Scotland. It has been argued that the greater the degree of acceptance of a migrant and/or migrant community demonstrated by the host nation, the less pronounced the degree to which members of the migrant community rely upon each other or ideas of home for support (Fawcett, 1989, p.671).

This finding is reflected in the interview data. Three of the four interviewees had been or currently were involved with Scottish partners, as were two further questionnaire-only respondents. Data from interviewee D made it clear that this trend is true of many, perhaps the majority of Russians living in Scotland. While some emigrated with a Russian spouse, others (all women) married 'in order to remain [in Britain]'. The success that these women have exhibited in their chosen fields was also emphasised:

> Many [women] found themselves a job and they were even
> more successful than their husbands. They've received a good
> education, in Russia the level of education is very good, they
> have an excellent level of English because the learnt it in
> Russia. [They have] knowledge because they were educated
> in Russia, and musicality […] N is a very talented woman

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[4] Binyon, 2004; Chisea, 2004; Crear, 2004; Elias and Gail, 2004; Elias, 2004; MacLeod, 2004; Nelson, 2004.

> […] She has her own boutique in Edinburgh, she even wants
> to open an outlet in London, she's very successful.... It seems
> to me that she earns more than he [her husband] does
> (Interview with respondent D).

By both emphasising Russian success as an individual achievement and measuring it against spousal capabilities (where the spouse is non-Russian), the respondent assigns status to Russians in Scotland. The great pride the respondent takes in the achievement of others Russians is also evident.

The distinction, which can be seen in media perception of Russians through their positive omission from the negative reportage of immigration issues, is underscored by respondents. Interviewee D is adamant that

> The Russian community is not parasitic, it's not a community
> which demands any sort of benefits or income support...
> nobody lives on benefits. I don't know a single person, not a
> single soul! Nobody from the people I know, *nobody* lives on
> benefits, no one has income support. They *earn* their money
> and pay their taxes (Interview with respondent D).

In the respondent's view, it is important to acknowledge that Russians resident in Scotland participate fully and fairly in the social and economic environment in which they live. Further, this participation distinguishes them from other non-Scottish groups. In addition to this, through socialising together Russians are able to retain and reinforce their status, an issue that is often at the heart of transnational conduct. As Remennick (2003, p.381) notes:

> Transnational lifestyle and co-ethnic networking enable
> immigrants to transplant their old identity to new soil, which
> is an important asset in the face of the many losses they have
> to cope with. For instance, a senior Russian physician
> remains a respected specialist in the eyes of other Russians,
> regardless of the fact that he (or she) has failed to get a local
> licence or is unemployed.

While the status-position of Russians in Scotland is more assured than that which is suggested in the above example (most have jobs/roles commensurate with their skills), the importance of status is clear. Respondent A, who was unemployed at the time of the interview and waiting to begin postgraduate study, reflected at length on status:

I do think a lot depends on what sort of status you have… not only professionally but if you've got many friends, if you've got somebody close to you to share things, such things mean quite a lot and for me (Interview with respondent A).

Although not explicitly linking involvement with the Russian community or the SRF with the maintenance of status, it was clear that activities in and around the Forum were important to this respondent, albeit not the mainstay of her social milieu (Questionnaire and interview with respondent A). While issues surrounding social status were reflected in the press discourse, they can also be discussed with reference to the role fulfilled by the SRF. It is the SRF which, through renting premises for seminars or organising picnics, provides space for Russians to interact *en masse*.

The SRF: A Transnational Institution?

An understanding of the precise role of the SRF in the social, political, and cultural milieu of Russian migrants in Scotland is vital if one is to fully grasp the type of transnationalism that is present. Van Amersfoort and Doomernik have noted

> Initially, immigrant organisations generally have a more conservative function. They try to avoid unnecessary contacts with the host society. A defensive ideology develops in which the 'own' culture is made, at least morally, superior. […] When too much adaptation takes place, the immigrant institutions lose their function and the group will lose its cultural characteristics. (2002, p.56)

Perhaps atypically, the SRF is run by a British woman, thus some of the outlined introspection is automatically avoided. Further, the remit of the Forum is not primarily concerned with providing a social space for Russians, but rather with the promotion of Russia and things Russian within the host society (Interview with J. Carr). A large proportion of the membership of the Forum comprises British citizens. Many Russians are affiliated to the organisation but far fewer subscribe to full membership (Interview with J. Carr). Russians who do attend SRF events have a different

agenda to that of British members. British attendees at the Forum events wish to learn something definitive about Russia. Russian attendees may be interested in what is available; however, gatherings are also a social event during which they meet other Russians.

The SRF has a vital part to play in terms of fostering connections between Russia and Scotland, thus enabling the passage of social and political remittances from migrant-residents to Russia. Weekly emails are sent to members and affiliates to inform them of upcoming events, which range in type from films to seminars and drama, or musical presentations. Appeals are circulated requesting help in finding employment for Russians preparing to move to Scotland, or temporary accommodation for visiting musicians or actors. The Forum also fulfils a more overtly socio-political function. An e-petition requesting the release of imprisoned Russian scientist Igor Sutyagin was circulated to the Forums subscribers (at the instigation of a Russian member). More recently, there have been multiple aid appeals made on behalf of survivors of the Beslan school siege. In this regard, the Forum provides a framework within which a more traditional type of transnational participation, economic and political engagement with society of origin, can be carried out with ease.

By providing a space, both actual and metaphorical, the SRF enables transnational engagement through the provision of an environment in which Russians meet to exchange ideas and experiences with each other. Those who do not socialise with other Russians in Scotland at any other time do so in a framework 'constructed' by the Forum. In this environment those who do not return to their country of origin on a regular basis come into contact with those who do so. Thus, they are able to engage in a type of transnational exchange which, although not as deep as that which is found among those Russians who do return, is still a notable phenomenon. This practice of *proxy transnationalism* becomes increasingly apparent when migrant activity is scrutinised more closely.

It is notable that, when discussing the existence of a defined Russian

community in Scotland, three of four interviewees expressed, at some point during the interview process, an ambivalent attitude towards the community and sometimes towards the SRF, yet all admitted to some connection to the community and the SRF (Interviews with respondents A, B and D). Two interviewees, A and B, stated that they did not consider themselves to be part of a Russian community in Scotland. They went on, however, to detail participation in the Russian milieu. Respondent A emphasised the important role that she felt the SRF played in terms of promoting Russia in Scotland. Respondent B's connection with the Russian community was less pronounced, based instead around web forums such as bratok.co.uk, which he claimed to like as 'I can laugh at the [stories on the message board from the] Russians who cannot understand how to do things here' (Interview with respondent B).

The respondent who was perhaps the most involved with the SRF and the broader Russian community claimed that,

> I socialise with them [other Russians at SRF events] as you know in "the Swedish way"… Sometimes we all go and have a picnic together or there is a Russian ball, in any case when I'm invited I participate with great enthusiasm, everybody knows me (Interview with respondent D)!

Yet, when asked directly whether or not her participation forms an important part of her social interactions, respondent D replied:

> *Oh yes*! […] Absolute necessity, a moral necessity, a moral duty, I suffer if I don't see them for a long time. I need Russian society, Russian company (Interview with respondent D).

Indeed, through using the SRF as a social institution, Russians were able to connect with other Russophones and discuss Russian issues. The interviewee's response makes apparent a need for a specific experience of social interaction that can only be gained thorough interaction with other Russians. A proportion of this need can, perhaps, be explained by the strong attachment of Russian speakers to their language and culture which, Remennick (2003, p.378) claims, is 'one of the prominent features of all historic waves of Russian/ Soviet emigration'.

Expressions of cultural identity were stressed more by some respondents than others. Films, books, the role of the Orthodox Church, and festivals such as Easter and Christmas were all discussed. One respondent regularly travels to Russia where she purchases Russian films which she pays for herself. These films are then shown at a film club run by the respondent.

> I chose the films... They all have story lines derived from the literary works of famous authors, great lives [...] Before the film begins I read a short commentary explaining what's what, which director, the era etc. We've had Boris Godunov, Ivan the Terrible. I showed a film about Peter the Great, then there was a film of Tolstoy's, one of Chekhov's work and Mikhalkov... In three years I've shown a lot of films but as long as there's an interest I'll carry on (Interview with respondent D).

The films are not only Russian, but in addition have a distinctly purist bearing, taking as their subjects the "great figures" of Russian history. This expression of cultural identity through shared visual experience is explored by Moorti (2003, p.356) and is one which, she argues, can be used to sustain reciprocal cultural flows, 'mobilising visual culture to [contribute to] imagined community', underscoring once again the psychological aspects of transnationalism, rather than physical acts, which lead to exchange. Moreover, Russians who have not travelled back to their country of origin are able to engage in a collective activity (watching the film) which has been facilitated by the return of one member of the community. While one Russian takes the role of the *transnational agent*, other transmigrants participate through a proxy form of transnationalism.

Vital connections: Easter, the Internet, and Edinburgh

The role of the Church and national holidays or festivals was also a topic of discussion. Although none of those interviewed were regular attendees, the Church was mentioned as a centre of communal activity, and in one case it was referred to as the primary locus of Russian society in Scotland, 'the first meeting place' (Interview with respondent C). The same respondent noted that Russians gathered together in considerable numbers to mark

national/religious holidays:

> There are various holidays for which people all gather
> together to celebrate. Easter, for example, in April we all
> went - seventy, perhaps seventy Russians went to the town of
> Roslyn […] There are other events too, for example 'old new
> year' … Russian new year, we celebrated Russian new year in
> a hotel, there were about 160 people, not all Russian but the
> majority (Interview with respondent C).

In celebrating Russian New Year with other Russians, the respondent
demonstrates cultural continuity with his country of origin, where a specific,
extra-territorial cultural environment is created, and the host culture is
almost totally excluded. Thus, where physical presence in Russia is not
possible, a cultural enclave provides a temporary solution (see Askoy and
Robins, 2001, p.697, for further examples or Riccio, 2001, p. 595).

The Internet is also used as a tool for transnational interaction. Not
only does it allow contact with family members to be maintained, but in
some cases it also provides a prism for understanding the world. One
respondent claimed he felt no nostalgia for Russia and did not consider
regular contact with, or return to, Russia as important: 'My mum is there and
my cat is there, I don't have much family, I wouldn't say I miss Russia'
(Interview with respondent B). He did, however, admit to reading Russian
news web pages in preference to British or Scottish news sources as he was:
Kind of interested [in] what's going on there as well as in the whole world
and I feel I can judge, […] understand what's going on [there] better than I
would understand what's going on in Mexico (Interview with respondent B).
This activity suggests that he uses the web-based news as an information
filter. Use of the web enables access to the Russian perspective on any given
situation reported in the news.

A theme which came through strongly during the course of the
research was a specific adherence to Edinburgh as a place of belonging in
Britain (Interviews with respondents B and D). The city took on a
personality which was agreeable to respondents (see also Çağlar, 2001,
p.608). Combined with the other activities outlined above, it suggests a

tendency to create physical retreats which in turn make possible the construction of 'mental spaces' (Robins and Askoy, 2001), which are connected to the homeland for the conduct of transnational exchange.

The possibility of return: factors affecting transnational conduct

For some respondents the possibility of return is ever present. Respondent D, who has lived in Scotland since 1979, was perhaps the most insistent on this point. It was the potential upheaval of return which was largely responsible for her prolonged stay. Currently, all of the respondent's remaining relatives reside in Russia (she added, 'all my friends live here, in Edinburgh'); she visits her children and grandchildren for three months every summer. A second respondent (respondent A), resident in Scotland since 2001, spoke of her permanent possession of return tickets to Moscow:

> Psychologically it's much, much easier for me to have it [the return ticket]. I don't know how it would be if I didn't have it... so at the moment I think it's better for me to have the ticket back even if I'm not really going (Interview with respondent A).

The same respondent, when asked whether or not she considers that she really lives in Scotland, replied that, since she had been accepted on a course of postgraduate study, 'I feel more like living here rather than coming here on holiday' (Interview with respondent A). Both of these cases are interesting from a transnational point of view. Firstly, the possibility of return is ever-present and secondly, it is not always necessary to return, simply to know that you can. It is clear that the idea of return/a return has significance for these respondents. Their particular responses to return demonstrate that a range of attitudes towards this aspect of migrancy is possible. Further, it suggests that the concept of return plays a more complex role in individual transnational praxis than is recognised in the limited theory of transnationalism outlined above.

Analysis of the empirical data suggests strongly that transnational conduct among Russians living in Scotland is highly individual in nature. This implies that considerable analytical gains can be made from broadening

the understanding of what constitutes transnationalism and seeking to, somehow, codify its subtler forms. The majority of Russians included in the survey sought to engage in transnational activity only occasionally, in an almost pragmatic fashion. This may be explained, at least in part, by the size of the community. Respondent B suggested that, over time, deeper transnational practices may be undertaken by Russians. Speaking of Indian/ Bangladeshi immigration, he observed:

> First there were those who were basically English, who spoke English... but then there immigration broadened and we have a Bangladeshi community and those people who say they don't even speak English, so obviously they rely more on their community and they give back more to their community. With Russians so far I think it's just more scientists, artists, people who are not that bound to back home, but later on it might be the case, with the increasing representation of Russians there are going to be people who will consider themselves part of a community (Interview with respondent B).

The respondent's observation that, in order for deeper practices of transnationalism to be undertaken, a critical mass of (potential) community members must be achieved, is perceptive. Further, the proximity of the country of origin must also be considered as an important contributor to a migrant's opportunity structure. Advocates of a limited theory of transnationalism contend that migrants' regular physical presence in their homeland is a necessary element of transnationalism. Returning *home* cross-continent is, however, a much more complex undertaking than returning, for example, cross-country; thus migrants who reside far from their place of origin may necessarily employ alternative strategies in order to maintain contact with their homeland.

Proxy transnationalism? Some conclusions

This paper set out to explore the appropriateness of the theory of transnationalism as a tool to explicate the experience of ethnic Russian migrants living in Scotland. Presently the most widely accepted definition of transnational activity states that transnational practices are 'defined as those

that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants' (Portes, 1999, p.464). The notion that the regular physical presence of the migrant is necessary in order for transnational activity to take place was challenged and the idea that a *mental space* in which transnational activity can be undertaken was presented.

While analysis of actions falling under the remit of this *limited* definition of transnationalism allows the researcher to investigate its broader trends, the more subtle aspects of its practice may be overlooked. If a limited theory of transnationalism is applied to the case of Russians living in Scotland, then the type of transnationalism in which they participate cannot be fully understood. By employing an *expanded* definition of what constitutes transnational activity, a deeper understanding of transnationalism is made possible. Findings suggest that transnationalism as practised by Russian migrants living in Scotland is uneven and dependent on multiple factors. It is practiced on a highly individual basis, with migrants picking and choosing the mode and depth of their practice.

Study respondents, however, demonstrated a high degree of integration into the society of settlement and consequently a low dependency on overt transnational activity. It was nonetheless notable that many of the cultural activities undertaken could be viewed as mechanisms for a more subtle form of transnational engagement. The Russian population in Scotland is not a diasporic one. Thus, applying the framework of transnationalism can help to define more precisely the characteristics which describe this community.

It is individual transnational practice which defines a migrant community, yet attempts to incorporate the cultural aspects of migrant practice into the definition of transnationalism have been problematic. Caution must be exercised, however, in advocating an expanded version of transnationalism, as care must be taken to maintain the integrity of the theory as a social science field of genuine merit. It may be useful, therefore,

to designate the non-overt transnational practices illustrated by Russians living in Scotland as *trait-transnationalism*. Thus it may be possible to recognise the importance of these activities demonstrated by respondents in this study. It may not be possible to account for the individual nature of the transnational activities of a given migrant community with a unified, over-arching theory. However, as this paper has demonstrated, the application of transnational theory can still offer great insights into the generation of migrant identity on an individual and collective basis.

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