“In Our Own Way”: Tradition and Transmission

Among Later-Generation Transylvanian Saxons in Canada

By © Rebecca Horeth

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Abstract

This thesis examines the motivations and directions of Transylvanian Saxon folklore transmission among later-generation immigrant members of the Transylvanian Saxon community in Aylmer, Ontario. Interviews, participant observation, and attendance at cultural performances and events inform this ethnographic study that applies performance theory to explore the concepts of nostalgia, authenticity, and tradition and their roles within a small diasporic organization. Additionally, the author investigates her own position as a third-generation Transylvanian Saxon and leader within the community. The thesis begins with background information leading to the author’s participation and research in the community, followed by introductions to the study’s participants. Transylvanian Saxon heritage and migration narratives are applied as a framework for presenting the group’s history and participants’ expression of nostalgia for an unknown *Heimat* or homeland. Next, a case study of a homecoming event in Germany illustrates the varying degrees of engagement with costume authenticity between different Saxon groups. Then, recorded folklore is presented as a key component to transmission in small immigrant communities where cultural practices are passed down, passed on, and passed back between members. Finally, contemporary material culture is presented in a case study demonstrating how nostalgia, authenticity and tradition are being creatively interpreted among later-generation Saxons and non-Saxons.

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Chapter 1. Introduction: Confronting the Intangible Obstacle

I remember lying on the plush carpet in my grandparents' farmhouse living room, cozied under one of my grandma's too-small knitted blankets with my toes wiggling out, lined up next to my brother and our twin cousins, my grandma sitting on the worn-out grey couch quietly calling attention to her four squirming grandchildren as she tried to coax us into naptime. I was young enough for the adults to feel that I needed to nap, but as the eldest and only granddaughter, I was convinced I was, in fact, old enough to stay awake. My grandma sighed and conceded that if we wanted to stay awake for a little while longer that afternoon, she could tell us a story about the *old country* where she had grown up until she was ten years old, about my age. My brother, the youngest of us all, started to drift asleep while my cousins groaned and abruptly stopped their fidgeting, feigning sleep to avoid another anecdote of our grandparents' childhood. In the moment, my hesitation in deciding my next move gave my grandma the opportunity to sigh her conclusion, "Maybe next time," as she put her hands to her knees to hoist herself off the couch and return to the kitchen where my mom had been finishing up the lunch dishes. Wide awake on the carpeted floor, I stared at the popcorn ceiling and hoped that maybe next time she would tell us the story.

1.1 Growing up Saxon in Canada

It was not as though I had never heard these stories before. My grandmother was particularly enthusiastic about telling us about the old country–Transylvania–and the fact that she and her family had to leave their home abruptly, that her almost fourteen-year-old brother had to dress in girls' clothes so that he would not be recruited into the military and could stay with their mother as they left Transylvania in the autumn of 1944. I was less interested in her stories of

escaping war and more curious about why my grandmother had only a seventh-grade education (evidently, with the benefit of hindsight, these stories aligned), but I was too impatient to listen to either. I was an avid reader from a young age and, to my dismay at the time, the only English-language "chapter book" at my grandparents' home in southwestern Ontario was an evacuation and immigration memoir written by a distant cousin, a story similar to my grandmother's experience. It is the story of a young girl who grew up in Transylvania, the village events that led up to her family's departure, and her account of her family's migration to the United States. *Fleeing to the Friendly Enemy* by Barbara Ohler Weber was my first foray, around age ten or eleven, into gaining a deeper understanding of my family's heritage and history.

Transylvanian Saxons are a German ethnic minority group who lived in the region of Transylvania in present-day Romania.[1] Although participants in my research include both Transylvanian Saxons and non-Saxons, I frame my work around Transylvanian Saxons as the pivotal group members driving the transmission of their folklore. This is a community I grew up in as a paternal third-generation Transylvanian Saxon, attending events at the Saxonia Hall and sitting under the banquet tables to get a front-row seat to watch the dancers in their beautiful costumes, hoping one day to join in on their routines. Today, I regularly attend events at another Saxon club in Canada, the Transylvania Club in Kitchener, Ontario, as well as in Europe. Together the Saxonia Hall and the Transylvania Club are the two remaining Saxon clubs in Canada. This community plays a significant role in my everyday life. Overall, I spend an average of twenty hours a week working on hall-related tasks, including planning and facilitating dance practices and cultural exchange group visits, managing the club's social media accounts, writing

[1] Some still do. However, the majority of those who continue to actively participate in Saxon cultural practices in Canada are descended from Transylvanian Saxons who migrated to Canada after the Second World War, as I discuss in Chapter Two.

the club's quarterly newsletter, curating the club's library and cultural collection, helping to cook food for the club's monthly fundraisers, bartending at events, and attending board meetings.

My grandmother, Rosina Horeth often tried to teach my cousins, my brother and me about our Transylvanian Saxon roots. She told us stories about her homeland, where she, my grandfather and most of the older aunts, uncles, and cousins in our family were born.

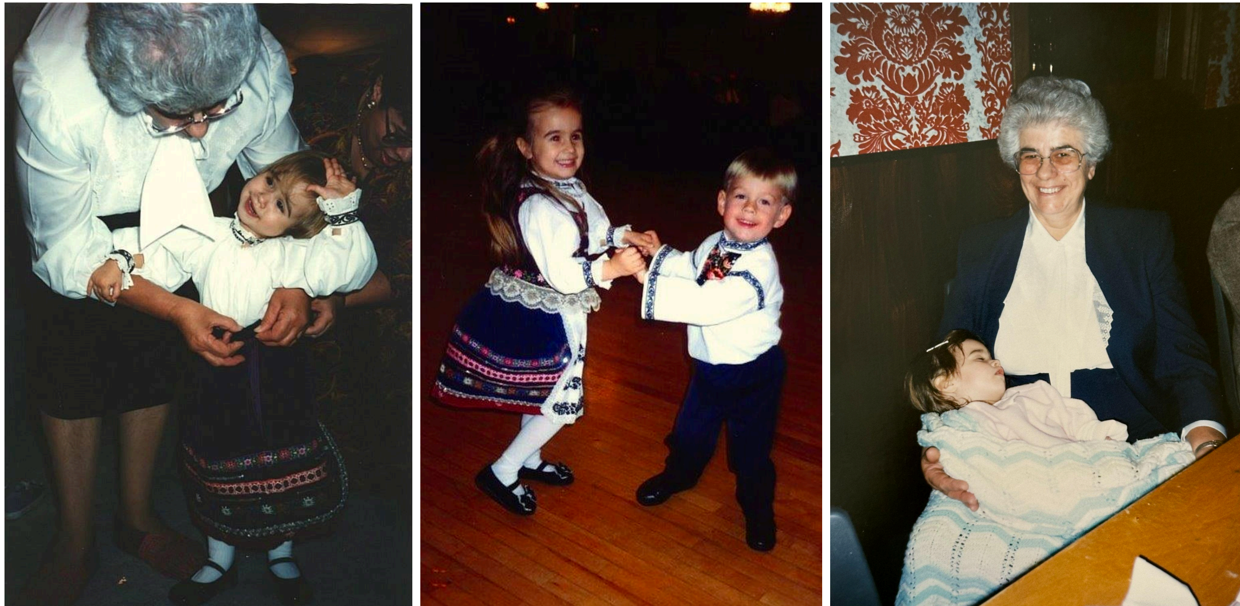

Figure 1.1: My grandmother and aunt help me put on the Transylvanian Saxon folk costume (*Tracht*); Figure 1.2 Dancing in the costume with one of my cousins; Figure 1.3: My grandmother holding me as I sleep at the end of an event at the Saxonia Hall (Photos contributed by Karen Horeth).

She made us adjustable, child-sized *Trachten*[2] and promised our own full ensemble once we stopped growing. She encouraged us to dance in the children's folk group at the German-Canadian Club Saxonia Hall in Aylmer, Ontario, which my aunts–her two daughters–facilitated when I was a child. For a brief time in the early 2000s, I stopped participating in the dance group because I was more interested in the ballet, jazz, and tap classes I took with friends from school. Besides, I often did not understand what was happening at Saxon events, where many of the adults spoke German. However, my interest in learning about

[2] The *Tracht* is the Transylvanian Saxon folk costume; further examination of the *Tracht* is included in Chapter Three.

Transylvanian Saxon culture and traditions themselves deepened after my grandmother passed away suddenly in 2006 when I was fourteen years old. Suddenly, I was responsible for my own learning when my family's obvious link in the "passing down traditions" chain had been broken. Suddenly, I had to determine on my own the "right way" to continue practicing my Transylvanian Saxon traditions, and I wanted to creatively engage the help of the community at the Saxonia Hall.

1.2 Returning to the Saxonia Dancers

In 2009 when I was 17 years old, noticing that I was finally interested in learning more about my heritage, my father, John Horeth Sr., encouraged me to participate in the annual *Jugendlager* or "youth exchange" for young Transylvanian Saxons from Canada, the United States, Germany, Austria, and Romania. These five countries are home to the diaspora of Transylvanian Saxons today. The exchange was in Austria, and after having met several dance group members from the five countries, I was inspired to return to the dance group I had left as a disinterested adolescent. Unfortunately, the dance group, formed in 1968 (Wagner et al. 1982, 129), had succumbed to symptoms experienced by many immigrant cultural organizations after one or two generations had passed through it and was functionally defunct by 2008. Political scientist Monica Iorio and cultural historian Andrea Corsale describe such symptoms of weakened ties to diasporic homelands as "due to assimilation into new living places and mixing of ancestries among subsequent generations" (Iorio and Corsale 2012, 201). While the timing of the Saxonia Dancers' assimilation to Canada did not align with the wave of ethnic identity crises that dancer and ethnochoreologist Anthony Shay identified from the 1960s (Shay 2006, 45), each subsequent generation of dancers since the original first-generation immigrant group gradually

shifted their interests away from the Saxonia Hall and towards the larger Canadian society. My own disinterest as an adolescent fit within this pattern observed among second- and third-generation immigrants.

Confronting the intangible obstacle of Saxon assimilation to the Canadian way of life, my father helped me contact former members of the Saxonia Hall's folk dance group. Several other second- and third-generation immigrants who had grown up attending regular get-togethers and social events at the Saxonia Hall had stopped gathering at the club by 2009. Together, we invited those former dancers and their children to a dance practice. The fact that the original group had dissolved illustrates the Transylvanian Saxon fears of assimilation into North American society were not entirely unfounded, as examined by historian Sacha Davis. The Saxon educated class who remained in the homeland as emigration from Transylvania increased during and after the First World War perceived "abandonment of traditional practices in favour of a homogenizing modernity stripped of cultural specificity" as the main threat to Saxon culture in the new host country (Davis 2012, 160). Although the dance group at the Saxonia Hall has not been totally abandoned, the overall homogenization of the club's membership with its surrounding Canadian society continues in 2024 as predicted by the ancestral educated class.

One dancer, Daniel Pfingstgraef, considered the differences between Saxon events in Europe and in Canada. Daniel observed, "There's not that many of us; we don't marry people that are Saxon anymore because there's just not enough people. We are much more integrated with the rest of our communities, where there [in Germany] it seemed like most of them were married or dating someone Saxon because that's their social circle, whereas we don't have that here because we don't have enough people." The Transylvanian Saxon fixation on cultural loss is not unexpected; Finnish folklorist Pertti Anttonen acknowledges that immigrant folklore research

historically concentrated on "'the loss of traditions' when people migrate, with the research focus set on comparing what kind of folklore people had possessed in their places of origin and what they had no longer mastered in their places of immigration" (2005, 49). However, by reaching out to former dancers in 2009, my father (and I, by association), turned to nostalgia as a communication tool to reconstitute and restore the group and, along with it, the group's immigrant folklore. Gender and cultural memory scholar Sinead McDermott identifies one function of nostalgia as "a means of defiance against attempts to erase or deny the past" (2002, 404). Among both Saxon members of the German-Canadian Club (Saxonia Hall) and non-Saxon members, nostalgia continues to be an attractive factor in their cultural participation. Still today, new members, like non-Saxon dancers Justin and Dave, seek to replicate the experiences their first-generation immigrant parents sentimentally described of arriving in Canada and participating in cultural or homeland organizations in the 1980s.

1.3 Rethinking Generations of Transylvanian Saxons in Canada

What drives the transmission of folklore in small, later-generation diasporic groups? This thesis centres around a group of later-generation Transylvanian Saxons in Canada at the German-Canadian Club of Aylmer, Ontario (Saxonia Hall). It is a multi-generational group in two senses: this project's participants range in age from twenty-two to sixty-four (with other club members ranging from childhood to their nineties), but the group is also a combination of first-, second-, third- and later generation immigrants to Canada. Thus, this "later generation" group contains multiple generations with varying degrees of distances from their homelands. I am part of this group as a third-generation Transylvanian Saxon and, along with my contemporaries both in age and in our generational distance from Transylvania, we gather around the learning and

sharing of Saxon cultural practices. I am born in 1992 and the majority of the participants in this study were born between 1992 and 2002. Immigrant cultural experiences have been examined from the perspectives of first-generation immigrants (those who were born in another country and live in the new "host" country), second-generation (children of first-generation), third-generation (grandchildren of first-generation) and "later-generation" referring to third-, fourth-, fifth- (and so on) generations of immigrants (Iorio and Corsale 2012, 202; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1983, 43; Nahachewsky 2002, 176; Shukla 2005, 14). The literature surrounding immigrants and the language of generations tends to focus specifically on a more contained group, usually comprised of recent immigrants and their children. However, more time has passed for the group I examine in this thesis, so more generations are involved and there are multiple interwoven threads and connections to "home." As I reflect on the language of immigrant generations, I come to understand that the term "second-" or "third-generation," may be outdated as it does not describe someone who has multiple degrees of separation from their ancestral homeland. For example the identity of someone like myself, who has two grandparents born in Transylvania, one born in Canada (to Belgian parents), and one born in Belgium, does not fit into the established framework. I may be a third-generation Transylvanian Saxon immigrant to Canada, but this is only true when considering my paternal roots.

In this thesis, I use the descriptor "later generation" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1983) as a more encompassing term to include participants who are distinctly second- or third-generation immigrants alongside those whose identities are more complex. "Later-generation" acknowledges the complexities of subsequent immigrant generations (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1983, 40; Iorio and Corsale 2012, 203), especially as children and grandchildren of the first generation married outside of the community, but also because some "second-generation"

immigrants are, for example, second-generation on one parent's side while third-generation on the other parent's side. The term "later-generation" allows flexibility with these varying relations to participants' Transylvanian Saxon ancestors' arrivals in Canada.

This thesis contributes to studies in immigrant folklore by highlighting the voices of later-generation immigrants who continue cultural practices introduced to the host community upon the arrival of their first-generation immigrant ancestors. Although my project focuses on a small group in Aylmer, Ontario, Canada, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's observation applies to this work:

> Memories of the Old World experiences and the trauma of immigration may fade with the distance from the Old World, the passage of time, migrations within the United States, marriage with members of other communities, and entry into other spheres of American life. With possibly eight great-grandparents born in possibly eight different countries, a fourth-generation child will form and display cultural loyalties in ways that are complex, open to considerable choice, and worthy of study in their own right. (Kirshenblatt Gimblett 1983, 43)

It is time to return to the language of immigrant generations and rethink this identifying vocabulary in the present where, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett proposes, the complexities of assimilation and inter-cultural families in the new, "host" country blur the lines of how a person describes their roots. Woven through the experiences and voices of later-generation Transylvanian Saxon and non-Saxon immigrants to Canada who are involved with the Saxonia Hall, are the concepts of nostalgia, authenticity, identity, belonging, tradition, and transmission.

Meanwhile, as folklorist Katarzyna Marcol describes, "texts of folklore shifted from communicative to cultural memory, whose construction is largely dependent on institutions and the authorities" (Marcol 2023, 96). While my work focuses primarily on members of the German-Canadian Club (Saxonia Hall), they are also members of the umbrella organization, the *Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Kanada*, (the Alliance of Transylvanian Saxons

in Canada), as are members of the Transylvania Club in nearby Kitchener, Ontario. The *Landsmannschaft*, as an institution, seeks to upkeep Transylvanian Saxon traditions in Canada and is the formal authority on Saxon heritage and culture for participants in this project. I emphasize that the *Landsmannschaft*'s authority is formal because individual members from both clubs bring their own experiences and specializations on certain areas of Saxon folklore over others when they unite at dance rehearsals, choir practices, cooking sessions, and annual events. When such institutions as the *Landsmannschaft* exist to define the boundaries of cultural practices and to lead the people who perform them, it is necessary to also note, as folklorist Juwen Zhang does, that "it is the unity that holds them together under a collective identity. This unity (not uniformity) is the shared folklore-in-practice, or *folkloric identity*, maintained by 'small groups,' 'here-and-now.'" (2015, 450).

Existing folkloristic studies on dance tend to examine choreography and staged performances of authenticity, contrasting them against social dance as "real folklore" (Nahachewsky 2002; Macotsis and Turner 2006; Quigley 2016; Wright 2017; Feinberg 2018; Shay 2021). To contribute to this part of the field, I use folk dance to examine how transmission occurs and has shifted in later-generation immigrant communities where the notion of the group is also in flux. I also contribute to Material Culture studies (Hertz 2021; Shukla 2015) through the lens of Bendix's *In Search of Authenticity* (1997) to analyze how the people at the Saxonia Hall negotiate the transmission of their cultural expressions as a sub-group of the international Transylvanian Saxon network. Although Dan Ben-Amos expresses that "both the performers and the audience have to be in the same situation and be part of the same reference group ([1972] 2020, 33-34)," I investigate situations when members of the group do not explicitly identify with

the same point of reference but rather with familiarities in their new context (as immigrants and descendants) used to place themselves within the group.

Finally, there is limited literature available that is related to Transylvanian Saxon immigration to Canada (Wagner et al. 1982; Wieden 1986; Kroner 2001; Scholtes 2016). Most Transylvanian research focuses on Hungarian Transylvanians (Brubaker et al. 2006; Quigley 2016) or Transylvanian Saxons in Germany (Davis 2012; Koranyi 2022; Verdery 1985). Noteworthy is the fact that among the limited Saxon literature, even fewer publications are available in English. These are most often self-published histories or migration stories specific to individual villages or families (Frim 1969; Intschert 1989; Ohler Weber and Holland, 1996; Emrich 2011; Theissler [2012] 2014). These are often the property of household collections, received as gifts or through family projects over the years, but generally not accessible to the public. If I knew of a book and knew who owned a copy, I could borrow it. As my interest in Saxon history became more known among the clubs' members, further reading recommendations were made to me. Now, I have my own private collection of Saxon-related literature in English and German and am working to make these and similar books available to the Saxon community in Canada through my work at the Saxonia Hall in Aylmer, Ontario. On the other hand, in German, Transylvanian Saxon folklore has been examined from a European documentary/*Volkskunde* and historic lens focusing on symbols of identity and belonging (Sedler 2002, 2023; Hutter and Sedler 2007; Klusch 2002; Schiel 2023). I investigate Transylvanian Saxon folklore ethnographically and as a member of the Canadian community. Throughout my work, I constantly negotiate my position as a cultural insider, but also as a researcher–the folklorist outsider. I problematize notions of belonging from the vantage point of Transylvanian

Saxons in Canada who have adapted their traditions to their geographic context, and their unspoken acceptance of change within seemingly long-standing cultural practices.

1.4 Methodology

"You want to hear something? Actually, this could be helpful for you."

Kate Pfingstgraef

* * *

Throughout this project, I apply ethnographic fieldwork grounded in folklore (Gilman and Fenn 2019) and qualitative research (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater 2007) to explore the moments that surprised, intrigued or disturbed me and investigate participants' responses to the transmission of folklore at hand. Positioning myself as a researcher within a group to which I have belonged for several years and within which I have deep roots and strong existing relationships, had unexpected benefits and fascinating challenges (Gilman and Fenn 2019, 16-21). Thus, my work follows Barbara Myerhoff's "turn towards home" (1979). As folklorists Jack Kugelmass ([1986] 1996) and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1983, 2007) similarly turned their work away from the "other" and towards their own communities, my ethnographic project began as a result of my familiarity with participants in my research and with our shared Saxon heritage.

In Kugelmass's *Miracle of Intervale Avenue*, I empathized deeply with the central informant, Moishe Sacks, who was innovative and open-minded about participation in a Jewish congregation in order to continue the community's cultural and religious practices ([1988] 1996, 50-53). Sacks's comment in response to a question about who would lead the South Bronx congregation in his absence also resonated with me; he says, "That's not fair to put so much responsibility on me" (Kugelmass [1988] 1996, 187). He emphasizes that the longevity of the

community was due to all the people involved, not one specific person and that the burden of being the designated leader adds pressure to an already challenging task of preservation and continuity. Sacks further observes that people do not describe the congregation as a place that "used to be a shul" because it continued on, even with the obstacles it encountered as a result of assembling an aging population (Kugelmass [1988] 1996, 188). I similarly understand that the Saxon community in Aylmer, Ontario, continues as a result of the many hands at work, not the efforts of a single person. Kirin Narayan's *Alive in the Writing* further guided my approach and is a valuable tool as I negotiate these personal experiences, my fieldwork, and ethnographic writing (2012).

Although I understood that I hold a dual position of insider as a longstanding member of the group and outsider as an ethnographer, it was through the interview process that I learned about how my position affected my friends' and family members' approaches to participating in my project. For example, I often needed to preface interviews with an explanation about my research focusing on the interviewee's experience of activities at the Saxonia Hall; otherwise, in response to a question about how they perceived an event, the interviewees responded something along the lines of "Well, you were there, you remember." I also had not anticipated how previous research participation experience would affect my friends' and family members' understanding of folklore research methods. At first, some would laugh as I popped out of my role leading dance practice to quickly jot down field notes about something that had been said or done. Comments like "That can't be real research!" and "Can I try making these kinds of notes?" were frequent when I began my fieldwork in May 2023. Eventually, the participants understood I was observing the everyday life of the group and, at events or in regular conversation outside of

practices, an idea crossed their mind, and I would hear an excited claim of "Here is something for your research!" or "I have something to put in your paper!"

From May 2023 to March 2024, I conducted twelve audio-recorded interviews and several follow-up conversations. I was a participant observer for the duration of the research project. This was and remains the most challenging method in my work because I came to understand that I was a living member of the research community. It is not always ideal to use the terms "we" and "our," but I have examined my vocabulary throughout this work which is based on my research but also on experiences I have had and on my own understanding of the group to which I belong. It was difficult to separate my research from my daily life because they became one and the same. In conversations with my participants and supervisor, Dr. Jillian Gould, I explained that at some point, I needed to clearly define an "end" to my fieldwork so that I could begin writing while the group and my life within the group continued onwards.

Not only do I turn towards my own "home" as Myerhoff does, but throughout my work, I write introspectively to analyze my actions as a leader in the Aylmer, Ontario Saxon community where I am the Cultural Groups Facilitator. Anthropologist Ruth Behar's (1996, 2009) and communications scholar Carolyn Ellis's (1999, 2004, 2016) work in autoethnography are useful guides to my work, given the central position I hold within the group. I am both a dedicated member of the Saxonia Hall and the leader of its dance group. I am also a member of the club's Board of Directors and the Vice-President of the *Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Kanada*. I hold several central leadership positions within the community of Transylvanian Saxons in Canada, and many of the current dance group members associate their participation in the group with an existing relationship with me. My work goes beyond Myerhoff's and Kugelmass's turn toward their own groups as I turn toward and examine myself and my roles

within the group.

I follow Behar's framework of embedding her vulnerable personal experience within her research to establish an autoethnographic style that weaves together the formerly binary research "subject" and researcher roles ([1988] 1996, 28). However, unlike autoethnography, the main focus of this project is not my experience alone, but the combined experience of my peers, community elders, and me. Therefore, I turn to autoethnography as a method that guided my work throughout this project, but not as the central direction of the ethnography. Autoethnography helped me to better examine my own position in the community as a leader and decision-maker, especially in my role as dance group facilitator at the Saxonia Hall, while I followed the "turn" towards my own community. While autoethography centres the author as the key research subject, I position myself among other significant participants using autoethnographic methodology. To support my inward analysis and positioning, I kept field notes and journal entries about my personal experiences with the ideas at the forefront of my work.

Behar aptly refers to Barbara Myerhoff's reflections on ethnography within one's own community, recalling that Myerhoff "'spent a great deal of time agonizing about what [she] was doing–was it anthropology or a personal quest?'" (Behar 2009, 257). This experience especially resonated with me as my research took place within a community I have not only deeply committed to for almost fifteen years–with all the joy, heartache, stress, and relief that accompany such a personal endeavour–but one that has been part of my whole life. My mother, Karen, took notice of the passion I have for our group and the Saxon culture, saying. "I think it was when the Austrians were at our club this year, 2023, you were just so happy. I just saw you that night as happier than I had seen you in a while. You just seemed so happy, almost joyful. As a parent, you always want your kids to be happy." Perhaps this was also the motivation my dad

had when he helped me reestablish the group in 2009.

Figure 1.4: From left, me, Derek, Daniel and Kate dancing at the Saxonia Hall during the Austrian group's visit (Perry 2023).

How many times has this project brought a tightness to my chest and welled tears in my eyes? I have lost count. Behar famously challenges autoethnographers to become vulnerable observers because "anthropology that doesn't break your heart just isn't worth doing anymore" (1996, 177). Whether it is the joy my mother identified or the heartbreak I feel as I reflect on Saxon experiences I missed or will never have the opportunity to try, I rest assured, guided by Carolyn Ellis's work in autoethnography, that my deep personal longing to continue participating in Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices in Canada can, should, and will have an impact on my work, and my writing is not separate from my research process (1999, 670; Bochner and Ellis 2016, 80). Part of my challenge with autoethnography is not being vulnerable with the folklore research community but with the Saxon community; in Ellis's words, it is a "vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written or having any control over

how readers interpret it" (1999, 672). Earlier in this introduction, I relied on my memory of my grandmother's storytelling and how I started facilitating the Saxonia Hall's dance group in 2009. I do not have field notes about those experiences, but they are woven into the fabric of my being; they are narratives with which I have introduced myself to friends who question my time commitments to a place that often leads me to feel stressed or angry, as I grasp for traditions that seem to be just out of reach while simultaneously feeling comfort and optimism as I reunite with friends I have made over the years and as I share parts of my heritage with people around me through school programming, cooking, and even the decorations in my home. Ellis insists that constructing narratives like mine through memory is equally valuable to qualitative work as ethnographic fieldwork. She notes that "memory does not work in a linear way, nor does life either, for that matter," and "the topical is interwoven with the chronological" (Ellis 1999, 675). Readers will notice that my own account of being a later-generation Transylvanian Saxon is similarly interwoven with fieldwork and theory as it suits the context.

1.5 Participants

In the autumn of 2009, the youngest new dancer to join was seven years old, and the oldest was forty-five. Almost fifteen years later, this youngest dancer, Kate Pfingstgraef–upon learning the age of the group's now youngest members, who are fifteen years old themselves–compared her years of participation in the Saxonia Hall's dance group and remarked, "That's a whole lifetime!" It seems fitting Kate, her brother Daniel, my husband Reilly Ragot and several of our friends and family members who together form the present community at the German-Canadian Club (Saxonia Hall) supported my research and reflected on their experiences learning, continuing, and teaching Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices in our Canadian

context. While many members of the Saxonia Dancers and Saxonia Hall community as well as members of the Transylvania Club participated in my project from Spring 2023 to Winter 2024, the ethnography in this thesis centres around Kate Pfingstgraef, Daniel Pfingstgraef, Julie Pfingstgraef, Derek Gotzmeister, John Horeth, Karen Horeth, Reilly Ragot, Justin Toth, and Dave.[3] Through participant-observation, I was a participant myself as a leader in the community I observed. There are similarities between our families' immigrant stories and how we all became regulars at the German-Canadian Club Saxonia Hall in Aylmer, Ontario.

Kate Pfingstgraef and Daniel Pfingstgraef are siblings and joined the dance group at the Saxonia Hall together in the Fall of 2009 when I began leading the group. At the time of writing, Daniel is 26 years old and owns a software company that specializes in healthcare and event management. 22-year-old Kate is a university student in Health Sciences pursuing Audiology. Kate and Daniel's father, David, is Transylvanian Saxon–both of his parents immigrated to Canada in the 1950s, like my grandparents. Kate and Daniel often joke with the other dancers about who is "more Saxon" since they have Saxon roots on both their mother's and father's sides. They are third-generation immigrants on their father's side of the family, and fourth-generation on their mother's side.

Daniel and Kate's mother, **Julie Pfingstgraef,** 53, originally pursued a teaching career but eventually began working at her husband's audiology clinic. Julie is a third-generation immigrant; her father has Hungarian German, or *Schwaben*, roots, and her mother has ancestry in Transylvania, but both were born in Canada. In fact, her maternal grandmother is the family member who immigrated to Canada from Transylvania.

[3] All participants in this project consented to the use of their name and any identifying descriptions. However, Dave requested that only this shortened version of his full name be used because part of his contributions to the project include depictions of alcohol use. See Appendix B for the full list of participants.

Derek Gotzmeister is an airplane mechanic and is 26 years old. He told me that his family had been involved at the Saxonia Hall often over the years, including his grandmother, who volunteered as a cook in the kitchen for cultural banquets hosted by the club. In 2015, he recalls attending a "Doors Open" event at the Saxonia Hall and being invited to dance. Since then, he has been eager to take advantage of the opportunities offered at the club to help plan events, become a member of the Board of Directors, and even sit on the Alliance of Transylvanian Saxons in Canada as the cultural representative. Derek's paternal side of the family is Transylvanian Saxon, although he refers to them as "German," and clarifies that some of his German relatives grew up in the former Yugoslavia. His mother's side of the family is Dutch. All of Derek's grandparents immigrated to Canada, making him a third-generation immigrant.

Similar to siblings Kate and Daniel, my brother, **John Horeth Jr.,**[4] age 29, and I grew up participating in programs and attending events at the Saxonia Hall. John is a software developer at our fathers's industrial distribution business. Although he prefers to spend his free time focusing on his musical, painting, and gaming hobbies, he contributes several hours each month as a volunteer at the Saxonia Hall, both in the kitchen and with facility maintenance. I have a Bachelor of Education and worked in education before beginning my Master of Arts in Folklore, but I have worked for the family business at different times as well. While I am deeply interested in the history and culture of Transylvanian Saxons and engaging publicly with our community through performances and community workshops, my brother would rather remain in a backstage role. He attributes his participation at the Saxonia Hall to a family priority rather than an interest in his cultural heritage. Along with our first cousins, my brother and I learned a great

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[4] As we do not use the "Junior" title in my family, throughout this thesis, when I refer to my father I will use "John Horeth Sr." and I will call my brother "John."

deal about our Transylvanian Saxon heritage from our Grandma Horeth. Our grandparents met and married in Canada, but they both left Transylvania in 1944 with their families during the evacuation of Northern Transylvania in September of that year. We are third-generation Transylvanian Saxons on our father's side of the family. In our small extended family, the cousins all have one Saxon parent and one non-Saxon parent.

Derek, John, and I all have the experience of mixed heritages within our immediate families, with one family member (our fathers in both cases) being the Transylvanian Saxon. Interestingly, our position as *Halb Sox* or "Half Saxons" as we say among our Saxon friends, has led us to understand more clearly which of our individual family traditions are Saxon. For example, in December, the three of us explained to Daniel that the folk belief that our grandmothers used to tell us, "Don't eat chicken on New Year's Day; it's bad luck," is a Saxon belief. We were certain this was the case because all had heard about it from our Saxon families. Daniel, on the other hand, heard the belief from both sides of his family and simply thought it was just a family superstition. Thus, later-generation immigrant learning among Transylvanian Saxons happens both within culturally relevant spaces and in negative spaces, as Saxons notice differences between family encounters.

John's and my mother, **Karen Horeth**, age 57, was born to Belgian parents–her father was born in Belgium only eighteen months before immigrating with his family to Canada, and her mother was born in Saskatchewan, Canada, to Belgian immigrant parents. Her mixed immigrant background is a good example of the use of the term "later-generation" in this thesis, as Karen is second-generation on her father's side, but third-generation on her mother's side. While Karen is an active member of the Saxonia Hall, she proudly reminds her immediate family

of her Belgian roots whenever the opportunity arises. She met my dad in the 1980s and has since regularly attended events at the Saxonia Hall, also the location of their first date.

In a similar way, my husband, **Reilly Ragot**, 31, became a regular at the Saxonia Hall after we started dating. He has been involved with the Saxonia Dancers since I convinced him to dance with us at a *Heimattag* (homeland day) event in 2013. Reilly considers himself Canadian, though explains that he has Finnish, French, Scottish and Irish ancestry. His father's paternal grandmother was born in Finland, and his paternal grandfather was born in France. On Reilly's maternal side, his family has deep roots in central Ontario but celebrates their distant Scottish ancestry through foodways and a family tartan. Reilly has joined my brother working in our dad's business as a manager and quality assessment representative. He was the first in his immediate family to attend and complete a post-secondary degree, where he studied Psychology and Linguistics.

Many participants in this project, including 31-year-old **Justin Toth,** a pediatric nurse in southwestern Ontario and dancer in the Saxonia Hall's dance group, indicated their participation at the club was due in some part to an existing relationship with me. Justin and I attended elementary and secondary school together. His involvement in the dance group and as a Saxonia Hall kitchen volunteer, like many people who attend public cultural food events, for example, is "part of the social network of the hosts… so it is also a time for broadening and reintegrating community ties" (Kaplan 2015, 63). After several invitations from me, as I tried to increase the size of the shrinking dance group, Justin and his wife Chelsea joined for recreation and to try to reconstruct the social atmosphere of the cultural clubs his parents had told him they had experienced as young adults. Justin grew up attending the local Delhi Hungarian Hall, just as John, Kate, Daniel, and I attended the Saxonia Hall. Justin's father immigrated from the former

Yugoslavia in 1963 at age three, and his mother came as a fourteen-year-old in 1980 from Hungary. As such, Justin is a second-generation immigrant.

Dave, 34, was born in Canada, a second-generation immigrant to Czechoslovakian parents who immigrated to Canada in the eighties with their eldest son, Dave's brother. Dave is the only member of his immediate family born in Canada. Dave used a fish scale that he keeps in his wallet to express how he internally embraces his immigrant background and Czech heritage. He recalled that, as a child, his grandfather's second wife was not particularly affectionate towards children during visits; this experience led Dave to disengage from his Czech identity and language for several years, only to become interested again as a young adolescent upon learning that a classmate was also Czech. Today, Dave explained that the fish scale is more of a personal reminder to himself of his Czech identity than a public proclamation about his culture. However, through his participation in events at the Saxonia Hall over the years, Dave found himself learning more about the German, or *Sudetendeutsch*, roots of his Czech family. Dave and I became friends when we were completing our Bachelor of Education degrees. Dave is now a teacher in Toronto, so he does not regularly attend group meetings at the Saxonia Hall but considers the group members among his friends.

Although this thesis centres around later generations of Transylvanian Saxon immigrants and Transylvanian Saxon folklore specifically, the experiences of second-, third-, fourth-, and subsequent generations of any immigrant groups are prominent.

1.6 Theorizing Transylvanian Saxon Immigrant Folklore

Concepts of nostalgia, authenticity, tradition, and creativity in transmission are embedded in later-generation Transylvanian Saxon folklore in Canada. Performance studies scholar Richard

Schechner's "restored behavior" offers a different approach to examine and think about the folklore being performed at the Saxonia Hall. I apply "restored behavior" as a tool to analyze transmission in different directions and with different origins as it relates to immigration and origin narratives, traditional or national costumes, and folk dance. Schechner examines how actions thought to be rooted in past events are recontextualized as authentic, or traditional, in contemporary or other settings. Such actions are *restored* because they occurred (or are thought to have occurred) in the past and are now considered to be re-established in the present (Schechner 1985, 36). However, there is a significant difference between behaviour that is based on actual past events, and behaviour that is based on past events that are *believed* to have happened but did not, in fact, occur exactly as remembered or presented. Schechner uses a graph (see Figure 1.5) to evaluate performances and their referential points of origin, however his work can be understood in a more narrative manner.

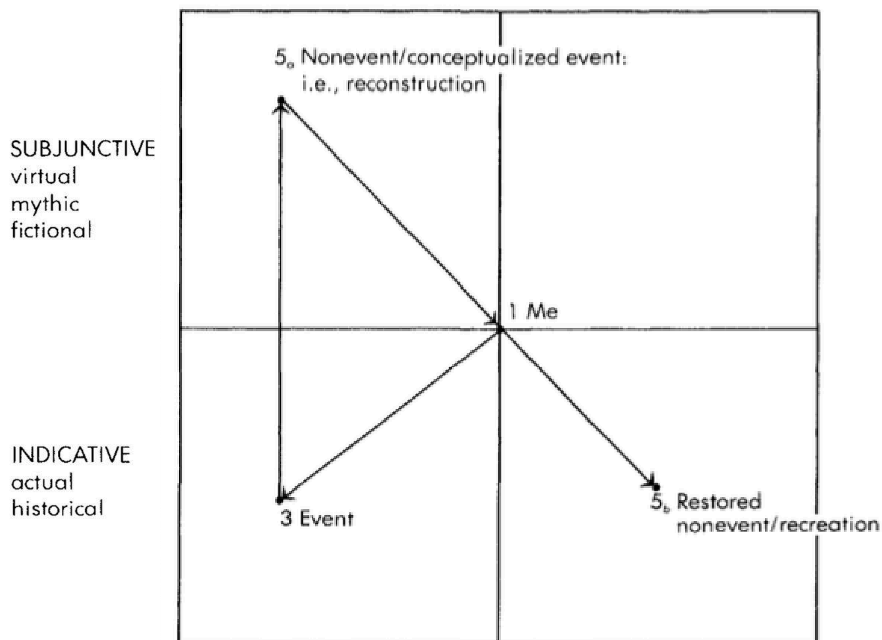

Figure 1.5: Schechner uses a four-quadrant diagram to illustrate the differences between the indicative and subjunctive, and between the past (left column) and future (right column) (Schechner 1985, 40).

While there are multiple scenarios that align with Schechner's model, there are two instances he describes which are most relevant to Transylvanian Saxon performances of nostalgia for home. In the first instance, which I highlight in Chapter Two, a performance is based on an actual "event" that occured in the actual past. Within the context of the Transylvanian Saxons in Canada, the historical event for Transylvanian Saxons in Canada is the lived experience of first-generation immigrants from Transylvania to Canada in the 1950s. When they nostalgically remember and restore their cultural practices upon arrival in Canada, they refer back to actual historical events of their own past. The actions of their time, during the 1950s and 1960s, reflect a direct link and experience in historical Transylvania. Often, a performance that can be considered "restored" reflexes back to what the audience and performers perceive as a historic event.

Schechner's second type of event is based on occurances that may not have actually happened in the past but are remembered in a certain way or thought to have happened. In this case, the performer's point of reference–perhaps as a result of oral transmission between community members and later generations–is the "past, subjunctive" and is considered a conceptualized event (it may not have actually happened) (Schechner 1985, 38). Contrary to the relative certainty of historical events, there is less certainty that a conceptualized event actually occurred as the person performing in the present does not have direct lived experience with their reference point in the past. Performances in the present and future apply historical information to establish a restoration of what "might have been and then to perform these" (Schechner 1985, 48). This present or future performance is informed by both (or either) a historical event and/or the idea of a historic event.

Schechner identifies a third event, which, like the first instance described above, is based

on actual history and reproduced exactly in reference to the historical event (Schechner 1985, 38). However, he suggests that this event–in which one replicates precisely an actual historical event–is an extremely unstable format, due to the nature of the transmission of cultural values (Schechner 1985, 43). Selection and creativity take place within the arriving Transylvanian Saxons' new context of post-war Canada. Over time, as those first-generation Saxon immigrants to Canada pass on their cultural practices, further variation occurs.

Thus, Schechner proposes that all instances of restored behaviour are performances based on conceptualized events, or the performer's understanding and interpretation of a past event with which they do not have direct lived experience (Schechner 1985, 44). He concedes that basing the performance on history is possible, but "the determining factor is whether or not a performance is based on previous performances" (Schechner 1985, 49). When the performance–or, in the case of the Transylvanian Saxons, their tradition–is based on the previous performance, transmission has occurred, and the actual past event is unintentionally forgotten with each "passing," or each degree of transmission.

The former two event frameworks are most significant to Transylvanian expressive culture about "home;" it is likely that the early Saxon immigrants to Canada who transmitted Saxon folklore to later generations were referring to an actual historic event because they were born and lived in Transylvania. For Saxons in Canada today, restored events are more likely to be founded on conceptualized events. This is the performers' understanding of a practice rooted in the past and their interpretation and presentation of it in the present, despite not having actual direct experience with historical Transylvania. Some participants in this project, including myself, might believe that they are referring to actual experiences in Transylvania, whether by using the music understood to have been shared and recorded by a first-generation immigrant, or

by reviewing books and folklore collections from the interwar period. Yet these layers of distance from the supposed original mean that our point of reference is, in fact, the conceptualized past (Schechner 1985, 48). However, the nostalgia learned from earlier generations–not lived experiences–impacts the interpretation of the point of reference in the past and, thus, the performance of Saxon folklore in Canada today.

1.7 Voices of Later-Generation Saxons in Canada

In Chapter Two, Knowing Home without Going Home, I explore narrative and the concept of nostalgia to examine Transylvanian Saxon migration history and how nostalgia became the determinant of which aspects of Transylvanian Saxon folklore would be selected for transmission to later-generations. I follow interpretations of nostalgia as later-generational resistance (Boym 2001; McDermott 2002; Cashman 2008; Ciubrinskas 2020) and a means of coping with loss (Boym 2001; Pickering and Keightly 2006). In this chapter, I present the history of Transylvanian Saxon migration as it aligns with narratives that later-generation Saxons in Canada use to describe their heritage.

With an established understanding of nostalgia's role in Saxon folklore in Canada, I consider how the concept of authenticity is applied as a means of controlling what and how Saxon folklore is transmitted in **Chapter Three, Folklore in the *Festzelt*.** I look at interpretations and constructions of authenticity and tradition (Bendix 1997; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) to explore how costume correctness is a communication tool and how authenticity contributes to a sense of belonging among those who participated in this project. As folklorist Alexandra Urdea observes:

> Even as people lament the fact that authentic folklore has disappeared, folklore still enables them to talk about the past, and often about something seen as lost with the

> passage of time. An object that is considered authentic can have the power to alleviate the loss. Authenticity, therefore, is not a quality, but rather a common denominator through which people talk about an imagined past. (Urdea 2022, 178)

The Transylvanian Saxon folk costume or *Tracht* serves to illustrate how community ideals and concepts of costume authenticity rooted in the past are used to communicate cultural objectives in the present.

Following this selection and supervision of folklore transmission, in **Chapter Four, Recording the Folklore,** I analyze how later-generation Saxons accomplish transmission in several directions. I use transmission, variation, and tradition (see Toelken 1996, Ben-Amos [1972] 2020) as a springboard to analyze patterns of how folklore is passed along among later-generation Transylvanian Saxons in Canada. This communication takes place not only in the line of receiving and passing down cultural practices but also in sharing community knowledge with former generations, members of the same generation, and non-Saxons. As the leader of the folk dance group I describe in this case study, I analyze my own role in the transmission of Transylvanian Saxon folklore in Canada among later-generation immigrants. From these foundational concepts, I propose that folklore transmission occurs in three directions within the group of study. Overall, this thesis seeks to emphasize the judicious choices made by later-generation participants as determined by nostalgia, authenticity, and communication. Finally, in my conclusion, I apply these lenses to study the innovative folklore of later-generation Saxons in Canada as established through a new type of Saxon folk attire and material culture.

This thesis seeks to reveal current and accessible folklore that often seems obscured by nostalgia for an unfamiliar time or place and by a pursuit of the so-called "authentic" traditions. Throughout this work, I endeavour to uplift the voices of later-generations within this particular immigrant community in response to their elders' concerns about the loss of tradition. While this

thesis demonstrates the importance of folklore in the daily lives of later-generation Transylvanian Saxons, it is also relevant to immigrants from other places and cultures. Although I begin with a history of migration to and from Transylvania, like folklorist Pauline Greenhill (1994, 71), my objective in this work is to demonstrate how the present-day cultural practices of members at the Saxonia Hall are significant and necessary objects of study to better understand contemporary Transylvanian Saxon and later-generation immigrant folklore in Canada.

Chapter 2. Knowing Home without Going Home: Making Canadian Saxon Folklore through Nostalgia for *Heimat*

Siblings Daniel Pfingstgraef and Kate Pfingstgraef share an experience that is unfamiliar to my brother and me: their Transylvanian Saxon family name is very German-sounding. As a result, Kate and Daniel are often confronted with questions about their heritage, and they have an explanation they occasionally use. As Daniel says, "If it's just someone I want to get off my back, I say, "I'm German," and move on, and that's enough for them." Daniel's simplification of his roots reminds me of Sonja Boon's 2019 *What the Ocean Remembers: Searching for Belonging and Home.* Boon describes her identity as inherited, revealing that her experiences tracing her ancestral roots to the Netherlands and to Suriname were challenging as she straddled the positions of being a visitor and being "from there" (2019 113). In the same ways that Daniel simplifies his Transylvanian Saxon roots to state "I'm German," Boon reduces her self-described complicated paragraph about her background and identity to a "short simple phrase" by saying "I'm Dutch" (2019, 36). The ways in which the participants in this project describe their heritage are based on complicated threads of identity and immigration and, often, it is challenging to explain, in detail, one's position within a cultural community. Daniel told me the key components of his identity that he shares when he chooses to provide a more in-depth description:

> If I wanted to explain deeper, then I would have gone into the fact that we're Germans that were in Romania–in Transylvania–we're Saxons. There's this explanation that we were German, then they went there in the 1100s, and they settled in this area, and they kept ties with their German heritage, so we're basically German, but we're from Romania, is how I describe it. I don't usually go that deep unless someone was really prodding. I don't think I would ever jump right to Saxon because a lot of people think it's like Anglo-Saxon. That word describes a bunch of different people. I think that would be a little bit more confusing. Usually, I say my grandparents were German that lived in Romania, and they came over here after World War Two.

Daniel shared an example of when he had chosen to share more details about his background with some of his colleagues who had asked him about his family name. "I explained the whole story to them," he said over supper one evening before dance practice in late August 2023. "They found it interesting. They listened for ten minutes while I explained it to them. That was who I would tell the whole explanation to." As we talked about the interactions he's had in different contexts, I noticed that Daniel has a fascinating relationship with his family name. Folklorist Pauline Greenhill explores the voluntary aspects of ethnicity in Canada among mainstream or majority individuals; though her work focuses on English ethnicity, her observation that the choice to belong to and identify with a certain ethnicity that is otherwise disguised by lack of accent or physical attributes, such as association with cultural organizations like the Saxonia Hall, becomes a means of retaining distinctiveness for members (1994, 33). Daniel's family name, Pfingstgraef, and its accompanying explanation are ways in which he expresses his unique identity. Prompted by inquiries about his name, Daniel demonstrates a fundamental knowledge of his Saxon roots, both culturally and geographically, but has the privilege of selecting the best opportunities to divulge details of his Saxon heritage depending on different contexts.

His sister, Kate, similarly views describing her background as a lengthy task. She told me that she does not typically introduce herself as Transylvanian Saxon if she does not have the time to explain what that means with specificity. She says, "Whenever I explain it, even without a picture, people don't understand what I'm trying to say, and it takes longer to explain. You have to full-on go for the whole story, and sometimes they're still confused." Kate and Daniel make the choice to share details about their ethnicity depending on the context and the amount of effort they are willing to exert at a given time. These siblings express their Transylvanian Saxon identity in a similar way to what folklorist Andriy Nahachewsky describes as a "voluntary,

situational, and part-time identity" (2002, 176). Apart from the Pfingstgraefs' very German-sounding family name, as young, white, native English speakers, their Saxon ethnicity is fairly invisible unless they decide to share it. They are more Canadian than Transylvanian or "immigrant," as later-generation Saxons, and would be foreigners in the *Heimat*, or homeland of Transylvania in present-day Romania. Kate's and Daniel's choices about describing their identity as German or Saxon are situational, but when they do express their Saxon identity, it allows them to stand out from the local norm.

On the other hand, my brother John's and my family name–Horeth–is somewhat more manageable for English speakers to say, so we are not usually confronted about it. Nevertheless, I, too, have a deep relationship with my name as an everyday marker of my Saxon identity. Although people do not generally ask me about my background because of it, I am proud to know that my name, Horeth, was the second most frequent name rooted in my grandfather's Transylvanian village of origin, Burghalle (Zehner 1990, 160). Leading up to our wedding, I talked to my husband, Reilly, about keeping my own family name. Unlike the Pfingstgraefs, my name does not mark me so obviously as "other" among the general public, but among Saxons, I am able to express my heritage and roots through my name. My brother John states that he is uninterested in discovering his roots, however he can provide a sweeping explanation of his heritage, saying, "My mom's parents, well, their parents were from Belgium, and my dad's parents were from the Transylvania area, right? Or Romania or something? See, I'm not even one hundred percent on a lot of the historical knowledge." Like my brother, regardless of the depth of their knowledge about Transylvania and their family's immigrant history, everyone who participated in this project was able to share some details about their connection to Transylvania

and German or Saxon heritage.[5]

Considering how young Saxons present or introduce themselves in everyday contexts is the starting point for understanding their connection to their Saxon *Heimat* and their nostalgia for an unfamiliar place. Such contexts define what sociologist Erving Goffman identifies as motives for trying to control the impression that a performer–Kate or Daniel, in this case–communicates in an interaction with someone else (1959, 15). Among early performance theorists, Goffman explains that performance in the context of everyday life is "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (1959, 15). It is not necessarily a theatrical production but simply the actions and communication of a person in the different situations of their day-to-day life. For Kate and Daniel, their identity is tied to the relationship they have with their performed role or "front" as Saxon (Goffman 1959, 22). Goffman uses fronts to describe intentionally performed roles in different situations. When Kate and Daniel are among colleagues or school friends, as opposed to friends and family members at the Saxonia Hall, their presentation of their Saxon identity is voluntarily brief or detailed, depending on the context. Their fronts change among other Transylvanian Saxons.

For instance, Daniel recalled a visit to Germany in May 2023. Daniel attributes his travels on this trip to his participation in the Saxonia Hall dance group where he has enhanced his knowledge and family experience with Saxon folklore in a community setting. He reflected on the differences between the Saxons in Germany, who are active in the cultural organizations there and are primarily descended from southern Transylvania, and those in Canada, most of whom are from the north (Wieden 1986, 9). Daniel considered how he presents his heritage with more specificity among fellow Saxons. He explains, "Even within the Saxons, especially in

[5] This includes Justin and Dave–who are not Saxon, but identified overlap between Transylvanian Saxon folklore and their own Hungarian and Czech heritage respectively–as well as Reilly and Karen, who married into Saxon families and therefore have learned and formed their own personal connections with Saxon folklore.

Germany, people were always like, 'Are you from the north? From the south? What town are you from? What's the big town name?' Once everyone is Saxon, you go deeper." Daniel seemed to be at ease providing more detail about his roots to those who were already familiar with the regional and cultural history. He knows that his family roots are in the north of Transylvania, near Bistritz,[6] and can proudly name the village where his paternal grandfather grew up, Waltersdorf, because he knows his red-embroidered *Tracht* shirt comes from that village. Folklorist Tom Van Buren notes that the dynamics of immigrant communities can create space and freedom for immigrant folklore to stabilize and be passed down in the country of residence (2005). Daniel's and Kate's privilege to choose when and how to express their Saxon heritage and identity is, perhaps, slightly less than my brother's and my ethnic invisibility; however, through the Pfingstgraefs' involvement with the Saxonia Hall and the dance group's folklore, they have determined the degree of freedom with which they can express themselves and continue passing their Saxon folklore across generations.

Later-generation Transylvanian Saxons make definitive choices about when to present themselves as "Saxon" or "German," and the Pfingstgraefs are not alone in this experience. When asked about his family name, Derek Gotzmeister also describes himself as German before determining if it is worthwhile to clearly define what it means to be Transylvanian Saxon or to call Transylvania a *Heimat*, or homeland. He explained, "I'm just so used to saying 'German' just because people don't know 'Saxon' when you tell them, and then it gets to be a whole long discussion and explanation that you don't need to get into all the time. German is a fairly easy shorthand for most Canadians." I have shared a similar condensed version of Saxon history with

[6] Because Transylvanian Saxons in Canada are descended from those who immigrated to Canada while the region was more populated with German- or Saxon- (a dialect of German) speakers, I use the German city and village names for Transylvania that are situated in present-day Romania. These are the place names that the participants in this project are most familiar with, although Romanian and Hungarian names for the cities and villages exist as well.

friends who have asked me, but my tale was scripted by stories and explanations I had heard before from someone else in the Canadian Saxon community. Even my mother, Karen–who is not Saxon herself–has a brief description she uses to tell her colleagues about who the Transylvanian Saxons are, and my brother–admittedly uninterested in his heritage–knows that there is a connection to German speakers in Romania. Following the pattern of the narrative later-generation Saxons and non-Saxon community members use allows me to dive into, as Derek says, "the whole long discussion and explanation."

2.1 Migration to and from Transylvania

Many Saxons who actively engage in cultural practices and community events in Canada, including myself, begin the generalized explanation with reference to twelfth-century Germans. Based on my conversations with Saxon friends and family, most have a broad understanding of the history of Transylvanian Saxons. An explanation, though often lacking precision, typically includes the movement of ethnic Germans to Transylvania, or *Siebenbürgen*[7], about 900 years ago, the acknowledgement that Transylvania is in present-day Romania, and a brief conclusion of their departure from Transylvania and immigration to Canada following the Second World War. In her interpretation of personal experience narratives (PENs), Greenhill notes the differences between PENs and narrative generalization, characterizing the latter with a "frustrating lack of detail and information" but coming to the conclusion that this was a pervasive mode of communication about the past (1994, 35). While I initially attributed the lack of detail in Saxon heritage explanations that my friends and family members shared with me

[7] Saxons have an understanding that the German *Siebenbürgen* refers to the seven (*Sieben*) fortified settlements (*Bürgen*) in the region. However, Saxon historians Ernst Wagner, Edward R. Schneider, Max Gross, and Martin Intscher explains that the name existed before the settlements and that *Sieben* may simply be a symbol for "many" and *Burg* or *Berg* could mean "hills," meaning *Siebenbürgen* could simply be a place of "many hills" (Wagner et al. 1982, 9).

during my research to their familiarity with my knowledge of our shared history and cultural practices, I have come to recognize that their narrative characteristics are ubiquitous among Canadian Saxons I worked with for this project. I came to understand that the generalized narratives shared with me during my fieldwork indicate, as Greenhill observed among English Morris dancers in Canada (1994, 36), what aspects of a narrated situation are most relevant to Saxons beyond the particular incident itself. The settlement in Transylvania almost a millennium in the past, the German language of the migrant group, and the maintenance of their cultural practices are key features of Daniel's, Kate's, Derek's and Karen's, among other later-generation Canadian Saxons', stories. Truthfully, my research for this project led me to gain a deeper understanding of my heritage and ancestral immigration patterns, and even this additional learning has proved challenging in conversation with other Saxons because the extra details do not always fit seamlessly into the community's transmitted narrative.

Regarding the movement of the 1100s, as Iorio and Corsale describe, the initial ethnic German settlement in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Carpathian mountain range region of Transylvania "was part of a wider German eastward demographic expansion (*Ostsiedlung*) which lasted for several centuries and created a scattered 'colonization diaspora' stretching from the Balkans to the Baltic Sea and into Russia" (2012, 205). The migrants' origins have been traced to the lower Rhine-Mosel region of northern Germany, bordering the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, through eighteenth-century language analysis of the Saxon dialect (Pfeiffer 2009, 12; Davis 2012, 168; Scholtes 2016; 3; Davis 2022, 57). This growing group of migrants was known as the *Siebenbürger Sachsen* or Transylvanian Saxons. Another source, as historians Lori Straus and Emma Betz describe, situates these early migrants' origins as the Flanders region in present-day Belgium (also bordering the Netherlands and

Luxembourg), as well as southern Germany, because the Saxons were sometimes referred to as "Flandrenses" in twelfth century Transylvania (2022, 36). And what of the region of Saxony in present-day Germany? Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historiography, particularly by Saxon nationalists, traces Transylvanian Saxon origins through Flanders back to Saxony, but, as historian Sacha Davis notes, the demonym "Saxon" likely stems from the Latin *Saxones,* which was a common term for German speakers in Eastern Europe during the twelfth century (2012, 168). According to others, the term "Saxon" also designated a status of privilege, because many early Transylvanian Saxons worked for the Hungarian chancellery (Wagner et al. 1982; Gündisch 1998; Iorio and Corsale 2012).

Despite disagreement surrounding the Saxons' geographic origins, there is consensus on the large waves of movement of these peoples. First, it was the Hungarian monarch, King Géza II (1141-1162), who encouraged German colonization in Transylvania in 1143; the region remained part of the kingdom of Hungary and eventually, from 1867 to 1916, belonged to the Austro-Hungary Empire (Wagner et al. 1982, 61; Verdery 1985, 70; Iorio and Corsale 2012, 205). Although the ensuing eight centuries of history following arrival in the region are not unexceptional, I follow the narrative generalization and look ahead to early twentieth-century Transylvania–the ancestral place and time most familiar and relevant to later-generation immigrant Saxons in Canada. In 1918, Transylvania was officially incorporated into Romania (Verdery 1985, 70; Iorio and Corsale 2012, 206), with the northern part of the region switching briefly back to Hungary due to that country's occupation of Transylvania in the 1940s and again returning to Romanian oversight in the late summer of 1944 (Wagner et al. 1982, 68-77). The second mass migration was in the autumn of 1944 when northern Transylvania evacuated the Saxon people. A third major movement in Saxon history was the deportations in southern

Transylvania beginning in 1945. Finally, the departure of several Transylvanian Saxons to Germany during the Romanian period of communism but, more significantly, in the decade following the 1989 fall of the Iron Curtain (Gündisch 1998, 247-250). I focus on the northern area of Transylvania during the interwar period and into the 1940s because many Transylvanian Saxons who are actively involved with their cultural organizations in Canada today are descendants of immigrants from this region near Bistritz (present-day Bistrița, Romania).

Although Transylvania had become part of Romania following the First World War, the Vienna Award of 1940 reannexed the region surrounding Bistritz to Hungary, and Saxon nationalism in the region subsequently rose (Iorio and Corsale 2012, 206). Some Saxon historians, such as Ernst Wagner, Edward R. Schneider, Max Gross and Martin Intscher, considered this annexation to be an occupation by Hungary in Romania, as the division meant the loss of much of northern Transylvania's institutional leadership which was situated in the south, in Hermannstadt (1982, 75). Their interpretation, I argue, is likely the result of nineteenth-century Saxon relations with Hungarians. Towards the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Kingdom of Hungary sought to nationalize its people through Hungarian customs and language, eroding longstanding Saxon privileges in the region (Iorio and Corsale 2012, 206). Whether annexation or occupation, the change in borders in 1940 became increasingly problematic in the eyes of the Transylvanian Saxon minority on both sides. *Transylvanian Saxons: Historical Highlights* attributes the ethnic Romanian population's majority status of seventy-five percent of the country (two-thirds of the population in Transylvania) to the stability of Saxon culture municipally. The authors note the need to "Romanize" the people (enforcing Romanian customs and language) as Hungary had done with Magyarization from 1848 to 1914, was unnecessary (Wagner et al. 1982, 69).

Nevertheless, the Saxons perceived that Romanian nationalism was growing as a result of assimilation policies, land and education reform, and banking jurisdiction changes, especially during the interwar period (Gündisch 1998, 180-185; Cercel 2011, 164; Iorio and Corsale 2012, 206; Wagner et al. 1982, 76). Much of the Saxon cultural practices that continue in Canada today–such as the costumes, music, and dances–owe their existence to the nationalist collection and reproduction of Transylvanian Saxon folklore during the day-to-day lives of Saxons during the early twentieth century. These records serve as references for Transylvanian Saxons today, though any political motivations, particularly in Canada, are significantly muted. Cultural historian James Koranyi applies social psychologist Michael Billig's theory of banal nationalism[8] to analyze Romanian Germans' interest "in collecting and celebrating their local *Volksgeschitchten*,[9] in nostalgia reminiscing about a communal past during moments of crises," especially leading up to the Second World War (2022, 11). By the late 1930s and early 1940s, the combined results of a loss of privileges and the spreading nationalism in the region become apparent.

As the Second World War unfolded, many German-speaking minority populations across Europe, including the Saxons in Transylvania, were attracted to National Socialism, and several were eventually radicalized by the Third Reich (Iorio and Corsale 2012, 207; Koranyi and Wittlinger 2011, 97-98; Schuller 2021). These details are often glossed over in the narrative generalizations that Saxons in Canada use to describe their heritage today. Koranyi and Wittlinger provide a potential reason for this, noting, "still the subject of historical debate, the radicalization of Transylvanian Saxons occurred not merely as a result of the rise of the National Socialists in Germany and of the right in Romania during the 1930s, but also due to internal

[8] Banal nationalism is a less extreme, "ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced" (Billig 1995, 6).
[9] Folk stories or folk histories.

currents and processes" (2011, 100), including conflict and political ambiguity among Saxon religious leadership regarding their position towards Nazism (Cercel 2011, 164-66). Evidently, among those who participated in this project and for me as a researcher and member of the community, confronting one's roots in relation to the atrocities of German National Socialism in the 1930s is a challenging piece of Saxon history and an uncomfortable topic.[10]

Some Saxon historians, particularly in Canada and the United States, attempted to distance their historical narrative from Germany by focusing instead on shared priorities. For example, in his contributions to the search for Saxon migration origins, John Foisel, pastor of Cleveland, Ohio's St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, presents Germany as being "at odds" with American values (Davis 2012, 169-170). Foisel further distances Transylvanian Saxons from Germany by claiming their ancestral roots stem from a homogeneous "Saxon" group in northern Europe closely related to the Anglo-Saxons (1936, 4-5). Although his book *Saxons Through Seventeen Centuries* is popular among Transylvanian Saxons in Canada and the United States, this is likely because the book is among the very few available in English. As Foisel emphasizes in his introduction, the book itself should not be regarded as an academic history of Transylvania but rather "a story of our people based upon that history" (1936, x). Foisel later encourages the reader to continue their learning through further research in a note following his partial bibliography (1936, 343). *The Transylvanian Saxons* replaced Foisel's work as a key English-language resource in 1982, and, most recently, Waldemar Scholtes' 2016 *Transylvanian Saxons in Canada* has become the reliable source written by a Transylvanian Saxon. These later works highlight Saxon values of community service, political respect, and hard work as aligned

[10] The Saxons' relationships with and perceptions of the German National Socialist German Workers Party is a topic I have given substantial consideration as I learn about my own family's history and that of the larger Saxon community in Canada and globally. This topic deserves a deeper analysis that falls outside the objectives of this thesis and deserves further study.

with values in Canada and the United States.

In his account, Wagner briefly details the consequences of the radicalization that occurred in 1930s Transylvania. In 1942, Hungary and the Third Reich agreed to permit recruitment to the German Wehrmacht (Waffen-SS), highlighting that "officially, the recruiting was to be voluntary." In actuality, severe social pressure meant that several Saxons joined (Kroner 1998, 29; Wagner 1982, 76). Intscher implies that those in Northern Transylvania, which was within the Hungarian borders at the time, chose to fight with the Germans rather than the Hungarian army simply to avoid a language barrier, not necessarily out of an alignment of values (Wagner et al. 1982, 76). Meanwhile, those in southern Transylvania, situated in Romania, could choose between the Romanian or German forces (Davis 2022, 64). Political historian Christian Cercel additionally mentions that joining the German army rekindled a shared sense of kinship among Saxons and Germans, first established among Saxon and German soldiers who fought together in 1916-1918 (2011, 172). Although Transylvanian Saxons in Germany have studied the topic of Saxon affiliation with National Socialism, as reported in the *Siebenbürgische Zeitung*[11], there is only a tacit knowledge in Canada among later-generation Saxons, as I observed throughout my fieldwork, with army recruitment designated as conscription or a result of external German social pressure. The narratives we later-generation Saxons in Canada hear and share about our origins reflect the interwar aspects of societal force and purported choice leading up to the Second World War. Why and how origin stories are adapted throughout the oral traditions of immigrant groups warrants further investigation beyond the scope of this project. However, it is valuable to note that later-generation Saxons in Canada recognize that there were unspoken relationships–whether

[11] The "Transylvanian Saxon Newspaper" is a German-language publication specifically for and about Saxons. Most articles feature news of Saxons in Germany and Romania, but there are occasional articles about Saxons in Austria, Canada, and the United States. Gregory Zacharias reports on lectures related to National Socialism in Transylvania during the 1930s (2015). Gerlinde Schuller also acknowledges the affiliation in her project "Archiving Family Memories" (2021).

beneficial or harmful–with the occupying German soldiers during the 1940s. Our geographic and chronological distance from Transylvania once again grants us the privilege to determine which parts of our voluntary identity and history we choose to acknowledge and in which settings we choose to divulge them.

Among the Transylvanian Saxons in Canada, 1944 is a significant year because the evacuation of Northern Transylvania occurred that autumn. In the stories my grandmother and other older members of the Saxonia Hall told me over the years, the evacuation happened quickly. With short notice and only the essentials in hand, the people remaining in the village filed down the main dirt road towards Austria or Germany (see Figure 2.1) to the sound of

Figure 2.1: Migration routes and wartime evacuation of the Transylvanian Saxons (Intschert 1989).

ringing church bells on their assigned day in flight from the incoming Soviet[12] army. Iorio and Corsale estimate that approximately 100,000 Germans left the region at the end of the Second World War, as the German army evacuated Saxons from Transylvania before the Soviet Red Army arrived (2012, 206-207; see also Illyés 1982, 25; Koranyi 2022, 1). In Northern Transylvania, Saxon historians credit the cautious leadership of Robert Gaßner who, along with Saxon Lutheran ministers in northern villages, prepared secret plans to leave with a departure timeline scheduled for September 6 to 19, 1944, despite disapproval from their southern counterparts (Wagner et al. 1982, 76-77; Wieden 1986, 7). Upon their arrival in American militarized zones in Austria and Germany, the evacuees settled in refugee camps–called *Fluko-lager*–found nearby work, mostly with local farmers, and began to re-establish their Transylvanian Saxon village lifestyle and customs in their new setting (Keiper 2009). Economic hardship following the end of World War II, however, prompted some families to continue their westward journey towards Canada and the United States.

2.2 Arrival in Canada

As theologian Andreas Pfeiffer observes of those 1944 evacuees who eventually arrived in Canada, "It is difficult to obtain the actual numbers of those who migrated from Transylvania to Germany, Austria, the United States, and Canada because Saxons immigrated either with a German, Romanian, or Hungarian passport" (2009, 28; see also Kroner 2001, 31). Other Canadian first-generation Saxons have expressed to me personally that they came as refugees or

[12] In my fieldwork observations and having heard throughout my lifetime from other Transylvanian Saxons in Canada and the United States, part of this flight narrative as told by those who were children during the flight (and their descendants) names the incoming "Russian" army. However, I am grateful to one of my thesis examiners, Dr. Mariya Lesiv, for pointing out to me that the vocabulary of "Russian"–in reference to what was in fact the Soviet Army–is a result of systemic knowledge-production processes in the West which themselves are dominated by Russian imperialism. These flight narratives, as told by later-generation Transylvanian Saxons in the West, are a topic worthy of their own examination.

displaced persons via the *Fluko-lager* in Germany or Austria following their departure from Transylvania in 1944. Transylvanian Saxon historians identify post-World War I as the first wave of Saxon immigration to Canada, attributing the destination to tightened immigration policies in the United States, though Saxon historian Michael Kroner notes that there were likely some earlier arrivals in Canada, based on records about Transylvanian Saxons in Manitoba in 1919 (Kroner 2001, 29-30; Wagner et al. 1982, 122). Later, a large wave of interwar immigrants arrived in Canada, particularly from 1928 to 1930, primarily to find work, with the intention of returning to Transylvania (Wagner et al. 1982, 122; Scholtes 2016, 23). Considering the experiences of temporary versus permanent immigration lends itself to understanding the tenacity of Saxon folklore following the forties.

The United States was not alone in strengthening its borders during post-war periods. Canada blocked immigration from Germany in 1946 except for direct relatives, but the Saxons could be interpreted as displaced persons from Hungary or Romania. So, the immigration policy was permeable for Transylvanian Saxons. Restrictions were eventually lifted in 1950, except for former National Socialist and Communist Party members (Kroner 2001, 30; Wieden 1986, 12-13). Although Saxons had settled in Canada as early as 1919, they voluntarily stopped ethnic German events in 1942 to confirm their support of Canada as World War II continued (Scholtes 2016, 72). Thus the 1950s wave of approximately 5000 northern Transylvanian Saxon immigrants to Canada is considered the most significant wave (Scholtes 2016, 22). Pfeiffer discusses the differences between refugee and diaspora migration, noting that although the Saxons essentially chose to move to Ontario, there were factors that pushed them to leave Romania, namely their conditions at the end of the Second World War and, later, distrust for the Romanian government (Pfeiffer 2009, 57). The Saxon migrants' interpretation of a permanent

migration from the 1950s forward is pivotal and prompted deep feelings of nostalgia because they sensed there was no longer a Transylvanian "home" or *Heimat* to which they might return. First-generation Transylvanian Saxon immigrants in Canada remembered their homeland and took action to reconsider and restore it so they could teach their second-, third- and later-generation descendants.

2.3 Nostalgia for a Transylvanian Saxon *Heimat*

There are several perspectives from which to examine and reflect on the deep feelings of loss and yearning that nostalgia provokes. Russian-American cultural theorist Svetlana Boym positions nostalgia as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed," a "long-distance relationship," and a component of the search for one's roots (2001, xiii-xv). I understand these characteristics as directly aligned with the Saxon understanding of *Heimat*. Participants in this project acknowledge that *Heimat* translates to "home" or "homeland," but insist that they interpret it as a feeling not a place. I propose that "Heimat" is a *symbol* of the place and time, whereas nostalgia is the feeling that motivates Saxons to continue transmitting their cultural practices in reference to that place and time. Nostalgia, as folklorist Ray Cashman indicates, is embedded in the notions of tradition, identity, authenticity and heritage (2006, 138). These concepts are similarly woven throughout Transylvanian Saxon folklore today: in costume authenticity, dance tradition and the ways in which identity and heritage are felt and understood within these conversations. These concepts are rooted in a relationship with past times and places that are unfamiliar to this project's participants, the Transylvania of earlier generations. Although Transylvania continues to exist today and, in fact, German-speaking Transylvania Saxons continue their cultural practices in this place, later-generation Canadian Saxons' relationship

with the past time and past place of Transylvania is geographically and temporally long-distance. Nostalgia becomes the coping mechanism for modernization and its associated changes to the everyday lives of participants in this project, but also to their Saxon traditions (Boym 2001, 42; Cashman 2008, 243-255). For those involved in this project, nostalgia for *Heimat* is remembering, revision, and resistance.

Though individual Transylvanian Saxon families continued to arrive into the 1990s, the 1950s cohort was considered the last major wave of immigration of Saxons to Canada. This particular Transylvanian immigrant wave to Canada was characterized as a "different generation of Saxons," homesick and nostalgically motivated by the loss of their homeland and the sense of permanence of their place in Canada to engage in and pass on their Saxon traditions (Wagner et al. 1982, 123; Schuller 2024). In being nostalgic, their difference compared to earlier immigration waves stands out in contrast to Boym's observation that first-generation immigrants are generally unsentimental about their roots, and the task of searching for one's roots falls upon their children and grandchildren (2001, xv). For the 1950s group, nostalgic ties to their homeland through cultural practices such as narratives, costume, and folk dance might also be viewed as "a symbolic source of resistance to assimilation into the host society" as sociocultural anthropologist Vytis Ciubrinskas notes of diasporic communities (Ciubrinskas 2020, 64). In 2023, is the folklore that is transmitted nostalgically at the Saxonia Hall a story of continued resistance or one of creativity?

The first-generation immigrants belonging to the 1950s group were determined to actively preserve and pass down their traditions. Folklorist Linda Dégh observes this phenomenon within immigrant folklore, noting that new immigrants "are the most effective propagators of folklore in America. They teach songs, dances, embroidery, egg painting, and

language through organized festivals, competitions, courses, and museum displays for the grandchildren of peasant immigrants" (1984, 195). Such propagation is further supported by folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett who recognizes that "folklore is made and not found" (1995, 369). She alludes to the processes and choices that groups make to determine which and how cultural practices must survive to represent the identity of the group. Folklorist Ray Cashman similarly explores the "fragile but vital construction of community and local identity" through folklore (2008, 256). Relying on nostalgia for their *Heimat* Transylvania, this final wave of Saxon immigrants to Canada selected, crafted and perfected the Saxon folklore that they felt would ensure a future diffusion of their cultural practices from the old country and solidify their and their descendants' Saxon identity in a new homeland.

At this point, first-generation Saxon immigrant behaviour in Canada reflects Schechner's restored behavior. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, performing Saxon cultural practices upon arrival in Canada was based on past historical events from Transylvania. This is an example of Schechner's restored event based on both an actual past event *and* the performer's conceptualized past event. Their nostalgia is based on an actual experience of being in the historical homeland of Transylvania. Over time, they may have forgotten or misremembered certain aspects of home, thus conceptualizing the past, and the performance of their nostalgia that they eventually passed on is based on the layers of reality and construction. Schechner writes about rituals–and this applies within the context of performed nostalgia for Transylvanian Saxons–that "they change in two ways: first by a slow slippage made inevitable by changing historical circumstances," (1985, 43). I suggest it is not only the passage of time but also the traumatic experience of these first-generation immigrants evacuating their homes in Northern Transylvanian as young children, then travelling to and arriving in Canada, where there are

language and cultural barriers to maintaining their everyday life, as contributing circumstances to a similar slippage. Schechner continues to note that change also occurs "through 'official revisions' made by the owners-heirs of the 'authorized original'" (1985, 44). Such official revisions translate to restored nonevents constructed by Saxon historians and decisions made by umbrella organizations like the Saxonia Hall and the *Landsmannschaft* about how we perform Saxon events, costume use, songs, and folk dances. Nevertheless, nostalgia for home–whether as a place or a feeling–remains critical for Transylvanian Saxons. As Cashman detects in Northern Ireland, nostalgia is "a vehicle for coming to terms with change" (2006, 141) for Saxons in their new Canadian context and for future generations at the Saxonia Hall in Aylmer, Ontario.

Boym further suggests that nostalgia is not necessarily tied to a specific time or place. It could be "nostalgia without lived experience" (Boym 2001, 38). Similarly, anthropologist David Berliner presents a type of nostalgia that is apparent among later-generation Saxons in Canada; it is a "nostalgia for a past that one has not personally lived, entailing feelings of loss that are detached from the direct experience of loss" (Berliner 2020, 62). I, therefore, suggest that the cultural practices participants described to me and those practices that I have engaged with myself as the Saxonia Dancers' group leader demonstrate collective feelings of nostalgia for a place and time we never experienced. Boym focuses on the uses of nostalgia to recreate the past, to evoke a sense of unity, stability and familiarity, to convey complex emotions and to yearn for a better, idealized future as part of a continuity with one's roots, even if those roots are imagined. Similarly, through my leadership and the ways in which I facilitate dance practices, I recreate what I understand the Transylvania of my ancestors to have been. Like Cashman's critical nostalgia (2006, 152), and as Scholtes observed among Transylvanian Saxons in Canada (Scholtes 2016, 257), such yearning can be concerned with the future while simultaneously

serving and connecting the past and present (Boym 2001, xvi). The continued performance of Saxon folklore by later-generation Saxon immigrants to Canada proves that despite change over time and assimilation to the new host country, the connection between past and present remains.

Today, Saxons in Canada who participated in this project appear to yearn for both a connection to the past and its link to the future. Nostalgia transfers the group imagination into the past, subjunctive non-event from "restored behavior" which drives continued cultural practices and relationships with the Transylvanian Saxon *Heimat*. Schechner's "restored behavior" based only on a conceptualized past event occurs when these later generations–in this case, the participants in this project–who do not have lived experiences in Transylvania and (in most cases) have not ever been to Transylvania, continue to refer to the place as home. The group has learned how to know Transylvania as a home without going home. I argue, following Boym, that the group's conceptualized historical point and feelings of nostalgia and yearning could also be for a different place or time, in this case, for an experience that is similar to present-day larger groups. Yet how can these cultural practices be considered restored "nonevents" when many of the traditions are rooted in first-generation immigrant experiences of actual historical events in Transylvania? As Schechner emphasizes, "The people possessing the latest version of the original often presume (falsely) that it has come down unchanged over many generations" when, in fact, the changes turn the past reference event into a fictional nonevent (1985, 49). He continues, "the event to be restored has been forgotten, never was, or is overlaid with so much secondary stuff that its actuality-in-history is lost" (Schechner 1985, 50). In the case of first-generation Saxon immigrants, this "secondary stuff" includes the traumatic experiences of evacuation, and for the younger Saxons among this first-generation group, the rose-coloured glasses of childhood memory. By the time the performances by second- and third-generation

Saxons occur, the restored nonevents are further influenced by language loss and cultural relevance within mixed families that became common for Saxons in Canada. Following nostalgia's reliance on the past and its manifestation through Saxon cultural practices in the present, I argue that Saxon folklore is rooted in nostalgia and should be interpreted as "restored behavior."

2.4 Nostalgic Immigrant Folklore Today

Saxon cultural groups that I have observed and am part of position our cultural practices within a chronology of being Saxon in Transylvania in the past and our concerns about the viability of Saxon traditions in the present and future. Amongst ourselves, we consider components of our costume, our dance steps, and even the methods we employ to cook Saxon foods with the question–usually asked in jest, with an exaggerated Saxon accent–"Did dey have dat in da old country?" However, we are asking each other, not someone who lived in Transylvania. As media arts scholar Sarah Durcan notes of nostalgia, many Saxons in Canada hold an "uncomfortable and ambiguous position of remembering home but also knowing that we cannot return there because it no longer exists" (2021, 62). While the geographic place Transylvania exists today and the cultural milieu of Transylvanian Saxons is ever present in Romania, the experience of Canadian Saxons' ancestors is gone, not only due to political and immigration circumstances in history, but also by the simple fact that ongoing tradition implies a degree of change. Folklorist Henry Glassie poses tradition and change as one and the same, "an innovative adaptation of the old" (2003, 177). I have observed the nostalgic response to the changes my and earlier generations have experienced. Several later-generation Saxons today rely on nostalgia for a time and place that are foreign to many of us in Canada, nostalgia that was

passed on by parents and grandparents. So, when I asked Kate if she thought of Transylvania as a homeland, she explained:

> Kate: I don't really think of it as the location at all, really. It's more caring what was brought… and I don't do it all for my grandparents. That wouldn't be enough reason for me to come.
> Rebecca: Why not?
> Kate: I have to make my own choices and decide whether I still want to be a part of this or not. But being understanding, being thankful, respecting that they did a lot of this stuff in a certain way so that we could continue enjoying it.

Kate notices that her grandparents' generation made choices about how to pass on Saxon cultural practices in their immigrant context in Canada. Although the Saxons who arrived in Canada in the 1950s had similar aspects of folklore to continue, their circumstances and geography had significantly changed. Noting the phenomenon of invented traditions or the history and uses of traditions within groups, historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger assert that "Quite new, or old but dramatically transformed, social groups, environments and social contexts called for new devices to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to structure social relations" (1983, 263). Nevertheless, in recognizing that her grandparents' generation adapted the folklore, Kate claims agency in her participation in and interpretation of Transylvanian Saxon traditions and nostalgia today.

Feelings of homeland nostalgia fostered by the Saxon immigrants who arrived in the 1950s remain omnipresent in Canadian Saxon folklore today, and Scholtes suggests that nostalgia's reflection on the past and orientation towards the future are inherent to Saxon identity (2016, 257). Yet this nostalgia is disconnected from actual experiences in the "homeland." As noted earlier, the participants in this project are mostly unacquainted with the physical place of Transylvania in present-day Romania. Any feeling of nostalgia for home or for Saxon activities were taught and transmitted by earlier generations and elders in the community. My observation

is that nostalgia has become a vital component not only of positioning the group and its members' identities as Transylvanian Saxon but also of a later-generation Saxon search for roots and their relationship with this shared *Heimat*. Cashman suggests that nostalgia is critical for a "community realizing itself through bids to represent a shared past" (2008, 155). However, younger Transylvanian Saxons do not share a past lifetime in Transylvania; what they do hold on to is an idea of a shared past. As Daniel explains:

> I don't directly associate homeland with Transylvania. It's more, like, with the people and the traditions and culture that create the homeland that you're celebrating. Sure, everyone came from one spot, but I've never been there. I don't know what it's like. There's still the sense of belonging that I would equate to a hometown that is present in the group of people, even though it's somewhere else.

Glassie suggests that tradition is the meeting point or intersection of history, culture and the choices groups make while passing on cultural practices and knowledge (2003, 193). Traditions, as Daniel observes, do not necessarily refer to an exact location but to this intersection.

Later-generation Saxons in Canada who, like Daniel, lack lived experience in the physical place of Transylvania more often view *Heimat* as a feeling rather than a place. This is the power of the folklore nostalgically selected and communicated by the 1950s immigrant group: "Homeland is mostly immaterial and made up of emotional attachment, memories, identification, culture and spirit, where home is materiality and real-life experience. Thus, *Siebenbürgen* was discursively constructed by respondents in ways that made it familiar and special to them, a cultural homeland rather than a real home or place of residence" (Iorio and Corsale 2012, 218). Particularly within the immigrant folklore setting, constructing a notion of *Heimat* is imperative in defining and continuing the transmission of Saxon identity.

As folklorists Robert Klymasz and Babro Klein observe, "It is in folklore that people tend to find the symbols through which they re-establish a sense of peoplehood in new lands. Indeed,

such phenomena as special foods, music, dance, and traditional dress may assume increasingly important symbolic roles as ethnic markers, when the children of migrants no longer speak the language of their parents" (Klymasz 1973; Klein 2000, 25). Here, I must also highlight the place of Saxon folklore as a symbolic language among later-generation Saxons in Canada. While we attended *Heimattag*, a Saxon homeland day festival in Dinkelsbühl, Germany, in the spring of 2023, my friend and fellow dancer Kate realized how dance was the common language among young Saxons from different countries. She explained that she often did not comprehend the festival events, which were primarily facilitated in German, but when the groups gathered to dance, they understood each other. Her brother Daniel offered a specific example, reminding me of our brief practice session behind the main dance area when a German woman approached us and asked if we could practice with two couples from her party. Daniel, Kate, Reilly, and I agreed, and the four couples proceeded to dance while the woman called the steps in German. Daniel accepted that he did not understand her words, but having a general knowledge of the dance steps, he was able to participate in the rehearsal with ease. Upon our return to Canada, the siblings reflected on the language barriers and the dense scheduling of the weekend-long event:

> Kate: We go there, and everything else is different. Even though those dances were technically new and we had to learn them, the feeling of performing a dance in *Tracht* with each other feels familiar… and feels like something that, I do it here because of the same reasons they do it there. And now that we're doing it together is a different experience than speaking.
> Daniel: That's a good point, actually. When you're actually there doing the dance, you kind of feel more like you're not on the other side of the world or anything. It's very familiar. It feels like the home… it's like the *Heimat*.

Daniel and Kate's participation in the music, costume, and traditional dance symbols of their Saxon heritage demonstrates, as anthropologist Ruth Behar identifies, that "Folklore in many ways is the search for an understanding of what home means" (2009, 251). While the siblings may use narrative generalizations to describe their heritage to outsiders and while they do not

explicitly refer to Transylvania as their own "homeland," they have a visceral connection to their culture and imagined *Heimat* through costume and dance as a result of the transmission choices made by their grandparents' and great-grandparents' generations who were nostalgic for home.

Such nostalgia has become a critical behaviour for later-generation members of the Saxonia Hall. Following Cashman's interpretation of nostalgia as "a register for critical (that is, judicious) thought that may inspire critical (that is, vitally important) action" (2006, 154), I examine how, for later-generation Transylvanian Saxons, this nostalgia is more critical in the sense of being a necessity. While this chapter focuses on Saxon narratives and nostalgia, a similar degree of yearning is also present with non-Saxon members of the Saxonia Hall, like Justin Toth. Justin's reasoning for dancing and attending Saxonia Hall social events resonates with his nostalgia for experiences he learned about from his parents. He clarifies, "I feel like that's something our parents' generation had that's kind of died out. I think it's something that's missing in general culture lately." His participation at the Saxonia Hall responds to and confronts the threat of modernization to social engagement and a sense of community. Justin is able to incorporate these into his everyday life through his participation in Saxon folklore, even as a non-Saxon.

However, there are also moments of nostalgia that inspire reflection and sound judgment in regard to changing practices. After a *Trachtenball* in March 2024, 41-year old Dan Schmidt, who is a member of the Transylvania Club–the other Saxon club in Canada–explained to me that he recognized how some of the cultural practices of our grandparents' generation might be considered inappropriate by today's standards. Dan is a third-generation Transylvanian Saxon, born in Canada to Saxon parents. His example was the Easter-time ritual of *Bespritzen* from Weilau, one of the villages where he has Saxon roots. The custom was that young men visited

young women's homes, recited a poem,[13] and sprayed them with perfume or rose water. Dan's interpretation of the event was, at least in part, that it was a way for families to introduce their daughters of marriageable age to the community's bachelors. Dan chuckled as he acknowledged this, but then continued to explain how his *Opa*–his grandfather–took him along as a child and how Dan's children today accompany him on the activity where the goal is not marriage but simply to visit Saxon friends and learn about Saxon customs from the old country. Cashman argues that nostalgia is used to make informed evaluations of the past and to reconcile the traditional and the modern; in other words, to be a vehicle for coming to terms with change (2006, 141). For Dan, this child-friendly rendition was an appropriate adaptation to *Bespritzen* in the Canadian setting. His critical awareness of the negative aspects of the past iteration of this activity proves Boym's argument that nostalgia is a process and communication tool, not merely a romantic picture of history (2001, 40). Another judicious adaptation is the Saxonia Hall's dance group, which recreates imagined village scenes through folk dance while expanding the group membership to married couples, non-Saxons, and non-traditional pairings of boys dancing with boys. As the group's leader and a Saxon myself, I want to continue the traditions of dancing in the Transylvanian Saxon folk costume, but in order to do so, I recognize that the boundaries of the group membership must also be flexible.

2.5 Positioning Later-Generation Transylvanian Saxons in Southwestern Ontario

When Kate was reflecting on the challenges of explaining what it means to be Transylvanian Saxon to her non-Saxon friends outside of the club, she used the traditional

[13] The poem reads in the Weilau dialect, "*Ich hu gehuirt, ihr het a Ruisabimcha zem gegaessa, Euch well et giern begaessa, et sell ich net verdraissa,*" (I heard you had a little rose tree to water and I would like to water it so that it shall not perish) (Frim 1969, 62). Other villages shared these customary visits that contribute to and build community, but due to varying dialects, the poem differed slightly depending on the location.

costume, the *Tracht*, to illustrate her point. In southwestern Ontario where the Saxonia Hall is based, there is a much larger population of German, Polish, and Ukrainian immigrants than Saxons. Their folk costumes are, therefore, more familiar to the general public. This comes up often witn the Saxonia Dancers' group because ethnic or traditional costumes, to an outsider, can have a lot of similarities. Polish and Ukrainian costumes, like the Saxon *Tracht* have a lot of intricate embroidery. As such, I was bothered but mostly unsurprised when the Saxonia Dancers group performed in London, Ontario, during the summer of 2023, and a photo of us was shared online later by the organizers with the caption "Polish dancers." In Kate's words, "There are other cultural costumes that are more popular, that you see all the time, and someone's just going to look at it and know what it is or have an idea." Kate considers these other costumes and expresses that she believes most people are not as familiar with the *Tracht* because there are fewer Saxons in Canada.

Kate has another costume example–the Bavarian Dirndl and Lederhosen–which the dance group wears during the fall to perform at Oktoberfest. Again, in the context of southwestern Ontario, there is a larger general understanding and familiarity with German culture because Oktoberfest is a popular and common harvest-oriented event that takes place annually in several southern Ontario cities.[14] The festival is open to Germans and non-Germans, so the general public has a foundational understanding of the event and attends simply to have a good time. Kate explained, "If it was an Oktoberfest, I feel like that's easy enough to understand. They'll not want to continue to dive and ask me more questions, versus if it was *Trachtenball*, I would say, 'I have a family party.' If it was my roommate or someone who I'm actually friends with, then I would dive into it." These examples illustrate how culture is presented in different places;

[14] In a report about resident perceptions surrounding the annual Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest–the largest such festival in Canada–in southwestern Ontario, authors Xiao and Smith mark the festival's Canadian origins in 1969 (2004, 164), also noted on the official Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest website "Our Story" (2024).

being situated in southwestern Ontario allows Saxons from this project to resort to a general familiarity with German heritage. Due to her very German-sounding Saxon family name, Pfingstgraef, Kate is often prompted to explain her heritage, though she has the geographic privilege of choosing what details she provides. Thanks to her engagement in Saxon folklore in Canada, she can access the communication process to describe her roots.

Cultural practices are the dynamic sites of Saxon identity; this was the case in early twentieth-century Transylvania and in present-day performances in Canada that employ nostalgia to commemorate an unknown homeland. Participating in cultural practices today leads later-generation Saxons in Canada, like Kate, Daniel, Derek, Dan, and me, to contemplate our heritage identities and to make choices about how we describe our roots and continue Transylvanian Saxon traditions. Looking back at the movements of the Transylvanian Saxons during the earlier centuries of their history, Pfeiffer describes the initial "Saxon" identity as a constructed one because those who migrated to Transylvania did not come as a single ethnic population but rather in several independent waves over an immense period of time; they became a Transylvanian Saxon nation "with a common language, law and mind," after gathering in Transylvania (2009, 53). Contrary to Foisel, who asserted that Saxons were a group long before their arrival in Transylvania, Pfeiffer identifies the ethnogenesis of Transylvanian Saxons within Transylvania itself. Similarly, in its new 1950s Canadian context, characteristics of the group shifted again, suggesting that non-Saxons who join the group today might be considered, to a degree, insiders within this dynamic identity performance. As Koranyi reports of Saxons in Germany, "By looking at the memorial practices of particular groups, and the ways in which they tell and retell narratives about their shared past in order to reinforce or change aspects of their identity, it is possible to get at the 'glue, that holds identities together'" (2022, 14). Folklorist

Dan Ben-Amos highlights the necessity of viewing folklore not as a collection of cultural practices and expressions but as a communicative process ([1972] 2020, 30). If so, nostalgia inspires such communication from one generation to the next among Transylvanian Saxons in Canada, while tradition prompts the adaptation of cultural practices to present contexts. Together, these allow Transylvanian Saxons in Canada to understand and share narratives about our cultural identity.

Chapter 3. Folklore in the *Festzelt*: Negotiating the Boundaries of Costume Authenticity at Transylvanian Saxon Homecoming Festivals

I have a *Tracht* sitting in my closet. Actually, because I wanted to make sure that all the dancers in the Saxonia Hall's dance group have a costume to wear when we perform, I have several *Trachten* in several closets in my home. Sometimes I worry about the weight of it all–not of making sure that everyone wears the costume properly, even though I help them to do so, but the physical weight of eight or nine (I have lost count) velvet dresses hanging on the aluminum clothing bar in the closed narrow corner of my home office. Will one more costume make the bar buckle? The women's costumes weigh significantly more than the men's: they consist of a dark blue velvet skirt, heavily embroidered on the bottom with floral motifs, beading and ribbons, and lined with cotton. The skirts fall just below the knee when we wear them. Some skirts are attached to a red velvet vest, similarly decorated with embroidery, sequins, and lace. Even if the vest is not attached to the skirt, I usually hang the vest on the same hanger because I am running out of space. Under the dress, we wear white voluminous cotton embroidered blouses with expansive sheer sleeves and at least two long underskirts. The men's costumes are white cotton or linen cross-stitched shirts, wool pants, a short embroidered velvet tie with two blades, and a decorative woven leather belt.

Before a dance performance, I sort the costumes by who fits into which outfit. I pack each into a garment bag with the dancer's name on it, layering the pieces into the bags in the order they need to be put on. If I lift all eight bags over my shoulder to take them outside to the car I, too, buckle under the weight of it all.

* * *

Indeed, the Transylvanian Saxon identity is most visible through our *Tracht*, which is the folk costume of the Saxons. The word "Tracht" (singular) or "Trachten" (plural) translates directly to "costume." Folklorist Pravina Shukla defines costume as "special dress that enables the expression of extraordinary identity in exceptional circumstances" (205, 14). In the context of Transylvanian Saxons in Canada, *Tracht* is not any costume but specifically the Transylvanian Saxon *Festtracht*, the clothing historically worn for church services and special sacramental occasions, such as confirmations and weddings. The group at the Saxonia Hall also wears, on occasion, other costumes which are referred to precisely by name, for example, the Bavarian *Tracht*, which is known as the *Dirndl* and *Lederhosen*. In Canada, when Saxons say *Tracht*, they refer to the Transylvanian Saxon *Festtracht*. The group uses the traditional costume in a way that is more sustainable for contemporary activities–not as church clothing, but as identity-expressing attire at heritage celebrations.

For later-generation Transylvanian Saxons, wearing this costume demonstrates a yearning for connection. It communicates a sense of identity that represents all Transylvanian Saxons regardless of their precise region. Folklorist Pravina Shukla observes a similar sense of identity in her study of everyday dress in India (2005, 14). While the motivations behind wearing the *Tracht* may begin with nostalgia for the old country, the framework governing how the costume is worn in Canada today focuses on the preservation of old country experiences known to us through stories from our elders. Just as Daniel, Kate and I are familiar with our ancestral villages in Transylvania, we understand that our *Tracht*–intentionally preserved in Canada by our Saxon grandparents–contains details that preserve our geography and represent our heritage (Shukla 2015, 99). Such understanding is demonstrated through our behaviour while wearing the *Tracht*, as the three of us discuss stitchwork details that represent our family's villages and

debate the aesthetics and requirements of jewellery and accessories. The *Tracht*, therefore, remains a stable symbol of belonging among Transylvanian Saxons today. However, the framework of authenticity surrounding our *Tracht* communicates cultural anxieties, opportunities for education, and the establishment of a sense of belonging and communitas (see Turner 1969).

Nevertheless, as with any clothing or fashion item, as the *Tracht* was passed down, it has evolved over decades in the Canadian context just as it previously has done over centuries in Transylvania. Kate reminisced about her grandmother dressing her in the *Tracht*. She remembers, "My grandma would put the *Tracht* on me, or my grandpa–they told me about it, and now I can continue doing that." My own mother, Karen, recalls how her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law (my grandmother and aunts) insisted "that it had to be worn properly." If these are examples of costume cultural practices being passed down, or vertically, then the *Tracht* was also passed horizontally: I taught my husband Reilly and our friend Justin Toth about the Saxon *Tracht* when I welcomed them to the dance group at the Saxonia Hall. When Kate, Daniel, and I exchange stories about wearing the *Tracht* at different events over the years, we learn from the others' experiences about what the Saxon community sees as acceptable.

The combination of such informal passing on or transmission and the variation that occurs in every iteration of *Tracht* traditions is a marker of folklore (Toelken 1996, 31; McNeill 2013, 13). Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered examples of slight variations to the *Tracht* and community members' ensuing feedback. Being a member of the Saxon community in Canada myself, I was unsurprised at the responses of some Saxons both in Canada and during my travels to Germany, mainly when someone expressed that something was worn incorrectly. However, my position and my own direct experience with such comments–in the past, I have apparently worn the wrong shoes, lipstick, and head coverings–made me inclined to investigate

the notion behind these responses. Earlier, I established how narrative generalizations that later-generation Transylvanian Saxons choose and use to describe their identity are communication tools; depending on the context, the components of the narrative vary slightly to serve different purposes of simplicity (to respond to a stranger inquiring about a family name) and belonging (to demonstrate knowledge of our ancestral villages and cultural nostalgia). Those narratives serve as communication between Saxons and non-Saxons as well as among Saxons because they help us establish to each other what we know about our folklore. Similarly, costume authenticity is used to communicate a degree of belonging and the continued transmission of nostalgia.

Folklorist Regina Bendix's *In Search of Authenticity* remains relevant to understanding the role of authenticity in everyday artistic communication in small groups, even nearly three decades following its publication. Bendix presents the concept of authenticity as a means of communicating a cultural group's ideals, including their sense of uniqueness or even purity (1997, 4). When coupled with a constructed connection with the past, these ideals create a sense of authority that aligns with authenticity (Bendix 1997, 11). As I established in Chapter Two, feelings of nostalgia among Transylvanian Saxons who arrived in Canada in the 1950s and onwards became a driving force in the continuity of their cultural practices. Nostalgia, or longing for a past place or time that may no longer exist, is the link between the supposed "authentic" past and modernity. For example, in May 2023, when Daniel, Kate, Reilly and I lined up for the *Trachtenumzug*–a parade during which all participants wear the Saxon folk costume–at *Heimattag*[15] in Dinkelsbühl, Germany, one of our German friends who would be leading the

[15] *Heimattag* is an annual "Homeland Day" event. It is usually a two- or three-day festival celebration, varying in activities depending on the host country. In Canada and the United States, the event is significantly smaller with only about 250-300 attendees compared to Germany's approximately 10 000 attendees. There is usually a Lutheran church service, a meal, cultural performances by choirs and dance groups, and speeches by local dignitaries and/or government officials celebrating themes of intercultural awareness and support.

parade approached Reilly and asked him to remove his era-inappropriate sunglasses.

Figure 3.1: From left, Reilly, Daniel and Kate wait in line before the parade begins (Horeth, May 28, 2023).

It was a bright, sunny morning without a cloud in the sky. Sunlight glimmered against the pastel-painted stucco and timber-framed houses. Rays reflected off the old city cobblestone street, and the four of us squinted as we stepped out of the cool shade and into line. Reilly, whose eyes are very sensitive to light, often wears the *Tracht* with reflective black lenses and polished silver frame Ray-Ban Clubmaster sunglasses if an event is outdoors (Figure 3.1). He has never encountered opposition at events in Canada or the United States. However, this was the second time event organizers from the *Verband der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Deutschland*–the Alliance of Transylvanian Saxons in Germany–asked Reilly to remove his sunglasses. The first time was during our visit in 2018. Then, Reilly and I had pre-arranged to walk in the parade with the first group and we met the organizers before the parade began. Right before we started walking, one

woman in the group suddenly and aggressively told Reilly he could not wear sunglasses. Shaken, he removed them quickly but complained the sun bothered his eyes. When we returned in 2023, Reilly and I expected a similar instruction. Because of his past experience, Reilly was prepared to explain the situation, and apologize, but reiterate that he needed his sunglasses to see.

Nevertheless, our friend insisted that Reilly remove the sunglasses, at least until after passing the cameras and dignitaries. I jumped in to defend Reilly, saying, "Well, you're wearing glasses; take those off then!" Our friend chuckled and replied that he needed his glasses to see. "So you understand," I replied. "Reilly needs his glasses to see, too." Not willing to be flexible, our friend explained that Saxons probably used glasses in the old country, but they were unlikely to have had sunglasses in Transylvania. Reilly offered to walk behind a tall person at the back of our group to camouflage his accessory, and our friend conceded that it would be acceptable. His sunglasses seemed to go by unnoticed.

This was not the last dispute over Reilly's sunglasses that day. Later that day, we were part of a group of dancers making our way to the main square. As we passed by the crowds of people in the bleachers, someone grabbed Reilly's arm. She shouted at him in German. In the brief ruckus, I realized she was demanding that Reilly remove his sunglasses. Almost as quickly as she appeared, Reilly shook her off, unphased. I was fuming, however; my husband is not Saxon, yet he enthusiastically participates in Saxon cultural practices in order to serve the communal objective of carrying on traditions–this woman was not even wearing a *Tracht*! Later that weekend, we met a member of the social media team who was monitoring the live video stream for the weekend. He explained, with great amusement, that there were several rude comments on the video stream page from the *Trachten-Polizei*–people online who remarked that Reilly's sunglasses should not be worn because they did not align with a "correct" version of the

Tracht. The position of costume police is pervasive in immigrant folklore, where "self-appointed guardians of the 'real'" express their opinions based on their own interpretation of authenticity (Graden 2014, 356; Shay 2021, 231; Shukla 2015, 139). As folklorist Carrie Hertz explains, "Some community members are deeply invested not only in following the dress code but also in adhering to nuanced details unpublished anywhere" (2021, 50). The team member assured Reilly and me that we should not be concerned about such comments, especially from people who were not participating in the costume parade themselves.

3.1 Learning About Our Transylvanian Roots

If authenticity relies on a lineage and a traceable beginning in the past, as our friend pointed to former villages' lack of sunglasses, then there is a focus on the purity of the folklore being performed "authentically" (Bendix 1997, 81). Our friend and the audience member did not consider the sunglasses as rooted in a past Transylvanian Saxon wardrobe. Folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett examines the rise of folk costume ideology in the 19th century and observes that the pretext of costume preservation led to stylization that did not necessarily reflect earlier versions of dress in the former homeland (1998, 299). As a result, costume guidelines should be negotiated, as I observed in Canada during my fieldwork. Within international Saxon communities, this negotiation falls elsewhere on the spectrum of authenticity. In their newspaper article, "Richtlinien für siebenbürgisch-sächsische Trachtenträger" (2007), then Vice President of Germany's *Verband* Doris Hutter and Transylvanian Saxon folklorist Irmgard Sedler emphasize guidelines for hair, make-up, accessories, and costume components by which those wearing the *Tracht* must abide. Although these guidelines were presented in a 2007 newspaper article, I came across them in 2023 through the *Verband*'s social media accounts ahead of the *Heimattag* costume parade. While books about the Transylvanian Saxon *Tracht* exist, they are published in

the German language and accessible to only the few Saxons in Canada who are able to read and understand German. The timing of Hutter and Sedler's article's resurfacing and the language used demonstrate, therefore, that the intended audience was participants in the costume parade in Germany.

While Hutter and Sedler hold formal roles within institutions like the *Verband*, other Saxons who engage in *Tracht* traditions–like the woman who grabbed Reilly in Germany–informally become "cultural gatekeepers" (Hertz 2021, 50). Folklorists Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi call this monitoring "community censorship" and observe that it intends to curtail major deviation within a folkloric tradition (2013, 228). In both formal and informal instances of enforcing costume rules, the objective is to align with an "authentic" *Tracht*, which creates restrictions about how Saxons wear the costume. So, cultural gatekeepers in the international Transylvanian Saxon community advise that sunglasses must "definitely be avoided" (Hutter and Sedler 2007). They insist that costume wearers must not mix pieces from different regions and should at least know the villages of origin of the costume they have on (Hutter and Sedler 2007). I interpret this connection to and replication of an original village experience as nostalgically guided costume censorship because there appears to be a yearning for an experience in a past time and place. I present these guidelines as examples of an official interpretation of what Transylvanian Saxons are supposed to wear, however I am more interested in how Saxons interpret these rules and wear their own versions of the *Tracht* in reality.

Folklorist Lizette Graden additionally explores how costume censorship can illustrate implicit ethnocentrism or racism, particularly when the costume rules or guidelines outline who can and cannot participate in the material culture tradition (2014, 356). This has occurred during my time as the leader of the Saxonia Dancers when senior members of the Saxon community

remarked that non-Saxon participants should not wear the *Tracht*. Even though these non-Saxon participants are insiders in the dance group, some older Saxons still mark them as outsiders. Marking who does or does not belong can depend on costume, family name, how someone looks, or a combination of these. Most dancers do not stand out as "other" unless they have a non-Saxon last name, are a racialized person, or do not conform to traditional gender presentations. Furthermore, leaders in the community like Amanda Mooser and myself, both leaders of our respective dance groups at the time of this project, have become the point of reception of comments about supposed outsiders. These comments are often based in nuanced observations: someone who does not "look" Saxon, does not conform to traditional gender roles, or does not have a "Saxon" family name. Thus, small moments of costume censorship arise in private layers because they arise only when additional details about a non-Saxon dancer have been revealed. As I reflect on these voiced concerns, as Shukla explains, limiting who can and cannot wear a costume can be a "way to control the costume and discourage unnecessary change" (2015, 104). However, year after year, the simple fact that this group is a later-generation immigrant community suggests that Saxons in Canada themselves have already contributed to slight modifications over time as they integrated into their new home communities and opened the door of their traditions to "outsiders."

While concerns about intermarriage resulting in assimilation away from Saxon cultural practices were prevalent in Transylvanian Saxon villages in the past (Davis 2010, 203-204), my mother remembers that marrying a Saxon made her feel like she belonged to the Saxon community. When Karen first wore the Transylvanian Saxon costume, she felt honoured because she wore her mother-in-law's *Tracht*, an all-white version originally meant for wear during the summer. Later, her mother-in-law made Karen a velvet winter *Tracht*. Her mother- and

sisters-in-law underscored the importance of wearing the costume properly. Yet Karen emphasized to me that she felt more honoured to wear this *Tracht* because it was made especially for her, saying, "I thought it was awesome to have a velvet one because everyone else had velvet ones with all the embroidery." For Karen, wearing the costume and having a *Tracht* of her own demonstrates, as Graden acknowledges, that contemporary folk costume is "an embodied cultural heritage in the making" and "dress practices should be understood as in flux and as transnational" (2014, 356). Today, within the Aylmer, Ontario group, one does not necessarily need to be married to a Saxon to experience the group's inclusivity despite costume guidelines.

Including non-Saxons–such as my friend Justin Toth, who joined the Saxonia Dancers in March 2022–in Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices is meaningful for the continuity of Saxon folklore. For those involved in this project, cultural preservation moves away from exclusive, unchanging displays of cultural practices and toward inclusive dynamic performances. While Graden highlights the possibility of ethnocentrism surrounding costume rules, folklorist Dorothy Noyes draws attention to the peripheral interaction of insiders and outsiders within the formation of a group. She explains that this interaction between people, including when boundaries around certain traditions are drawn, "facilitates the exchange of tradition" (Noyes 2016, 23-26). Since Justin's maternal family roots are in Hungary, I asked him how he felt about wearing a costume from another cultural group.

Justin's perspective counters the senior members' perspectives about outsiders wearing the *Tracht*. As a member of the Saxonia Hall, he considers himself as part of the community despite not being Saxon himself. His actions align instead with Graden's examination of embodied cultural heritage. Justin's participation in Transylvanian Saxon material culture ensures that other people, Saxon or not, are able to learn about the cultural practices of a group

that is not his own. He told me about his friends and family asking him why he is part of this group and why he wears the *Tracht*. Not only does Justin see this as an opportunity to teach others what he has learned about Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices, but he also uses it as a stepping stone to talk about his own heritage. He says, "It can be a transition because we can talk about the similar food or the parts of the language that overlap, or for example, Transylvania was part of Hungary… so there is cultural crossover."

As Noyes observes within the Italian market and among the participants in its traditions (2016, 43), here Justin's interaction with Transylvanian Saxon costume practices as a non-Saxon himself ensures that these traditions are repeated and continued. While Justin may not have a Saxon heritage, he contributes to the group's objective to authentically "envision and reconstruct a piece of the wearable past" (Shukla 2015, 199). His engagement with the Saxon group, then, is a significant factor in the group's material culture performances of Schechner's "restored behavior" (1985). Justin does not exactly restore an actual historical past, where Hungarians wore Transylvanian Saxons costumes, but he complies with the boundaries of *Tracht* authenticity enforced by central cultural figures like myself. His and other non-Saxons' involvement in the group is important in a small community because, while they are dancing together and wearing the Saxon costume, they are representing Transylvanian Saxons as insiders.

Despite possible negative connotations associated with titles like "gatekeepers" or the act of "policing" costume use, such guidelines can be educational and help later-generation Transylvanian Saxons in Canada learn about the Saxon heritage they portray by wearing the *Tracht*. With Hutter and Sedler's recommendation that one be familiar with the geography of a costume comes lessons about various regions in Transylvania, a place most later-generation Saxons with whom I spoke have never visited. As Shukla notes, "education and authenticity

drive the choices" when passing on material culture (2015, 165). Part of membership in the Saxonia Dancers is the reality that even non-Saxons like Justin have access to conversations about our costume traditions. Thus, they have the opportunity to learn about Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices while simultaneously being able to explore and teach us Saxons about their own heritage. In Justin's case, a post-dance practice discussion in the late summer of 2023 about Transylvanian Saxon nicknames led us to discover similarities in Saxon and Hungarian regional vocabulary and naming patterns. When later-generation Saxons open their cultural practices to outsiders and to variation, especially in such a visible symbol as the *Tracht*, their traditions move seamlessly into continuity.

Like Hutter and Sedler's *Tracht* guidelines and as Shukla argues about the Swedish costume almanac, costume rules or guidelines are perspcriptive and "tell us what should be worn, but not what was (and is) actually worn by people" (2015, 80). When Transylvanian Saxons are compelled to align with costume guidelines, they ignore the creative variation taking place among later generations. Authenticity thus becomes performative when it is posed as rooted in the past because it becomes a question of "enacting" certain ways of life "as was" rather than acting out of everyday necessity (Bendix 1997, 74). The costume guidelines demonstrate a communal value of aligning the ideals of an authentic costume with its origins in a Transylvanian Saxon village–a place and way of doing things that are remembered from the past. Furthermore, Bendix explains that a major problem with the concept of authenticity is that it implies that there is a fake, contrasting option (1997, 9). The actual attire of people is contrasted against the constructed "authentic" or approved costume.

Classifying variations as fake is especially problematic for diaspora groups, like the later-generation Saxons in Canada, because it rejects any adaptation or creativity resulting from

migration. Folklorist Dorothy Noyes describes that groups influenced by immigration contexts and modernity often policed their traditions along established ideals of authenticity (2009, 241). In Germany, Kate, Daniel, Reilly, and I experienced the accepted framework of authenticity among Saxons as much more rigid than what we were familiar with in Canada, where the population of Saxons actively performing our cultural practices is significantly smaller than in Germany. As anthropologist Sangmi Lee describes:

> For diasporic communities, cultural authenticity is especially unattainable because their ethnic traditions have constantly travelled across the diaspora and have been transformed as they are reterritorialized in different nation-states. Cultural forms and practices are always subject to change since diasporic people have been geographically detached from their original nation-state. (Lee 2022, 11).

Those who migrated–and their descendants–are consequently excluded from the "authentic" tradition as well.

Supporting this point, ethnologist Helmut Groschwitz argues that authenticity is negotiated and "requires an opposite pole, inauthenticity, and thereby also encompasses the neighboring discourses on forgery, copying, and reinvention" ([2017] 2019, 9). As such, any rampant enforcement of authenticity on Saxon folklore by later generations' performances of tradition could, in fact, result in a devaluation at worst and concealment at best of present-day cultural practices. As folklorist Henry Glassie notes, "culture and tradition, we have come to accept, are created by individuals out of experience" (2003, 180). Glassie acknowledges that tradition might be understood to be the medium for the concept of authenticity to pass between generations–the thread connecting past to present–but that folklore, if considered artistic communication, is inherently stylized through selection, evaluation, transmission, and creativity (2003, 182-183). Suppose that authenticity is understood as a static, constructed standard which

is aligned with history, and tradition is the creative and dynamic changes that occur as a cultural practice continues in different contexts. In that case, the Transylvanian Saxon costume, as later-generation Saxons wear it in Canada in the present, cannot be both authentic and traditional.

My brother John notices that costume rules help turn our attention to the fascinating role of tradition and variation in the costume. He says:

> It's bizarre that there are rules for a costume that, by definition, is made by hand to be unique. It's interesting that these cases are right on the border of being correct and not correct. Everything that's interesting is that tiny bit of area where either you're a little bit right, or you're a little bit wrong.

For example, Reilly and I usually wear a combination of *Tracht* pieces from my grandmother's and grandfather's families. As they come from different Transylvanian villages, our outfits are a hybrid of combined regional symbols. However, as Glassie notes, "traditions of creation are often accompanied by traditions of criticism designed to check creative excess" (2003, 190). Reilly's and my costumes are "a little bit right" and "a little bit wrong," as my brother puts it.

The combination of pieces from different areas contradicts Hutter and Sedler's recommendation to wear a costume entirely from one village (2007). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett emphasizes that migration must be understood as a source of creativity in tradition, not loss (1978, 49-50). What does it mean to wear a full costume if I do not own the full ensemble? Such guidelines would dictate that I do not participate in the *Tracht* tradition if parts of my costume come from different villages. I choose to participate anyway. Dan Schmidt and I talked about mixing pieces of the *Tracht* because our grandparents' Saxon roots come from different villages. He acknowledged that "It's gonna be really hard at some point to know what village your *Tracht* is from. Some of them are handed down three generations, and some of them are bought online now." The variation or creativity in combining the pieces we and other Saxons can access ensures continuity, not loss. This interpretation of variation resulting from migration validates the

continuity of Saxon cultural practices in Canadian settings rather than prioritizing notions of fixed authenticity. Returning to Bendix, who focuses on who needs authenticity and their reasons for applying it, I examine why authenticity is used as a communication and transmission tool, both among Saxons within Canada, and between Canadian and non-Canadian Saxons.

Lee's examination of authenticity's relationship with the past among diasporic communities is especially relevant to Transylvanian Saxons in Canada. She acknowledges that traditions are continuously modified. Thus, one's perception and experience of authenticity, especially when rooted in a shared homeland, are subjective (Lee 2022, 11). Those involved in this project do not consider Transylvania to be their literal homeland–most attributed the place of home to Canada. However, their understanding of a Transylvanian *Heimat* as a feeling aligns with Lee's analysis of the role of "homeland" in constructing authenticity. If authenticity measures only how much has changed over time in response to modernity, it fails to account for the implications of constant movement and modification to new immigrant contexts that diasporic groups experience (Lee 2022, 15-17). Schechner's "restoration of behavior" (1985) is significant here because performers of Saxon costume traditions appear to refer to a historical point, but in fact, due to the changes resulting from the Transylvanian Saxons' constant migration, the performers refer to a conceptualized interpretation of our collective past. As historians Hobsbawm and Ranger famously highlight, invented traditions are aligned with a historical past in response to novel situations (1983, 1-2). They present "invention" as the standardization or formalizing of cultural practices in reference to the past. As such, constructions of *Tracht* authenticity are similarly rooted in the past, and many Saxons rely on these notions of authenticity as a basis or point of reference to respond to changing costume practices today.

3.2 Expressing the Fear of Cultural Loss

Recall that the first generation of Transylvanian Saxons established ways of continuing their old country folklore in their new Canadian setting by relying on their sense of nostalgia for home. When I spoke on behalf of John Werner, the President of the *Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Kanada* at a Saxon event in March 2024, I illustrated that my values align with the *Landsmannschaft*'s mandate to maintain and preserve the Transylvanian Saxon heritage: its customs, traditions, and language (Scholtes 2016, 246). The speech emphasized that the community of Saxons in Canada should continue to honour the past and pass on our heritage to the future (see Appendix A). The sense of impending cultural loss remains prevalent three quarters of a century after the arrival of the 1950s cohort, and is the first motive for Saxons to maintain "authenticity" in our cultural practices today. As Bendix notes, this "fear of loss" fuels the search for authenticity (1997, 78). This is unsurprising when I consider that leadership in Canada's Transylvanian Saxon community during my lifetime has repeatedly reminded us to be faithful to our past and to our *Heimat*, in order for us to be able to continue our traditions into the future. Anthropologist David Berliner identifies anxieties that resonate with what I have heard:

> We might call it a contemporary "losing-everything." "We're losing our culture"; "We're abandoning our customs"; "Traditions are being lost"; "Everything's being swept away"; "There's nothing left of the past"; "The young have no more interest in knowing elders' stories"; loss today comes in many forms. The loss of culture, identity, tradition, knowledge, and roots, and the consequences thereof, constitute a theme nostalgically invoked by many individuals and groups. (Berliner 2020, 2)

While "fear of loss" may be too strong a notion for some later-generation Saxons who embrace adaptations to costume traditions, the tendency to be concerned about losing some aspect of Saxon folklore implicitly influences us. For example, my friend Bengt Nyman, age 38, is aware of the sense of cultural loss that has been transmitted across Saxon immigrant generations in

Canada, as he shared with me during a conversation we had about his choice of attire at the 2023 *Heimattag* in New Castle, Pennsylvania.[16] He observed and consequently learned an intergenerational nostalgia for Transylvania and is aware of concerns about cultural loss, acknowledging that "a different generation, an older generation, might be disappointed in the loss of certain traditions and memories." Bengt was born in Canada to a second-generation Saxon immigrant mother and a first-generation Swedish immigrant father. Although Bengt was born in Canada, he explained that he considers himself to be a "half immigrant" because he grew up in Germany and returned to Canada in 2006, not knowing much about his Saxon roots. Among peers in his generation, Bengt perceives that our connection to Transylvania will be maintained only if cultural events and activities are fun and social relationships are prioritized.

A balance must be struck because, certainly, all later-generation Saxons I spoke with–and undoubtedly other young Saxons in Canada–hold different opinions about the degree of conservation and change that are acceptable in the transmission of their cultural practices. Daniel Pfingstgraef tells me that he believes that Saxon traditions should not change. He explains:

> I think my opinion would be, I would say, I don't want stuff to change. I don't mean that as in, "We should do everything in exactly the same way," but we shouldn't go so completely changed just for the sake of getting more people involved that we lose what we're trying to do. I think there's a line that you have to walk.

This "line" is governed by our understanding of Saxon cultural practices and our disposition to construct authenticity in relation to the inauthentic (Feinberg 2018, 22). While he appears to accept some variation, it seems that Daniel views radical deviation from tradition as "inauthentic" and what he considers to be an indication of loss. He says, "We can't make it so it's just the *Festzelt*[17] like they have there [in Germany], and everything else is gone. Then that's not

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[16] See Chapter Four.

[17] The *Festzelt*, or "party tent," is part of the *Heimattag* weekend activities in Germany. It is situated outside the old city walls of Dinkelsbühl, beyond the formal cultural festivities of the homecoming celebration. The *Festzelt* features live bands playing German rock music (*Schlager*)into the early hours of the morning. The tent setting is

the same thing anymore. You've gone too far, then." For Daniel, "too far" becomes inauthentic. His concern about the *Heimattag* in Canada becoming a significantly more casual event leads him to value the idea of authenticity as a means of controlling the homecoming tradition (Dégh and Vázsony 2013). Recently at a dance practice, Daniel even suggested that he would consider sponsoring a Canadian *Heimattag* event to avoid significant changes and to ensure that the event aligned with his understanding of the tradition. Though he mentioned this somewhat in jest, it is clear to me that the notion of authenticity is a framework for Daniel to manage this fear of cultural loss.

Certainly, Daniel and Bengt hold different opinions about the characteristics of Saxon events in the present, just as my friend in Germany and I disagree about sunglasses interfering with the overall authenticity of the *Tracht*. After experiencing the interaction between Saxons from different countries, as I did when I attended the *Heimattag* in Dinkelsbühl, Germany in the summer of 2023, I noticed how the "acceptable range of authenticity" varies between Saxon communities (Shukla 2015, 139). In Germany, I was an official representative from the Canadian *Landsmannschaft* and was formally invited to address attendees in a presentation and panel discussion, but I was also a young Saxon who wanted to dance and have fun with my friends.

With Kate, Daniel, and Reilly, I moved from the formal settings within the old city walls in Dinkelsbühl, where the *Tracht* parade and official presentations took place, to the physical periphery of the *Festzelt* (party tent), where I could hang out and share a beer with other Saxons my age. In these two settings, the costume rules varied. Those of us who walked in the *Tracht* parade were expected to demonstrate the "authentic" costume traditions, as enforced by event officials like our friend as well as "cultural gatekeepers" in the audience. The audience itself,

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much more casual than the events inside the city walls, with most attendees wearing jeans and t-shirts, dancing to loud music, and drinking beer.

however, could exhibit more creativity. I was bewildered by a post on the *Verband*'s Instagram account during the *Heimattag* event: a photo of a dog wearing the headgear of a young Saxon girl (Figure 3.2). I found the photo itself to be a quirky and creative way for the dog's Saxon owners to engage in the cultural practice of the weekend's activities. At the same time, I was flabbergasted that such a photo would be posted to the official media of the event when organizers from the *Verband* were meticulously patrolling Reilly's sunglasses. The four of us were further surprised to see someone wearing the men's *Tracht* shirt with jeans (Figure 3.3), something that would be entirely unacceptable within the city walls.

Figure 3.2: Dog in *Tracht*, as posted on the *Verband*'s Instagram account (Siebenbuerger 2023). The caption reads, "Even Dogs wear the costume at the Transylvanian Saxon Heimattag." Figure 3.3: Someone wears the *Tracht* with jeans in the *Festzelt* in Dinkelsbühl, Germany (Horeth, May 27, 2023).

Personally, I would prefer to see someone wearing any part of the *Tracht* because, to me, it demonstrates that they have a degree of vested interest in the cultural practices of the Saxon community. In fact, in Canada, I have encouraged it. Returning to Reilly's sunglasses, from my position as a leader in the Canadian Saxon community, I do not see modern accessories as an issue. My fear in discouraging someone from wearing the *Tracht* if they did not have the outfit entirely correct is that they would feel excluded from the costume tradition and cease their engagement.

At the same time, during my fieldwork, I noticed myself moving back and forth along the spectrum of acceptable authenticity surrounding the Transylvanian Saxon costume. Kate, Daniel, Reilly and I talked about this in early July 2023:

> Rebecca: I was going through some of the pictures later on in the parade, and I noticed how many people were wearing sunglasses, and I think the issue was that we were in the front group wearing the sunglasses. We were walking in the first group, we were the representation group, right? I think that was part of the issue; we were the official group.
> Kate: You know what pissed me off?
> Rebecca: What?
> Kate: Some of the people in "the official group," they had these *ugly* purses. They weren't the regular ones. Not ugly, but not matching–
> Reilly: Like modern. They didn't fit the *Tracht*–
> Kate: Like not *Tracht* purses–
> Daniel: And how is that any different than the sunglasses?
> Kate: That's what I was wondering after!

The four of us continued our reflections as the summer went on. After the 2023 *Heimattag* in New Castle, Pennsylvania, Reilly and I commented that some people had their hair down[18] or wore trendy footwear with their *Tracht*. Kate and Daniel teased us, as they remarked that Reilly and I sounded like our Saxon elders dissecting our costume use in detail. I did not need the reminder–I remembered the awkward feelings from my childhood when a Saxon adult told me my ribbons were too short and my apron was off-centre, or when my grandmother said my black

[18] Hutter and Sedler (2007) as well as Zehner (1990, 92) note that hair should be tied back, preferably in a tight braid not a ponytail.

dance shoes were too fashionable and insisted I must wear nylons. While we made the comments amongst ourselves, I certainly did not find the feedback so problematic that I needed to approach the people apparently at fault for supposed "inauthenticity."

However, I recognized that, like the organizers in Germany, I held myself, other dancers, and cultural leaders at Saxon events to a higher standard because we were not only engaging in the costume tradition but also representing our understanding of the tradition's history. Hertz explains that anecdotes such as these "reveal the social pressure delivered by cultural gatekeepers who clearly define and monitor the boundaries of acceptable engagement with tradition" (Hertz 2021, 50). It was the same issue in Germany: when Reilly was marching in the parade with the dignitaries and dancing with the authentic performance of folk dancers, the organizers and spectators expected him to align with their notion of *Tracht* authenticity. Wearing the costume in public is worth more to the community as a whole than keeping the costume private because its display carries the tradition forward (Shukla 2015, 86). This intentional display of Saxon *Tracht* by cultural leaders creates a standard that others in the community can align with, adapt, and continue.

As Graden suggests, "authenticity, like heritage, can be seen as a mode of contemporary cultural production that re-presents the past" (2014, 354). The notion of authenticity plays a role in Schechner's "restored behavior," which I outlined in the Introduction of this thesis as a tool to examine our Saxon performances today. Authenticity–and our perception of it among our dance groups and those in positions of leadership–is Schechner's conceptualized event (not an actual historical event) (Schechner 1985, 40). Many Saxons present an understanding of authenticity to create the reconstructed event or "restored behavior" when wearing the *Tracht*. In Boym's words, the intended "authenticity is visual, not historical" (2001, 38) because later-generation Saxons

restore an acceptable image of the costume from a past time in Transylvania with which they do not have direct lived experience. In the Dinkelsbühl *Festzelt* and in the audience, engagement with tradition takes precedence over authenticity. While engagement similarly takes precedence in Canada among the Saxons who participated in my project, it is in critical dialogue with our understanding of authentic Saxon cultural practices, and this dialogue counteracts a fear of losing Saxon costume traditions.

3.3 Degrees of Belonging

Among those I spoke with, later-generation Saxons do not seem deeply worried by the idea of losing their culture, though they are aware of and share the concerns of earlier generations. As Derek explained, "I'm not sure traditions can die that easily; it's just a matter of finding the time and finding the interest in bringing it back. It's not like these traditions don't exist anymore; there are still people who practice them and celebrate them." John also remains optimistic, noting that "the hall's still in a fantastic position, but while we're in sort of a rut, it's not a problem because as long as we're here, it will live on. I guess it means there's no worry about this place." For both Derek and John, the key to continuing the transmission of Saxon folklore at the Saxonia Hall is engaging people who will actively participate in the cultural practices of the club. Our friend Justin Schatz, former President of the dance group at the Transylvania Club Kitchener, our sister club, similarly prioritizes people and community-building as a core personal principle. As he explained to me when we talked about his involvement in his club and his connection with his Saxon roots in spring 2023, Justin believes that later-generation Saxons "have to focus more on keeping people involved and wanting to be there and being welcoming to a lot more people as well." The *Tracht*, nevertheless,

continues to play a role in one's sense of belonging to the Saxon community in Canada, and the level of its authenticity defines the degree to which someone who is Saxon or not belongs.

When dancers in the Saxonia Hall group perform in *Tracht*, most audience members do not raise questions about who is dancing or what their heritage or ethnic background is–although approximately half of the group does not have Transylvanian Saxon roots. In a material way, they fit in with our group because I have ensured that they have a costume with all the correct pieces and they wear the costume at appropriate times (i.e. for dance performances and Saxon events). As Hobsbawm and Ranger recognize, "Quite new, or old but dramatically transformed, social groups, environments and social contexts called for new devices to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to structure social relations" (1983, 263). Given that the context in which Saxons wear the *Tracht* in Canada is different than it was in early twentieth-century Transylvania, the costume traditions today serve an additional degree of belonging–acceptance among our group in Canada for those who are not Saxon. Before a new dancer wears the *Tracht* for the first time, I explain that they must be particularly careful how they move around the event space. I also alert them to the possibility that someone might approach them and ask them about the costume they are wearing. Given my position among the Saxons in Canada, I can usually advise the dancers to respond that they are borrowing the costume from me and that they can invite whomever they are speaking with to ask me about the costume itself. In Germany, however, when Kate borrowed one of the white summer *Trachten* that I have for another dancer, she knew that other Saxons at the *Heimattag* would want to know exactly in which village her costume originated. Folklorist Joseph Feinberg identifies the role of the relationship between one's knowledge of the authentic costume and their position within the community. He sees authentic folklore as "useful in identity formation because it offers a sense of place and

community, a means of connecting or disconnecting across time and space, a point of affective orientation" (Feinberg 2018, 22). In Canada, anyone wearing the *Tracht* at a Saxon event becomes part of the community and, even temporarily, adopts a Saxon identity as embodied through the costume.

Negotiating the boundaries of authenticity within the Saxon community at home and abroad involves a choice between aesthetics and practice. Shukla notes that "Ethnic people living abroad often prefer to wear a 'timeless' version of their cultural attire," citing a lack of resources as the reason for the clothing's staticity (2005, 6). On the contrary, I found that the lack of resources, particularly the diminishing number of older Saxon women with the skills and knowledge to make *Tracht* components, motivated later-generation Saxons in Canada to search creatively for costume parts that aligned with their understanding of the aesthetics of an authentic costume. For example, my father, John Horeth Sr., wears a *Tracht* shirt that is machine-made, not hand-embroidered. Here, the "look" of authenticity is more important than adhering to the process of "authentically" making (or having someone make) a costume piece. Even when a later-generation Saxon does indeed make a *Tracht* in Canada, as Amanda Mooser did for her partner, they ensure that the material and embroidery patterns resemble the village of origin in Transylvania even if the costume is made as a simple gift, not for a particular ritual. Thus, there is creativity in the degree to which the customs surrounding the costume are followed in Canada. In old country Transylvania, costumes aligned with life rituals like confirmation, when children would receive a *Tracht*, or late adulthood, when costumes were simplified after child-bearing years had passed (Zehner 1990, 87-99). Furthermore, there were different *Trachten* for high religious holidays, for the summer versus the fall, and for everyday use. In fact, the *Tracht* with which most Saxons in Canada are familiar is the *Festtracht*, which was formerly reserved for

high holidays, confirmation, and weddings (Scola, Bretz-Schwarzenbacher and Schiel 1987, 138; Zehner 1990, 80). Within the Saxonia Dancers group specifically, we do not align with the different contexts and changing details of the costume from the old country, so our acceptable range of authenticity relies more on aesthetics than practices surrounding the costume. Looking at fashion influences, it seems that migration made those of us in Canada more willing to accept different footwear, make-up, and hairstyles than leadership in Germany, though it should be noted that creativity, as influenced by contemporary styles, made its mark in Europe along the periphery. There is flexibility, as Reilly and I noticed among some participants in the United States with trendier shoes and hairstyles, and this flexibility is generally accepted.

Negotiating the boundaries of authenticity within the Saxon community at home and abroad also serve different purposes. These life cycle rituals and religious nuances are not necessarily the same shifting fashions that Shukla highlighted as part of the difference between costume abroad and in one's new home (2005, 6). However, among Saxons who participated in this project, the *Tracht* that we wear is the *Tracht* that we have. The boundaries of authenticity become flexible if that flexibility means someone in Canada has access to Saxon cultural practices and will continue to participate in them. In Germany, on the other hand, one's costume authenticity demonstrates their degree of belonging to the representation of Saxon heritage. Reilly's sunglasses with the *Tracht* marked him as not *fully* part of the community.

Consequently, wearing the *Tracht* thoughtfully, became a way of fitting ourselves into the international Saxon community. While Kate, Daniel, Reilly and I were acquainted with a few of the event organizers, most of the *Heimattag* attendees in Germany were unfamiliar to us. Additionally, the event is hosted entirely in the German language, and Kate and Reilly have only a beginner level capability in German. Still, Kate described feeling a greater sense of belonging

in Germany among strangers, even though she often feels that her Saxon identity marked her as different among non-Saxon peers at school and work in Canada. She said, “There’s all these people I didn’t even know. They have a *Tracht* sitting in their closet too. This isn’t weird to them. This is normal. Now, in a way, it felt like now I can feel normal, in a sense, dancing, because there’s so many people who, this is also their normal.” Kate’s description of recognizing a shared “normal” resonated with me, as I had a similar imagined sense of connectivity when I first attended the *Heimattag* in Dinkelsbühl in 2018.

A friend of mine had picked up my husband Reilly and me from the Munich train station to drive us to Dinkelsbühl ahead of the 2018 event. Since she was part of the organizing committee, we arrived early in the afternoon, well before the opening of the *Heimattag* festivities that Friday. My friend dropped us off at our hotel and left to meet with the other organizers. As we had nothing concrete planned, Reilly and I explored the inner old city by foot and decided to sit at a restaurant patio for an early lunch. We were in the perfect location to watch as cars trundled along the cobblestone street, stopping outside the nearby hotel entrances. I noticed, as several people exited their cars, that they hoisted garment bags from the trunk, seeming to wobble under the weight of the bags’ contents. I leaned across the table and our half-eaten pizza and gasped excitedly as I said to Reilly, “You just *know* there are *Tracht* in those bags!” He chuckled and shrugged a sign of agreement. This sense of connection I felt in 2018 and Kate described in 2024 demonstrates how the larger Saxon community becomes imagined for participants in this study. As political scientist and historian Benedict Anderson describes of imagined communities, they are “imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (6).” Even though I did not recognize any of the people

arriving and I could not see inside their luggage, I had a premonition that they were Transylvanian Saxons with their costumes in tow. Although Anderson's imagined community centered around the idea of a nation, it can also be applied to "communities of interest" whose members share values, interests, and cultural traits as well as a sense of affinity with each other (Grofman 1985, 87; Phillips and Montello 2017, 31)[19]. Examining the small instances of folklore within the Transylvanian Saxon "community of interest" provides the tools to understand how nationalist philosophy manifests itself within small group settings–outside the great political landscape of "nation"–as Kate and I experienced at each of our first German *Heimattag*s.

Such connections continued through our participation in similar cultural practices among fellow Saxons in Germany who were otherwise strangers. For example, after having danced with our Saxon peers in Germany, Kate, Daniel, Reilly and I noticed how our participation in shared Saxon cultural costume and dance practices helped us feel like part of the larger international Saxon community. Sociologist Michael Skey explains that such active participation "not only confers social status for those recognised as belonging but can be both comforting and enjoyable" (2018, 6-7). Daniel felt this way as well, recalling, "I was glad that we got to dance. You're more of a participant in the event than just an observer. You're not just watching other people do stuff, you're actually part of it." Food studies scholar Fabio Parasecoli also observes the phenomenon of participation leading to a sense of belonging among cultural reproduction in food events, noting that the customs "connect those who share them and confirm the eaters' identities as individuals or as part of a collective. At the same time, meals exclude those who do not participate, marking them as outsiders" (2014, 423). Whether the tradition is food, or–in our case in Germany–costume, engagement marks the participant as included. Kate and I similarly

[19] Like Anderson's analysis of nationalism, Grofman and Phillips and Montello investigate "communities of interest" through a political lens. Nevertheless, the concept as a group category functions to describe the nuanced connections between Transylvanian Saxons from separate geographic regions.

attribute our participation in Saxon traditions to our connection with the international Saxon community. Kate asked me, "Do I necessarily sit here and talk to you about what it means to be a Saxon? To me, even what you said–'why do we go to Heimattag if we can't dance?'–because that's the part I enjoy. I feel like I'm connected to the culture more through dancing than through just talking about it."

For non-Saxons, like Justin Toth and my mother, engaging in Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices as authentically as possible similarly led them to feel connection with other participants in Canada. The concept of authenticity continues to play a role even more so for those without Saxon heritage. I asked Justin to reflect on why he did not want to wear the *Tracht* when he first joined the dance group because he did not have black riding boots like some of the other male dancers. He explained, "To be honest, it's probably because I didn't want to stick out, like if everybody was wearing the same thing and I was not wearing it, but I have long gotten over that." His concept of the authentic male costume including boots prescribed varying degrees of belonging. Once he felt more like part of the group–he and his wife Chelsea joked about buying Saxonia Hall memberships so they could say "Now it's Justin's Hall"–he too navigated the spectrum of costume authenticity at the Saxonia Hall. His concerns about belonging were alleviated and, about the boots, he says, "I have long gotten over that."

Another example of the role of authenticity in group dynamics is when my mother made a men's tie, called *Sträipchi*, for the dance group. She described the process to me, indicating in different ways how her understanding of authenticity guided her project:

> Karen: Sewing velvet is interesting, but I plowed through it and it actually turned out not too badly, but the embroidery, I wouldn't know where to begin with the embroidery of the flowers. I did find some appliqué-type flowers at the fabric store, Fabricland, so I purchased them, cut them, and sewed them on. It looked close to what it should look like. I added the fringe on the bottom. I used another one as a model. With a pin on it, from a bit of a distance, it looks absolutely authentic. I was kind of proud of that. I think I

> surprised you with that! Didn't I bring it in a box to the Hall? You had no idea. I was making it in secret to surprise you and Reilly. The big reveal."
> Rebecca: I think I asked something like, "Where did you get this?"
> Karen: Yes. Which made me feel, "Oh, she thinks it's real." You know what I mean, real… not made by me.

The ways in which my mother recounted this experience to me illustrate her relationship with and understanding of the *Tracht*. She says the tie she made "looked close to what it *should*" and that she had a model. She uses terms like "authentic" and "real," clarifying those categories as different because she did not embroider the decorations onto the tie herself. I interpret that, to her, the act of embroidering would have rendered the tie more authentic. Additionally, Karen demonstrates some knowledge of the customs surrounding former *Tracht* fabrication because she associates the tie's "realness" with a maker other than herself, implying a Saxon maker would be more authentic. Nevertheless, she felt proud of her understanding of *Tracht* as a model for creating something new and useful for the group.

In Transylvania, Saxon women had the responsibility of preserving the customs surrounding making and wearing the *Tracht*. Consequently, young women were blamed for the transition to mass-produced clothing and modern-influenced costume variations (Davis 2010, 204-209). While the people I spoke with during this project did not specifically identify who in their Saxon community was responsible for maintaining and passing down costume traditions, the notion that women were leaders in this area remains prevalent. My mother Karen's mother- and sisters-in-law communicated their expectations about proper *Tracht* dress, Daniel and Kate compared my observations of trends with complaints from our Saxon grandmothers, and their mother, Julie Pfingstgraef, expressed that her mother is proud of their engagement with traditions at the Saxonia Hall and said "Make sure you keep going."

Lately, I often feel the pressure of this responsibility. As I have learned more of the *Tracht* guidelines and rules that align with our notions of authenticity, I often surprise myself at how closely I follow them, despite my critically nostalgic philosophy of using what I have and getting "as close as possible" to the desired look. I am generally unbothered by others' inaccurate variations in their *Tracht* and I am especially excited when I see a creative adaptation worn by a younger Saxon at our club. However, when Reilly and I went to the *Heimattag* in Germany in 2023 as part of the research for this project, I made an effort to select full *Tracht* ensembles that represented my grandmother's village, Groß Schogan, for both of us. I sometimes feel guilty when I do not wear the *Haube*–an embroidered and beaded velvet head covering for married women that was my grandmother's–even though it does not fit me properly, but particularly when an older Saxon relative or friend asks me why I do not wear it or if I have one of my own.

Although the notion of authenticity results in censorship, disappointment, and at times contentious dynamics within and between Saxon communities in Canada and internationally, it ultimately remains a necessary communication tool in the transmission of costume or *Tracht* folklore. Understanding Saxon cultural practices ensures that later-generation Saxons learn about historical Transylvania and maintain the relationship between the past and present that earlier immigrant generations to Canada strived to pass on. Authenticity establishes a framework for us to enact the past, a past time and place that becomes familiar through our exchange of Saxons traditions in Canada and abroad. However, participants' and my willingness to accept a variable range of authenticity propels our traditions forward and outwards, among Saxons and non-Saxons alike, so that we can work towards our parents' and grandparents' objective of avoiding cultural loss. Later-generation Saxons in Canada are not explicitly taught how to negotiate the rules around *Tracht* authenticity, but our combined foundation in nostalgic

traditions and enthusiasm to participate in Saxon cultural activities in ways that are more personally valuable prompts us to make individual changes. While some Saxons in Canada might prioritize aesthetics over behaviour, the degree to which we interpret the *Tracht* use ensures that we can continue to participate in our cultural practices and that we can include others and each other within the Saxon community in Canada. As I analyze further in Chapter Four, and as folklorist Lynne McNeill explains, "folklore, by nature of its transmission, is malleable, adaptable, changeable, and mostly anonymous, and this makes it way more culturally and expressively communicative" (McNeill 2013, 9). Our acceptable range of *Tracht* authenticity allows us to accept creativity and variation while respecting the notions of authenticity that taught us what we know about the Transylvanian Saxon costume and other Saxon traditions.

Chapter 4. Recording the Folklore: Mapping Folk Dance Transmission Among Later-Generation Saxons

Like the Transylvanian Saxon folk costume as it continues to be used and transmitted among the later-generation Saxons in Canada with whom I worked on this project, Saxon folk dances in Canada experience similar degrees of variation as they are learned, taught and continued. However, for the dancers at the Saxonia Hall, the transmission of Saxon folk dances does not fall within an expected path of consecutive continuity. As I discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the group which today constitutes the Saxonia Dancers was formed in 2009 in an effort to revive the Saxonia Hall's former cultural youth programming. The group that had originally formed at the club in 1968 (Wagner et al. 1982, 129) had disbanded between 2005 and 2007.[20] Prior to this dissolution, dancers in the group learned dances taught by older Saxonia Hall members, often members who had previously been in the dance group themselves. The transmission of folk dance until the group's dissolution followed a pattern of "passing down" tradition.

When I aimed to form a group in 2009 with the support of my father, we were not really continuing the dance tradition but restoring a connection to that tradition and passing it on to other young Saxons my age as well as to non-Saxon friends. As my parents and other former Saxonia Dancers rejoined the group, I also re-taught some dances to them, "passing back" the tradition. Throughout, I relied more heavily on dance performance recordings than former Saxonia Dancers facilitators had done. Some may argue that the use of recordings prevents cultural practices from being considered "folklore"(Anttonen 2005; Brunvand 1986). In this

[20] There is no recorded evidence for the disbanding of the Saxonia Dancers in the early 2000s, however my cousin Jessie Triska–a current Saxonia Dancer who participated in the group up until it disbanded–and I used photos from family photo albums and details in Waldemar Scholtes' *Transylvanian Saxons in Canada* (2016) about events in 2005 and 2007 to approximate the timeline of the group's dissolution around 2005 or 2006.

chapter, I demonstrate how recording the folklore is a necessary component of continued immigrant tradition transmission among later-generation participants at the Saxonia Hall.

Figure 4.1: Saxonia Dancers–friends, cousins, and parents–at practice in June 2023 (Horeth, June 27, 2023).

On Tuesdays from February to the end of November, my husband Reilly and I have a quick supper of leftovers or something frozen and easy to make before going to the Saxonia Hall for dance practice. We usually arrive an hour before the scheduled seven o'clock evening practice. While Reilly parks at the back near the dance group entrance, I unlock the building and enter the security system code, which releases a distant *whoop whoop* as I step into the dark entryway. Even though this has been my routine for several years, I still pat at the wall to find the light switch, then squint as the fluorescent lights illuminate the hallway and the kitchen as I move to the lounge, a vintage restaurant-styled room with red carpet and red velvet wallpaper. It

was added to the building in 1981 but closed to patrons shortly afterwards (Scholtes 2016, 42). There are no windows, but locals from Aylmer like to rent the space for casual events. In the summer, the room is hot. The board of directors keeps the central air off when the building is not in use to reduce the club's operating expenses, so it's already twenty-six degrees Celcius inside, and the air is stale. Again, my fingers feel the wall next to the door to flick on the lounge lights and start the fans. I reach a little higher to click the thermostat and turn the temperature down to its lowest summertime setting, twenty-three degrees Celcius. The fans whir into motion and wobble dangerously, so I slide the speed levers down for a gentler breeze. Reilly is at the back door, peering through the new windows that were installed in spring 2023. I have to retrace my steps because I forgot to grab the back door key when I came inside. Once the door is unlocked and Reilly enters, I turn on our group's laptop and play our dance music through a portable speaker as we set up the room for practice. Sounds of accordion and brass band marches fill the space. Sometimes, I start the playlist of all the songs we use for dance, and I warm up by dancing to as many as I can before any of our friends and family arrive, laughing at myself if I forget a step. This is our weekly routine for ten months of the year. Some weeks, we are the only dancers present, but we return every Tuesday night.

* * *

There is yet to be a consensus on the definition of folk dance within the field of folklore. A simple interpretation suggests that folk dance is an artistic movement by the people passed on through generations. Folklorist LeeEllen Friedland argues that folk dance should be used as a category only when referring to a historical connection to a "pure national soul and folk culture," tracing the roots of a particular dance to a nationalistic, nineteenth-century origin (1998). Folk dance historian Rob Houston agrees, noting that "*all* surviving dances trace back to a fixed

prototype" (2018). These interpretations seem less, if not at all, prominent depending on the context of a particular original performance. Meanwhile, the debate surrounding the utility of defining folk dance suggests that a definition is relevant only when multiple dance traditions cohabit in a community (Buckland 1983, 324; Ronström 2010, 355). Definitions of "folk dance," then, concentrate more closely on a description of differences from the other non-folk dances but do not describe the dance form itself. Anthropologist Joann Kealiinohomoku argues that definitions of folk dance often feature tradition, vocation, and community–qualities that also can be applied to recreational dance (1972, 385). Although a precise definition of "folk dance" may not be possible, Kealiinohomoku presents a framework that is useful for interpreting dance through a folkloristic lens. She argues that dance should be analyzed not by its apparent or posed monolithic qualities like being "communicative," "religious," or "artistic," but by its natural tendency to develop and change over time (Kealiinohomoku [1970] 2001, 33-35). Unlike Kealiinohomoku, however, I reflect on my role as a dancer and teacher to analyze Transylvanian Saxon folk dance transmission in Aylmer, Ontario.

4.1 Passing *Down* the Tradition: Vertical Transmission of Saxon Folk Dance

While the initial reformation of the Saxonia Dancers group in 2009 could be considered an invented tradition, the manner in which the group carries on in the present can be examined folklorically. Hobsbawm and Ranger suggest that the invention of tradition occurs when the old ways are "deliberately not used or adapted" (1983, 8). Thus the Saxonia Dancers was an invented tradition in 2009 because the old ways from former groups had deliberately ended. If a tradition is "alive," its continued momentum of variation and continuity seemingly prevent it from being considered invented. In this case, the old ways of pre-2009 groups were indeed

deliberately adapted since 2009. Following folklorist Pauline Greenhill's observation among London, Ontario English Morris folk dancers, if tradition is considered to be consistently invented and reinvented (1994, 86), I too wonder if it is at all useful to consider the Saxonia Hall's folk dance traditions as invented or not. Accepting the group's invention in 2009 only in terms of its connection and reference to past Saxonia Dancers groups, such as the ones to which my parents belonged in their youth, is a possible interpretation. Nevertheless, a dance tradition–invented or otherwise–is taking place and is being transmitted.

Not familiar with the group's operations prior to my membership, I asked Julie Pfingstgraef what practices were like in the 1980s when she was first part of the group. She recalled that "there was always a parent who was in charge of the dance group." The parent selected the music, determined which dances to practice, and conducted the rehearsal from start to finish each week. Julie continued her explanation of the parent's role, saying, "They didn't ever dance; they just were in charge and the dances, whoever the older people in the dance group that knew the dances would just teach the younger ones. Eventually, everybody knew them, and we would just practice them." Her description aligns with a general understanding that folklore is transmitted by word of mouth, imitation, or observation. Although there has not been a parent in charge of the group since I became the leader, I asked Julie what it was like to have her adult children participate in the Saxonia Dancers. She reflected on teaching her children about their Transylvanian traditions and shared with me that she was happy to have passed down Saxon cultural practices from her own youth. This example demonstrates the prominence of vertical transmission and the value attributed to passing down traditions within the Saxonia Dancers former group.

The purpose of determining the invention or naturality of these dance traditions for the

Saxonia Hall's group in particular–and their direction of transmission since 2009–is to examine my own role in transmitting Saxon folk dance among later-generation immigrants within this organization. Folklorist Henry Glassie describes tradition as a "creation of the future out of the past" (2003, 176). Simply, the present-day dance group at the Saxonia Hall is a creation out of past groups, especially since a past member, my father, assisted with the group's revival in 2009. Examining the dance tradition's origins further, Saxon historian Hanspeter Zehner explains that once they were confirmed, young Saxons participated in various dance events in their village over the course of a year (1990, 80-86). Given that the youth were nervous about showcasing the correct steps and that girls often danced twice in order to ensure all the boys had an opportunity to dance, my understanding of folk dance in Transylvania is not that there were groups as there are in Canada, but rather that the community would gather and join in any particular dance as a given song was played.

Zehner provides one such example: a dance called the *Siebenschritt*, a lengthy seven-part dance that communicated a young man's intention to marry his partner should he dance the entire routine with her (1990, 86). Today, the Saxonia Dancers continue to perform the *Siebenschritt*, albeit with less serious objectives. For the sake of tracing this particular dance's transmission to Canada, Waldemar Scholtes describes that his father, Professor Walter Scholtes, transcribed and arranged the tune in Kitchener, Ontario, in the 1950s, as someone who was born in Northern Transylvania whistled the song so that the dance might be restored in Canada (Scholtes 2016, 122; Intschert 1989, 285). This historical and geographic information is interesting to note; however, these details are something I have learned only as the researcher in this project. The manner in which I, a later-generation Transylvanian Saxon, learned about this dance aligns better with transmission patterns more commonly identified in the field of folklore.

My own father recalls that his cousin accompanied the dance group in Aylmer, Ontario and owned a copy of the sheet music for the *Siebenschritt*; however, he was uncertain about the origins of this copy. Regardless, in Aylmer, the group of dancers learned the *Siebenschritt* and passed down the dance to consecutive groups, as Julie described from the 1980s. I learned the dance myself from my aunts as a child, and later, when I began leading the Saxonia Dancers in 2009, my father helped me remember the steps and their order so I could teach it to the group.

This particular dance is an easy-to-identify example of dance folklore in the Saxonia Hall group because it has historically been transmitted by word-of-mouth (including with demonstration) and without a precise familiarity with a source. This dance, as performed in Aylmer, therefore, illustrates the longstanding notion in folklore that tradition is something that is "handed down through time" (Noyes 2009, 239). That is my personal experience learning the dance before being informed of its history in Transylvania. The dance was and remains "artistic communication in small groups", as folklorist Dan Ben-Amos outlines ([1972] 2020). Performing this dance in former Transylvania conveyed a message of love between partners. At present-day Canadian Saxon events, the *Siebenschritt* communicates the group members' position and sense of belonging within the Transylvanian Saxon community, whether or not the dancers are Saxon themselves. The *Siebenschritt* continues to be one of several communal dances where all attendees at a particular event are invited to dance together regardless of what they are wearing. In Transylvania, Zehner indicates that all dancers wore their *Tracht* (1990, 80). Here, it becomes clearer that the dance tradition is also open to endless revisions, as Glassie suggests about traditions in general (2003, 176). Nevertheless, the tradition of gathering to dance together for pleasure, not performance, therefore continues at the Saxonia Hall.

However, the Saxonia Dancers not only participate in traditional and communal dances

like the *Siebenschritt*, but they also have changed the context in which dances are traditionally performed. The group now showcases its dances at various events throughout the year. Reilly identifies a difference in the ways in which the Saxonia Dancers perform the *Siebenschritt*, noting, “When we do the *Siebenschritt* at *Trachtenball*, it’s more of a community thing. When we perform it as a dance group, then it’s a presentation.” In the “community” version, any attendee at the event is welcome to dance, just as would have been done in former Transylvanian villages. There is room for flexibility and variation. However, when the current group “presents” the dance, it is rehearsed in one way and there is little room for variation. Returning to Hobsbawm and Ranger’s notion of invented tradition, Reilly’s perception of the Saxonia Dancers’ “presentation” can be interpreted as an “invention” or a restoration of the communal dance tradition in Transylvania–unlike the community dance events, formal dance presentations were not part of the culture. Folklorist Pertti Anttonen characterizes tradition as “an act of interpretation” based on the relationship between the past and present (2005, 35). He argues that traditions should be viewed as patterns. If a tradition dies, then the pattern stops and therefore, the “tradition” is no longer a tradition (Anttonen 2005, 38-39). Participating in the dance as a “community,” on the other hand, illustrates a reference to the Saxonia Dancers’ understanding of traditional dances from Transylvania and their interpretation of Saxon events from a time that is unfamiliar to them. In my role as the group’s leader, my efforts to continue learning dances I understand to be Saxon and teaching them to the group to present or participate is motivated by nostalgia that was passed down within the Saxonia Hall community, as I established in Chapter Two of this thesis.

For this reason, when former Saxonia Dancers were not available to teach and “pass down” certain dances from their group or when those who were available could not remember all

of the steps, I searched for old recordings, starting with one of the group's former dances, "Fast Hopping." I include this dance and the caveat that older dancers had trouble remembering the precise footwork because, as Ben-Amos observes, "the study of transmission requires the inquiry into the principles both of forgetting and remembering" ([1972] 2020, 34-35). As I will demonstrate, memory is a factor in the shifting method of transmission for the Saxonia Dancers. Regarding folklore documentation, Anttonen examines the phenomenon of recording a tradition and plucking it from its sequence in the pattern of continuity and change (2005, 48). Supporting his argument, he applies folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's interpretation of folklore as "a discipline predicated on a vanishing subject" (1996, 249; 1998, 300). For the Saxonia Dancers, the tradition has not died, as Anttonen predicted; rather, it continues in a creative way.

Derek and I talked about the dance group's existence and traditions post-Covid-19. He seemed unconcerned about their finality, explaining, "I'm not sure traditions can die that easily; it's just a matter of finding the time and finding the interest in bringing it back. It's not like these traditions don't exist anymore, there's still people who practice them and celebrate them." Giving credence to this matter, folklorist Barre Toelken notes that traditions do not die; they continue despite being only through partial recollection or partial manifestation of tradition (1996, 195). I argue that, in the case of the Saxonia Dancers, recordings are a means through which the Saxonia Dancers can restore the sequence of continuity and change–"bringing it back"–after the chain of transmission had been broken prior to 2009 and when group gatherings dramatically shifted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I have focused extensively on the origin and line of transmission of Saxon folk dance traditions to and within the Saxonia Hall community because the argument can be made that the group is not performing folklore but a folklorism (Feinberg 2018, 17), or a constructed

presentation of the “authentic” tradition. Nevertheless, like Bendix with authenticity, I move away from the discussion of whether or not the dances themselves are tradition or folklore and instead apply the lens of folklore to explore the ways in which current dancers learn, teach, and perform these artistic, cultural practices. My study focuses on the transmission of Saxon folk dances within the present group, almost fifteen years after its reformation. However, because the group presents itself as traditional, it is helpful to acknowledge Glassie’s reminder that “Tradition is a temporal concept, inherently tangled with the past, the future, with history” (2003, 181). Despite the possibility of constructed origins, the current group has developed its own folklore in the present, based on the past, aiming to continue onward and consequently repeating the pattern of creativity and creation that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett observes in first-generation immigrants (1995, 369). Understanding the tangle of tradition and transmission over time is necessary to identify the dance folklore happening within the present group.

Relying on recordings of folk dance performances resulted in my ability to innovate and customize routines according to the group’s changing skillset and physical ability to maintain the group’s existence over the years. Folklorist Robert Klymasz notes these three key components of shifts in folklore: tradition, transition, and innovation (1973, 132). In using recordings of dances I found on a video home system (VHS) cassette from earlier Saxonia Hall groups and recordings from European Saxon groups on YouTube to select which dances the Saxonia Dancers learn, I maintain a conservative link with “tradition.” Recall that performance theorist Richard Schechner’s “Restored Behavior” is based on a past event that may not have, in fact, occurred or an event to which the present-day performer does not have a direct connection (1985, 38). I refer to the past with the help of recordings, without having experience then and there myself. My “transitional” interpretation of Saxon dance traditions allows the group to continue because I

intentionally arrange dances that are accessible to group members. For example, at a practice in Winter 2024, one dancer, Chelsea Mott, noticed, “Isn’t it funny that last year we were doing dances with a lot of hopping, and now we are doing dances with a lot of spinning?” I replied, “That’s because hopping hurts my foot. Once my foot is better, we’ll hop more.” The group’s injuries play a role in the choices I make about the Saxonia Dancers’ performances. In fact, everyday life circumstances can affect our routines from month-to-month and over the years. Another example is when my parents plan to dance with the group at an event. My mom has slowed down from years of being a long-distance runner and my father has had two hip replacement surgeries in the past fifteen years. As such, I choose dances for our performance set that are slower and lower impact to accommodate their physical abilities. On the other hand, when the younger dancers perform, I select dances that include more complicated manouevers that require additional strength and agility. Over the years, as the longterm members and I age, we perform the slower dances more regularly. While these examples demonstrate how individuals experience accessibility through selected changes in the dances, the group also undergoes change through my individual choices.

Here, the recordings are useful in an innovative way because I learn all the steps in a given dance but choose to teach them with different music or combine them with steps from other dances to choreograph something entirely new. During my conversation with Julie about the former Saxonia Hall dance group, she made a point of commenting on the dances the other members of the group and I have choreographed over the years:

> Julie: We didn’t ever get to make our own dances. We just had to do the ones that were already there.
> Rebecca: What was your reaction to the first time we started doing new dances?
> Julie: I think it’s neat, and there’s no point in always doing the old ones.
> Rebecca: Why not?

> Julie: Might as well change with the times and have some new, funner, different kinds of music… and I don't remember all the old dances.

As Klymasz summarizes, "The implications of the resultant construct and its relationship to the old traditional stratum are most crucial for an understanding of the overall direction of change and the various shifts and adjustments that are made in terms of form, content, function, carriers as well as vehicles, and occasions for the transmission of folkloric materials" (1973, 133). The choices I make related to capability and aesthetics call attention to the folkloristic qualities of the group's dances. This is an important distinction when discussing the dances' status as tradition or construction. Glassie highlights that performers of folklore, especially those making decisions on what past parts of the tradition are relevant in the present to be sustainable for the future, make artistic choices about how the tradition will be displayed at a given moment (2003, 180,184). Thus, the Saxon dance tradition becomes more interesting for younger dancers, it remains accessible for newer dancers, and it maintains a sense of nostalgia for former and older dancers whether they participate or observe. The dance tradition's transmission continues within the Saxonia Dancers group, aided–not hindered–by its documentation.

Transmission is often understood in a vertical sense, a "passing down," as the title of this subsection suggests. Shukla remarks that a vertical perspective of transmission notes change over time, focuses on origin and evolution, and seeks to identify historical sequences (2005, 5). The image of "passing down," is recurrent among the later-generation Saxons who participated in this project. From the Saxonia Hall, Derek, Kate, Daniel, and Julie provided examples to me of instances where they learned something about their Saxon roots from a parent or grandparent. Derek recalled learning German values of hard work from his Oma. Kate and Daniel had memories of their grandparents preparing them for events at the Saxonia Hall. Julie told me about asking her mother for Saxon recipes to cook in the club's kitchen. Similarly, Amanda

Mooser, the President of the youth dance group at the Transylvania Club Kitchener, recounted to me that learning new dances involves being paired with an older dancer who is already familiar with the routine and can help teach it to the newer, younger dancers of the group.

When I consider how I personally learned about my Saxon background, despite having explored several sources, I first fondly remember the moments my grandmother taught me a Saxon word or invited me to make schnitzel with her. Justin and Dave also told me about wanting to learn about their immigrant past and respective cultural practices from their parents and grandparents. Justin explained to me that he is working towards learning how to cook the Hungarian foods his grandmother is known for in their family, whether he learns the recipe from his grandmother directly or takes the opportunity to cook at the Saxonia Hall and experiment with technique. While Dave attended *Heimattag* with the Saxonia Dancers in July 2023, he shared a beer and some bread with bacon, which reminded him of visiting his grandparents and their friends in Czechia. As folklorist Sarah Gordon identifies in the case of the Grimm Brothers' collection, so too in the Saxonia Hall's community, the "documentation and preservation insured a sense of continuity into an unpredictable future" (2021, 14). The active transmission of Saxon and immigrant cultural practices by elders in the lives of this project's participants demonstrates their intent to pass down Saxon folklore into the future out of nostalgia for their homeland.

4.2 Passing *Across* the Tradition: Horizontal Transmission of Saxon Folk Dance

In late June of 2023, Reilly and I were teaching a dance called the *Hammerschmid* to the adult group because it is a fairly easy-to-learn dance with few steps, and we did not have much time left to prepare ahead of our big event in July with the visiting group from Austria. We were trying to figure out the clapping pattern, so Reilly suggested to the group that we check a video. I

opened the YouTube video from the 2018 *Kulturaustausch* when we were in Kitchener doing the dance together. The dancers in the video were doing four claps (hit legs, hit chest, clap hands, hit hands of the person on either side). A few of the dancers at practice that night remarked that four claps sounded off-beat when the music had three clear beats. Schechner outlines that change visible in restored behavior occurs in two key ways: "first, by a slow slippage made inevitable by changing historical circumstances; second, through 'official revisions' made by the owners-heirs of the 'authorized original'" (Schechner 1985, 43-44). Certainly the Saxonia Dancers' routines have varied over time as a result of different group leaders and instructional strategies. Fluid changes prompted by aesthetic preference demonstrate that the active members of the group interpret their positions as owner-heirs, regardless of whether they are Saxon or not. For instance, Reilly observed, "It *is* weird that it's four, but it's counts of three." Chelsea suggested we change it to three claps. I agreed the clapping sounded odd and said I was not bothered if we changed the dance or not. By consensus, the group agreed to change the dance to three claps.

Running shoes squeak across the parquet dance floor; even though Reilly and I recommend that people wear their dance shoes, dancers often come to practice with whatever is comfortable. Later that evening, as the group went through our upcoming performance set, I could hear a few voices helping each other out. Reilly called out instructions and steps that were coming next for a dancer who had missed a few practices. He did so several times throughout the set. While practicing another dance, the *Aussigroßa*–which we learned before Kate, Reilly, Daniel, and I went to Germany–I heard Reilly exclaim, "I don't remember *that* part!" and laughter ensued. The group chats and talks while practicing a dance, and, if a small error is made, there's usually some silly remark about it. I have established throughout this thesis that Schechner's "Restored Behavior" (1985) takes conduct, pulls it out of its context, and uses it in

another way. The Saxons in Transylvania used dance as a social environment and potential space to meet their future spouse (Zehner 1990, 80-86). Although the group rehearses to perform before an audience, the sense of community vibrantly echoing through the room at practice is reminiscent of the communal and social dances in Transylvania.

* * *

Since 2009, the Saxonia Dancers have continued under my leadership. I consider myself a peer to most of the dancers in the group, certainly to Kate, Daniel, and Derek, who also have grandparents who immigrated to Canada from Transylvania, but also to friends like Justin, Dave, and others who have danced with us at different times. While my friends and I are not immigrants ourselves, we have a direct connection with the immigrant generation as children or grandchildren of immigrants. I follow historian Deborah Dash Moore's framework of refering to the children of immigrants as the "second generation," a specific immigrant identity in its own right, with its own unique, lived experiences connected to ancestral homes (2006). Moore examines the second generation as a means of thinking about collective identity of a group (2006, 157). I apply this vocabulary to subsequent or "later" Transylvanian Saxon generations in Canada and I use the term "later" because the vocabulary of "first" and "second" generations becomes complex as the generational distance from one's homeland increases. As such, rather than being a first-generation immigrant passing down folklore nostalgically, I am a descendant of immigrants who passes folklore on to my peers who are also part of the subsequent generation of immigrants. I asked Daniel what he thought about horizontally passing across versus vertically passing down traditions. He recognizes that what he has learned about Saxon folk dance is a project among peers and explains:

> You taught me all the dances and why we did them. That would be the biggest example. It's a lot of teaching each other stuff. This wasn't always the way, at least in our dance

> group; there was never our parents teaching. It was usually us teaching each other and figuring out stuff from the videos. It wasn't being taught to us; it was us figuring it out.

When I refer to the dance group at the Saxonia Hall, I call it "our group," and Daniel's observation here illustrates why. Learning and teaching Saxon folk dance traditions is a communal and horizontal effort. Along these lines, Toelken emphasizes that:

> Another important aspect of traditional repertoires is that each item or genre or idea may come from a different source within the folk group. A person may have learned how to whittle from a grandfather, how to make willow whistles from an uncle, how to play the guitar from another uncle, how to sing songs from an aunt, how to know the traditions of crossing the equator from later buddies in the Coast Guard. For this reason, each tradition-bearer is a unique combination of folk expression. (1996, 195)

Each of these sources contributes to the behaviours of someone who is known to be the expert of the group's traditions and, within our group, members take turns teaching each other and work together to decipher recordings so we can restore cultural practices in the present. Toelken's description of the different possible sources of traditional repertoires also resonates with me as the Saxonia Dancers' group leader. However, I do not exactly fit the role of "tradition-bearer," a title which has historically been used in folkloristics to describe an elder. Although I may not be a typical "tradition-bearer," by my leadership in the dance group, I have become a teacher and someone who intentionally passes on Saxon dance traditions. In Chapter Two of this thesis, I presented folklorist Ray Cashman's "critical nostalgia" as a necessary yearning that allows the group to come to terms with change and continue their traditions into the future (2006). My choices as leader of the dance group are examples of my criticalness–or judiciousness–because I deliberately teach practices that align with modern values of accessibility. Unlike Toelken's "tradition-bearer," I thoughtfully accommodate the changing context in which I learn and teach alongside other group members as dance traditions are passed both downward and onward.

In another sense, horizontal transmission occurs when the Saxonia Dancers perform outside of the Saxon community, as the group did in June 2023 at a London, Ontario, multicultural event. While Glassie observes that transmission can occur vertically, passing down material from expert to student or source to performer, he also identifies a horizontal exchange between the performer and their audience (2003, 184). Audience members at this annual multicultural festival were curious about our costumes, music, and dances. Because Transylvanian Saxons are such a small population in Canada, the Saxonia Dancers' uniqueness among other cultural groups stands out. Thus, horizontal transmission occurs both when similar-age members of the Saxonia Dancers teach each other the dances and traditions surrounding Saxon folk dance, as well as when the general public witnesses an event and learns about Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices.

The transmission between insiders and outsiders or Saxons and non-Saxons further expands when non-Saxons join the group over the years. Following folklorist Dorothy Noyes' analysis of groups in relation to social network theory (2016, 26-29), I recognize that migration and the multiple interactions between individuals of the Saxonia Hall and their existing relationships outside of the club facilitate a reciprocal exchange of traditions. As I revealed earlier, my growing sense of responsibility surrounding how I teach group members about Saxon costume practices shapes my choices in navigating Saxon dance transmission. At the time of this study, I do not have children to whom I can intentionally pass down Transylvanian Saxon folklore. Several members of the Saxon community to which I belong have asked me when I plan to have children, but do not recognize that I have adjusted the transmission route from "downward" to "onward" by inviting non-Saxon friends into the Saxonia Hall group.

Horizontal transmission between Saxons and non-Saxons, like Justin and Dave, allows me to fulfill my self-imposed sense of responsibility as a teacher in this community. Justin Toth explained to me his reasoning for remaining a part of the Saxonia Dancers after initially coming to check out a practice with his wife, Chelsea Mott, who is a former dancer herself. Referring to past conversations with his friends and Hungarian relatives, Justin told me how he clarifies his role within a Transylvanian Saxon group and line of transmission. He said, "Even though I'm Hungarian, you know, I'm here holding space for it." Justin's words resonate with me as I understand his phrasing of "holding space" as illustrative of his role within the Saxonia Hall group. By being a member and dancer at the Saxonia Hall, Justin "holds space" for other Saxons to view and participate in Saxon cultural practices. If Justin and other non-Saxon dancers were not part of the group, it is likely that the dance group would no longer perform together because, at the time of this study, the group is composed of more non-Saxons than Saxons. Their presences keeps the group and its traditions going so that any future young Saxon has something cultural around which they can congregate. Justin further explains his place within the group, continuing, "Then it can be like a transition because we can talk about there's similar food overlap, or there are parts of the language that overlap, or for example, Transylvania was part of Hungary… so there is like a cultural crossover." While Justin's presence is beneficial for the group, his experience with Saxon cultural practices–especially food and language–seem to "hold space" for him to engage with his own roots, as someone who admits that he is not part of a Hungarian cultural organization comparable with the Saxonia Hall.

In a more literal sense, Dave held space for the group when he took Daniel's place in the group in July of 2023. I had invited Dave to dance with the Saxonia Dancers at *Heimattag* in New Castle, Pennsylvania because Daniel was not able to attend due to a work scheduling

conflict. We were one dancer short to have a full group and I was concerned that our group would need to withdraw our performance. Dave's presence was topically a friend helping out a friend in a time of need. However, as I reflect on Justin's words and Dave's participation, I see that Dave's presence, albeit temporary, filled a gap in the group that would have otherwise prevented our group's performance. In these small spaces–or gaps–the horizontal transmission of Saxon folk dance from Saxon to non-Saxon allows the cultural practice to continue.

Transmission of Saxon folk dance among the Saxonia Dancers who participated in this project occurs in a third horizontal way with the use of documented folklore. If, as Glassie notes, there is a horizontal exchange between performer and audience, then could there also be a horizontal exchange between performers of different Transylvanian Saxon dance groups after they viewed each others' dances? Following Ben-Amos's recognition in folklore that "No matter how defined, its existence depends on its social context" ([1972] 2020, 25), I apply the rationale that folklore passed between groups, from performer to performer, is also horizontal. In addition to using recordings of Saxonia Hall performances from the 1980s, I have also sought recordings of dances from European Saxon groups whose members are later-generation immigrants in their respective countries. I was never particularly concerned about the exact footing or directions because I wanted the dancers to feel encouraged to keep trying new dances. The dances posted from Europe were not instructional videos but rather performance sets. I selected dances that I thought would most reflect the abilities of our dancers and any new members. The context of my use of these videos is horizontal transmission because other later-generation Transylvanian Saxons are sharing the folklore "across" to us.

In the summer of 2023, part of the dance group learned four new dances from other European Saxon dancers through video recordings shared with me via email. I had requested a

copy of three of the dances[21] because Reilly, Kate, Daniel, and I wanted to participate in the dance showcase while we were in Dinkelsbühl, Germany, as I described in Chapter Three. Like a three-dimensional kinesthetic puzzle, Kate, Daniel, Reilly, and I meticulously analyzed the videos together to interpret the steps as best as we could ahead of the summertime event. Dancing alongside our European Saxon peers, Kate described feeling a deep connection with the dancers who were otherwise strangers. She said, "Maybe it's because I was struggling so hard, there, to connect with people and speak to them and have a conversation with them when I was there. It felt different and cooler, more of a deeper feeling because that was something I could do with them." Her experience demonstrates the continuity of dance as a tradition of belonging.

Dance is also a common language among later-generation Transylvanian Saxons in Canada who participated in this project. It is a language that aids in the re-creation of an unknown homeland. Viewing dance as a language illustrates Schecher's argument in "Restored Behavior," which, he describes, "offers individuals and groups the chance to rebecome what they once were–or even, and most often, to rebecome what they never were but wish to become" (1985, 38). This "language" also establishes a feeling reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's imagined community, where the actors sense belonging to a group whose members are mostly unknown ([1983] 2016). After an evening memorial service during *Heimattag* in Germany, Kate, Daniel, Reilly, and I walked back to the main hall for a meal we had been invited to–a smorgasbord of cold cuts and salads. We did not have a lot to say to the others seated at our table, but between nibbles of food, we smiled and nodded as we caught a word here and there, sharing something without really understanding. Afterwards, as we walked down the cobblestone

[21] The fourth dance was a routine that Reilly and I had learned quickly at our friends' Saxon dance practice in Austria during our vacation in the summer of 2022. That group was scheduled to visit the Saxonia Hall in the summer of 2023, and their dance group leader and I thought it would be fun for both of our groups to perform the dance together in Canada.

streets, we talked about how we didn't really understand everything happening over the weekend because it was all in German. Then Kate exclaimed, “I have something to put in your paper!” “My thesis?” I asked. “Yea! Dancing solves the language problem!” By learning dances and actively participating with the German-speaking attendees at the *Heimattag*, the four of us were able to position ourselves in the continued transmission of Saxon folklore–including dance, food, costume, and ritual–in spite of language barriers.

Using dance recordings is a peripheral way for the group to learn new routines that will be performed in a central space. My studies in folklore have taught me to pay closer attention to what happens along the edges of the types of Saxon events I have attended throughout my life. Historically, a central or standard mode of instruction was to have older, more experiences dances teach the next generation. However, I do not have an older dancer as a resource. My choice to seek and learn from dance recordings is therefore a peripheral or alternative mode of teaching. After the *Heimattag* in Germany, I deliberately selected one of the easier dances we had performed–the *Aussigroßa Erdi*–and taught it to other members of the Saxonia Dancers back home. Together, we performed this dance to the audience of Transylvanian Saxons in Canada and the United States at the *Heimattag* in New Castle, Pennsylvania. I note this because most of the group’s dancers and the audience members at a *Heimattag* in the United States or Canada would not have watched the event in Germany and, therefore, would be separated by several degrees from the recorded version of the dance. Schechner observes a similar phenomenon amidst Shaker dancers in 1970s American; the choreographer used records–in this case, pictures and research materials–to learn and teach the dances, but both the dancers and their audience were separated from direct experience with the “actual” dances (Schechner 1985, 47). The Saxonia Dancers’ performance of the *Aussigroßa Erdi* was therefore an example of horizontal

transmission to an audience that is at least two, if not more, degrees separated from the "source." In Chapter Three, I looked to McNeill to reveal how folklore changes in the *Tracht.* Here, I return to her words, which inform my understanding of the horizontal transmission of Saxon folk dance. She notes, "folklore, by nature of its transmission, is malleable, adaptable, changeable, and *mostly* anonymous, and this makes it way more culturally and expressively communicative" (McNeill 2013, 9, emphasis my own). Although I personally can recall and point to the sources I use for this and many of our dances, these sources remain anonymous in varying degrees to both dance group members and spectators. They are not certain of the origin of the dances we perform.

For example, Julie told me about her experience watching an online livestream of dance groups in May 2023. As she reflects on the possible transmission points, Julie recognizes that the dances I have selected for the Saxonia Dancers are possibly based on something I–or the group as a whole–found appealing:

> Julie: I think it's really neat when you see people from Europe doing the same dances that we do here. It's like, "Holy cow, they're so far away, but we still do the same thing." That's cool for me to have that perspective. Even when we were watching the *Heimattag* livestream…
> Rebecca: From Dinkelsbühl?
> Julie: Yeah. I saw them doing some of the dances that you guys did, and I went, "Hmm, how come we know the same dances?" That was kind of neat because even though you're that far apart, you're still the same.
> Rebecca: Do you have any thoughts? To answer that question, you asked yourself, where do you think those dances are coming from?
> Julie: Either *you* saw them doing the dances and thought that was a cool dance, so we might as well do it here, or have we been doing that? Has somebody been doing that dance for hundreds of years? I don't know how we knew the same dance. It would be neat to know. Do we do the dance because we saw them doing it and we liked it, but where did they learn the dance? Did they learn it from an ancestor? How old are they? Were my husband's or whoever's grandparents doing that dance when they were young?

As we had this conversation, I was fascinated to hear Julie thought process because I immediately identified the dance she described, without have actually viewed the performances

myself. Of the dances I have taught the group before Julie viewed the 2023 livestream, the dance still performed by several European Saxon groups was the *Hetlinger Bandriter*.[22] This is knowledge I hold as a dancer and as the group's main instructor. However, I wanted to distance myself, somewhat, in order to examine Julie's experience more closely. So, I seached for the recording of the livestream while I analyzed Julie's interview. I played the three-hour-long video and skipped through it to catch the first part of each dance. I noticed some similar music and steps to other dances in our group, steps I had extracted in the early years of my group leadership. Finally, I came across a group from Ingolstadt, Germany who was performing the *Hetlinger Bandriter*, as I expected.

I first saw the dance during a *Jugendlager* (youth exchange) in Germany in 2013. I did not have the opportunity, then, to document the dance and bring it home for my group. Two years later, I found a video version of the dance as performed by a group from Munich, Germany. I proceeded to learn the steps from the video. At the time, I was living in Ottawa, approximately six hundred kilometres or a six-hour drive from the Saxonia Hall. So, I audio-recorded my dance lesson, with my voice explaining the steps and counts over the *Hetlinger Bandriter* music. I emailed the audio files to the group in Aylmer, and the dancers learned the routine without me.

Julie was curious about how the group learns dances and where those dances originate and through this thesis work, I am prompted to think differently about this transmission. The fact that I can identify the source where I learned this dance as a central member of the group is not a determinant of the knowledge of those in more peripheral positions in the Saxonia Hall group. Despite Julie's uncertainty in the case of the *Hetlinger Bandriter*, I usually inform the group of where I found or learned a particular dance when I introduce it to them. In actuality, my source is

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[22] A recording of the livestream is available on the YouTube channel for the *Verband der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Deutschland* (Siebenbürger.de 2023). The dance can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfKkVIp8La8&t=9403s&ab_channel=SiebenbuergerDE

not necessarily the original source of a given dance. Thus, our rehearsal and performance of dances learned through recordings is yet another example of Schechner's "Restored Behavior." The context again determines that we present our dances as rooted in a past or an origin with which the entire group is unacquainted. The group's dances reference the past but are not performed exactly as they might have been in the past.

I also sympathize with Julie's animated recognition of a familiar dance. In 2018, a visiting group from Romania performed the *Hetlinger Bandriter* at *Heimattag*. Excitement bubbled inside of me as I identified in their routine, a dance that my group and I knew as well. I approached the guest group and suggested that we perform the dance together, along with a few Saxon friends from the United States who were also familiar with the routine. Chaos and laughter ensued as the dance progressed, and we all experienced variation in the routine, crashing together as some dancers moved clockwise while others shifted counterclockwise. The audience was entertained by the confusion, and we all laughed, shrugged it off, and continued the routine as we knew it. This was when I began paying closer attention to variations in the dances our group was learning.

While Julie acknowledges that I might have seen this particular dance somewhere and chosen to pass it on as the dance group's facilitator, she admits she does not know exactly how we as a group came to know and perform the same routines as groups in Germany at the 2023 *Heimattag*, saying "I don't know how we knew the same dance. It would be neat to know." A degree of anonymity, despite familiarity and variation, remains. What matters is not the documented dance but the context in which the dance continues in the Saxonia Dancers' regular activities.

How can folklorists redefine and reinterpret the position of documentation in the field? Folklorists Nicole Macotsis and Kay Turner identify that "changes in modes of learning and increased interaction across ethnic and national boundaries invigorate old and new dance forms. Internet communication and cheap air travel make the homeland less a memory and more an active reality" (2006, 16). Given that the act of recording the folklore is a significant part of this project, I propose that recordings can help, not hinder, traditions in their sequence of continuity. As I have established earlier, several folklorists would disagree with my elevation of recorded folklore (Brunvand 1986, 1; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1996, 249; Anttonen 2005, 48). However, I follow Ben-Amos, who notices that the longstanding oral "criterion of medium of transmission has not defined what folklore really is; it has merely provided a qualifying statement about the form of circulation" ([1972] 2020, 29). In fact, communication itself has changed from historically verbal transmission to online communities and social network spaces.

Folklorist Tommaso Venturini, in his study of online conspiracy theories, for example, suggests that digital spaces imitate oral cultures in their repetitive and evanescent nature (2022). He describes the phenomenon of secondary orality, which "is a post-literate orality produced by the advent of electronic technologies and by the way in which these technologies reverse some of the cultural dynamics introduced by writing and printing" (Venturini 2022, 63). Venturini further supports his argument, insisting that "Because nothing survives in an oral culture if it is not remembered and repeated, successful oral narratives need to be, above all, *memorable and repeatable*" (2022, 64). Recording and broadcasting Saxon dance folklore digitally through video, as I do for the Saxonia Hall group, is not the first instance of folklore transmission changing and adapting to modern technology. Collections of Saxon folk dances, such as Marie Luise Schuster's *Deutsche Völkstanze*, are printed copies with step notation. When I began

recording the Saxonia Dancers' performances and publishing them to the Saxonia Hall's YouTube channel, my intention was not to preserve the presentation but to pass on the dance steps to any future dancer who wanted to learn them, as I have done with dances I have viewed online. Such documentation and horizontal transmission allow dances to remain both memorable as audiences fondly refer back to events, and repeatable as dancers share and learn from each other.

Although the Saxonia Dancers use recorded video, the lines of transmission are comparable to Julie's experience of learning from the older dancers. There is not one specific official source of recorded dances, as I refer to any source I can find that I think is accessible for the dancers. The group learns dances from a lead dancer (myself), who either learned from experienced dancers (through advice from my father in combination with videos from past groups) or from peers (through the videos from Europe). I understand vertical transmission to be when dances are passed down deliberately from someone who has the knowledge to someone who does not. On the other hand, I view horizontal transmission as a collaborative effort of "passing across" between two parties who are intentionally deciphering the dance steps together. While other forms of horizontal transmission are also possible (between performer and audience, between insider and outsider), the differences between individual instruction (vertical) and collaborative interpretation (horizontal) demonstrate a shift among later-generation members of the group. This shift in mode or direction of transmission reimagines how traditions are both shaped and shared by the group several generations after its founding members arrived in Canada. Dancers in the group today, however, do not tend to compare vertical and horizontal transmission styles, but rather they identify two ways of learning a routine: formally and

informally. Transmission–whether vertical or horizontal and despite recordings–continues to be informal, at least partially.

During a follow-up conversation with my husband Reilly about dancing at the *Heimattag* in New Castle, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 2023, I asked him to reflect on his personal journey of learning the dances our group performs: "How did you learn the *Stern Polka*?"

Reilly thought for a moment, then replied, "You probably taught it to me. I can't remember the first time I did the *Stern Polka*, do you know when it was?"

"No," I shrugged.

Thinking more deeply, he said, "I don't think we would have done it in 2013 in Kitchener at *Heimattag*. You probably taught it to me before an event, maybe, that we had planned to do it at. I think. The first time I would have done it would have been early enough that you would have tried to teach me ahead of time instead of throwing me into the fire. Now, you would just throw me into the fire because I have more skills and could probably catch up."

Reilly's imagery of having the dance skills to be "thrown into the fire" rather than receiving explicit instruction demonstrate that he distinguishes his current experience as a dancer from an earlier time when he did not identify as a dancer. This is an example of horizontal transmission between two similar-aged individuals, both with immigrant ancestry but from Saxon to non-Saxon. There was a time when Reilly did not know the routines, however by 2023 (and certainly earlier), his acknowledgement of his skills shows his confidence in performing the tradition. In fact, Reilly took my place as the dance group's instructor while I lived in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador during my graduate coursework. Considering that Reilly has moved from the position of student to teacher in the line of Saxon folk dance transmission, I asked, "Have you taught the *Stern Polka* to anyone? How did you teach them?"

He did not falter. “Yes. Who? I could name a handful of people: Ben, Delaney, Barb, Justin, Chelsea, Julie… some by virtue of being my partner, usually. For context, I overheard you talking about how a lot of people learn on the spot as you do it. I know I’ve taught it in practice, but I have also taught it to people I’ve grabbed off the floor. So, I’ve taught it formally and informally.”

“What’s the difference?” I asked, seeking clarification.

“Formally, you have time to break it down, not that it’s a super complicated dance, but break it down and give them an overview of what’s coming and when. Informally, you have about five to thirty seconds to tell them what’s coming ahead before you start to dance with them, and then you just push them along as part of the dance,” Reilly explained. The “formal” instruction that Reilly described having when he first joined the group and the same “formal” break-down of steps he applies when teaching are examples of vertical transmission. However, when dancers gain enough general skills and knowledge, they are able to learn more informally or even spontaneously, through observation and participation rather than instruction.

Former spontaneous social dances in Transylvania have transformed into rehearsed routines with modern aesthetics at the Saxonia Hall. As Dégh observed among Hungarian immigrants, “composed of old and new elements. Old traditions persist through continuous contact with the old country, although placed in a different context. One could say that the European variant is the negative, while the American is the positive print of the same picture” (Dégh 1966, 553). The Saxonia Dancers traditions similarly persist by placing former dances from the “old country” of Transylvania into contexts like Canadian Saxon event spaces like *Heimattag* or *Trachtenball*, with dancers of both Saxon and non-Saxon descent. The purpose of folklore in folk dance for the Saxonia Dancers is to construct community, whether through

sharing dances between groups, with new audiences, or with each other. For this reason, I focus not on what I or other dancers teach the Saxonia Hall's group, but how the teaching happens. Horizontal transmission therefore occurs between dancers within the Saxonia Hall's group, between dancers and their audience, between dancers from different Saxon groups, and between Saxons and non-Saxons.

4.3 Passing *Back* the Dance: Diagonal Transmission of Saxon Folk Dance

Earlier in this chapter, I referred to a former dance, "Fast Hopping," which I learned mostly by watching an old recording. I had decided to teach one of the former Saxonia Dancers routines to the group around 2015. The previous year, the group had not performed very often because several dancers had moved away for school. My parents suggested that they could fill in as dancers so that we could continue performing until the group was able to recruit more members. However, they wanted our group to learn some of the routines they had performed in the past, believing it would be easier to recall those dances than to learn something entirely new.

Although my father rememered the footwork for "Fast Hopping," as he listened to the music, he could not recall the patterns the dancers make while performing the steps. He then offered me a copy of a video that his sister had made when he was in the dance group in the 1980s and suggested I examine it to determine the parts of the dance that he could not remember. The video in question is a copy of a personal camera recording of the dance "Fast Hopping" at the Saxonia Hall in 1985. I put the VHS into their VCR and recorded the video on the television screen with my phone. Then, I saved the video on my computer and uploaded it to the Saxonia Hall YouTube channel. The video itself is just under two minutes in length. However, the footage is very blurry, parts of the video were cut out, and the recording stops before the end of the first

half of the routine. There are also parts of the video where the person filming zoomed in on faces rather than showcasing the footwork. Nevertheless, with my father's assistance, I pieced together the patterns and footwork, taking notes and trying the steps myself as I learned the routine.

That summer, I began teaching the steps to fellow younger dancers in the group. The Saxonia Hall was hosting *Heimattag*, so my parents were otherwise occupied that weekend and could not perform with the group as originally planned. Nevertheless, I spent the time teaching the routine to Kate, Daniel, and Reilly during the weeks when other dancers were not available. The four of learned the dance and performed it together, just the two couples. My father commented that the dance did not look like a proper performance with only two couples, so he and my mother began attending practices more regularly, with the intention of refreshing their memories on the dance. However, by this point, I had already taught my generation of dancers the routine as I had learned it from the video. When my parents rejoined the group, they said we did some of the parts of the dance incorrectly. Because more of the younger dancers had learned the routine this "incorrect" way, however, I insisted that my parents would need to relearn the dance our way, with slightly different footwork and directions.

Because my fieldwork focused on how and why Saxon traditions are shared in the Saxonia Hall group, this dance, "Fast Hopping," was the most common example that participants reflected upon with me. Karen Horeth (my mother) shares:

> Learning the dances that we did when we were younger was a bit tricky because when you guys tried to learn them, you might have learned a little bit of a slightly different thing. Right? So, I think it's "Fast Hopping" where we go in and slide to the left, step to the left a couple of times and then step back and then go back. We did it in the opposite direction, so that was tricky to go with the new slight variations, but once you get it in your muscle memory, I guess, it was fine.

Julie Pfingtsgraef (Kate and Daniel's mother), who danced with my mother, also referred to muscle memory while relearning "Fast Hopping," saying, "Now, when you guys changed the

steps a little bit on the old dances, muscle memory's like, 'Wait a minute.'" Despite the changes and necessity to relearn parts of the routine that resulted from this atypical transmission, the older generation of dancers mostly accepted the variations. At a dance practice one evening in June 2023, Justin's wife Chelsea was helping him with the steps to "Fast Hopping," sharing phrases of encouragement, "There you go!" and giving precise directions, "You spin." Kate was correcting her mother Julie, who was using the wrong foot to go into the circle for "Fast Hopping." I shouted from the sidelines, "I bet our moms are using the wrong foot!" Then my mother said, defensively, "I'm not because you converted me!"

Karen considers that the younger members of the group learned the dance in a different way, and Julie suggests that the dance was intentionally changed. Daniel, Kate and I also reflected together on the possible source of change in the dance, noting that I might have learned the mirror image of the dance while watching the recording. The difficulty with referring to a recording, of course, is that many of the young dancers in the reference video are also not always using the "correct" foot, so the "correct" steps are not clearly on record. At various points of the dance, some dancers are using different feet than the others.

Although total perfection in replicating the dance was valued in theory, in practice, the total sum of the performance in costume was more culturally appreciated than knowing which foot to start a dance with. Folklorist Anthony Shay categorizes performances like these, which most people are familiar with when they view folk dance, as "Ethno identity dances" because they refer to a specific dance and ethnic group (2021, 232; see also Feinberg 2017, 7). Nevertheless, in the vertical line of transmission, older members of the 1980s group "passed down" their dances to younger dancers at the time, like Karen, John Sr. and Julie, who, over twenty years later, could not recall all of the steps to "pass down" the dance to our 2015 group.

So, when I studied recorded dances like “Fast Hopping” and taught it to the Saxonia Dancers, I “passed on” the tradition horizontally to my fellow group members. Finally, when the group taught the dance back to former members (for example, their parents) who rejoined the group, the dance was passed back and up.

As I reflect on the nature of transmission, I see that several participants in this study view traditions as being shared through an act of passing “down,” or vertically, from an older, more experience person with more knowledge to a younger person. Folklorist Tom Van Buren argues that folklore creates the space for cultural knowledge and practices to be passed down (2005, 43). Yet, my father was not able to pass the full dance down to me and I needed the video to learn the routine myself before I taught it to my contemporaries, learning and passing it sideways. Was the video a means, then, for me to receive the dance vertically or horizontally? My father does retain some agency in the line of transmission here because, although he did not remember all of the dance, he was able to provide the resources (the video) which contained the knowledge he intended to pass down inter-genertionally. However, when I taught the dance to my same-age peers, I passed the dance “across” to them. The direction that interests me most, however, is how to examine the transmission that occurred when the younger dancers and I taught the routine “back” to Karen, John Sr., and Julie. I would like to introduce the idea of looking at this “passing back” as “diagonal transmission, which I illustrate in Figure 4.2.

Transmission occurs diagonally in unexpected places, on the periphery of the cultural practices at hand. Historically, the Saxonia Dancers shared their dance traditions with younger groups by passing it “down.” Over the years, as non-Saxons joined the group to socialize, the Saxonia Dancers shared their dance traditions with their same-age peers by passing it “across.”

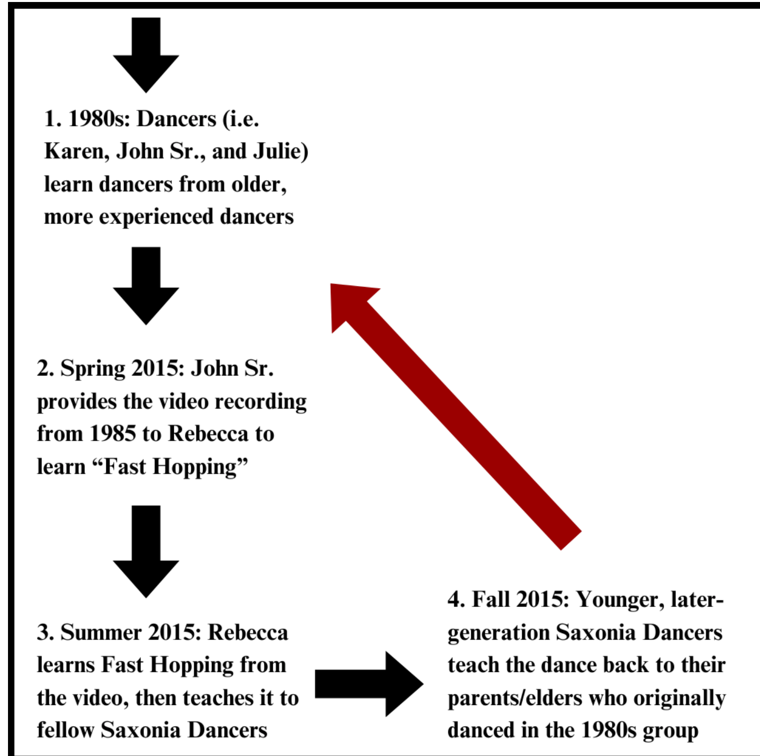

Figure 4.2: Transmission map for the Saxonia Dancers' routine "Fast Hopping" shows vertical, horizontal, and diagonal passing of the dance steps.

Dances were not intentionally recorded for instructional purposes, so the transmission that occurs as a result of such videos reaches outside of the central "tradition," to introduce cultural information that otherwise may not have been accessible. Similarly, when Dave learned about the Transylvanian Saxon food traditions at *Heimattag* from older Saxons, it was an atypical direction of transmission because Dave's presence as a non-Saxon at a Saxon event was unexpected. Those who shared the *Speck*–a type of smoked bacon–with him passed Saxon foodways both down (vertically) to someone younger than them (Dave), while also passing the tradition across (horizontally) to someone who was culturally an outsider (Dave being Czech, not Saxon).

Figure 4.3: Dave enjoys a beer and *Speck* at the *Heimattag* after-party
(Photo contributed by Kate Pfingstgraef, July 8, 2023).

Earlier, I noted that Dave joined the Saxonia Dancers group temporarily in the summer of 2023 to fill in as a dancer at *Heimattag*. As I analyzed my fieldnotes and photographs from the event, I was eager to ask Dave about a particular moment that Kate had caught on camera and texted to me at the *Heimattag* after-party. Dave appeared to proudly show off the beer and bacon that he and other party-goers were consuming. He recalled, when he ate *Speck* at *Heimattag* (Figure 4.3):

> I was noticing the connections between the Czech culture and the Saxon culture and embracing that. Maybe even through the similarities, I'm starting to feel connected on my own. I got really excited about the similarities. That's the photo I think I even sent to my parents to be like, "Look at me, look at what I'm doing; I'm embracing my culture," even though it's like, this was at the German club.

Engaging with Saxon cultural practices at *Heimattag* provides Dave the physical space to engage with food traditions and interpret them in his own, Czech way. He identifies the overlap between

Saxon culture and his Czech roots. The transmission of Saxon traditions diagonally between Saxons and non-Saxons of different immigrant generations thus fills a gap for other later-generation immigrant participants to connect with their own traditions while simultaneously permitting the continuity of Saxon traditions.

The varying modes and directions of cultural transmission among this group results in filling gaps, addressing breaks, and holding space, whether for the Saxonia Dancers as a group or for individual members. Accepting that transmission can occur in in nontraditional ways creates a space for the Saxonia Dancers to respect the concerns of the first-generation group who arrived in Canada in the 1950s and wanted to preserve their Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices. I already suggested that the Saxonia Dancers is a reinvented group as of 2009, due to the break in the former group's sequence of transmission since 1968. Kate attributes the current group's use of recorded folklore to this break. She explained a conversation she had with her mother leading up to *Heimattag* in the United States:

> Now you see here, my mother… cause she's doing the wrong foot, right? And she's like, "I'm just going to end up doing the wrong foot. That's what it's gonna come out." She's not worried about it. Then she's like, "Well, because we did it the other way," and I was like, "Yeah, and we probably wouldn't have learned it quote-unquote *wrong* compared to what you did if there wasn't a break in the dance groups." You know? If people kept doing it… This dance group taught this one and then taught this one and taught this one, instead of us learning it from a video.

As Kate describes, the break or gap in transmission between older and younger Saxonia Dancers is filled by the recording from 1985. Indeed, the first iteration of the group–or of this particular dance–might be invented; however, the group and the dance have developed their own traditions and variations throughout the years since 2009. Diagonal transmission is an innovative way for members of the group to deliberately fill in gaps in typical transmission and hold space for the traditions to be transmitted into the future.

In studying dance transmission of Saxon folk dance in Aylmer, Ontario, I would be remiss to omit attention to the pressures the group faces regarding continued transmission. Folklorist Joseph Feinberg describes the pressures of a Slovakian folk dance group, which I have observed similarly exist among the recreational Saxonia Dancers group, namely:

> Pressure placed on newcomers to learn folk dances that "should" be theirs; pressure to bring enjoyment to one's dance partner; pressure on ensemble members to develop their performance skills and to demonstrate, even while having fun, that they are capable of top-notch performance; pressure on outsiders to enter a social group that is already well-established; and the pressure on insiders to accept outsiders, to open themselves outwardly toward a broader public, which risks destabilizing the community that they have created among themselves. (Feinberg 2017, 89)

Some of these pressures are alleviated through the Saxonia Dancers' use of recordings because new members can enjoy different types of modelling: outsiders can observe in a low-stakes environment from home, and insiders openly share their dance traditions with a broader public online. Despite this technique, it is clear that the recorded folklore is not intended to be used as a means of standardization (c.f. Shay 2021, 240). It is a reference point, a point in the line of horizontal and diagonal transmission that fills the gap where previous generations have not passed a dance tradition "down." Glassie's imagery of the temporal tangle of tradition's past and future (2003, 181) is a suitable metaphor not only for the ways in which folk dance is transmitted among later-generation Transylvanian Saxons and their non-Saxon peers involved in this project. It also illustrates the intricacies of nostalgic narratives about an unknown homeland or *Heimat* and the complex notions of authenticity in costume and dance traditions within the group. Nevertheless, recorded folklore–whether migration narratives, regional costume collections, or folk dances–addresses gaps in the network of passing traditions down, on, and back. This allows transmission within Canadian Saxon groups, between Saxon groups in Canada and Europe, and

between later-generation Saxon and non-Saxon immigrants alike to restore their connection to their identity and their roots.

Chapter 5. Conclusion: Saxon Swag and the Everyday Expressions of Later-Generation Transylvanian Saxons in Canada

"It's in our own way because it's different now, but carrying what they carried through their life to then me carry through my life. Even though they're two or three generations back, if they weren't around and didn't come over and have all the stories and go on the boat like they did, I wouldn't be here."

Kate Pfingstgraef

* * *

I have been a part of the community in which this project takes place for most of my life and I am extremely immersed in the cultural practices of Transylvanian Saxons in Canada to this day. When I decided to step back and study the group for my Master's thesis, it helped me to ask questions that I had not considered before and apply folklore concepts to a group that I am very much a part of. Particularly rewarding was being able to connect more closely with my friends and fellow dancers, both Saxon and non-Saxon alike, and to have a platform through which I could talk about the issues I was contemplating as a folklorist. Sharing my ideas with the group initiated topics that the participants of this project and I will be able to continue to think about together. My own development as a scholar has prompted me to continue to reflect on what I have learned about Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices from my parents, grandparents, and from fellow Saxons and how we all continue to transmit and perform Saxon identity with our own innovative variations. As I write this thesis, weekly dance practices at the Saxonia Hall in Aylmer, Ontario, continue, and those who participated in my project regularly follow up with me about the progress of my work. Similar to folklorist Pauline Greenhill's project among English Canadians (1994), when my project began, I positioned myself both as an insider with tacit cultural knowledge and as an analytical, researcher-outsider. However, as I questioned the groups' and my own actions more meaningfully and examined patterns in narratives, costumes, and folk dance more closely, I noticed the participants beginning to do the same. Ultimately, the

question of belonging to the group or one's position within the group of later-generation Saxons at the Saxonia Hall was not a matter of one's heritage but one's engagement with and participation in Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices. For several participants, Saxon folklore, not Saxon ancestry, was the medium of group formation and expression.

There appears to be an internal negotiation to express belonging among this project's participants. Cultural geographer Robert J. Kaiser observes that "homeland tends to be perceived by members of the nation as exclusively theirs, consigning all non-members to the status of foreigners or outsiders who do not properly belong" (2004, 230). However, participants in this project acknowledged the intersecting relationships between German and Romanian Transylvanians in the "old country," as well as the interdependence of Saxons and non-Saxons in Canada. While Amanda Mooser and Kate Pfingstgraef use the Transylvanian Saxon costume or *Tracht* to differentiate themselves from other local German-speaking ethnic groups, Justin Schatz, Daniel Pfingstgraef, and John Horeth incorporate Romanian geography into their narratives about their Saxon familial roots. Derek Gotzmeister and Dan Schmidt identify Romanian, Hungarian, and Turkish influences in Transylvanian Saxon foodways, and Dave notices similarities between Saxon and Czech hospitality practices. Justin Toth, Reilly Ragot, and I recognize that dancing with the Saxonia Dancers, regardless of one's ancestry, meant that there would remain enough people involved for this Saxon tradition to continue. There are so many reasons why we participate and why this group in Aylmer, Ontario continues; for some, it is enjoyment, but for those of us with Saxon heritage, it is to deliberately continue to participate in a heritage activity that our grandparents and ancestors did.

Recall that Daniel does not consciously associate the concept of homeland with Transylvania. Karen Horeth and Julie Pfingstgraef also compared and presented their co-existing

immigrant and Canadian identities. It seems that later-generation immigrants who participated in this project, therefore, do not adhere to the exclusivity of Kaiser's "homeland." On the other hand, Daniel's sister Kate acknowledges that the idea of *Heimat*–whether a nostalgic memory, a feeling of belonging, or a place where traditions originated–remains relevant as a reference point for Transylvanian Saxon cultural practices in the present. These concepts are topics I have discussed with my Saxon friends, not only in writing this thesis, but in conversations about how to keep traditions "alive." When I interviewed my Saxon contemporary, Bengt Nyman, we talked about current Saxon cultural practices, knowledge about Saxon traditions and how we perceived both to be more accessible and inclusive:

> Rebecca: I've always wanted to make this information more accessible for other people, if anyone ever was interested. You know, you hear "Oh well the kids aren't interested." That's okay! If they want to be interested, they will be, if they don't that's okay too. For me, it's just to make it available if they wanted to learn, then they have a place where they can find the answers.
> Bengt: We recognize it's not necessarily a matter of interest or not, it's an accessibility barrier, it's a financial barrier, whatever it may be. However you make things accessible, that's different for each person.

Bengt describes accessibility as a more modern concept that later-generation participants grew up with or learned at an earlier age than elder group members. Having joined the Transylvania Club dance group in Kitchener, Ontario, in the early 2000s as a twenty-one year old, Bengt recognizes the value of maintaining traditions that honour a collective Saxon heritage, however he shared with me that he and his peers prioritize creating a sense of belonging over preserving a formal iteration of certain traditions. He emphasizes that relationships between the people involved should remain paramount while correct alignment with "authentic" rules or event etiquette could be relaxed. Once again, this demonstrates how later-generation immigrants critically evaluate how to best engage with the nostalgic ideals of older generations while interpreting their community's cultural practices. This inclusive interpretation of Saxon traditions

illustrates that younger group members critically prioritize community and belonging, collaboration, and connectivity. Nevertheless, these priorities remain informed by nostalgia, authenticity and tradition as participants and I continue to transmit Saxon folklore "in our own way."

Through their continued engagement with their cultural practices, later-generation Transylvanian Saxons in Canada continue to learn and pass on a sense of nostalgia for the past place and time that was the Transylvania of their ancestors. This nostalgia for *Heimat* fuels the community's search for authenticity in their costumes and dances, although later-generation Saxons in Canada prioritize learning about their heritage and intentionally passing down (vertically), passing across (horizontally), and passing back (diagonally) their traditions to their children, their non-Saxon friends, their parents and to each other. While the participants in this project are actively involved in their respective club activities at a formal and organized level, their everyday expressions of Saxon identity indicate how the concepts of nostalgia, authenticity, and tradition are embedded in their lives. As I completed my fieldwork, asking questions about participants' immigration history, club involvement, and perspectives on cultural transmission, they brought to my attention the small ways they perform their identity in informal settings. The following three examples demonstrate that the themes explored and analyzed within this thesis occur not only within the framework of dance groups and club membership but also in individual everyday life. It struck me that, whether privately, between Saxons within the group, or among Saxons and non-Saxons, later-generation dress continues to be purposefully performed in costume-like ways.

5.1 "I've worn this *Wappen* every single day": Everyday Expressions and Belonging

Folklorist Carrie Hertz describes dress–or one's apparel, the way one gets dressed–as "an expressive medium of material culture, intimately bound to understandings of personal and collective identities, *both* self-fashioned and ascribed. It is a form of unstable artistry for navigating complex and overlapping social, material, temporal, spatial, and conceptual boundaries." As I learned over the course of my research, the roots of later-generation Saxon identity in Canada are complicated and Saxon participants' heritage overlaps migration and diasporic histories as well as language and nationality boundaries. Explaining the roots of the Pfingstgraef, Gotzmeister, and Horeth Saxon family names are ways in which Kate, Daniel, Derek, and I convey our Saxon background in our daily lives outside of the Saxonia Hall setting but within the diverse population surrounding Aylmer, Ontario.

However, Justin Schatz, a musician and teacher, similarly has a German-sounding family name but grew up in Waterloo, Ontario, a region in southwestern Ontario known for its large population of German settlers. He expresses his unique Transylvanian Saxon identity through everyday material culture. Justin explained to me that he wears the *Wappen* every day, pointing to the Transylvanian Saxon crest pendant on his necklace (Figure 5.1). The crest features seven castle symbols representing the seven fortified settlements of Medieval Transylvania. For Justin, wearing the crest represents his heritage and his appreciation of belonging to a connected community. He clarifies, "I also got into the profession of teaching because it's about community building, but I've been a part of that my whole life, trying to continue on traditions, but also being a part of something that is just outside of regular life." Justin told me that the shared Saxon traditions are something that community members can connect with. Although "every single day" wear is not the case for me, I similarly have chosen to grow my hair long so I can wear it in

one or two long braids *almost* every single day as an inconspicuous acknowledgement of my Saxon roots and the community that is profoundly important to me. Most people with whom I interact do not inquire about my braids; however, when a classmate or a friend's relative makes a comment that it reminds them of their grandmother's or their own hairstyles, I am glad to have the opportunity to explain my choice. For Justin, wearing the crest is a subtle daily reminder of the community in which he grew up and remains involved. The *Wappen* situates him within the community and it achieves the objectives of costume. As folklorist Pravina Shukla identifies, the "goal is to express heritage, satisfying the self, serving the community, and informing an audience of unknown others" (2015, 256). When someone asks him about his necklace, Justin has the opportunity to talk about his background and the significance of Saxon traditions in his life with his non-Saxon peers and colleagues who may not be familiar with the Transylvanian Saxon culture.

Figure 5.1: Justin Schatz wears the Saxon *Wappen* necklace daily (Horeth, August 5, 2023).
Figure 5.2: Dave keeps fish scales in his wallet, following a Czech folk belief (Photo submitted by Dave).

Folklorist Andriy Nahachewsky's study on voluntary or situational immigrant identity, which he calls "New ethnicity," explores how later-generation individuals "consciously choose to claim this ethnicity and both privately and publicly incorporate ethnically defined cultural practices" (2002, 176). While this thesis explores several public performances of ethnicity, the small private expressions demonstrate that later-generation participants enjoy a degree of freedom of choice in how they claim their identity. Though not Saxon, Dave disclosed an example of such small private displays of ethnicity when he showed me the fish scale he keeps in his wallet (Figure 5.2). He recounted a Czech folk belief that keeping a fish scale from the carp that was traditionally eaten on Christmas Eve in his wallet is supposed to bring wealth throughout the following year. I asked Dave why he carries something that most people cannot see. He explains, "It's how I express my Czech culture. It's not like I have a tattoo of the Czech flag or the lion. It's almost reminding myself–more than showing every single person–'Look, I'm Czech.' It's more about embracing that side internally than externally telling people about my culture." Shukla recognizes that daily dress is a creative but individual expression of one's identity that "might not reveal who we really are," while one's identity in costume is "always elective, motivated by will, true to the self' (2015, 270). While Dave cannot actually wear the fish scales in the way apparel or costume are worn, the fact that he carries them with him daily reflects both the foodways and folk beliefs of his heritage identity. As an English-speaking white man, Dave can present himself in his daily life without choosing to express his immigrant identity. Carrying the fish scales are, for Dave, elective and his subtle way of staying true to his self.

I have been thinking about these subtle or private ways of displaying ethnicity as my husband, Reilly, and I decorate the home we moved into in 2022. For instance, during our travels

to Dinkelsbühl, Germany for the *Heimattag* in 2023, we purchased a tablecloth that was cross-stitched with Saxon motifs. Although it is too small for any table we own, we display it as a piece of folk art in our living room (Figure 5.3). Novelist Alice Walker explores the contrasting uses and displays of material culture in her short story "Everyday Use" (1994). While Reilly and I regularly wear Saxon costumes for dance performances and need to make minor repairs on general deterioration, I also consciously choose some pieces to preserve and display my heritage privately as a daily reminder of my identity. During the same trip to Germany, Daniel purchased a Transylvanian Saxon songbook, which he displays on the piano in his living room (Figure 5.4). His sister Kate gravitated towards the piano and played a few notes from the book when we visited Daniel's house in the late summer of 2023. Like Justin Schatz and Dave, Daniel and I mark our sense of belonging to a community in subtle or private ways in our homes, and we are able to choose when to present the associated narratives about our immigrant backgrounds.

Figure 5.3: Transylvanian Saxon cross-stitch tablecloth mounted on the right wall of Reilly's and my living room (Horeth, August 20, 2023).
Figure 5.4: Daniel's Saxon songbook on the piano, next to the front entryway (Horeth, August 5, 2023).

5.2 Weilau Boys: Identity Expression and Belonging Between Saxons

This thesis has examined how Transylvanian Saxons negotiate authenticity surrounding and through their costume, the *Tracht*, at two *Heimattag* events in the summer of 2023. During the event in New Castle, Pennsylvania, Dan Schmidt and Bengt Nyman (centre and right in figures 5.5 and 5.6) attended the event not wearing their *Tracht*, unlike most young attendees who did indeed wear the Saxon costume. Instead, Dan and Bengt arrived wearing black cotton t-shirts with the label "Weilau Boys" on the back. The front of the shirts listed five Saxon foods[23] written in white text, in the dialect of the village of Weilau. I view the design as rooted in the concept of authenticity because, like the *Tracht*, the shirts are connected to and represent a specific region (Weilau). Dan described the process of designing the shirts which, he tells me, started as a joke but involved conversation with his grandmother, who helped with the spelling of the dialect:

> Even when we were making them, my Oma was like, "Why are you doing this?" because I called her. I just wanted to make sure we were spelling the words right. We had to call three different people to make sure because it's in Saxon, and no one writes Saxon. She said, "Okay, that's nice." It was cool that it made my Oma happy, even though she's not from Weilau. It's my Opa.

That the design process included consultation with Dan's grandmother about language and spelling demonstrates Daniel's objective of making more than a simple t-shirt, but rather something more meaningful. Shukla argues that "All clothing is significant, a matter of assembling outfits for contexts in which they become personally and socially meaningful. But daily dress is a solo act whereas costume comes of collaboration (2015, 269)." In their own way, Dan and Bengt created a modern *Tracht* that is collaborative because they consulted each other and other Saxons from Weilau. As I presented in Chapter Three, Shukla also identifies that folk

[23] The words on the shirt read "Pali," which is a homemade plum liqueur, "Boflesch," which is smoked bacon or *Speck*, "Zwibel" or onions, "Botz," a cornmeal mixture often made with cheese, and "Honklich," a thin yeast cake with egg custard and sometimes semolina flour, often served with fruit purée (Sedler 2023).

costumes contain details that preserve geography and represent heritage (2015, 99). The "Weilau Boys" t-shirt indicates explicitly that it is from Weilau through the back label but implicitly through the dialect text. Both with ancestry in Weilau, Dan and Bengt's t-shirts, therefore, allowed them to express more specific details about their identity with other Saxons who are already familiar with the general narrative of migration to and from Transylvania. At the *Heimattag* in the United States, other Saxons from Weilau, whom Dan and Bengt had not previously met, approached them to comment on the shirts and share connections about similar family ancestry. Saxons who were not from Weilau, however, recognized some of the vocabularies but pointed out that the regional spelling of the words was incorrect. The "Weilau Boys" t-shirt, therefore, contains regionally specific motifs (Shukla 2005, 11). This marks Dan, Bengt, and any other Saxon from Weilau who wears the shirt as being Saxon, but more specifically as having roots in Weilau.

Figure 5.5: Adam Schatz, Dan Schmidt, and Bengt Nyman wear the "Weilau Boys" shirts while making apple cider. Figure 5.6: A close-up image of the front of the Weilau Boys t-shirt (Photos contributed by Dan Schmidt).

Curious about whether the t-shirts could be studied alongside other folk costumes like the *Tracht*, I asked Dan and Bengt if any criteria existed about who could wear the t-shirts and when. Both emphasized that there are no rules around the shirt. However, as they described times that they chose to don the "Weilau Boys" label, I noticed they established boundaries around the shirt's use and display. This behaviour further aligns with the notion of "authenticity," in that costume guidelines and community censorship often prescribe how the wearer should act while in costume to align with a standard. For example, Bengt acknowledged that they joked to those who asked about the shirts, saying, "Are you from Weilau or not?" and Dan remarked that "there are no criteria, but I thought people who are from Weilau are going to want to wear them. I don't think it matters, though." This concluding statement demonstrates that Dan does not prioritize rules that limit outsiders from engaging with the material culture at hand, as previous generations had done (see also Sedler 2002, 285). Nevertheless, both Dan and Bengt explained to me that several members of their club, the Transylvania Club in Kitchener, Ontario, have roots in Weilau, so they expected the shirt to be popular and thus had more than their own two shirts printed.

Additionally, Dan and Bengt each talked about and compared situations when they would or would not wear the shirt. Further designating the spatial positioning (Shukla 2005, 11) of this piece of clothing, Bengt explained:

> There's no point in hanging out with my neighbours and wearing that, you know? They won't get the point, but if I go hang out with *my* group of people that I went through the dance group with, my age group, then I can wear that, and everybody's like, "Oh yea!" and they're excited to see it and approve of it.

Dan echoes Bengt's thoughts, saying he wears the shirt when "there will be Saxon people because nobody else is going to get it, and it takes a lot of explaining if you're not Saxon." This includes both organized club events, casual social gatherings, and Dan's at-home annual apple cider production day (Figures 5.5 and 5.6). To non-Saxon outsiders, the vocabulary has no

significance, and the shirt incites a complicated explanation reminiscent of Daniel Pfingstgraef's response about name inquiries. That Dan and Bengt both anticipate that fellow Saxons will understand that the point of the shirt is to display their heritage illustrates that they perceive themselves as part of an imagined community, one that Benedict Anderson famously describes as "a deep horizontal comradeship" (1983, 7).

While Dan, Bengt and the later-generation Saxons who participated in this study consciously consider themselves Canadian, they subtly showcase their pride in their heritage and their position within the group through innovative attire while still learning about and transmitting their traditions. Saxon scholars such as historian and director of the Transylvanian Saxon Library and Archives in Gundelsheim, Germany, Ingrid Schiel, agree that the *Tracht* has changed over the history of Transylvania (2023, 153-155). While Schiel argues that hybrid or innovative ensembles like the Austrian-Saxon "Katharini-Dirndl" are not an example of a renewed or evolved *Tracht* because it is based on Austrian everyday apparel and features only some Saxon motifs, namely fabric colours and embroidery patterns (Schiel 2023, 160), Shukla notes, "Innovation and change lie at the heart of the definition of folk costumes" (2015, 105). Both scholars nevertheless recognize that costume delineates one's identity and place within a group. Bengt ultimately describes his shirt as "easy, casual, everyday wear," and he identifies that, by wearing this shirt, he displays that he belongs to the group. As I reflect on Bengt's description of the "Weilau Boys" shirt, my interpretation of the shirt is that it is a modern costume piece created by later-generation Saxons. They negotiate their engagement with Saxon clothing traditions through their understanding of nostalgia for *Heimat* and frameworks of costume authenticity.

5.3 “Oh! So you speak Saxon!”: Group Belonging Between and Among Saxons

Also collaborative in design, elective in use, and true to many participants’ heritage, the Saxonia Hall created a t-shirt in 2011. This white t-shirt features the words *Soksesch as mai Mottersproch* or “Saxon is my Mothertongue” on the front, with a large blue and red *Wappen* with seven yellow castles on the crest. The back of the shirt also reads “Saxonia Hall.” When I helped design the shirt and select a slogan for the front at the time, I suggested to the committee that we use “Saxon is my Mothertongue” as a symbolic recognition of our Saxon heritage, although many of us did not speak this German dialect. Applying the notion of “Mothertongue,” or one’s native language, demonstrated that our committee’s values of depicting identity, at the time, aligned with Kaiser’s interpretation that “homelands are most often depicted as politically neutral, cultural spaces that are both ‘natural’” (2004, 230). Despite the origins of this particular shirt design, over a decade later, Saxonia Hall members continue to wear it today as a marker of belonging to the group and has come to represent more than the “natural” Saxon heritage of those who wear it. Identity expressed through this shirt, like tradition, should be understood as folklorist Ray Cashman describes the performance of the individual: “an on-going work-in-progress–enacted, maintained, and revised through performance, recursive and changeable over time” (2011, 303). The ways in which participants wear this shirt demonstrates the changing message communicated through this example of Saxon material culture, messaging that can be similarly expressed through costume.

My brother John Horeth and our father John Horeth Sr. wear the shirt as a uniform. My brother insists that he does not have a profound connection with his heritage as expressed through Transylvanian Saxon costume. So when he wore this t-shirt during my interview with him, I asked him why he chose to wear it:

Because I have three or four of them and I wear them when I go to the hall, like a uniform. It has the "Saxon is my mother tongue" message on the front and a picture of the Saxon crest with the seven castles, the *sieben Bürgen*, and again I know all that stuff just from association, not because I sought out that information. It's the most basic information for anyone involved.

John and John Sr. are not alone in wearing the t-shirt as a uniform; Derek, Kate, Daniel and I along with other Saxonia Hall members do the same, wearing the shirt to dance practice, club and *Landsmannschaft* meetings, or casual events at home with other Saxons or at Saxon clubs. Could this shirt also be considered costume-like or is it merely everyday clothing?

Figure 5.7: John Horeth Sr. (front), and John Horeth (back) wear the Saxonia Hall t-shirts while cooking in the club.
Figure 5.8: John showcases the type of shirt he often wears at the Saxonia Hall.

The shirts, as well as a more-recent Saxonia-Hall branded pullover, mark us as Saxon and as belonging to the Saxonia Hall. For example, my aunt, Rosemary Horeth, commented to Daniel about the sweaters they both wore at a *Landsmannschaft* meeting and used the Saxon word for costume. She said, "Hey, you wore the *Tracht* too," then turned to Derek and me and asked,

“Why didn’t you wear the *Tracht*?” Shukla examines costume and uniform in contrast, noting that “Costume–as opposed to uniform–is defined by the wearer’s intentions and behaviors, and it is evaluated by the audience on the basis of garment construction, fabrics, ensemble, and accessories, as well as by its fitness for the occasion” (2015, 5). The Saxonia Hall t-shirt is explicitly recognized by other Transylvanian Saxons as a “Saxon” piece of clothing because the text is written with the Saxon dialect. Like the “Weilau Boys” t-shirt, other Saxons evaluate the accuracy of the shirt’s text based on their regional understanding of the language. Wearers also evaluate both shirts in terms of how appropriate they are for certain occasions and for who will be the shirts’ audiences. I described the comments that I hear when I wear the Saxonia Hall shirt among other Saxons to Dan Schmidt, noting, “I get that with our *Soksesch as mai Mottersproch* t-shirts. Especially when I wear it in Europe. ‘Oh! So you speak Saxon!’ I’m like, ‘Nooooo.’” When I wear the shirt among Saxons from other groups, my intention is to display that I am Transylvanian Saxon, in general, but more specifically that I belong to this community at the Saxonia Hall, specifically.

Yet, Shukla also characterizes costume as being “used for dress-up and to temporarily assume another’s persona” (2015, 15). Thus, the shirts become a way in which participants at the Saxonia Hall can horizontally transmit Transylvanian Saxon folklore to non-Saxons. Dave, who is not Transylvanian Saxon, compared wearing the Saxonia Hall t-shirt at *Heimattag* to wearing clothing branded with his alma mater. When he learns a colleague also went to the same school, he wears the university shirt to demonstrate that they have something in common. Dave explained that, for him, wearing similarly branded clothing denotes community. Dave wore his Saxonia Hall t-shirt for our interview, and I interpreted this–as an extension of his behaviour with the school shirts–to indicate his sense of belonging in the Saxonia Hall community. Dave agreed,

replying, “Even though, sure I’m not a Saxon, I still feel that I belong in the community.” I find this interesting because, since he lives over two hours away from the Saxonia Hall, Dave does not attend regular practices and only comes to some events during the year. I asked him to clarify and he continued, “It’s friendly; people just know your name. At this point, people are starting to know who I am… because you know this person, you must either be part of the community or be friendly.” Dave also recalls an elder Transylvanian Saxon asked him if he was Saxon at *Heimattag* when she saw him wearing the t-shirt. He replied no, and the next day when he danced in the *Tracht* with the Saxonia Dancers, she returned to him and asserted that he *must* be Saxon because he did such a good job with his performance. Dave and I interpreted this woman’s comments as granting him honourary status as “Saxon” along with his actual membership within the group.

The Saxonia Hall t-shirt, like uniforms, “replaces personal identity with a collective one” (Shukla 2015, 251). However, while Shukla explains that uniforms are typically standardized, costume includes creative variation (2015, 264). Within the group at the Saxonia Hall, later-generation Transylvanian Saxon transmission of cultural practices is continuously reinterpreted in participants’ own ways. While the shirt explicitly showcases a collective Transylvanian Saxon identity with the dialect text, any member, Saxon or not, can wear the shirt and share the cultural practices associated with the group. In a large group of Transylvanian Saxons from the international community, this shirt positions Saxon wearers as “Saxon” from Canada (specifically from the Saxonia Hall) and from northern Transylvania (through the dialect). For non-Saxons who wear the shirt, it positions them as insiders within this small immigrant community. This acceptance is a change from the early first-generation immigrant

tendency to grasp nostalgically to homeland practices and limit outsider engagement, but it is a modification that overall strengthens the group and its collective cultural practices.

"You have to maintain enough that it's true to what you're trying to tell people, but you can't leave it exactly the same."

Daniel Pfingstgraef

This thesis uplifts the experiences of several later-generation Transylvanian Saxons participants who acknowledged the layers of belonging and exclusivity in their narratives, costumes, and traditions. However, I also sought and included the voices of later-generation immigrants who are not Saxon to better understand the place of organized groups like the Saxonia Hall in the wider sphere of artistic communication and everyday expression in small diasporic groups. When explaining why he participates in the Saxonia Dancers group and his reasoning for inviting his friends to club events, Justin Toth compared his experiences as a Saxonia Hall member with his memories of participating in local Hungarian club activities. He recalls, "I didn't know anybody that went there that wasn't Hungarian. Whereas, at the Saxonia Hall, it's always seemed, since I went there, that anybody can come. I want to have that sense of community and I want people to know that these events are going on, and if they want to go to them, it's not an exclusive thing." Both Justin and Dave exemplify German Studies scholar Fritz Wieden's hypothesis that a focus on cultural transmission would attract both Saxons and non-Saxon Canadians (1986, 44). Despite not being Saxons, they each express a sense of belonging to the group at the Saxonia Hall because they experience personal connections between their own cultural identity and the Saxon cultural practices in which they participate.

"Everything now is at a point where it either evolves or it will start to stop happening."

Justin Schatz

Several participants in this project express their identity and their position within the Transylvanian Saxon community through their historical and nostalgic narratives, folk costumes, and shared traditional dances. Yet, they also acknowledge that their cultural practices need to be inclusive and accessible. Saxon Swag shared between friends–like the *Wappen* necklace, the "Weilau Boys" shirt, and Saxonia Hall branded apparel–as well as subtle and private ways of dressing or incorporating Saxon material culture into one's everyday life–are more attainable than pure identities, "authentic" costumes, and consecutive transmission. Anthropologist Ruth Behar recognizes this in her analysis of folklore as an understanding of home. She challenges group insiders to "give way to more inclusive and flexible definitions of identity" (2009, 262-263). This perspective gives validity to the creative folkloric expressions among later-generation immigrants who engage with Saxon traditions.

"I just hope, even though it's going to change, that it doesn't die out completely. I want my kids to go and experience it."

Dan Schmidt

Although Dan accepts change in tradition, his hope reflects the longstanding position that traditions can be passed down, lest they end. This image of tradition, change and "death" is at the heart of studies in folklore. As I reflect on my early days leading the Saxonia Dancers in 2009, I notice that my actions were based in survivalist thinking, especially when I invited my school friends to participate in the dance group over the years. Group membership naturally shifts. Instead of lamenting loss, I responded by passing on my traditions not to children, but to my peers and to my community of Aylmer, Ontario. Certainly, passing "down" cultural knowledge and practices remains important and, since 2009, there have been several years when I have facilitated children's "folk groups" with dancing and language learning. While I value the chance to introduce my Transylvanian Saxon culture to those around me in a horizontal way, I realize

that what I learn and what I share all began with the stories my grandmother passed down to me and the knowledge I was inspired to seek after she passed away. What has become even more relevant, to me and among the participants in this project, is the outwards or horizontal transmission of our traditions. The stark lines of "insider" and "outsider," first blurred by immigration, then by inter-cultural dynamics, are further softened through the changing directions of the transmission of Saxon traditions in Canada.

As a teenager, when I expanded my interpretation of who belongs to the dance group to include anyone who is interested rather than anyone who is Saxon, I was able to share a meaningful personal experience with those who are closest to me. Now in my thirties and following my learning in this field, I recognize the dynamic nature of folklore and tradition; it does not die–it is constantly being reinvented and reimagined while group members are constantly engaging with their concepts of tradition in different contexts and in different ways than those who came before them. Whether later-generation Transylvanian Saxons in Canada are passing cultural practices *down* to children, *across* to peers and community members, or *back* to older generations in a model that values the knowledge of the old and the young, what is important is that the traditions are continuing to be shared and practiced in ways that transform past experiences to suit contemporary realities. As Glassie suggests, "If tradition is a people's creation out of their own past, its character is not stasis but continuity" (2003, 177). Maybe I always felt that it did not make sense to view our Transylvanian Saxon traditions in Canada as dying because I was (and continue to be) part of a group that performs these storytelling, costume, and dance practices. After completing this thesis, I can see that our small, aging community of Saxons in Canada care deeply about our culture. Perhaps we do not do things in the same ways that our parents or grandparents did when they lived in Transylvania or when they

first arrived in Canada, but we continue adapting our traditions and shifting the ways in which we learn and teach these traditions. I am proud to be part of a community that does so, and I better understand the pride that my late grandmother had in sharing her heritage with my parents, my aunts and uncles, my cousins and me.

Aligning innovative cultural practices with inherited nostalgia, rooting everyday expression in frameworks of "authenticity" based on the past, and expanding group membership are all necessary components of the transmission of Transylvanian Saxon folklore in this immigrant community in the present as the place and time of the "homeland" fall further back in history. Therefore, for later-generation Transylvanian Saxons in Canada, the maintenance of our traditions relies on shifting modes of transmission vertically, horizontally, and diagonally, including, but not limited to, simplified identity narratives, creative and resourceful attire, and recorded and collaborative interpretation of folk dances. As we learn the cultural practices from our parents and grandparents, and as we negotiate, perform, and share them in our own ways, we expand the definition of who belongs to the community and our understanding of what Saxon traditions can become outside of Transylvania. In doing so, instead of hoping to preserve our culture in a historical sense, the Saxon community in Canada empowers its members to live our culture and to enact our traditions in the present and into the future.

Glossary

Aussigroßa: A Saxon dance taught in Germany in spring 2023 ahead of the Heimattag in Dinkelsbühl, Germany. The Saxonia Dancers now include it in their performances.

Bespritzen: An Easter-time activity where participants (historically male) visit Saxon families and recite a poem asking if any young women of marriageable age are present. The young women come out and are sprayed with perfume. They present the visitors with a dyed, hardboiled egg. Often, all participants enjoy a glass of schnapps liqueur together.

Festzelt: The casual party tent at Heimattag in Dinkelsbühl Germany, typically featuring lesser-known German rock bands instead of the traditional brass bands that are present at more formal Heimattag activities.

Fluko-lager: From "Flucht" meaning "Flight" and referring to an evacuation from one's homeland and "Lager" meaning camp; the Fluko-lager in Austria were refugee camps where Saxons from Northern Transylvania lived immediately following their evacuation from their home villages in 1944.

Halb Sox: "Halb" meaning "Half" and "Sox" from "Soxsen," the dialect spelling of "Saxon" (from Transylvanian Saxon or "Siebenbürger Sachsen" in High German). The phrase is used in reference to someone with one Saxon parent and one non-Saxon parent.

Hammerschmid: a dance performed by the Saxonia Dancers, taught to the group by a visiting Romanian dance group.

Haube: Directly translated to "Hood;" a velvet head covering or bonnet with intricate floral embroidery and pearl beading, historically made by the bride's mother or mother-in-law and presented to the bride on her wedding day.

Heimat: "Home" or "Homeland," is the direct translation, but Heimat is a larger conceptual reference point for Saxons in Canada referring to Transylvania, whether or not they were, in fact, born there.

Heimattag: "Homeland Day," a two- or three-day festival celebration, varying in activities depending on the host country. In Canada and the United States, the event is significantly smaller with only about 250-300 attendees compared to Germany's approximately 10 000 attendees. There is usually a Lutheran church service, a meal, cultural performances by choirs and dance groups, and speeches by local dignitaries.

Hetlinger Bandriter: A Saxon dance performed by groups in Europe. The Saxonia Dancers learned this routine by referring to a video recording from Munich, Germany.

Jugendlager: “Youth Camp” or “Youth Exchange;” initiated in 1971, the Jugendlager is an opportunity for later-generation Transylvanian Saxons to travel to one of the five Federation countries (Austria, Canada, Germany, Romania, or the United States) to meet other young Saxons and learn about how their cultural practices are continued in different contexts.

Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Kanada: “The Alliance of Transylvanian Saxons in Canada;” the umbrella organization for all Transylvanian Saxons in Canada. Abbreviated to Landsmannschaft.

Schwaben: From “Donauschwaben,” or “Danube Swabian,” a German-speaking ethnic population in a region that is now part of present-day Hungary. I use the German title “Schwaben” in my project as this–not the English translation–is the vocabulary used by participants.

Siebenschritt: “Seven steps,” A seven-part dance performed in Transylvania as a community dance and practiced by Transylvanian Saxon dance groups in Canada.

Siebenbürgen: The German name for “Transylvania” used by Transylvanian Saxons. Transylvania is also translated by some German speakers to “Transylvanien;” however this is not commonly used by the Saxons from Transylvania.

Siebenbürgische Zeitung: The “Transylvanian Saxon Newspaper” is a German-language publication specifically for and about Saxons. Most articles feature news of Saxons in Germany and Romania, but there are occasional articles about Saxons in Austria, Canada, and the United States.

Speck: A type of pork bacon that is lightly smoked but not cooked; it is usually heavily salted and air-cured. It is a common snack accompanying beer at Saxon home gatherings.

Sträipchi: The name, in the Transylvanian Saxon dialect, for the Northern Transylvanian Saxon men’s embroidered velvet tie. This tie consists of two velvet blades (the lower and thicker part of a tie), and can vary in size based on village and sub-region within Transylvania.

Sudetendeutsch: Like “Schwaben,” a German-speaking ethnic population in a region that is now part of present-day Czechia.

Tracht: A national, ethnic or folk “costume.” While this German term can apply to any folk costume, in this project, I use the term “Tracht” to refer specifically to the Transylvanian Saxons’ costume; from “Festtracht,” meaning “Festival” or “High Holiday” costume. Plural Trachten.

Trachtenball: An event hosted in Canada and the United States when attendees are invited to wear the Transylvanian Saxon folk costume or “Tracht.” Some attendees choose to wear other German costumes (also known as “Tracht” by those who wear them, although not by the Transylvanian Saxons).

Trachten-Polizei: People who monitor and speak out about apparent costume inaccuracies, but are particularly belligerent about pointing out supposed errors; they are not necessarily part of Transylvanian Saxon institutions (though they could be).

Verband der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Deutschland: The Alliance of Transylvanian Saxons in Germany, the umbrella organization for all Transylvanian Saxons in Germany. Abbreviated to Verband.

Wappen: “Crest,” refers to the Translvanian Saxon crest. The left half of the crest is coloured in blue and the right half is red. There are two rows of three yellow castle towers and one centred tower at the bottom of the crest for a total of seven castles representing “Siebenbürgen.” The Wappen is sometimes featured in black-and-white on Saxon clothing or accessories.

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Appendix A: Trachtenball am 2. März 2024 Transylvania Club

Speech Written by John Werner
Bundesvorsitzender der Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Kanada

Presented by Rebecca Horeth
First Vice President of the Alliance of Transylvanian Saxons in Canada
at the annual Transylvania Club Trachtenball, March 2, 2024 in Kitchener, Ontario

Herr Präsident Reinhard Schmidt, Liebe Mitglieder und Freunde:

Im Namen der Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen begrüße ich Sie alle aufs herzlichste, und freue mich auf die grosse Teilnahme der Mitglieder am diesjärighen Trachtenball.

Trachtenball is a very special event in the cultural program of the Transylvania Club. Trachtenball along with our annual Heimattag are the two events where we celebrate our Saxon Culture and Heritage, where we proudly wear and show off our Siebenbürger Sachsen Tracht, watch our youth groups dance, listen to songs performed by our choir and dance to the music of our own Hofbräu Band. This is where our rich Heritage of our past is shown off and passed on to our future. I am pleased to see so many members wearing their Siebenbürger Sachsen Tracht and the ongoing solid support of our membership. We are all very happy to see the involvement of our Kindergruppe as it is these children that will grow up to be the leaders in the future. Please continue to support the many Untergruppen of the Transylvania Club to help us honour our past, sustain the present and promote the future.

As part of the Siebenbürger Youth Exhange Program between Germany, Austria, Romania, the USA, and Canada, this year Canada will host a group made up of thirty (30) participants ranging from 16 to 20 years of age. The youth will arrive in Toronto on Friday July 5th and spend two nights at St. Jerome's University in Waterloo before going to Aylmer for four days. They will return to participate at the Heimattag being held here at the Transylvania Club on July 12th, 13th, and 14th. After the Heimattag the group will go to Niagara Falls, Wonderland and spend some time at Lake Huron before returning home on Friday July 19th. When staying in Kitchener and Aylmer, we will billet our guests with our Saxon families so they can enjoy our hospitality and get to know us. If you are able to billet two or more of our guests, please contact Erika Schmidt, Ryan Hesch, Rebecca Horeth, or myself. Further information will be announced in the Nachrichtenblatt.

As already mentioned, this year our annual North American Heimattag will take place on July 12th, 13th, and 14th here at the Transylvania Club. I invite all our members and friends to

make plans to attend the Heimattag. Wir laden Mitglieder und Freude ein, am Heimattag teilzunehmen.

Der heutige Abend ist auch ein besonder Abend im Leben des Transylvania Klub wo die neue Miss Transylvania 2024 gekrönt wurde. Die Landsmannschaft der Siebenbürger Sachsen in Kanada gratuliert Laik Sweeney Miss Transylvania 2024 aufs herzlichtste und wünscht ihr viel Spaß une eine gute zusammen Arbeit mit der Jugend.

On behalf of the Landsmannschaft, I would like to congratulate Laik Sweeney, Miss Transylvania 2024 and present her with a financial gift and a book written by Professor Waldemar Scholtes entitled "Transylvanian Saxons in Canada."

Congratulations Laik and we wish you all the best as Miss Transylvania 2024.

Thank you,

John Werner
Bundesvorsitzender

Appendix B: List of Participants

Interviewees

Derek Gotzmeister
John Horeth Jr.
Karen Horeth
Amanda Mooser
Bengt Nyman
Daniel Pfingstgraef
Julie Pfingstgraef
Kate Pfingstgraef
Reilly Ragot
Justin Schatz
Dan Schmidt
Justin Toth
Dave (Family name withdrawn by participant)

Additional Community Participants

Delaney Carvalho
Julie Gotzmeister
John Horeth Sr.
Rosemary Horeth
Chelsea Mott
Ben Robertson
Adam Schatz
Jessie Triska
Barb Weryk