

Adversity and Trauma in the Narratives of Displaced German Children, 1945-2022



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June 2023



ISBN 978-1-83766-166-4

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Table of Contents:

1. Introduction	2
1.2 Key Concepts	3
2. Methodology	6
3. Findings	7
3.1 Adverse Experiences Before Migration	7
3.2 During and after migration	8
3.3 Impacts of ACEs on health, well-being and integration	12
3.4 Community and Societal Factors	17
3.5 The Power of Storytelling	19
4. Conclusions	21
5. Recommendations	22
5.1 Access to psychological care and therapies	22
5.2 Opportunities to share narratives and reflect critically	22
5.3 Support in working through negative narratives of the past	23
5.4 Prepare the host society	23
5.5 Provide opportunities for civic engagement and leisure activities	23
Bibliography	24

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August 1948, German children deported from the eastern areas taken over by Poland arrive in West Germany.
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Refugees fleeing from Königsberg before the advancing Red Army in 1945
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Fig 1

Refugee Treck near Braunsburg (East Prussia) 1945
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Fig 2

Map of Germany 1938 with East Prussia in red
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Fig 5

Former camp for expellees in Eckernförde, picture taken in 1951
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1. Introduction

Heinz Buchholz was 13 years old when in August 1944 he and his family packed up their belongings onto horse drawn wagons to be evacuated to safety from the front line. This was the beginning of an epic journey which saw Heinz become a refugee from the Soviet invasion of Germany, become a slave labourer, lose all legal rights, be expelled from northern Poland and lose his mother and two siblings. Many years later a chance encounter whilst on holiday triggered a swathe of repressed emotions. In their wake came nightmares, insomnia, outbreaks of uncontrolled sweating and other “behavioural disturbances”. His “body and mind had been wearing a poorly constructed mask” that he and his doctors now needed to work through. Part of that therapy was writing a memoir about his life and adverse experience as a child refugee. Writing his memoirs allowed him to work through the feelings he had kept hidden and express the emotional distress of his past as they came to the fore 60 years later (Buchholz 2002, 10–11). This memoir, and the many others like it, provide valuable insights into individual experiences of adversity and displacement, whilst also giving insights into how communities deal with adversity.



Fig 1: Refugee Treck near Braunsburg (East Prussia) 1945

This report highlights lessons for policy makers and practitioners today that can be taken from the experiences of German children displaced from Eastern Europe between 1944-1948. It uses narratives to outline experiences of adversity both during displacement and during resettlement in West Germany across the life span of child refugees. The report covers 6 main areas: background, adverse experiences before, during and after migration, the impact of community and societal factors, the role of storytelling in processes of coming to terms with adversity, conclusions and recommendations.

1.2 Key Concepts

1.2.1 Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences describe a range of traumatic experiences, that usually occur in early childhood and can have lifelong impacts on the health and well-being of the person. These include abuse (physical/sexual/verbal/mental) and exposure to domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse and parental separation ("Adverse Childhood Experiences" n.d.)

Displaced peoples can also experience a broader range of ACEs, therefore, the understanding of ACEs has been expanded to include experiences related to the migration journey. All the ACEs mentioned above can occur before, during or after the migration process. However, there are additional adverse experiences that displaced people are exposed to, such as destruction and war, witnessing and committing violence, imprisonment, abduction, and the severe deprivation of basic necessities. Further adverse experiences can also occur within systems of asylum such as in camps, immigration systems and detention centres or after arrival in residential accommodation, care systems, schools, or communities after arrival (Hopkins et al. 2020). Migration journeys increase the vulnerability of already vulnerable members of society exposing them to an array of complex adversities.

Studying and understanding the impact of adverse experiences on children (both migrant and non-migrant) is fundamental to building a healthier and better society where individuals can reach their full potential. Research has demonstrated that ACEs can have lifelong consequences. These include various health conditions in adulthood as well as engaging in damaging behaviours, which can contribute to a cycle of multi-generation adverse experiences (Hopkins et al. 2020). This report will draw on these understanding of ACEs to discuss their role in the narratives of Germans who were displaced from Eastern Europe after World War Two.

1.2.2 Narrative

The study of narrative is central to this report. Narrative is, simply put, 'an account of connected events'. That is - a story told about experiences expressed in a range of forms, from speech and writing through to images and objects (Fludernik 2009, 1). Narratives are, therefore, central to the human experience and can convey so much more than just the story they tell. Since the dawn of time, narratives have been used to caution, educate, and liberate and their study provides an understanding of the experiences and values of a society. Imbedded in narratives are clues about both the individual and the time and culture in which they live. Narratives also contain insights into how individuals come to terms with experiences and are therefore powerful tools to study the longer-term impacts of ACEs through refugees' own words.

Narratives are not just stories. They also shape our perception of reality, meaning they are central to the construction of our past, present, and future as individuals and as societies (Bruner 1991, 20). The stories we tell have a profound influence on the decisions and actions we take in real life. Therefore, being able to deconstruct, contextualise and understand narratives contributes to understanding the world around us. They are also a powerful driver of political and economic decisions and underpin our values and attitudes towards others. The shared narratives of a group often contribute to the bonding of that group and so understanding their meaning helps us better understand communities.

The power of narrative is multifaceted and can have both positive and negative outcomes. It is, therefore, important to understand narratives critically to avoid prejudice and damaging stereotypes about others (Arwyn 2023). As will be highlighted, ACEs litter the narratives of displaced Germans and have been a powerful source of collective victimhood, which has led to solidarity but also problematic attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.

1.3 Historical context and background:

Until the end of the Second World War Germans had lived in communities scattered across Eastern Europe for centuries. Some lived in regions of Germany that were lost in 1919 and/or in 1945 due to border changes, which included East and West Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia. Others lived as ethnic minorities within other states such as Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Russia/USSR, the Baltic States, and the Balkans. As a result of the Nazi's genocidal and expansionist war, up to 12 million Germans living in Eastern Europe were displaced. This report focuses on Germans from East Prussia, a region that belonged to the German state until 1945 and later became a part of the USSR/Russian Federation and Poland.

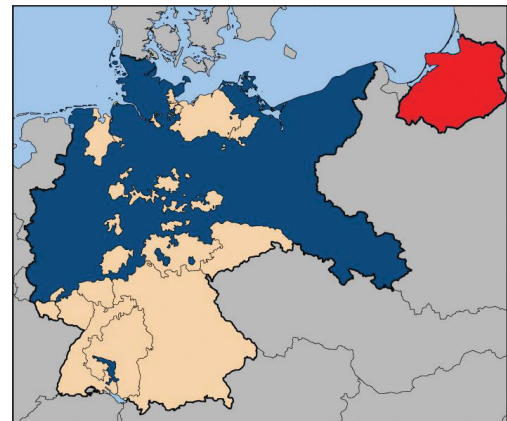


Fig 2: Map of Germany 1938 with East Prussia in red

The displacement of Germans in the period 1939-1945 came in numerous forms. First the so-called 'ethnic Germans', who lived outside of the German state were forcibly transferred by the Nazis to areas of Nazi occupied Poland between 1939-1944. The next wave of displacement came as the Soviet Union invaded Germany beginning in 1944. The so-called 'Great Flight' climaxed between January and May 1945. The next stage overlapped with 'the Great Flight' as authorities in Czechoslovakia and Poland began to forcibly remove Germans in the spring and summer of 1945. Such was the chaos caused by these violent and disorganised expulsions that the Allied leaders (Harry Truman, Josef Stalin, and Winston Churchill/Clement Atlee) discussed their fate as a matter of priority.¹ They agreed that Germany's eastern border would be moved Westwards to its current location, known as the 'Order Neisse Line'. The areas beyond it would become a part of the Polish state and northern East Prussia would become a Soviet exclave (Kaliningrad Oblast). All Germans who remained East of the new border would be deported West by 1948. As a result of the border changes those who had begun their journey as deportees in 1939-44, refugees in 1944/45 or expellees in 1939-1948 all became permanently displaced as their homelands disappeared behind the Iron Curtain of communism.

Between 1945-1949 Germany was divided into four zones of occupation, each administered by one of the wartime allied countries (GB/France/USA/USSR). However, because of the growing tensions between East and West, Germany was divided into two states in 1949. Of the estimated 12 million² Germans who migrated, estimated 8 million settled in the Western Zones of Occupation that became the Federal Republic of Germany (hereafter FRG) in 1949 (Beer 2011, 47-53). Circa 4 million

1 The 'expulsion' of Germans from Eastern Europe became an important area of discussion in the postwar Potsdam Conference in July-August 1945.

2 There are no reliable sources for the numbers of Germans expelled at the end of the Second World War. Estimates vary from 10 to 15 million, however, as demonstrated by Hahn and Hahn the statistics are vastly over estimated and unclear to allow a false and overinflated image of German loss and suffering to emerge. Eva Hahn and Hans-Henning Hahn, *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern: Legenden, Mythos, Geschichte* (Paderborn, 2010), p. 38.

came to live in communist Soviet Zone that later became the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR).³ Several displaced Germans were among those who chose to flee Westwards from East Germany to West Germany in the period before the Berlin Wall was built in 1961.

In the immediate aftermath of the WWII, when Germany lay mostly in ruins, the influx of displaced Germans placed further pressures on already challenged communities. Poverty, hunger, homelessness, and discrimination were a common experience. However, by the 1950s the economic situation in the FRG improved greatly and the period of huge economic growth known as the 'economic miracle' was underway. The improved economic circumstances and support from the government provided opportunities for displaced Germans to find employment, stable homes and build a new life. The quick integration of 'expellees'⁴ into the FRG became one of the state's big post-war successes. After 1947 several organisations were set up by expellees that represented their social, political, and cultural needs and became an important and powerful element of post-war politics and society in the FRG. They also played an important role in reuniting expellees who were scattered all over Germany.

Up until the late 1960s the needs of the German expellees had been a priority of the West German government. However, as the Cold War began to ease in the early 1970s, Germans began to focus more on crimes of Third Reich and the Holocaust and the political mood in Germany shifted. The political power of the expellee organisations decreased and many expellees began to feel alienated from the mainstream. Increasingly, their cause became associated with extreme nationalism and the far right.

In 1989 the Berlin Wall fell and in 1990 the German Democratic Republic was dissolved and Germany was reunified. Consequently, Germans began re-examining their recent history in search of a shared past. As a part of these changes the experiences of expellees were of increased interest to the German public. The stories of expellees were shared broadly in a variety of media, from films and documentaries to books and newspapers. From the 2000s onwards there has been a 'memory boom' which has included the publication of hundreds of first-hand accounts by expellees. Their study is therefore a fruitful source of information about how individuals process and come to terms with adverse experiences because of displacement over a period of 80 years through their own words.

1.4 Terminology

All displaced Germans are classed in German law as 'expellees'. This includes the refugees who fled in 1944-1945 and those who were expelled after 1945. Similarly, the organisations that represent displaced Germans refer to them as 'expellees'. For this reason, these terms are used interchangeably in this study to refer to the East Prussians who fled or were forced to leave Eastern Europe during and after WWII.

³ Displaced Germans were treated differently depending on where they lived in divided Germany. In the GDR their victimhood was as a result of the close relationship between the state and the USSR. For further information on displaced Germans in East Germany see Ian Connor, *Refugees and Expellees in post-war Germany* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 197-234 and Michael Schwarz, 'Vertriebene in doppelten Deutschland', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 56, 1 (2008), 101-150.

⁴ This is the term used in West Germany for both the refugees and those expelled from Eastern Europe after 1945.

2. Methodology

Narrative accounts are of principal interest to this project. Thirteen oral history interviews were conducted in 2009-2011 with expellees who had been under 18 during their displacement. The report also draws on autobiographical accounts written by child refugees published between 1980-2011. These sources are memory based and so provide a recollection of individual experiences rather than an exact description of events as they happened. They are therefore shaped by the experiences of individuals between events and the time of recollection, making them an excellent resource for understanding how people make sense of their experiences in light of the present (and what has come between).



Fig 3: August 1948, German children deported from the eastern areas taken over by Poland arrive in West Germany.

The report also draws on the literature published on key topics such as integration, psychology, and narrative to supplement the primary material. The interviews were unstructured with some follow up questions where necessary. No specific questions relating to adverse experiences were asked as the interviews were designed to allow individuals to express their narratives as they saw fit. Nevertheless, adverse experiences made up a significant part of the material in both interviews and memoirs illustrating the centrality of those experiences to narrators' life stories.

3. Findings

3.1 Adverse Experiences Before Migration

Evidence of adversity within the home was few and far between. Corporal punishment was used at home or at school but was understood as a 'normal' part of discipline, and even praised. Only one writer discussed adverse childhood experiences before their journey in detail. Christa Wels portrays both her mother and her teachers as being physically and emotionally abusive. She also highlighted the poverty in which they lived as contributing to her adverse experiences (Wels 2007, 7–20).

Evidence of adversity within the home was few and far between.

Neither mental illness nor drug or alcohol abuse were discussed by narrators. Although parental death was more common in this period, it was not a feature in the sources. Separation due to divorce was uncommon at the time in German society. It is not to say that these adverse experiences did not occur, but they were not a part of the life story conveyed by narrators. This could be on account of the broader culture of the time where domestic violence was not discussed openly, or that corporal punishment was more acceptable. Aside from this the memories shared are shaped by the broader culture of the expellees which tends to portray life before 1945 as an idyllic lost paradise and so all adversity tends to be downplayed in favour of nostalgic recollections (Demshuk 2012, 17–19).

Some adversity is highlighted in relation to living under the Nazi regime 1933-1945. However, it is rare. Adverse experiences are usually related to a fear of incarceration for speaking out against the regime and its crimes against Jews. Some did witness violence against 'enemies of the state' such as Jews, Poles or Soviet prisoners of war. However, this is infrequent and largely played down (Arwyn 2013).

Germany was severely bombed during WWII. The experience of the raids (including destruction of their homes) is the beginning of a long line of adverse experiences endured by East Prussian children. Bombing during WWII has been recognised as a significant adverse experience for children all over Germany with many experiencing injury, loss of family, fear, exposure death and injured victims, homelessness and disrupted education (Akbulut-Yuksel 2014). Some young men (aged 12+) were forced into combat in the final months of the war and underwent all the accompanying horrors of warfare with little training. They were also taken prisoner by the Soviets, and many underwent years of captivity under terrible conditions.

The experience of the raids (including destruction of their homes) is the beginning of a long line of adverse experiences endured by East Prussian children.

3.2 During and after migration

This section will outline the range of adverse experiences faced by German children because of displacement. It covers their flight, the three years under Polish and Soviet rule and resettlement in West Germany. The flight in 1944-1945 was often undertaken under the most difficult of circumstances as the Nazi authorities did not allow flight until the very last moment. The German military also prioritised military needs over the evacuation and well-being of civilians (Willems 2021, 207). This resulted in refugees fleeing in the deepest of winter (temperatures of -20C) with the invasion happening around them. Men were either already in the army or coerced to join 'People's Militias', meaning that women, children, the sick and elderly made up most of the refugees moving west. Journeys were mostly combined of walking, horse drawn wagon, train or boat. Conditions on these routes were appalling with refugees crossing the front lines, being attacked by enemy forces, freezing to death and drowning in refugee ships.



Fig 4: Refugees fleeing from Königsberg before the advancing Red Army in 1945

Conditions on these routes were appalling with refugees crossing the front lines, being attacked by enemy forces, freezing to death and drowning in refugee ships.

3.2.1 Collective Violence and Witnessing Violence

Most East Prussian children witnessed violence during their flight westwards. Exposure to combat as refugees crossed front lines and attacks on refugee transports from the air were experienced by almost all. Children witnessed death and the destruction of bodies, sometimes of their own family members, first hand. Aside from this they saw people and animals who had frozen to death by the side of the road, bodies of soldiers (including boy soldiers) hung from lampposts for desertion, trains that had been attacked by aeroplanes and drownings (at sea, in harbours or whilst fleeing over frozen bodies of water).

Those who did not reach destinations in the West and were overtaken by the Red Army (the Soviet Army) on route came under the rule of the Polish and/or Soviet authorities until their deportation up to 3 years later. Some were put into holding camps (including previous Nazi camps) where violence in the form of beatings and murder occurred daily. Death was a common occurrence due to violence, bad sanitary conditions, lack of food and healthcare.

Those who lived outside of the camps but in areas under Polish and/or Soviet control also had to contend with the daily threat of violence and death. Germans had no civil rights and so were subject to the whims of the authorities and civilians, many of whom had suffered greatly because of the German-led war. Children were terrified of the Soviets as years of Nazi propaganda had portrayed them as violent beasts out to destroy Germany. Fear and terror were significant to their daily experiences. Some were beaten by soldiers and civilians. H. Eder (10 years old) was beaten, thrown down a flight of stairs and had a gun pointed at him by a Soviet officer for not answering a question (Arwyn 2011, 2:31:58). Such memories are central to narratives of expellee children and make up a significant part of their adverse experiences.

3.2.2 Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a common feature of war and displacement and refugees are particularly vulnerable to it (Vu et al. 2014, 3). The invasion of Germany was accompanied by the mass rape of German women by the Red Army. Up to 2 million German women were raped during 1944-1948, some of whom endured multiple attacks. These included victims of all ages (9-90 years old) and gang rape was also prevalent. Attacks were often accompanied with murder and mutilation. Children were both the victims of rapes themselves and witnesses of the rape of family members. Again, the terror of living under these circumstances for prolonged periods of time were deeply impactful on individuals and the threat of sexual violence looms large in the narratives.

3.2.3 Incarceration

Camps in Eastern Europe were closer to prison/labour camps than refugee camps, meaning that Germans were not free to leave. Some in the East were holding facilities for deportation. Others were forced labour camps where Germans were forced to live up until 1947/8. Children also lived in these camps and were expected to work as forced labourers. Conditions were poor, food was scarce and disease was rife. Children also suffered neglect in the camps as they were separated for long periods from their parents and left to their own devices. These experiences were highly damaging to the children due to the insecurity, feelings of helplessness and the lack of autonomy. Individuals describe themselves as 'unprotected game', meaning they felt totally unprotected by adults but also by their lack of legal and civic status as Germans.

3.2.4 Deprivation of basic necessities

Germany as a whole underwent a period of extreme shortages due to the wartime disruptions between 1945-49. Refugees were again particularly vulnerable as they had lost access to resources and space to grow food. Refugee children suffered greatly in the camps and billets in occupied Germany. Aside from the physical impacts of prolonged hunger, the emotional toll has left its mark on their life stories. Refugee children remember being given substandard food (such as peelings for the pigs), begging for food and having to rely on care packages from abroad. Theft became a common and even accepted means of survival across all regions. All these experiences contributed feelings of shame and degradation that lingered into old age.

Refugee children remember being given substandard food (such as peelings for the pigs), begging for food and having to rely on care packages from abroad.

Germans under Soviet and Polish administration in East Prussia were in an even worse position as they were in a hostile environment and were last on the list of priorities. The economy had totally collapsed and so the normal flow of goods had completely ceased. Over time, supplies found in abandoned houses ran out and people had caught every living creature. The winter of 1947 was particularly harsh. Starvation and related illnesses killed significant numbers of the remaining population in East Prussia (Spatz 2016, 60), leaving many children without guardians. Children speak of spending days unaccompanied roaming the countryside searching for food and eating anything including bark and leather. Christel Wels even caught and ate a dog. Things got so bad that rumours of cannibalism haunt the accounts. This did occur, but its prevalence in narratives is more of a symbol of the extreme levels of deprivation experienced than evidence of actual cannibals stalking the ruins (Arwyn 2017).

3.2.5 Housing

Most expellees lost their homes and most of their belongings. Many had lived and worked on their land for generations resulting in a deep sense of loss that continued the rest of their lives. Much prominence is given to their final moments at home in their accounts and leaving home is portrayed as caesura in their lives after which nothing is the same again (Arwyn 2013).

Most experienced homelessness because of their displacement. Most expellees in both occupied Germany and under Soviet/Polish rule were either assigned derelict and/or damaged housing, lived in refugee camps or were forcibly billeted with families (who did not want them there). The insecurity associated to their homelessness was exasperated by the lack of choice and that they could be moved by the authorities with little or no notice.

Camps in occupied Germany were slightly better than those in Eastern Europe but families still lived in makeshift huts that were dark, dirty and over-crowded for many years. These conditions further exasperated feelings of insecurity and indignity among refugee children. Billets were often even more difficult as 'natives' who saw refugees as an imposition, gave them the worst quarters such as in barns or animals sheds, resulting in lifelong feelings of shame and degradation. The consistency of such feelings across narrators and its persistence across time suggests that it would be beneficial to help refugee children explore and overcome feelings of shame. This is also reflected in the broader literature on feelings of shame experienced by refugees and refugee minors (Stotz et al. 2015; Furukawa and Hunt 2011).



Fig 5: Former camp for expellees in Eckernförde, picture taken in 1951

3.2.6 Access to Services

Education was severely disrupted for children from 1944-1948. Some did not attend school for several years. Individuals speak of not being able to read until 10 years old or the shame of attending classes with children who were much younger. Again, here the experience of shame was remarked upon.

Access to healthcare was also very much restricted. For those who remained in East Prussia until 1948 there was virtually no medical care. Hospitals did exist but they were places where people went to die rather than heal. The community was ravished by typhus and other diseases related to starvation and poor sanitary conditions. Lice were a constant plague and even small infections could become fatal. Some children suffered life changing accidents due to playing with weapons left over from the war and not being able to access adequate health care to treat those injuries.

3.2.7 Family Separation

Children became separated from families under a range of circumstances and for varying periods of time. Some were separated for hours or days during their flight before being reunited with family. In other instances, family members were seized by the Soviet authorities to work as enforced labour in the Soviet Union. These included fathers who were prisoners of war and mothers who were taken during the flight. Very many were never seen again.

In other cases, children were lost for longer periods or never reunited with their families. The German Red Cross received over 300,000 requests to trace lost children between 1945 and 1948 (Zahra 2009, 45). In Soviet East Prussia unaccompanied children came to be known as 'Wolfchildren' as there were numerous children surviving on their own in the countryside 'like the wolves'. Some were completely orphaned, whereas others were sent by family to neighbouring Lithuania, where the food supply was better and the population more sympathetic. Some children stayed in East Prussia or Lithuania where they were adopted. Unaccompanied children experienced kindness and sympathy but were also at a great risk. Many experienced sexual and physical abuse as well as exploitation and discrimination. A number were so young when they were separated, they did know their birth names or remember their family, forever stuck in a limbo.

In other cases, children were lost for longer periods or never reunited with their families.

3.2.8 Discrimination after arrival

Although German expellees were internally displaced within their own nation, they nevertheless experienced discrimination by their fellow countryfolk. Expellees were often resettled in rural areas untouched by war and bombing. Rural areas tended to be less open to outsiders and the lack of experience of suffering during the war made populations less empathetic to the refugees.

Linguistic differences in accent and dialect were obvious as some of the rural East Prussian children spoke the 'low German' dialect and belonged to different confessions (Protestants in Catholic areas or vice versa). They were also discriminated against due to their poverty. Few had access to new clothing or soap and regular washing and bathing facilities resulting in bullying at school and resultant feelings of shame.

There was also a racialised element to the discrimination. Historically, there was a tendency for Germans to consider themselves culturally superior to Eastern Europeans (Liulevicius 2009). During the Nazi period these ideas were taken to their full conclusion through the genocide and murder of those considered to be 'racially Slavic' (Eastern European). These ideas did not disappear overnight with the collapse of the regime and were used to frame anti-expellee sentiments after 1945. The derogatory term for 'Poles' (Polake) was used against them despite their German ethnicity. The example highlights how misinformation can be used to discriminate against incoming refugees.

Improvement came over time as the economic situation of both expellees and 'natives' improved in the 1950s. West Germany's prosperity also led to migration from East Germany and the Mediterranean, resulting in changed attitudes towards the expellees. When the perception exists that resources are limited, outsiders become a target of unwarranted blame. Therefore, educational interventions in host communities attempting to combat those narratives would be useful in preparing the ground for incomers. One of the few child refugees who had a relatively positive memory of his arrival highlighted the role of sports, in his case football, in helping with his integration. The integrative nature of sport is also supported by the literature and government policy (Spaaij et al. 2019).

3.2.9 Change in family circumstances

Experiences of war and displacement impacted the ability of parents to provide and care for their children. Traces of mothers undergoing what are categorized as 'breakdowns' or suffering with longer term mental health problems are evident. During the flight there are numerous examples of mothers being unable to parent for short periods, resulting in children's potential exposure to harm. Few, however, referred to longer term poor mental health. Where they did, it was usually euphemistically ('nervous disease') and not much detail was given. There are several factors at work here. First, the stigma and lack of understanding of mental health in the period shapes the narratives. Secondly, expellee narratives tend to heroise mothers highlighting their resilience. Therefore, discussions of problems do not fit into these larger group narratives, that in turn shape individual narratives. Most striking, is the absence of discussion of long-term mental health effects of family members who experienced combat and/or captivity as prisoners of war.

3.2.10 Changing Family Roles

There was significant evidence of changing family roles. Mothers were at times simply unable to parent under the circumstances of flight and forced labour. Children took on a range of responsibilities including finding and stealing basic necessities, providing care for younger siblings and even protecting their mothers from sexual violence. Children were often proud of their contribution to the survival of the family and to the protection of their mothers. Some reflected on the extra-ordinariness of the situation, but few blamed their mothers, instead sympathizing with the extreme difficulties they faced.

Children took on a range of responsibilities...

3.3 Impacts of ACEs on health, well-being and integration

3.3.1 Mental Health

Evidence from research conducted in the 1940s and 1950s as well as the narrative sources contain evidence of adverse impacts on mental health among the expellee children. These included premature maturity, refusal to speak, insomnia, nightmares, bedwetting and headaches (Weber-Newth 2012, 24; Ackermann 2004, 446). Although psychologists and social workers were concerned about the impact of adverse experiences at the time, the limited understandings of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and its effects meant little practical support was available. Instead, children were expected to integrate as quickly as possible, and focussing on rebuilding and integrating economically (Weber-Newth 2012, 24).

Recent studies of elderly expellee Germans have highlighted anxiety, PTSD, a lower quality of life and well-being in their conclusions (Weber-Newth 2012, 27; Beutel, Decker, and Brähler 2007, 212). Individual narratives convey descriptions of trauma and several directly stated life was permanently changed for them after witnessing distressing scenes (Buchholz 2002, 109–13; Morgenstern 1992, 52). Even where the effects of trauma were not directly discussed it is clear in the descriptions, tone and framing of the accounts that their lives were permanently impacted by their memories. Many simply got on with their lives and tried to bury the past, focussing instead on their work, integrating into society and their families, reflecting the outcomes of the research studies referenced above.

The lack of psychological care was reflected on angrily by narrators as they felt they had been let down, especially in comparison with the care available in the 2000s. A number, such as Heinz Buchholz whose memoir was discussed in the introduction, explicitly stated that the act of sharing their life stories was therapeutic. It is evident that the act of writing memoirs was a part of processing individual trauma. It was also clear that trauma was deeply engrained in their stories, even in the cases where it was not reflected on explicitly. One of the key recommendations of the report is to provide spaces in which individuals can use narratives to work through adverse experiences.

3.3.2 Physical Health

Years of poverty, nutritional deficiency and access to limited resources impacted refugee children's physical health. Research conducted in the 1950s showed that refugee children were thinner and smaller than 'native' children and were more prone to poor immunity, decayed teeth, conditions of vitamin deficiency such as postural defects and rickets as well as infections such as tuberculosis. They also had less stamina than other children and were noted as having pale, wilted, elderly skin and sad faces. However, physical recovery was quick and went in line with general material improvements that occurred in Germany in the 1950s (Volker Ackerman 445-6). By the 1960s research noted that they had caught up with peers in growth and height. The wealth of the FRG, access to world class healthcare and social security have provided a context where refugee children were able to live long and healthy lives, thus negating some of the effects of childhood deprivation. The significance of the broader economic context is evident here in terms of creating a context in which children could thrive.

3.3.3 Sense of Loss

A deep sense of loss is a central and unifying experience for several German refugee children. One refugee spoke of 'overflowing with homesickness' when she sees images of home (Suck-Uring 2010). Longing for home is a characteristic often associated with the German expellees and the organisations that represent them. Much of the discourse surrounding home shared among expellees, both in their press and by word of mouth, is nostalgic for a place that never really existed. These longings for lost idealised homelands are common among exiles of all kinds (Malkki 1995). The continued sharing of such depictions has simultaneously been a source of comfort but can also be damaging.

Individuals have been able to retreat to a world of childhood memories where they believed there was little or no strife. However, in reality, their childhoods were shaped by the Nazi dictatorship and genocide. The dwelling in homesick memories has resulted in the development of damaging myths about life before 1945 and a failure to recognise the criminality of the Nazi regime. In turn, these myths have shaped the political choices of refugees, pushing some to extreme right. As loss is such a fundamental element of the migrant experience, this report suggests that providing spaces where these feelings can be explored in a sympathetic but critical manner is important to avoid a nostalgic version of home and the past radicalising individuals.

Loss is a central theme in the personal and collective experience of the German expellees. Over the years they have developed different ways of coming to terms with these feelings of longing. Writing about their experiences has been a source of comfort. As was socialising with other

expellees, especially from the same town or region. Others sought out areas to live or holiday in places that looked like their home. This was of course easier for German expellees as their new homes were geographically and climatically similar their homelands. While not always possible, it is recommended that spaces are provided where individuals can meet and speak about their homes. Where return is not possible artefacts and language could be a means of creating positive connections with the homeland.

3.3.4 Learning and Academic Achievement

Many participants noted that their education suffered due to displacement. Some did not attend school or have access to educational materials for several years and lacked basic skills in reading, writing and literacy. This resulted in feelings of shame and otherness. In the long term most were able to catch up and gained some positive experiences in school. Sympathetic teachers or teachers who were themselves expellees were of support which mirrors the findings of an earlier report into adverse experiences and child refugees by Aberystwyth University (Grosz, Homer, and Hammel, n.d.). Although some of the children spoke in the regional dialect of their homes they were able to follow in class. In addition, their shared language and culture made the integration into education smoother. Research conducted in the 1960s demonstrated that expellee children had largely caught up with their peers educationally and in some cases were even more successful in entering higher education (Gerhardt and Hohenester 1997).

3.3.5 Economic Integration

The quick integration of expellees became a key foundational myth of the FRG. It was put down to the policies of the government and the hard work of the expellees. By the 1960s research highlighted the successful integration of expellees into the economy. By the 1970s, however, regional, and empirical studies illuminated a more complex process. They demonstrated that many refugee families remained poorer than 'native' families well into the 1970s (Connor 2007, 2). The dismantling of the myth continued with later studies focussing on the emotional integration demonstrating that many continued to feel alienated from West German culture into the 2000s (Kossert 2009). The research into expellees demonstrates that integration is a long and complex process. It is, therefore, important to consider how the process changes across the lifespan of individuals.

... many refugee families remained poorer than 'native' families well into the 1970s ...

Individual accounts are shaped by the culture that the author belongs to. It is evident that expellee narratives about integration and hard work are also shaped by wider cultural ideas that exist in German culture. Narratives of employment often highlight their economic integration, success, and commitment to hard work. No doubt individual commitment was important to their success. However, we must also consider the wider context. Economically the FRG experienced a huge boom after 1950 and the government provided support to expellees helping them re-establish themselves economically. Also, expellees' familiarity with the language and culture made integration less challenging generally when compared to other migrants (especially those of a different race and religion) who operate in a language not their mother tongue. Another contributing factor was that German society changed drastically after WWII with the old class system virtually disappearing, resulting in increased opportunities for social mobility for all. The

lesson that can be taken here is the importance of context and the role of governmental support. Where individuals are encouraged to succeed within a wider context of economic prosperity economic integration can occur swiftly. The stories we tell about economic integration are also important as the wider narrative of economic success has influenced how individuals narrate and perceive their own success.

3.3.6 Social and Cultural Integration

In this area there were a range of responses by individuals. Some felt more socially integrated into the FRG than others, whilst a sense of alienation from the mainstream was also felt by some. A number felt that the expellees, unlike other Germans, had been punished twice for the crimes committed by the Nazis. They believe that expellees both shouldered the collective guilt of Nazi crimes as well as losing their homes, culture and community. Some felt that they did not want to admit they were expellees publicly as they feared the stigma associated with that identity. The sense of alienation was usually partnered with extreme right views. These included anti-Eastern European and Russian prejudices and a tendency to obscure the role of the war and Nazism as causes in their expulsion. They also included a downplaying of knowledge of the Holocaust and other crimes.

Individuals who identified with the centre left political party (SPD) in Germany tended to hold less discriminatory views, were more willing to accept German culpability and were less angry about their experiences. Instead, they perceived the expulsions as the consequence of the murderous policies of the Third Reich and helping come to terms with their past. It is important to provide spaces where refugees can discuss their perceptions of what has happened to them. It is equally important to ensure that conversations are facilitated so that individuals can engage critically with the events of their past.

3.3.7 Appreciation and Meaning

Studying refugee narratives in later life is beneficial as there has been space for reflection across their lifespan. Collective victimhood is central to how expellees narrate their experiences. However, there was much evidence of appreciation and meaning making in their memories. They were particularly appreciative of the opportunities open to them as residents of a prosperous Western European country. Individuals noted they were grateful to have avoided living in communist East Germany. They appreciated that many of the opportunities available to them in the West would not have been available had the migration never occurred.

There was also much appreciation also for the struggles experienced by their mothers and women in the post-1945 period more broadly. Mothers were heroised for their resourcefulness, strength, and willingness to risk all for the sake of their children. There is no doubt an element of mythologising underway as there are also numerous tales of women who were unable to parent. There were even numerous cases of filicide where mothers killed their children out of fear of violence by the Red Army (Huber 2019). Nevertheless, the prevailing narratives are of heroization and gratitude.

Sharing identity affirming narratives have also contributed to providing meaning to the East Prussians. Many of the narratives that East Prussians share with each other highlight the historic resilience of the East Prussians, either as tough and hardy agricultural workers used to adversity,

or as the protectors of German culture on a boundary between Germanness and a Slavic lesser culture (Liulevicius 2009). Drawing on these stories of resilience and strength as a community reinforced their identity and underlined their ability to overcome (Arwyn 2020).

Contact with other expellees (and East Prussians) was noted as meaningful and helpful to ease difficult emotions. Expellees were scattered all over Germany meaning that their traditional networks were dispersed. The proximity of others who had gone through a similar experience was very helpful to the children. Some attended school classes that only contained expellee children and were taught by expellee teachers. This was a comfort on one hand but also could result in poor integration into the wider community. The expellee organisations played an important role in bringing expellees together and reconnecting individuals.

3.3.8 Civic Engagement

Several participants noted their commitment to civic engagement as giving meaning to their lives as well as integrating them into local communities. Siegfried Kugies, an expellee who had also been a boy soldier in the war, was convinced that civic engagement was an essential component of a functioning democracy and was proud of his work in local government. Charity work was also an important element of their social engagement. Often, they were involved with charities that supported people in the regions from which they were expelled that assisted with medical supplies, education, sport and cultural exchange after the fall of communism. Those involved were proud of their work and how it supported their former homelands. This work was very cathartic, and individuals processed their homesickness and confirmed they were indeed in a better position having lived in the FRG. This type of work helped integrate individuals further in the West German democracy as well as soothing painful feelings of loss. Civic engagement is to be encouraged as a means of individuals embracing the systems of the host country as well as maintaining connections to their home (depending on circumstances). Also, it is beneficial emotionally on an individual level.

Charity work was also an important element of their social engagement.

3.3.9 Return

Travel to the former homelands contributed to coming to terms with individual loss. Due to the lost homelands being behind the Iron Curtain many were unable to travel until the 1970s and others not until the 1990s. Return allowed individuals to see that materially they had been much better off in the FRG thanks to increased opportunities and social mobility. Conversely, it did also confirm (among some) long held stereotypes that Eastern Europeans were economically and culturally inferior and were not the best custodians of the land. Individuals found the experience of return deeply painful at times but also struck up lasting friendships with people who now lived in their former homes. It, therefore, had a humanising effect breaking down barriers between former foes. Facilitating connections and conversation between former enemies can contribute to the process of coming to terms with adverse experiences and resentment against perpetrator groups that those experiences have caused. These connections are a central part of how societies and individuals heal to move forward from adversity.

3.4 Community and Societal Factors

The support given to expellees by the FRG's government, expellee organisations, the Red Cross and formal religion provided crucial support. It was fundamental to the successful elements of their integration and provides a context for understanding their adverse experiences.

3.4.1 Governmental Support

The German government's support of expellees has varied over time but its interventions in the 1950s provided opportunity and economic stability to many. Refugees and expellees were feared as a potentially destabilising force in the early years of the FRG. They made up 10% of the voting population, had lost virtually everything and so politicians feared their radicalisation.⁵ The government were therefore keen to ensure their swift political integration to avoid radicalisation.

3.4.1.1 Foreign Policy

The context of the Cold War created a situation where foreign policy that suited the expellees also aligned with goals of the government, which was anti-Soviet and anti-Communist. The expellees were useful in the geopolitical context as their displacement made them victims of Soviet aggression. A policy of refusing to recognise Germany's 1945 borders and demand the return of the territories lost after 1945 was central to the FRG's 'Eastern Policy' in the 1950s. The impact of this was twofold: it created a situation where the expellee organisations and some individuals believed that a return to the East was possible, therefore, stoking hopes that would be dashed in the future. On the other hand, the vast majority accepted the revised borders quietly and came to terms with the loss personally (Demshuk 2012, 13).

3.4.1.2 Domestic Policy

In 1949 the FRG established the *Federal Ministry of Displaced Persons, Refugees and War Victims* that was responsible for social policy, integration, compensation, aid and cultural needs of German victims of WWII. It passed several important measures that ensured the rights of and economic support for expellees. The *Federal Law on Refugees and Exiles* (1953) secured the legal status and of citizenship of displaced Germans. It also cemented the term 'expellee' as in law. Another fundamental policy of the Ministry was the *Equalisation of Burdens Law* (1952) that provided compensation to those who had lost property during the war. The expellees, among others, were big benefactors of the economic support given and it helped many re-establish themselves with homes and businesses.

The Ministry also provided funding for research and cultural endeavours. An important production was the *Documents on the Expulsion of the Germans from Eastern-Central Europe 1951-1961* a dossier on the displacement of Germans drawn from thousands of individual accounts. This was an important project for expellee culture as it centred victim narratives within individual storytelling about the expulsions whilst also playing down German crimes during the war. These patterns shape expellee narratives until this day.

5 This had occurred in 'Ethnic German' communities the wake of the WWI border changes.

Beginning in the mid-1960s there was a geo-political shift as the Cold War settled. Concurrently there was a shift to the left in German politics and a sense that the integration of expellees had been achieved. The changing context led to a change in governmental attitudes towards the expellees. The Ministry was shut down in 1969 and the Eastern border with Poland was recognised by the FRG, thus relinquishing the claim to the territories beyond it. Expellees and the political right were enraged feeling that they had been betrayed which has led to the sense of alienation felt by some and fuelled radical views. The support provided by the government before 1970 was fundamental to their successful integration. Considering the political changes that resulted in change of policy more work could have been done with expellee organisations to ensure their support.

3.4.2 Expellee Organisations

Expellee organisations have also played a central role in shaping policy and discourses surrounding expellees, especially in the period before 1970. Beginning in 1947 a range of organisations developed in West Germany that sought to represent the Germans expelled from the East. The most significant organisations are the Federation of Expellees (BdV - *Bund der Vertriebenen*) and the Regional Associations (LMS - *Landsmannschaften*). The BdV represents all expellees in Germany and has tended to act as a political lobby. It was hugely politically influential in the 1950s and early 1960s and had a vast membership.

Alongside the BdV there are 21 Regional Associations (LMS) that represent the regions from which Germans were expelled. The LMS have been very important socially and culturally as they have acted as a centre point for the dispersed population and helped reunite families, friends, and neighbours. They organised annual meetings where expellees come together to celebrate their home region. They produce newspapers and newsletters that disseminate all kinds of material including accounts of the flight and the former homeland. They also have responsibility for running museums and information centres celebrating the culture of the former Eastern territories.

Before the political changes of the 1970s, the expellee organisations had a broad base of support across the political spectrum. However, since the 1970s the views of the organisations have not kept pace with the mainstream and have been associated with the extreme political right. The organisations were fundamentally opposed to the acceptance of Germany's eastern border in the 1970s and continued to openly demand the return of the lost territories up until Germany's reunification in 1990. They have been slow to acknowledge Germany's culpability in the war tending to downplay crimes. They also tend to obscure Germany's role in the causation of the displacement through its vicious war and genocide in Eastern Europe. In the last 30 years since Germany's reunification the organisations have become less relevant politically and focus has shifted to cultural work. Organisations representing the needs of migrants are important for integration and community building. However, they can also become a source of radicalisation and contribute to shaping damaging and uncritical victimhood narratives.

3.5. The Power of Storytelling

Sharing stories about adverse experiences is a central element of coming to terms with a difficult past. As individuals age, they begin to try to make sense of their lives and order those experiences into meaningful life narratives. A prime example is the story shared at the beginning of the report by Heinz Buchholz, who saw the opportunity of writing a memoir as a means of coming to terms with his adverse childhood experiences. Such narratives function on multiple levels as they tell us about how the individual perceives their own life. They are also shaped by the values of the society and time in which they are written. By considering these accounts as more than just memories but also clues into how people view the world, we can unpick the therapeutic and life affirming value of these texts. Writing ones' memoirs assists individuals in working through difficult feelings and making sense of the enormity of the events they endured.

3.5.1 Individual Narratives and Working through the Past

Key themes arise in the narratives of elderly former child refugees, and the process of sharing these narratives is a means of making sense and coming to terms with deep emotions and difficult pasts. These themes are numerous, but this report will focus on three main areas: reclamation of agency, coming to terms with historic experiences and relationships with 'home'.

Powerlessness was a central experience of expellee children in the period 1944-1948. They lived in a country fully occupied by foreign powers with little civil or legal rights.⁶ Despite this reality, attempts to reclaim agency can be found in the stories told by expellees. It is important to note that we are looking at patterns

Powerlessness was a central experience of expellee children in the period 1944-1948.

in stories rather than a reconstruction of events as they happened in the past. One example of stories that reclaim agency are 'trickster' narratives. These are stories where the underdog wins by subverting unfair power structures. Tom and Jerry cartoons are prime example: the underdog mouse uses wit to overcome the more powerful cat. Narratives that follow a 'trickster' pattern appear in expellee stories in several forms, including women using cunning to outwit attackers and the use of trickery to steal extra food or gain a better deal when bartering for goods. These stories highlight the inventiveness and resourcefulness of individuals whilst also providing them with a tool to retrospectively claim agency through storytelling. Thereby, storytelling became central to processing and making sense of their individual traumatic experiences.

Narrative devices, or patterns in the ways that stories are told, are also used to process the unpredictability and threat to life faced by children during this period. It has been noted that when communities undergo periods of extreme stress, rumours and extraordinary tales increase. These tales simplify the complexity of the experience of expulsion and make events more digestible by giving them a character of fate (Kalinke 2002, 169). An example of such a narrative pattern is the 'lucky escape'. Lucky escapes centre around individuals just missing catastrophe because of a lucky intervention of fate. For example, a traffic jam resulted in them not reaching a port on time and, therefore, missing a boat that sank, thus saving their lives. It is not to say that these things did not happen, however, by looking at the language used and ways that the story is framed these stories also carry deeper meanings related to processes of coming to terms with trauma and survival guilt.

6 Especially those under Soviet and Polish rule.

As already established, reconciling one's relationship with home has been an important experience for expellees when working through their adverse experiences. Narratives about home before the flight began are nostalgic with little or no discussion of the darker (personal and political) elements. Nazism is barely discussed, and the deep socio-economic injustices of East Prussian society are glossed over in favour of idealised versions of home. When considering what happened after their departure it is understandable that individuals, who were children at the time, glorify the life before migration. However, this failure to incorporate the context of Nazism into their own life history has resulted in the development of an uncritical victim narrative, which has facilitated a shift to the extreme right. Narratives are very important for working through various feelings and for coming to terms with trauma but also need to be worked through in an empathetic but critical way.

3.5.2 Group Narratives

Narratives shared by groups are also central to the self-perception of the group and how societies come to terms with difficult experiences. Both individual and collective narratives are interlinked and operate in constant dialogue with one and other. For example, narratives about sexual violence against expellees have been influenced by wider group discourses at the time in which they are written. Accounts by women about sexual violence written in the 1950s differ in terms of language, explicitly and frames of reference when compared to those written in the 2000s. This is because German society's understanding of the rape of German women during WWII and broader social norms relating to sexual violence have changed over time. It is therefore important to consider how the intervening time and changing cultural norms shape narratives.

The stories that groups tell about themselves have real live consequences. For example, expellee organisations leveraged their victim status to lobby for the rights of expellees. However, this focus on victimhood has also been problematic as it has resulted in individuals holding radical political views, focussing on their own victim status, and promoting damaging stereotypes of Eastern Europeans. The side effect has been individuals struggling to come to terms with changes in German politics and society and a sense of alienation.

The stories that groups tell about themselves have real live consequences.

Conversely, group narratives have a powerful community building function and help individuals heal together. Expellee organisations have used shared narratives of the past to build solidarity among the community as well as bring individuals together to celebrate their identities. For individuals this has been a great source of comfort and helped the process of integration and coming to terms with adversity. Politically, the power derived from community contributed to their ability to advocate and win big benefits for the group. Shared group narratives are also a source of validation and comfort for those who have been through similar experiences to share and not feel alienated.

4. Conclusions

This report has outlined adverse experiences experienced by German children who were displaced from Eastern Europe. Evidence for adverse experiences before migration was sparse with most highlighting the happiness of their childhoods, despite them taking place in the context of a fascist dictatorship and war. This was attributed to the broader trends in the community which downplay adversity before the Soviet invasion as a means of highlighting their victimhood afterwards.

Some of the most severe adverse experiences were endured during their flight from East Prussia and the period of occupation between 1945-1949. Children were deeply impacted by the violent reprisals, physical destruction and social and economic collapse that occurred in Germany after 1945. These included physical and sexual violence, starvation, forced labour, restricted services and no civil rights. Negative experiences continued after resettlement with children being singled out as other and feeling enduring shame for their poverty and lack of education. Although understandings of the impact of adverse experiences on the mental health of the children was not fully understood at the time, it was noted that refugee children displayed symptoms of what is now recognised as PTSD.

The report also highlighted the fundamental importance of the wider social, economic and political context for shaping how individuals perceive their experiences. Collective understandings of the past have been central in shaping individual recollections and the sense of grievance or acceptance perceived by individuals. Broader cultural ideas about the 'German Economic Miracle' have shaped perceptions about economic integration and educational attainment, whereas a sense of uncritical victimhood has led to grievances and alienation.

The shift from economic collapse to miracle in the 1950s had a direct impact on the lives of refugee children. Not only did their material situation improve but economic growth over a prolonged period combined with increased social mobility to directly benefit refugee families. The overall economic prosperity also meant that refugees were compensated for losses allowing them to build secure and permanent homes and businesses. The spirit of rebuilding and renewal was important for shaping the narratives of German expellee children about themselves as they have felt that through the virtue of hard work they have succeeded in life. The existence of organisations and spaces for expellees has played an important emotional role by addressing needs of the community as well as lobbying for political concessions.

Although most individuals tended not to speak directly of the long-term consequences of their experiences their impact was always present in narratives. The lack of psychological understanding and care was deeply troubling. Many have used sharing narratives of their experiences to soothe and work through their experiences, demonstrating the power of storytelling for both the community and the individual. Despite the integrative and healing power of narratives it is also important to critically evaluate one's own life story and its relationship to history to avoid alienation and radicalisation.

5. Recommendations

Much work can be done once individuals have arrived in the host country to support and aid individuals. These recommendations are based primarily on actions that can be taken after displaced children have arrived.

5.1 Access to psychological care and therapies

The unavailability of psychological care and sheer lack of understanding of adverse childhood experiences, PTSD and trauma before the 1970s was one of the most striking elements of the report. Individuals simply could not gain access to the care they needed. It is recommended that individuals are provided with specialist services to support the long-term processes of coming to terms with adversity.

Shame and a loss of dignity were emotions that came up regularly were among the most poignant, lasting over a long period of time. Providing spaces and resources to work through those emotions and to share life affirming narratives would assist individuals in overcoming the legacy of their adverse experience. The power of the stories that we tell ourselves and others about ourselves are deeply powerful and can shape the reality of our lives. Providing support to form and reinforce positive narratives about one's experiences and resilience helps individuals make sense of adversity.

5.2 Opportunities to share narratives and reflect critically

The report has emphasized the importance of storytelling as a therapeutic process, a life-affirming act and as a shaper of reality. Storytelling has aided individuals in working through their experiences but can also lead to the affirming of negative and uncritical understandings of the past. Opportunities to share individual life narratives (through various media) within therapeutic spaces at different stages of life can help overcome both adversity and develop critical attitudes towards one's own experiences.

5.3 Support in working through negative narratives of the past

Areas which came to be problematic in the narratives of expellees included: an uncritical view of their own victimhood, attitudes towards former enemies and the idealisation of homeland. Adverse experiences and the shared group understandings of these experiences directly shaped the attitudes of individuals. Providing support (workshops/media/exhibitions) to individuals and the broader community to develop a critical approach to their past can help with reconciliation and avoid the radicalization of individuals.

5.3.1 Governmental Support is fundamental

The support provided by the West German government was fundamental to the experiences of German expellees. Although this support did not necessarily alleviate the impact of individual psychological harm the context of a prosperous society aided integration and improved individuals' lives. The opportunities for education, social mobility, economic success and resources available contributed to the material quality of life of expellees. They were, in the most, part able to build stable economic lives, resettle in safe and high-quality homes and through economic success build self-esteem. It also contributed to building a sense of loyalty to the state avoiding mass radicalisation.

5.4 Prepare the host society

Some post migration adverse experiences could be avoided through the preparation of host societies to welcome incoming migrants. Educating host communities about the cultural differences, experiences but also commonalities and shared values between them and migrants breaks down misconceptions and prejudices. Schools, non-profits and religious institutions could compliment the work of government agencies in this area.

5.5 Provide opportunities for civic engagement and leisure activities

It became evident that the engagement of individuals in civil society, through leisure activities and non-profit work, as well as political structures, through local government, helped integrate individuals into their host society. The non-profit work undertaken in their former homelands was also a contributing factor in building better relationships with perceived former enemies and coming to terms with the loss of their homeland. Providing opportunities for engagement with the host society integrates individuals on multiple levels and strengthens their commitment as citizens of that society.

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