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# Heads Down, Hearts Up: How Ukrainian Baptists Make Meaning from Their Memories of Soviet State-Sanctioned Religious Persecution

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Abstract

This research describes and analyzes the ways in which adult Ukrainian Baptists who lived under communist rule interpreted and made meaning of memories of state-sanctioned religious persecution they experienced as children. A case study approach provides the framework for the qualitative study. Qualitative methods employed include in-depth interviews, fieldwork in settings where Ukrainian Baptists discussed their experiences under Soviet rule, and content analysis of documents pertaining to persecution toward Baptists by Soviets. Respondents in interviews and fieldwork settings consistently described state sanctioned persecution that sought to dominate and intimidate them and their sense of alienation from the dominant Soviet culture. Documents analyzed came from the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Adolf Klaupiks Collection, and the Albert Wardin Files. Themes of intended domination, intimidation, and exclusion of Baptists were mirrored in the document content analysis. Interviews and fieldwork revealed that setting tight boundaries of inclusion enabled Baptists under Soviet rule to construct worthy identities within their group based on adherence to their faith and survival. Baptist adults acknowledged childhood memories associated with state-sanctioned religious persecution resulted in survival strategies oriented towards close bonds with other Baptists and tight group boundaries associated with high levels of religious bonding capital. Adults reported greater caution when describing contemporary interactions with Ukrainian non-Baptists in their efforts to create ties of religious bridging capital. Past memories of religious persecution, however, failed to inhibit Baptist adults totally from engaging in building relationships outside of their group, building bridging capital, and envisioning a significant role for Baptists in caring for others. We found that individuals and tightly bonded groups of Baptists carried their beliefs and ideas through the era of Soviet rule. These beliefs and ideas today foster the resilience and cautious but steady construction of bridging capital with others beyond the bonded circle of already faithful Ukrainian Baptists.

This article first seeks to understand, through the eyes of Baptists who lived through state-sanctioned religious persecution under Soviet rule, what their experiences were like and how they have made meaning of them. A further interest of the research lies in better understanding the implications of these interpretations for contemporary Ukrainian Baptists who face a far different set of choices and challenges today than they did under Soviet rule. Baptists now have religious freedom and opportunity to recruit new members and serve broader needs of society. How Ukrainian Baptists interpret the past and draw from it in responding to current conditions is important for the future of the Baptist Church and its potential in contemporary Ukraine. The orientation of those interviewed toward bridging capital was also a focus of the analysis.

The concepts of bridging and bonding social capital provide a basic conceptual framework for the analysis of data. Putnam (2000: 67) defined social capital "as features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." The concept of bonding social capital refers to the often tightly bounded social cohesion of groups that are homogeneous with a common way of life and shared values and goals. Bonding capital results in people having strong ties with others like themselves and may contribute to preserving a group's way of life. It may also exclude those who are different and isolate those who are insiders. Bridging social capital, often more fragile than bonding capital, conceptually aims to capture intergroup ties and cooperation as heterogeneous individuals and groups unite in action aimed at enhancing mutual benefits by connecting with one another.

Religious communities marginalized by Soviet state-sanctioned religious persecution survived through social cohesion, or bonding social capital that emphasizes close ties with trusted others and boundaries toward outsiders. Bridging social capital is believed to be essential for sustaining previously persecuted communities through social attraction, especially when social constructs change, an idea clearly associated with Farley's (2005: 7) finding that a religious congregation "must replenish its membership if it is to be sustainable." Greater caution characterized Ukrainian Baptist perceptions of religious bridging capital; however, this study also found that past memories of religious persecution failed to inhibit Baptist adults fully when engaging outsiders.

## *BACKGROUND: THE CONTEXT*

Meanings assigned to memories of Soviet state-sanctioned religious persecution represent important data for sustaining Ukrainian Baptists through bridging capital. A brief historical overview is provided to offer an understanding of Baptist marginalization prior to the creation of the Soviet Union.

Although the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution ushered in previously unparalleled state-sanctioned oppression, Baptist marginalization existed prior to the creation of the Soviet state. Lane (1978: 139) postulated Baptist heritage in

Russia dated to the latter 1800s, acknowledging the reality of persecution characterized Baptist life almost from its beginning. Wanner (2007: 4) also noted the existence of a strong bias against evangelicals within Russian culture prior to the Soviet Union due to their identification as "unwanted sectarians," including Baptists in the region now known as Ukraine. Persecution directed at religious minorities supervened as more than social phenomenon. The union of civil and religious ruling classes that ascribed sect status to groups believed alien to Russian society sanctioned cultural religious persecution through marginalization directed at minority religious groups, like Baptists, as historically preexistent to the Soviet Union (Froese, 2008: 82; Wanner, 2007: 4).

The social order that amalgamated state with religion to disadvantage religious minorities remained factual beyond reasonable doubt in the era preceding the October 1917 Revolution (Froese 2008; Lane 1978; Wanner 2007). Nevertheless, the October 1917 Revolution represented a line of demarcation that distinguished the divide differently from what had historically preceded in Ukraine. The discriminatory perception Baptists faced prior to the Soviet state soon merged with Soviet policy after the revolution, contributing to the calcification of Soviet philosophy that viewed religious survivals of any kind as oppressive and, thus, targeted for annihilation (Froese, 2008: 44; Radzinsky, 1996: 244). The effort to remove all forms of religion continued throughout the history of the Soviet Union (Wanner 2007; Yelensky 2012). Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign, inaugurated in the early- to mid-1950s, confirmed two realities that confronted the Soviet Union's ongoing struggle against religion. First, the battle to eradicate religion had yet to be won. Second, a new generational front was necessary to eliminate religion from the consciousness of Soviet citizenry.

Another important aspect of the context for Baptists in Ukraine was the way the church was organized and the philosophical and theological beliefs and values that informed them. Local decision-making by members at the grassroots level characterized the church organization. Describing the functional nature of Ukrainian Baptist churches remains a somewhat elusive exercise since Baptist marginalization inhibited church attempts to structure before and after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution due to cultural opposition and state-sanctioned oppression (Long, 2005: 59–60). Preferences for structure, however, appear obvious from questions found in historical documents that celebrate Ukrainian Baptist history.

Ukrainian Baptists the world over, in closing the first century of their history, survey the past with sadness on one hand and yet with joy and thanksgiving on the other hand:

> "What do we have to show for these one hundred years? Where are our churches? Our schools? Our missionaries? Our hospitals, our publications, our other organizations incident to a Baptist denomination?" Fully do we realize how far behind our English-speaking brethren we are in these matters. Yet, on the

> other hand, we survey the past one hundred years with joy and thanksgiving, for while our Baptist brethren in England, Canada and the United States were building and expanding, the Ukrainian Baptists had to fight for their very existence. It was a long and bitter struggle and they survived (Hominuke, 1952: 30–31).

Unable to create an externally structured church-life mirroring Baptists living with greater freedom outside Soviet control, Ukrainian Baptists celebrate survival by internally structuring through individualistic belief: "Our chief achievement therefore, was, our survival…" (Hominuke, 1952: 31). Pyzh (2012: 47) also associates confessions of belief with the ways Ukrainian Baptists operated to preserve a sense of a Baptist community under Soviet rule within families and small groups when noting, "it is important to state that Slavik Baptist confessions provided more than a description of their beliefs; they served as a statement of their commitments."

## *METHODOLOGY*

The qualitative methodology utilized interviews and fieldwork with adult Baptists who described their experiences of state-sanctioned religious persecution in the Soviet Union as children. Content analysis of Soviet-era documents pertaining to state policy toward Baptists was conducted to provide a comparative historical contextualization. The documents reviewed are housed at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. Two sets of papers, the Adolf Klaupiks Collection (AR672) and the Albert Wardin Files (AR915), were analyzed. Multiple sources of interviews, fieldwork, and content analysis contributed to triangulation establishing the validity and credibility of the data and analysis (Bowen 2009; Creswell 2014; Denzin and Lincoln 2013; Yin 2014).

A constructivist assumption undergirded the epistemology, describing meaning assigned to memories of state-sanctioned religious persecution experienced as children and developed through an interpretive lens as adults. Since this research represented a system bound by location (Ukraine), community (Baptist), and a particular time of life (childhood memories), a case study approach was deemed apposite for the study.

### *Interviews*

Criteria for interviewee selection included experience with state-sanctioned religious persecution during the Anti-Religious Campaign beginning in the 1950s and referenced interviewees' status as students, regardless of age, during that time. The research sought to extract living memories recounted by adults of state-sanctioned religious persecution as children.

Six individuals were chosen and determined appropriate candidates for the purposive sample. While common experiences formed a basis for comparing memories between individuals, the fact that no relationship existed between interviewees at the time of their experience lessened the potential for influence or bias. Each interviewee identified as "Ukrainian" and "Baptist" and attended school as a child, youth, or student during the anti-religious campaign and continued until dissolution in 1991. Open coding identified three broad areas discovered within the data: (1) what the persecution entailed, (2) where the persecution took place, and (3) whom the persecution targeted. Open coding identified repetitive patterns in accounts of respondents. Axial coding further identified categories resulting from individual experiences with state-sanctioned persecution.

*Fieldwork*

The research also involved extensive fieldwork in multiple settings where Baptists discussed their experiences under communism beginning in 2011 and concluding in 2016. These settings included interactions that took place between the researcher and Baptists in homes, churches, educational institutions, and casual locations such as restaurants or parks.

*Documents*

Creswell (2013: 199–200) cited Yin (2009) when recommending the need "to display the data from individual cases according to some uniform framework." Adopting the "Creswell-Yin" approach to categorical aggregation, themes found in the document analysis provided a framework to identify individually assigned meanings that emerged from interviewee experiences with state-sanctioned religious persecution.

An online search revealed a repository of documents housed at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives located in Nashville, Tennessee, that addressed issues of power, marginalization, and control directed against evangelicals living in the Soviet Union, including Mennonites, Pentecostals, and Baptists. Numerous documents were chosen according to the purposive sampling strategy and were deemed valid for inclusion if one or more of the following criteria were present: (1) documents that presented the state's position supporting the ongoing anti-religious campaign; and, (2) documents that presented positions opposed to the state's policy.

Document types included academic writings, underground newspapers circulated among evangelicals in the Soviet Union, and publications intended to communicate with audiences beyond the Soviet Union either supporting or opposing the anti-religious stance of the state. A variety of individuals and agencies authored the documents, most written to persuade the audience to which

the document was circulated. Whether the document position claimed support or opposition to the state's policy, persuasion remained a primary aim for the authors, an analysis that raises the question of potential author bias. The collection, nonetheless, served an important purpose by preserving the voice of a marginalized group as well as the voices of those who sought to marginalize those same people. The sheer volume of material and the preserved condition of the documents added to document authenticity.

An initial reading laid the groundwork for the data analysis, utilizing an inductive approach to determine authenticity of author(s), purpose, time frame, document type, and content summary (Creswell 2013; Orange 2016; Srivastava and Hopwood 2009; Yin 2014). A second document review produced memos that identified broad themes found throughout the material. Memos were then categorized by repetitive themes found in the data. Subsequent readings engaged iterative inquiry and provided greater examination that reported patterns associated with the phenomenon of state-sanctioned religious persecution. Themes, categories, and patterns developed through iteration and reflection mapped state-sanctioned religious persecution throughout the document analysis and lent support to the interviews and fieldwork.

## *THEORY*

In seeking to explain how and why Baptists survived under Soviet rule and to understand the emerging orientations of Baptists to reach outsiders in post-Soviet Ukraine, we drew from four theoretical literatures. The literatures included (1) Durkheim's structural functionalism (1951; 2008 [1912]); (2) Weber's (1958 [1904]; 1978) conceptualization of *"Verstehen"* interpreting the intention and context of human action by gaining an understanding of the meaning of action from the perspective of actors (Berger 1967; Jensen 2012; Weber 1949); (3) the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital (Coleman 1988; O'Brien, Phillips, and Patsiorkovsky 2005; Putnam 2000); and (4) Swidler's (1986) theorization of culture and the ways in which people use culture.

Durkheim (2008 [1912]) argued structural functionalism as the primary basis for understanding religious society, suggesting institutionally derived values and beliefs as one of the bases for social solidarity. Durkheim (2008 [1912]) theorized religion is an institutional structure that regulates individual choice and behavior serving as one source of integration and social stability. Durkheim allowed that religious individualism exists yet also asserted that over time the social order (in this instance, a church) adjudicates the norms that govern the attitudes and actions of a religious society's members (p. 45).

Weber viewed social conditions as the result of ideas shaping behavior and collective actions thereby structuring institutions and society (Berger 1967; Jensen 2012). Consequently, Weber (1963) contended individual agency exists through rational choice, arguing that the structure of Protestant religions derived

from beliefs constructed by members guiding their religious practices. His perspective informs socio-religious research seeking an explanation of how religious bridging capital develops in churches where membership constructs begin the moment one believes versus those that begin at birth. The principle of a church comprised of "believers" rather than "birthers" implies voluntaristic affiliation, a concept Weber declares determinative when contrasting societal authority with individual agency (Weber, Gerth, and Mills 1946).

In Protestantism the external and internal conflict of the two structural principles—of the "church" as a compulsory association for the administration of grace and of the "sect" as a voluntary association of religiously qualified persons—runs throughout the centuries. Here we merely wish to consider those consequences of the voluntarist principle which are practically important in their influence upon conduct (Weber, Gerth, and Mills, 1946: 314). The lens offered by Weber is one of agency and engagement with imperfect structures aimed at reshaping them in keeping with religious beliefs and values (1958 [1904]: 95–154; 1978).

Weber and Durkheim offer contrasting theoretical lenses through which to analyze socio-religious implications for informants' perceptions of bonding and bridging capital. For Weber, the influence of religion-based individualism upon conduct, and thereby social change and economic structures, is key (Weber, Gerth, and Mills 1946). Durkheim's structural functionalism understands human ideas and action as largely determined by social structures.

Coleman (1990) recognized the polarity between Durkheim and Weber, noting that Durkheim contended an individual's relationship to his or her social environment framed personal perceptions, and as a result, whatever practices ensued. Coleman (1990: 13) agreed with Weber in his analysis of social theory, which he identified as an individual-level theory of action, noting that people act with purpose through reason and rationality. Thus, Coleman argued societally structured solutions alone fail to adequately develop individual social capital necessary for the social structure to function. (1990: 653–54).

Coleman's insight uncovers a significant conundrum in the socially structured versus individually agented argument related to the construction of religious bridging capital. Churches develop collectively planned programs designed to attract outsiders who rationally choose to participate. If, however, insiders engaged in those programs demonstrate higher levels of bonding capital with those who already belong, the purpose for the program becomes lost in the absence of bridging with outsiders. Consequently, attracting outsiders through socially constructed programs potentially weakens bridging capital by creating personal passivity whereby insiders become increasingly dependent on socially constructed programs to achieve for their society that which individuals ultimately accomplish.

Putnam (2000: 363) juxtaposed a complementary rather than conflict-oriented argument related to the concepts of bridging capital and bonding capital,

maintaining each possessed equal importance, even if each achieved different outcomes. Putnam's insight resonated with research conducted by O'Brien, Phillips, and Patsiorkovsky (2005) that declared bridging capital and bonding capital as mutually healthy manifestations of social capital.

Bonding capital that binds members to one another and bridging capital that brings members into contact with outsiders represent a logical two-fold approach for sustaining religious communities no matter the situation or regardless of the location. O'Brien, Phillips, and Patsiorkovsky (2005) rightly assume the existence of robust levels of bonding capital within a community need not negate, nor nullify, calls to create high levels of bridging capital. Indeed, the presence of bonding capital remains an essential ingredient for sustaining religious communities. Still, the need to build bridging social capital consistent with extant bonding ties represents a significant issue confronting Ukrainian Baptists' response to their current culture.

Swidler (1986; 2001; 2002) theorized that culture contributes to action through shaping a cultural "tool kit" (1986: 273) made up of practices, habits, traditions, and rituals as well as beliefs and values integrated agency and structure. She asserted that culture exerts influence not through socialization of groups with values that determine their action but through collectives and individuals making use of repertoires of culture that act as tool kits for solving the problems of life and achieving goals within their current context of cultural constraints and supports.

Swidler (1986) introduced two models of cultural influence that she maintained characterized "settled" (280) versus "unsettled" (278) cultural periods. During settled times she held that culture provides resources from which people craft diverse cultural repertoires "supporting varied patterns of action, obscuring culture's independent influence" (Swidler, 1986: 280). In contrast, unsettled cultural times encourage adherence to and actions in keeping with explicit ideologies while noting "doctrine, symbol and ritual directly shape action" (1986: 278). During periods when "competing ways of organizing action are…contending for dominance" (1986: 279), ideology and tradition are central in telling people "how to act and provide blueprints for community life" (1986: 279). Ultimately she holds that structural opportunities for action determine which among competing ideologies endure over time.

This integrative use of theory offers opportunities for systematic, differentiated arguments about structure, agency, and culture's interrelated causal roles in shaping action based upon observed data, in this case, interviews and participant observation about experiences of Ukrainian Baptists under Soviet rule. Rather than a struggle between interpretations of structural determination versus individualistic choice, what emerges in the analysis and findings is a complex interplay of the agency of respondents within cultural and structural constraints and supports.

## *DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS*

Hervieu-Léger (2000: 18) proposed unity through analysis, arguing for a need "to treat religious phenomena in the way that sociology treats any social phenomena, by collating them, classifying and comparing them." This case study collated and classified interviews with Ukrainian Baptists that described state-sanctioned religious persecution in the Soviet Union and then compared their memories through analysis of historical documents and participant observation representative of the anti-religious campaign beginning in the 1950s.

Comparing interview, fieldwork, and document analysis data confirmed similar findings about the persecution of Baptists under Soviet rule. The interviews and fieldwork extend knowledge by offering insight into the persecution mirrored in document analysis. Baptists resisted the dominant culture's demonization of them by withdrawing to the extent possible into the private sphere with family and other Baptists, where they constructed worthy identities as believers and survivors.

### *Building the Case Study: Interviews*

Vivid recollections of dark times now past suggested living memories remained intact for Baptist interviewees who experienced state-sponsored religious persecution as children, youth, and students during the anti-religious campaign. Emergent themes of power, marginalization, and control occasioned social domination, intimidation, and alienation described as pervasive, personal, and perpetual conditions confronting Baptists in Ukraine. Interview analysis further documented patterns of state-sanctioned religious persecution that were directed against religious individuals, communities, and institutions.

Respondents consistently described experiences of domination, intimidation, and feelings of alienation. Analysis of data revealed twelve additional patterns, discussed below, within the broad categories of domination, intimidation, and alienation. Respondent interview data analysis also revealed they developed ways among themselves of establishing worthy identities and support by acting when they were able in ways to disavow the negative judgments and treatment they received and assign positive meaning by resisting disavowal of being Baptist. They established worth through shared accounts of their suffering and survival, finding meaning through relationships with other Baptists in their families and neighborhoods. Table 1 describes themes, categories, and patterns of Soviet state-sanctioned persecution to marginalize through power and control resulting in pervasive domination, personal intimidation, and perpetual alienation.

**Table 1: Themes, Categories, and Patterns of Soviet State-Sanctioned Religious Persecution**

**Power-Marginalization-Control**

| Domination | Intimidation | Alienation |
|---|---|---|
| Propaganda/Indoctrination | Mocking | Exclusion/Inclusion |
| Persuasion | Ridicule | Discrimination |
| Accusation | Poking Fun | Stigmatize |
| Oppression | Insults | Separation |
| **Pervasive** | **Personal** | **Perpetual** |

The Soviet experiment sought to eradicate religion through unfettered power intended to marginalize religious individuals and institutions as a means of controlling what Soviet ideology defined as capitalistic survivals. The state remained vigilant over the possibility of losing a generation of new adherents to Marxist-Leninist Communism. Thus, one hears in the clarion call of the anti-religious campaign a crusade against Baptist children, youth, and students that entailed indoctrination, persuasion, accusation, and oppression. The echo heard in the victims' voices that reflected degrees of both acceptance and resistance remained robust years after the persecution ended.

One Baptist interviewee remembered propaganda and indoctrination as commonly utilized to dominate Baptist children, youth, and students through power relations:

> At that time a youth group formed an orchestra of folk instruments in our church. In the evenings we met for practicing, but when teachers knew about it, they came to the church and did everything to interrupt our rehearsal to discourage our desire to serve God. Then the next day all of us were at the principal's office for the ideological work.

A second interviewee recalled state-sanctioned persuasion as a tool regularly used by those in power to engineer peer dominance over Baptists while in secondary school:

> I guess my older sister and brother had a tougher time because at that time you were not allowed to believe there was a God in the Soviet Union time. When you went to school you had to be like everybody else; when you were different they tried to change you.

Other interviewee recollections noted the pervasive domination aimed at Baptist children and their parents remained effectual outside the school structure:

> There were also cases when the teachers came together with party workers to nail the church door [shut], because the pastors allowed children to attend the church.

> It was never taught [in school] that you can do whatever you can to live, like my father. He got his engineering degree before it got that way so he had his degree but he would work only very simple work. He was not allowed to work as engineer so he was a butcher.

Thus, state-sanctioned religious persecution sought to *dominate* Baptist families by *persuasive power* exercised through *propaganda, indoctrination, persuasion, accusation, and oppression*.

Interviewees further reported memories of Soviet state-sanctioned religious persecution to *marginalize* Baptist children, youth, and students through *personal intimidation*. Soviet law declared equal rights for all its citizens, including attitudes toward religion, codified in Article 124 of its 1936 constitution (Stalin n.d.). Policy and practice, however, revealed a different reality governed the rights of the religious. Concluding the state micro-managed every personal pattern that marginalized Baptists through state-orchestrated intimidation would be inaccurate. On the other hand, connecting links between persecutions sanctioned by the state with actions taken against religious children by state dogmatists, including educators that acted without consequence when opposing religion, would be undeniable. Consequently, the marginalization of Baptist children, youth, and students reflected patterns indistinguishable from the personal intimidation felt by religious adherents of all ages. One thirty-four-year-old Baptist woman reminisced over past, painful experiences of mocking and ridicule by teachers and peers that resulted in a sense of marginalization through personal intimidation:

> There was a case in the first grade when a teacher walked between rows looking at how children had written tasks, and when she checked my writing, she did not like how I did it. The teacher hit my head to my desk and hurt my nose. This left me hurt for life. Also, children in the street, with whom I played, they nicknamed me "Baptist."

The lesson, sanctioned by the state through marginalization due to one's personal religous orientation, remained learned by students no matter their age.

Another interviewee drew on his personal memories as a second-grader in response to those that poked fun through insults: "I felt depression, inferiority. I had low self-esteem. If someone called me 'Baptist,' he said it with the purpose of offending." An adult now in his mid-forties who attended school during the anti-religious campaign remembered the personal consequence for Baptist children who engaged in religious activities to celebrate holidays such as Christmas. No exemptions were allowed for children during their celebation of Christmas, since children, youth, and students caught celebrating Christmas were held up to public ridicule when school re-started after the winter break:

> We were not allowed to carol because you know Christmas was not a Soviet Union kind of holiday. So what our teachers did for Christmas break, since we were not allowed to sing about Christ, they would get on the streets. If they saw you and they heard somebody caroling they went to your house and caught all the kids and wrote down your names. Then when the school resumed the first thing they would do would be to get you in front of everybody and start kind of giving you a hard time.

Yet another woman, now in her sixties, recalled the personal intimidation commonly directed at Baptists while she attended an institute for postsecondary education: "There were intimidations and threats. They organized a meeting at which the whole institute was present. They even published an article about me in the media." Interviews revealed how the state apparatus disadvantaged the *marginalized* during the anti-religious campaign by leaving Baptists without advocacy when set against the many options available to the state, including *personal intimidation*, made clear by interviewee responses such as, "This persecution I felt very much. I remember that time very well and it was not easy," and "I understood that she [the teacher] never did such things with other children."

State-sanctioned religious persecution also manifested itself through strategies of *exclusion/inclusion, discrimination, stigmatization*, and *separation* used to *control* Baptist adolescents through *perpetual alienation*. A forty-three-year-old woman acknowledged the perpetual alienation that accompanied the discriminated and stigmatized status attached to Baptists when stating, "It's the only life I knew so it was just normal life. This was how we lived if you were a Christian." A young Baptist man acknowledged a similar status when saying, "Probably every believer who was born in the Soviet Union had the experience, that it was some kind of special treatment to him."

Threats of exclusion combined with promises of inclusion characterized the memory of the previously referenced sixty-year-old interviewee. This memory, more lengthy in its script, nevertheless demands full recitation as an example of exclusion/inclusion strategies that sought to control the Baptist woman through a sense of perpetual alienation as she attempted to begin her career in a Soviet culture antagonistic towards religion and its adherents:

> These events took place in the 1960s in Poltava [Ukraine] when I was graduating from Poltava Construction Institute and was working on my graduate work. This year was the year of rampant atheism. I almost finished my graduate work and received job placement to Kazakhstan. At this time some people came to my father, a pastor at the small Baptist church, and requested him to do something which was unworthy in the eyes of the Lord. They warned him that otherwise his daughter, meaning me, wouldn't graduate from the Institute. Of course, my dad didn't do what they requested, and right after that a KGB agent came to the Institute to talk with me. He told me about their demand. I had to renounce God

> and my faith publicly. They created various obstacles for my graduation work. They hoped I wouldn't complete it and they would be able to exclude me from the Institute for academic failure. At last their patience wore thin, and they gathered all the students and teachers for a meeting and announced that I was excluded from the Institute. But afterwards I had a conversation with the dean of the faculty, and he said, "I am so sorry, that our seniors did that to you." And the Institute's management treated me humanely and provided me with the certificate which said the following: "[Name] has highest technical education, but hasn't received her degree and diploma due to special reason."

The "humane" treatment remembered by the interviewee conflicted with the ultimate outcome that her certificate cited a "special reason" for why she failed to complete her degree.

A final excerpt drawn from a Ukrainian woman provided details as to how the Soviet strategy to control Baptists through perpetual alienation affected not only school-aged children but also the families to which they belonged:

> At that time it was not very good or fashionable or cool to be a Christian at all. So my parents were Baptists and strong Christians. They taught us well what to believe in, and I guess all of their kids followed their beliefs. I was six, and we all went to the same schools, so the teachers knew our family very well. They would come to our house and talk to my mom. They would talk to my dad. They would threaten to take the kids away if they taught us their ideas about God.

Interviewees' memories confirmed the plight Baptist children, youth, and students faced during the anti-religious campaign by identifying themes, categories, and patterns that mapped how state-sanctioned religious persecution permeated both Soviet constructs and Baptist culture, since the identified themes, categories, and patterns continually intersected in an atmosphere that knew no limitations and recognized no boundaries.

*Building the Case Study: Documents*

Comparing interviews with findings from the document analysis was deemed essential for building the case study, since thematic analysis remains an effective method for unearthing concepts from different data sources for comparison (Bryman 2012; Creswell 2013; Yin 2014). Direct quotes from documents presented below offer examples of themes found through content analysis of historical accounts of state-sanctioned religious persecution in the Soviet Union and reinforced the validity of individual allegations uncovered through interviews.

Pervasive domination of the religious grew from the unlimited power of the Soviet state resulting in the power to propagandize, indoctrinate, accuse and oppress children, youth, and students.

> *Propaganda/indoctrination*. The dissemination of artistic atheist literature; the showing of popular scientific and art films of an atheistic nature; the organization of exhibits and show windows; recommended reading lists and visual aids; demonstration on scientific atheist and natural science subjects in House of Culture, clubs, reading rooms and libraries; the use of district press—such is a far from complete list of the forms of atheist propaganda that our cultural-enlightenment institutions are capable of (Khudyakov, 1957: 13).
>
> *Persuasion*. But the visits to antireligious exhibits, the viewing of motion picture films, talks with pupils on antireligious themes should be organized and conducted very carefully, without coercive measures of action. The chief weapon of the Komsomols, on which most responsibility rests in conducting such work, is persuasion (Golubeva, 1959: 40)
>
> *Accusations*. This sect (The Evangelical Christian Baptists) is most widespread in Estonia, the Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and the northern parts of the U.S.S.R. Persons of varying backgrounds join the Baptists: students, young specialists [and] pensioners. They are accused of (a) past ties with the Baptists of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain; (b) complicity with Hitler during World War II; (c) spreading their teachings among Soviet youth; and (d) anti-Soviet activity (Teodoravisk, 1960: 54–55).
>
> *Oppression.* Nothing less than total mental surrender can satisfy the Communist ideologue" (Willetts, 1964: 35).

Documents authored by Khudyakov, Golubeva, Teodoravisk, and Willets recorded how power pervasively dominated through *propaganda, indoctrination, persuasion, accusations, and submission*. The effect on students of any age resulted in marginalization through personal intimidation.

Documents further verified patterns that poked fun, mocked, ridiculed, and insulted a younger generation for religious inclinations that marginalized children, youth, and students through personal intimidation.

> *Mocking*. In the Ukraine the party found it politically inexpedient to continue the existence of the Union of the Godless and closed it, seeking different and more indirect ways to continue their propaganda. The crude mockery of religion as depicted in the cartoons of the atheistic press…had on the whole, a result opposite from that desired (Hecker, 1927: 193).
>
> *Ridicule*. Assault by Ridicule — To be sure, all the old charges are played; scorn and ridicule of religion and the religious, reports of scandals among clergy at home and abroad, the stubborn insistence that science and religion are mutually exclusive (Lowrie, 1961: 109).
>
> *Poking fun*. At the semi-popular popular levels, poking fun at the Old Testament is a flourishing industry. The seminal work is E. Yaroslavski's *Biblia klya*

> *veruyushchikh I neveruyushshikh* (Bible for Believers and Unbelievers), originally written in 1922 and reprinted again in an eleventh edition of 850,000 copies in 1962 (Willets, 1964: 38).
>
> *Insults*. According to a statement contained in a resolution of the Central Committee of the Party, in some places anti-religious lecturers returned to the practice (condemned in 1939) of insulting clergy and the believers performing religious rites…. There have been many insulting remarks in the Soviet press. *Leninskoye Anamya,* published in the Finno-Karelian republic, printed a whole page of anti-religious material, including a collection of mock proverbs making fun of the priests and the church. Similar collections were published in Communist, the official party paper in Tadzhikistan (Timasheff, 1955: 332–33).

Documents retrieved from the era of the Anti-Religious Campaign produced records that *poked fun, mocked, ridiculed, and insulted* a younger generation for religious inclinations.

Document analysis confirmed Soviet authorities utilized tactics of exclusion/inclusion, discrimination, stigmatization, and separation to control religious communities and their individual members through perpetual alienation.

> *Exclusion/inclusion*. In this the Party youth play the primary role, from the day the child becomes, at the age of eight, a Little Octobrist and goes on to be a Pioneer wearing the red three-pointed scarf. Membership is not in theory, compulsory, though there are increasing instances where a child has been enrolled against the parent's wish or its own. A child who is not a Pioneer misses much of the fun of camps, games, and social activities, and be damaged in school career. Membership of the Komsomol (for youth aged fourteen to twenty-six) is, on the other hand, more selective. Many evangelical parents permit their children to become Little Octobrists and Pioneers conscious that alienation may be more hurtful than indoctrination (Pollock, 1964: 4–5).
>
> *Discrimination*. In schools, education continued to be given under the banner of anti-religion. And since all positions of higher rank were reserved for party members, *de facto* discrimination against believers continued to exist (Timasheff, 1955: 330).
>
> *Stigmatization*. The names of citizens who had remained true to their faith were published and often stigmatized in local papers (Pierce, 1955: 21).
>
> *Separation*. It is, of course, a crime under existing Soviet legislation for a priest to give religious instruction to children, or to recruit them as choristers. Technically parents are still allowed to take their children to a place of worship, but the Ideological Commission's 1963 decisions called for "intensified measures of control to protect the children and adolescents from the influence of churchmen and from coercion at the hands of their parents to perform religious rites." Various practical steps in this direction have been reported, including

> Komsomol patrolling of places of worship in order to dissuade children from attending services, or to report those attending to the school authorities for special indoctrination. In some cases (usually involving sectarians), children may even be taken away from their parents. One such case came to light when a young Leningrad worker name Malozemov was commended by Ilichev and others for acting to remove six of his younger brothers and sisters from the care of their parents, who were charged with nothing worse than being Baptists (Willets, 1964: 37).

Findings within the documents confirmed that patterns of *exclusion/inclusion, discrimination, stigmatization, and separation* were commonly used tools.

The document analysis confirmed that ideological atheism provided a rationale for Soviet antagonism towards religion, particularly since religion was viewed as a capitalistic survival, antithetical to communist objectives. The Soviet experiment gained power as it consolidated control over resources and instituted policies aimed at enforcing communist ideology. The Soviet attempt to eradicate individual belief in religion and its institutional base (the church) evidenced in the document analysis paralleled themes, categories, and patterns found throughout the interviews. The philosophical ideology that rejected institutional religion merged with a practical intent to remove all forms of individual religiosity, a phenomena displayed throughout the history of the Soviet Union and confirmed by the case study, since individual religiosity most assuredly fomented institutional religion (Wanner, 2007: 60; Yelensky, 2012: 306). Baptists developed strong bonding capital and boundaries under Soviet rule as a form of protection of their culture and religious beliefs. In doing so they created a sense of identity and community that countered their denigration by Soviets and constructed worthy identities as Baptists who remained committed to their religion, were faithful to each other and to God, and who maintained their values regarding how to treat other people. The religious values that informed Baptist action, such as forgiving those who mistreated them, represent a form of resistance to the dominant cultural values and beliefs of communism. The values and beliefs they carried within their culture through the period of Soviet domination provides the seeds for the emerging activities of Baptists aimed at building bridging capital. Assignment of meaning to the phenomenon of state-sanctioned religious persecution demonstrates that meaning making of Baptists in their internal bounded group informs contemporary interviewee perceptions of religious bridging capital. Table 2 précises meanings constructed by Baptists in response to Soviet state-sanctioned religious persecution that reflect their interpretation of negative experiences contributing to sustained resilience and strong relationships.

**Table 2: Assigned Meaning by Baptists to Soviet State-Sanctioned Religious Persecution**

**Power-Marginalization-Control**

| **Domination** | **Intimidation** | **Alienation** |
|---|---|---|
| Meaning through Risk | Meaning through Suffering | Meaning through Relationship |
| **Pervasive** | **Personal** | **Perpetual** |

*Concluding the Case Study: Meaning*

Allport (1950: 19) contended religion framed meaning as sentiment and thought coalesce, a concept he described as "an appetite for meaning." Individual appetites for meaning find resonance through collective solidarity, especially in unsettled times (Swidler 1986) characterized by social rejection. Assigning meaning to unsettled times, as experienced by Baptists during Soviet state-sanctioned religious persecution, creates continuity from one generation to the next by linking past and present (Hervieu-Léger 2000; Panych 2012, 2014; Wanner 1998). Some of the meanings assigned to experiences are foundational for the development of religious bridging capital that is emerging with the changing societal context of religious freedom following the years of an oppressive Soviet social construct.

Interviews and participant observation revealed that memories of state-sanctioned religious persecution failed to inhibit Baptist adults totally when engaging outsiders. Memories emerged from those interviewed not only spanned the chasm between memory and meaning, but also addressed how Baptists perceive the importance of religious bridging capital. Respondents described resilience, survival, and sustained commitment to their faith which entailed great risk and suffering but also made their relationships with other Baptists very close. These relationships sustained them through the years of Soviet rule.

When asked how one's experience with state-sanctioned religious persecution influenced Baptists who shared openly with people outside their community, one interviewee noticeably assigned meaning to his memories by connecting personal suffering with a personal conviction to share one's beliefs:

> For believers persecution was never a reason not to testify. Christians always testified about God and invited people to the church, regardless of the circumstances. Believers never felt hatred towards non-believers. People who know God understand who was behind the persecution and oppression of the church. There are many evidences that believers continued to love those who persecuted them and brought those people to church to accept Jesus Christ into their life. There is a long history of a missionary with his family who moved to a village where there was no church. He preached about love. There were people

> that did not like it. And one day they decided to go to him and take off the roof from his house, which he made for a long time. When they took off the roof, the believing man, instead of calling the police, told his wife to cook them dinner. When those bad people finished with their work, he invited them to have a lunch. During lunch, the Lord changed their hearts and from that fact they went home different people. After this incident, it began a great spiritual awakening in that village. There's a large Baptist church [there] now.

The response to suffering informed the motive for and meaning of the practice of religious bridging capital towards outsiders actively engaged in the persecution of Baptists. If suffering took place in the course of sharing one's belief, the resultant meaning assigned by the individual was discovered as the persecuted loved his or her persecutors without malice no matter the circumstances. The local query "what did it mean to suffer" provided the framework for the larger question "how suffering produced meaning by sharing one's belief with outsiders."

Another interview describing Baptist bridging attempts to outsiders after the advent of religious freedom bore striking resemblance to the former story set in the social construct of Soviet era persecution:

> We were trying for a long time to invite children from the town to the church for Sunday school. We did not manage it until we removed the church sign "Baptist Church" and then put on another one, "The Church of Christ the Savior." Then the children started to come. And before that they were afraid because there was written [the] word "Baptist." I can say one thing: If we want to lead people to God, the best preaching is our friendship with people without any conditions. Those who preach Christ, and not necessarily with words, but primarily with their actions and friendships, they will find people for God.

Both stories expressed a similar perspective that balanced a realistic view of the past with an optimistic view of the future contrasting the difference between meaninglessness when feeling helpless with meaningfulness when found hopeful. Outsider bias aside, vestiges of past religious persecution appeared no contradiction to a hopeful admission the present looked very different from the past, an important reality when asking whether memories of state-sanctioned religious persecution influence how adults perceive outsider response to the exercise of religious bridging capital.

One more interchange captured the complexity for parents when assigning greater meaning to familial security simulated in communal bonding versus sustainability situated through community bridging. A respondent noted:

> When I was little we were not allowed to have non-Christian friends. They [non-believers] were not allowed to have Christian friends. So Baptist people, Christians they don't want their kids to become like unbelievers. They don't want them to learn anything bad; so same way with non-Christians; they don't want their kids to learn anything from Baptists so we always stayed separate. We never

> had [non-Christian] friends. It's encouraged for youths to have friends outside the church. Sure you want to keep your kids inside the church, and it's safer. So it is not as strict now. Kids have lots of friends outside, but it is still, you know, if I would be parent I want my kids to go and have party with Christians not with non-Christians.

The interviewee initially demonstrated her recognition of the intractability that existed between believing parents and non-believing parents regarding the desire for separation. Juxtaposing the need for safety against the necessity of risk, she captured the problem faced by Baptists in Soviet Ukraine regarding the salience of bonding capital over bridging capital.

Ironically, the alienation of Baptists sought by the Soviet state suited the parental instinct to prefer safety for children from outside influences, in this instance the reach of the state into believing families. Religious parents would welcome protection for their offspring from the pernicious influence of the state, including its supporters.

Baptist parents found meaning as protectors of family and church under the prosecutorial environment that existed in the Soviet Union. When, however, the societal construct changes, so too does the social context. Believing parents were now confronted with how to encourage their children, youth, and students to interact with an unbelieving culture, not only as would naturally occur when adolescents interrelate but also because the church placed ever-increasing importance on youth ministries designed in part to build bridges to an unbelieving world.

Assigning meaning under the new paradigm for parents shifted from a one-dimensional perspective to a multi-dimensional outlook. The question no longer remained one simply of protection from religious persecution but now of instruction for religious propagation. Thus, the concern expressed by the interviewee represented a conundrum driven by cultural change. The reflections of the interviewee revealed candid conflict between assigning greater meaning to providing safety as a parent or promoting sustainability and a broad social agenda for the church through outreach, both communal constructs requiring individual agency, one originating at home, the other at church.

## *CONCLUSION*

The qualitative analysis described how Ukrainian Baptists made meaning of their memories of Soviet state-sanctioned religious persecution. The analysis offered significant historically contextualized conclusions.

The case study offered rich description that captured memories of persecution and found the themes emerging from interviews, fieldwork, and document analysis confirmed Soviet-state sanctioned religious persecution beyond contestation; explaining how Soviet authorities used unrestricted power to

marginalize and control Baptist communities, resulting from domination, intimidation, and alienation through propaganda/indoctrination, persuasion, accusations, oppression, mocking, ridicule, poking fun, insults, exclusion/inclusion, discrimination, stigmatization, and separation. Children, youth, and students were particularly targeted.

The data also corroborated that individuals engaged in religious bridging capital practices, sometimes at great cost, during the anti-religious campaign. Interviews and document analysis also suggested the Soviet state remained aware of such practices by Baptists, contributing to further attempts by the state to regulate if not redact Baptists altogether from society. State attempts, though not completely successful, nevertheless clearly hindered the free practice of bridging capital by Baptists.

Research further revealed that Baptists perceive a degree of unfavorable perceptions by outsiders remain as a leftover by-product from Soviet state-sanctioned religious persecution, during which outsiders treated Baptists with superciliousness, scorn, and suspicion. Nevertheless, Baptists also conveyed confidence when looking to the future, expressing an enthusiasm about practicing religious bridging capital in hopes of changing perceptions regarding Baptists. Baptist adults reported personal inhibitions resulting from childhood memories associated with state-sanctioned religious persecution. Respondents further reported persecution failed to inhibit Baptist adults totally from engaging in religious bridging capital.

Moreover, the case study identified the development of religious bridging capital was equal in importance with religious bonding capital and presented a challenge to Baptists. The choice between survival previously driven by the historical contextualization of a marginalized religious community steeped in social cohesion moved to a challenge of sustainability, now defined by the need for social attraction.

Childhood memories of Soviet state-sanctioned religious persecution shape the practice of religious bridging capital as Baptist adults in Ukraine seek to affirm their agency and resilience. Connerton (1989) argued the future found root in the past, since past recollections provide the foundation for future recourse, a helpful acumen when communities desire a new start separated from formerly difficult circumstances, and an insight particularly related to Swidler's theory elucidating unsettled versus settled times. Change, to Connerton's way of thinking, exists as nothing more than future hopes springing forth from reminiscences of a near or distant past (Connerton, 1989: 6). Swidler (1986) maintained that when threatened by unsettled times, people tend to adhere to existing ideology but that during settled times they often elaborate new strategies of action.

Thus, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, state-sanctioned persecution ended, but the question surrounding sustainability remained. Can Baptists endure by developing religious bridging capital when memories of their historical

marginalization still remain? Perhaps no insight derived from the qualitative data better represented the complex transition for a previously marginalized group, from survival through bonding capital to sustainability through bridging capital, than the following interview:

> Well, I guess persecution really affects you, who you become…. When I grew up, right, I told you that we never talked about who we wanted to be so my parents would teach us that you have to keep your head down and heart up. And I guess even today when you have freedom, you still think that way. You can become somebody. You just have to have your heart up.

Baptists who remained committed to their religion under Soviet rule carried with them their worthy identities, the values, beliefs, and norms of how to treat others, and the vision of the ways that God's will should be enacted in the world. Nevertheless, they were greatly constrained by the social structures of the Soviet regime (Durkheim 2008 [1912]).

In keeping with Swidler's (1986) theorization of how cultural groups often respond during unsettled times, they held close to theological (ideological) concerns of their religion and constructed tight boundaries of belonging, keeping their heads down to protect themselves and their valued way of life as much as possible. In the more settled times of religious freedom, Baptists who have preserved and transmitted to the next generation the knowledge of how the church was organized and the values and beliefs of the religion are constructing a new cultural repertoire and strategies of action that draw heavily upon what they carried in their hearts through the period of their oppression.

We theorize that not only the beliefs and values of Baptist religion but the Baptist church governance structure that privileges local decision-making, cooperation, and entrepreneurship as the foundation for church success provided Baptists with an alternative model of collective decision-making. The values and beliefs of the Baptist religion offered a worldview and worthy identity that supported their commitment to the Baptist church community and faith despite the fact that under Soviet rule they were vilified and church buildings and formal leadership structures were suppressed.

Weber (1958 [1904]: 95–154; 1978) theorized that Protestants in general, including Baptists, were oriented toward engagement with imperfect social conditions and would try to reshape them in keeping with their religious beliefs and values. The emerging orientation among Baptists in Ukraine toward engagement with the broader society and activities aimed at solving social problems and bringing new members into the church are consistent with Weber's ideas about the orientation of Protestants.

The social structural contexts within which they have operated have shaped the possibilities of how they have been able to enact their religion. The ideas and beliefs they hold as Baptists have been carried through their persecution under

Soviet rule and the experiences suffered during that era interpreted through the lens of what they carried in their hearts. The agency of Ukrainian Baptists is evident in the actions they took to protect and preserve themselves and other believers and in the emergent orientation toward proselytizing and engagement in addressing social issues and needs (Kovalisko 2015).

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