Rethinking Interethnic Marriage in the Soviet Union

Dmitry Gorenburg[1]

Abstract: An expert on minorities and nationalism in the Soviet Union and Russia examines the impact of interethnic marriage on ethnic identity. The extensive literature on intermarriage produced by Soviet scholars as well as the work of Western scholars on this subject is analyzed in terms of the findings, methodologies, and conceptions of ethnic identity that formed the framework for such studies. These are compared with other possible approaches to underlying questions about the sources and nature of ethnic identity and the problem of how ethnic identity should be conceptualized.

The determination of a person's ethnic identity is a complex process. Objective components that limit a person's choice of ethnic identity include physical traits such as skin color and behaviors such as language, clothing, and social networks. The subjective aspect of ethnic identity is composed primarily of images or stereotypes of ethnic groups combined with a person's sense of belonging to a particular group (Isajiw, 1990, p. 36). For most people, the choice of ethnic identity is straightforward—both parents belong to a single ethnic group, and they grow up believing that they are born a part of this group. This is why most people consider ethnicity to be an ascriptive characteristic, like sex or age. Things can get more complicated, for instance, when an ethnic group is a minority in a society dominated by a group whose members cannot be distinguished on the basis of culture or physical appearance or when a person's parents belong to two different ethnic groups. In this article, I examine the impact

of interethnic marriage on ethnic identity, focusing on the state of research on intermarriage in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation.

The literature on interethnic marriage in the Soviet Union is quite extensive. However, both Soviet/Russian and Western scholars writing on the topic tend to believe that a person can have no more than one ethnic identity. This viewpoint renders the connection between intermarriage and ethnic identity as unproblematic and thereby uninteresting. Children of intermarriage simply are assigned to one ethnic group or another. When these scholars do address the impact of intermarriage on ethnic identity, it is only to determine which of a particular pair of ethnic identities the children of intermarried parents more frequently choose. On the other hand, studies of interethnic marriage in other parts of the world show that:

> First, single measures are always inadequate to capture the complexities of racial and ethnic identification. Single forced responses cannot be the basis of identifying an increasing number of persons of mixed-race background, as it cannot for mixed ethnic origins. Second, children of inter-ethnic and/or inter-racial marriages may have an ambiguous relationship to their identities.… Third, the race and ethnic identities derived from single questions and forced categorical responses are not likely to be constant over time (Goldscheider, 2002, p. 85).

Given these findings, I seek to reconceptualize how interethnic marriage in the Soviet Union and its successor states is studied by showing that multiple identity options, open-ended questions, and measures that seek to distinguish the intensity of particular identities would yield a picture of ethnic identity among members of interethnic marriages and their children that is far closer to how these people actually perceive their ethnic identities than the traditional view that ascribes one and only one identity to each individual.

RUSSIAN AND SOVIET WRITING ON INTERMARRIAGE: PATTERNS AND EXPLANATIONS

Soviet theoretical writings on intermarriage and assimilation were based on the Communist Party's ideological requirement that scholars promote the drawing together and eventual merger of Soviet ethnic groups. Statements to this effect are found in just about every Soviet publication on interethnic marriage (Gantskaya and Terent'yeva, 1977). Soviet scholars argued that Soviet socialism promoted internationalization by eliminating ethnic discrimination. This internationalization was in large part responsible for the rapid increase in interethnic marriages after the 1917 revolution, and especially after World War II (Ponomarev, 1983).

After this ritual bow to Communist ideology, Soviet scholars examined the extent of the increase in interethnic marriage in the Soviet Union. They frequently noted that the percentage of families consisting of members of

Table 1. Percentage of Families that are Ethnically Mixed[a]

	Total population		Urban		Rural	
	1959	1979	1959	1979	1959	1979
Latvia	15.8	24.2	21.3	27.1	9.2	18.0
Ukraine	15.0	21.9	26.3	29.9	5.8	9.3
Kazakhstan	14.4	21.5	17.5	23.9	11.9	18.2
Moldova	13.5	21.0	26.9	36.0	9.4	11.3
Belarus	11.0	20.1	23.7	29.5	5.6	9.2
Estonia	10.0	15.8	14.2	18.6	5.1	9.0
Kyrgyzstan	12.3	15.5	18.1	23.1	5.5	5.9
Tajikistan	9.4	13.0	16.7	15.5	3.7	4.8
Turkmenistan	8.5	12.3	14.9	19.9	2.5	3.3
Russia	8.3	12.0	10.8	13.2	5.6	9.3
Lithuania	5.9	11.3	10.4	15.2	3.0	5.6
Uzbekistan	8.2	10.5	14.7	17.3	4.7	4.7
Georgia	9.0	10.4	16.4	15.5	3.7	4.8
Azerbaijan	7.1	7.6	11.8	12.1	2.0	1.7
Armenia	3.2	4.0	5.0	4.9	1.4	2.2

[a]Source: Arutyunyan and Bromley (1986, p. 153).

more than one ethnic group had risen from 10.2 percent in 1959 to 14.9 percent in 1979. Intermarriage rates were significantly higher in the western union republics and all autonomous republics of the Russian Federation outside the Caucasus (see Table 1.) Intermarriage rates rose particularly quickly in republics with significant migration, such as Latvia and Kazakhstan, and also in Ukraine and Belarus, Slavic republics where there were few barriers to intermarriage between the titular ethnic group and Russians. Both intermarriage rates and rates of increase in intermarriage over time were significantly lower in Central Asia and especially in the Caucasus (Arutyunyan and Bromley, 1986, pp. 153–154).

In analyzing these data, Soviet scholars tried to control for settlement patterns by comparing intermarriage rates with expected rates given the ethnic composition of particular districts. The data tended to show that actual rates were significantly lower than expected rates throughout the Soviet Union, except for Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-Belarusian intermarriage (Gantskaya and Debets, 1966; Susokolov, 1987, pp. 65–66). Intermarriage rates between Slavic migrants and members of indigenous groups were particularly low in traditionally Muslim regions. Nevertheless,

a disproportionate number of Soviet articles on intermarriage focused on areas in Central Asia and the North Caucasus, perhaps because of scholars' valiant efforts to show that even the most traditional Soviet ethnic groups were modernizing and adapting to Soviet society.[2] For example, Kazakh-Russian marriages in rural Kazakhstan were approximately one-fifth to one-tenth as likely as one would expect on the basis of the two ethnic groups' shares of the population in particular districts. At the same time, Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-German marriages in these districts matched or exceeded their expected values. Despite these findings, the author emphasized the gradual increase in Kazakh-Russian marriages in some districts, arguing that this was due to the development of a common Soviet identity through the spread of Soviet culture and the Russian language (Kalyshev, 1984).

Soviet scholars focused on four main explanatory factors for trends in intermarriage. Urbanization and variation in ethnic settlement patterns were considered the two most important factors. For the Soviet Union as a whole, rates of interethnic marriage were almost three times higher in urban than in rural areas in 1959 and remained about twice as high in 1979 (see Table 1). Similarly large disparities were found in all of the union republics except Kazakhstan and Russia, the former because of high rates of intermarriage among migrants who had settled there during the Virgin Lands campaign and the latter because of relatively high rural intermarriage rates between Russians on the one hand and Ukrainians and the titular nationalities of the autonomous republics on the other hand.[3] The higher rates of intermarriage in urban areas, according to Soviet scholars, are to some extent the result of greater opportunity for interethnic contacts due to a more diverse ethnic structure and dispersed settlement pattern. But even more important is that people who live in urban areas are more likely to have adopted modern Soviet culture and the Russian language (Arutyunyan and Bromley, 1986, p. 155). Still, while rates of intermarriage were uniformly higher in cities than in rural areas throughout the Soviet period and the percentage of the total population living in cities increased from 48 percent in 1959 to 62 percent in 1979, increasing urbanization alone does not explain the rise in intermarriage rates; throughout the postwar period these rates increased faster in rural than in urban areas.

Variation in ethnic settlement patterns was the second most important factor in determining the extent of interethnic marriage in the Soviet Union. One study, using bivariate regression analysis on urban Moldovan data, showed that settlement patterns explained over fifty percent of the variation in intermarriage likelihood (Susokolov, 1979, pp. 84–91). Gantskaya

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[2]For a sample of such articles, see *Sovetskaya etnografiya*, particularly Smirnova (1967), Vasil'yeva (1968), Yevstigneyev (1971), Sergeyeva and Smirnova (1971), Kozenko and Monogarova (1971), Ibragimov (1978), Kalyshev (1984), and Tolstova (1985).

[3]For data on intermarriage rates in Russia's autonomous republics, see Gantskaya and Terent'yeva (1977), Tomilov (1978), Krivonogov (1980), Rogachev (1986), Busygin, Zorin, and Stolyarova (1991), and Lallukka (1990).

and Terent'yeva (1977, p. 468) argued that interethnic marriages occurred most frequently in ethnic contact zones, which included ethnic border areas, areas where a minority group lives surrounded by another ethnic group, and areas with high levels of migration, such as large cities, new cities built around large industrial projects, and virgin lands. Once again, settlement patterns were primarily used to explain variation in the extent of intermarriage, not rates of change in levels of intermarriage.

Soviet scholars' explanations for the increase in intermarriage in the post-war period centered on the spread of Soviet culture and the decline of religion. For example, Ponomarev attributed the increase in interethnic marriages in Ukraine to "the fundamental socio-economic, political, and socio-cultural transformations of Soviet society, [brought about by] enormous efforts of party and soviet organs in patriotic and internationalist education" (Ponomarev, 1983, p. 82). The spread of Soviet culture, combined with the increase in the average educational level of the population, was seen as responsible for breaking down traditional restrictions on intermarriage. At the same time, the decline in religious belief was thought to promote interethnic marriage, since most religions prohibited marriage to members of another faith (Gantskaya and Terent'yeva, 1977, p. 468). The low levels of intermarriage between locals and Russians in Central Asia and the Northern Caucasus were attributed to the persistence of Islamic beliefs in rural areas.

In general, Soviet scholars attempted to show that the end of ethnic discrimination and the promotion of a Soviet culture and identity under Communist Party rule had started the process of interethnic rapprochement (*sblizheniye*), with the rise of interethnic marriage as one of its most visible manifestations. At the same time, data from specific regions showed that intermarriage outside of the Russian Federation was increasing primarily among culturally and religiously similar Slavic migrant groups that often acted as one ethnic community even before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Only among the non-Muslim ethnic groups of the Russian Federation were there high rates of intermarriage with Russians and other Slavs within the indigenous group's homeland.

RUSSIAN AND SOVIET WRITING ON INTERMARRIAGE: CONSEQUENCES

In discussing the consequences of interethnic marriage, Soviet scholars focused on the impact of such marriages on attitudes, language use, and ethnic identity. Interethnic marriage was portrayed as a key factor in promoting modern values in the Soviet Union. Intermarried families were shown to be more likely to live separately from parents, to have more egalitarian relations between spouses, and to be more involved in public activities than monoethnic ones. Interethnic families were portrayed as more progressive because they were less subject to the hold of traditional values (Terent'yeva, 1979, p. 236). Some publications described multiethnic

families, particularly in rural Central Asia, as setting an example for the entire village in terms of proper behavior, attitudes toward Communism, and even fashion (see, e.g., Vinnikov, 1969, p. 65).

Soviet writers frequently focused on the relatively strong tendency of multiethnic families to use the Russian language at home. For example, in Kishinev, 80 percent of Moldovan women and 90 percent of Moldovan men married to non-Moldovans used the Russian language at home, as compared to 13 percent of Moldovans in monoethnic marriages. Similarly, 60 percent of Russian-Georgian families in Georgia used only the Russian language at home. Russian was the main spoken language even in multiethnic families in which neither spouse was Russian (Arutyunyan and Bromley, 1986, p. 166; Susokolov, 1987, p. 80). Rates of Russian language use were even higher for mixed families in the autonomous republics of the Russian Federation (Busygin and Stolyarova, 1988).

Given the importance attached to ethnic rapprochement in Soviet ideology, the role of intermarriage in promoting changes in ethnic identity was particularly emphasized by Soviet researchers. Soviet scholars argued that since adults very rarely change their ethnic identity, natural assimilation could occur only through the arrival of new generations with unstable ethnic identity. Mixed marriages were seen to have a particularly strong impact on assimilation processes, since children born to such marriages had a dual ethnic identity from the start (Kozlov, 1974). While theoreticians like Kozlov focused on the weak or dual nature of ethnic identity among children resulting from interethnic marriage, empirical work focused on the choice of nationality by these children. These choices were documented in forms filled out by youths when receiving their first passports at the age of 16. Since these forms also recorded the ethnic identities of the youths' parents, they could easily be used to calculate the percentage of children born to all members of a particular pairing of ethnic groups who chose one or the other nationality. Scholars looking at this type of passport data did not spend much time discussing the nature of their subjects' identity. Instead, they focused on reporting the data on identity choice, perhaps including some explanation for the prevalence of one nationality over the other.

The findings of this research on identity choice were reported in numerous articles in various Soviet journals, with each article focusing on one region and, usually, a fairly narrow time period. Furthermore, data were available only for capital cities, with little indication of how the situation might differ in rural areas. This research showed that in all ethnic republics, when a member of the titular nationality of that republic married a member of a non-titular ethnic group other than Russian, children of such families chose the titular nationality by a wide margin (see, e.g., Arutyunyan and Bromley, 1986; Susokolov, 1987; Sergeyeva and Smirnova, 1971; Terent'yeva, 1969). Similarly, children of Russian–non-titular unions overwhelmingly chose Russian as their passport nationality (Sergeyeva and Smirnova, 1971; Terent'yeva, 1974; Zhalsarayev, 1974). One exception to this pattern occurred among offspring of marriages between Russians and

members of indigenous Siberian ethnic groups. Indigenous-Russian children in regions as varied as Kemerovo, Kamchatka, and Chukotka took the indigenous parent's nationality almost without exception (Krivonogov, 1987; Kuznetsov and Missonova, 1990). This pattern prevailed (and continues to prevail) largely because members of small northern and Siberian indigenous groups qualified for various privileges in the Soviet Union (and in Russia), including free education in boarding schools, university admission outside the regular competition, free medicine, and lower taxes (Sokolova, 1961).

The most variation in identification occurred among children of titular-Russian couples. Tatar-Russian children in Tatarstan and Buryat-Russian children in Ulan-Ude divided evenly between Russian and titular identities when choosing their passports (Busygin and Stolyarova, 1988; Zhalsarayev, 1974). Elsewhere in Siberia and the Volga region, most titular-Russian children chose to be listed as Russian. In the Northern Caucasus and in most union republics, on the other hand, between 60 and 80 percent of such children chose the titular nationality (Krivonogov, 1980; Shatinova, 1974; Gantskaya and Terent'yeva, 1977; Sergeyeva and Smirnova, 1971). Children were most likely to choose the titular nationality in Central Asia, with 82 percent doing so in Dushanbe and 94 percent in Ashkhabad. These rates were significantly higher than thoses in other republics primarily because of the Central Asian tradition of giving children the father's nationality in an environment where almost all titular-Russian intermarriages took place between titular men and Russian women. Belarus was the only republic where children of titular-Russian marriage were more likely to choose the Russian nationality, with such a choice being made 60 percent of the time by children in Minsk (Terent'yeva, 1969; Gantskaya and Terent'yeva, 1977; Kozenko and Monogarova, 1971).

As I noted, the data presented above are limited both geographically and chronologically. The information was collected primarily in the capital cities of various republics in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The 1979 census included a five percent sample that asked questions about nationality choice among children in ethnically mixed families. [4] The data showed that titular nationality was preferred by children of mixed parentage in the Baltic and Transcaucasus republics. The split was about even in Uzbekistan and Belarus and favored the Russian nationality in Moldova, Ukraine, and three Central Asian republics (Table 2). [5] At the same time, children in the Caucasus and Central Asian republics strongly preferred to choose the father's nationality, regardless of the father's ethnicity, while paternal nationality was largely irrelevant for the Baltic republics. Because of an insufficient number of intermarriages for statistically significant results,

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[4] These data suffer from some of the same limitations as the passport data, since the Soviet censuses did not allow respondents to list more than one nationality.

[5] Kyrgyzstan was not included because of the low number of Kyrgyz-Russian marriages within the republic.

Table 2. Percent of Children Choosing Titular and Paternal Nationality in Titular-Russian Families, 1979 Census (within Union Republic)[a]

Republic	Percent titular	Percent paternal	Republic	Percent titular	Percent paternal
Lithuania	73.6	56.9	Belarus	49.3	60.9
Estonia	64.1	49.7	Kazakhstan	45.1	69.5
Armenia	62.0	83.0	Ukraine	44.7	63.4
Azerbaijan	60.7	83.9	Turkmenistan	43.0	81.0
Georgia	59.3	86.2	Moldova	42.3	65.4
Latvia	54.1	53.5	Tajikistan	40.2	85.9
Uzbekistan	52.1	74.4	Kyrgyzstan	N/A	N/A

[a]Source: Volkov (1989, p. 13).

Table 3. Percent of Children Choosing Titular and Paternal Nationality in Titular-Russian Families, 1979 Census (within Volga Region)[a]

Nationality	Percent titular	Percent paternal	Nationality	Percent titular	Percent paternal
Bashkir	25.1	59.7	Mordvin	8.9	52.9
Tatar	22.0	60.6	Udmurt	7.9	51.3
Mari	11.8	49.1	Chuvash	5.6	49.6

[a]Source: Volkov (1989, p. 14).

data for the autonomous republic nationalities were available only for the six titular nationalities of the Volga region, although for a relatively large geographic zone that included the six autonomous republics and an additional eight provinces, all located in the greater Volga region. These data showed that at least among these ethnic groups, titular-Russian children overwhelmingly chose Russian nationality over titular (see Table 3).

The census data also showed that 70–90 percent of children born in Russian–non-titular families chose the Russian nationality, with rates depending on the specific other nationality. About the same percentage of children born in titular–non-titular families preferred the titular nationality, with the exception of Central Asia, where the average was closer to 60 percent (Volkov, 1989, pp. 15–18). The 1979 census data thus largely confirmed the patterns found by Soviet ethnographers studying passport

registries, although it showed a higher tendency for children in Central Asia and the Volga region to register themselves as Russian.

Soviet and Russian scholars who describe patterns in ethnic identification among the children of interethnic couples limit their explanations of these patterns to noting that the preference for titular and Russian identity results from the importance of the dominant ethnic environment in the region where these families live. According to these explanations, titular identity dominates over non-titular since a large percentage of the population of a particular republic is of the titular nationality. Russian identity dominates over non-Russian because Russians are the dominant ethnic group of the entire Soviet Union, as well as being numerically dominant in the urban areas of many ethnic republics. Soviet scholars do not explain the regional variation in the most interesting set of cases, those of titular-Russian intermarriages. As I will show below, Western analysts do not do much better with these cases.

WESTERN ANALYSES

Western studies of intermarriage in the Soviet Union also do not question the reality that underlies census categories, even though they sometimes describe themselves as opposed to essentialist views of ethnic identity. As a rule, their main goal is to determine whether Soviet policy toward ethnic minorities fostered assimilation or promoted ethnic identity. Those that focus on the assimilative aspects of Soviet policy do not question what assimilation means in practice and deal largely with estimating population losses due to assimilation (see, for example, Anderson, 1978; Anderson and Silver, 1983). In this section I examine the two best and most comprehensive works on intermarriage in the Soviet Union, both of which reject the simplistic and ideologically driven notion that Soviet policies designed to promote Russification were destroying ethnic minority groups through assimilation. At the same time, since survey research by Western scholars was impossible in the Soviet period, they are forced to rely on Soviet data that pigeonholed people as belonging to just one nationality. These data limitations inevitably prevent them from considering the possibility of multiple ethnic identities emerging in the Soviet Union.

Kaiser (1994) discusses intermarriage as part of a larger study whose main goal is to prove that the Soviet government failed in its efforts to assimilate ethnic minorities or to create a common identity for all of the country's inhabitants. He argues that "Russification did not pose the threat to indigenes that non-Russian nationalists and several Western analysts have claimed" (Kaiser, 1994, p. 321). His discussion is based on comprehensive data on the extent of intermarriage in the union republics of the Soviet Union. He argues his point by emphasizing the limited extent to which intermarriage occurred between union republic titular nationalities and Slavic migrants to these republics, with a particular focus on Central Asia and the Baltic and Transcaucasus republics. He argues that rapprochement of ethnic groups was not very evident because the rate of increase of

intermarriage slowed in the 1970s and 1980s. He does not attempt to trace changes over time in the difference between actual rates of intermarriage and expected likelihood of intermarriage given the ethnic breakdown of a region's population, which would show that much of the decline in the acceleration of intermarriage had to do with a decrease in Slavic migration to the non-Slavic union republics. His analysis is also skewed by the lack of data on ethnic groups below the union republic level, since scattered evidence from Russian and Soviet sources shows that these are the ethnic groups among whom assimilation and intermarriage are most likely to occur.

A more serious problem with Kaiser's analysis has to do with his conception of ethnic identity. At the beginning of the study, Kaiser briefly critiques the primordialist conception of the ethnic group as a single organism with a common ancestry and clearly defined culture that have survived more or less unchanged for centuries. Subsequently, however, he treats ethnic groups as self-contained units with clearly defined boundaries. At times he spreads this conception even to ethnic subgroups, as in his discussion of "intranational interethnic marriage" among Khakass subgroups. This idea of ethnicity prevents Kaiser from contemplating the possibility that the frequency of intermarriage between neighboring ethnic groups (such as Lithuanians and Poles near Vilnius and Tajiks and Uzbeks in Dushanbe) may have something to do with the fluidity of ethnic identities in that location, rather than some process of national consolidation (Kaiser, 1994, pp. 313–314). In general, Kaiser's focus on proving that Soviet efforts to assimilate ethnic minorities had backfired and his acceptance of ethnic groups as natural units with clear boundaries limits his ability to go beyond inverting the usual Soviet analysis that focused on the rapid increase in intermarriage.

Karklins's (1986) study examines ethnic relations in the Soviet Union from below, focusing on the impact of various policies and trends on the people who make up the minority groups. In doing so, she is very aware of the contradictory impact of Soviet nationality policies on ethnic identity. She notes that while modernization and the extensive use of Russian in daily life fit with the Soviet goal of the rapprochement and eventual merger of nations, the practice of registering nationality in passports reinforced ethnic identity, and the introduction of policies aimed at increasing cultural homogenization tended to lead to protests and a decrease in ethnic harmony (Karklins, 1986, pp. 216 and 225). Karklins (1986, p. 30) is quite sensitive to differences between passport nationality and personal ethnic identification, as when she notes that Ukrainians and Belorussians living in non-Slavic union republics tend to be seen by their social partners as having assimilated into Russians, "no matter what their official or personal ethnic identification." Karklins thus paints a picture of ethnic identity in the Soviet Union that is very different from the one person–one ethnicity view that characterizes Soviet and Russian writing.

Given her understanding of the mutability of ethnic identity in the Soviet Union, it is all the more puzzling that Karklins does not address the

impact of this factor in her discussion of interethnic marriage. Her chapter on intermarriage treats declared ethnic identities as given and unproblematic and uses them to calculate trends in rates of intermarriage and patterns in which groups are more likely to intermarry with each other. In doing so, she reproduces the Soviet findings that intermarriage occurs more frequently among culturally similar groups, that it is more common in urban areas, and that it is particularly prevalent among the smaller ethnic groups that lack their own ethnic region (Karklins, 1986, p. 155–163).[6] In a separate section on ethnic identity choice by children of intermarried couples, Karklins similarly limits herself to summarizing Soviet research on patterns of choice of nationality when receiving a passport. She argues that the choice of nationality depends in large part on the ethnic composition of the environment and its degree of differentiation from the Russians, as well as the social and economic advantage to be gained from the choice, but does not explain the difference in Russian-indigenous identity choice other than by cultural difference (Karklins, 1986, pp. 37–40). While she does discuss the options in the Soviet system for changing one's passport nationality and notes that identity choice for children from ethnically mixed families can be complicated, Karklins (1986, pp. 33–35) does not go beyond the Soviet ethnic categories and refrains from discussing the meaning of ethnic identity for ethnically mixed children or the possibility of their having multiple or layered ethnic identities.

A CONSTRUCTIVIST REASSESSMENT OF INTERMARRIAGE AND NATIONALITY CHOICE

Both Soviet/Russian and Western authors writing about the effects of intermarriage on subsequent generations' choice of ethnic identity assume that each person may have only one ethnic identity.[7] This may have been a reasonable assumption when interethnic marriage was rare. But in the context of a Soviet and post-Soviet society, where intermarriage had become ubiquitous in urban areas and fairly common in rural areas, this assumption no longer makes sense. Many of those who enter into an interethnic marriage already have mixed parentage. To speak of a Kazakh-Russian marriage when one of the Kazakh partner's parents is Russian obscures at least as much as it reveals. And since data on intermarriage show that in the Soviet Union, children of mixed parentage were more likely to intermarry than others, defining every individual as a member of a single ethnic group introduces significant distortions into the analysis.

Soviet and post-Soviet analysts often note that children of mixed marriages are themselves more likely to enter into interethnic marriages.

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[6]The rest of Karklins's chapter on intermarriage examines surveys of attitudes toward intermarriage, which is beyond the scope of this article.

[7]Or, in Soviet terminology, to be a representative of only a single nationality.

But this awareness does not affect their analysis of the interaction between ethnic identity and intermarriage or the way in which they write about identity choice among children of intermarried couples. At most, Soviet and post-Soviet scholars briefly mention that in a certain location children of mixed parentage are more likely to intermarry than children whose parents were of the same nationality (Susokolov and Novitskaya, 1981; Zhalsarayev, 1974). Occasionally, scholars do examine the extent of ethnic mixing across generations, usually among indigenous Siberian groups (Kuznetsov and Missonova, 1990). But these studies do not attempt to problematize the connection between individuals and their ethnic identity. Instead, they tend to focus on proving that most members of that particular ethnic group are only partially genetically linked to "their" ancestors.

Since 1997, Russian identity documents have no longer listed an individual's ethnic identity.[8] Scholars who have for decades depended on passport forms to determine individuals' ethnic identities no longer have recourse to this method. Instead, they must depend on individual self-identification, either in social science surveys or in the census. While this is not the place for a review of the former Soviet republics' diverging practices for measuring ethnicity in the 1999–2002 round of censuses, the 2002 Russian census was characterized by relatively few changes in this regard. The nationality question was asked in the same way as in previous censuses, only one response was accepted, and responses were coded according to a list of "acceptable" nationalities. The most significant change simply involved an increase in the number of such acceptable groups, as well as the listing of some subgroups within the major ethnic groups (Sokolovsky, 2002). Survey research, on the other hand, has become much more widespread in all of the former Soviet republics and, together with anthropological methods such as participant observation, is now the most common way of examining ethnic identity in the region. I believe that this change of methodology requires scholars to rethink the meaning of ethnic identity in the context of intermarriage.

This rethinking must begin with the premise that individuals can only have a single ethnic identity. Children born of interethnic marriages are likely to identify with the ethnic groups of both parents. In areas where interethnic marriage is common, a large part of the population can thus have multiple ethnic identities. If this is the case, researchers need to be sure that they capture this phenomenon when interviewing respondents and designing survey instruments. Questions about ethnic identity should be open-ended or, if that is not feasible for technical reasons, should allow respondents to check multiple boxes from a pre-selected list. The results must then be coded to reflect the diversity of the answers, rather than simply allocating those with multiple identities back to the single categories according to some formula, as was done with the response to the racial

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[8] Although some ethnic republics added a passport insert that continued to list nationality on a voluntary basis.

identity question in past US censuses (Perlmann and Waters, 2002).[9] If implemented, these methodological changes will force changes in the way scholars write about ethnic identity, since data will reflect the existence of numerous individuals with a range of hyphenated identities.

Unfortunately, given its stated preference for comparability with older data, it seems unlikely that the Russian State Statistics Service (Goskomstat) will implement such changes for the 2010 census. This means that the population will continue to be identified by a single ethnic label in official statistics. However, the elimination of the fifth point in virtually all official paperwork means that the impact of this official ethnic label on individuals will be much smaller than in the Soviet period. In fact, the focus on comparability by the census administration may be useful for determining the extent to which shifts in the ethnic makeup of the population are the result of identity shifts, versus changes in demographic factors such as migration patterns and birth and death rates. It may be that studies of ethnic identity in the region will bifurcate, with demographic studies that focus on trends in the ethnic makeup of a country's population continuing to use traditional census and survey data that treat nationality as a single, unproblematic identity category, while scholarship focused on understanding the formation and development of ethnic identity shifts to a more nuanced view of ethnicity. While, ideally, demographic studies of ethnicity in regions with high rates of intermarriage would also take the latter view, this is probably more than we can expect at this stage.

A second aspect of the rethinking concerns the diffusion of cultural traits among the population. Traditional scholars often argue that the children of interethnic marriage have weaker ties to their ethnic group's culture and poorer knowledge of the national language than children of monoethnic marriages. This perspective is again tied to the idea that a person can have only one ethnic identity. Once this identity is chosen, the person represents only that group—and appears, on average, to have less knowledge of that ethnic group's culture and language. But if we think of such children as members of more than one ethnic group, then their lower levels of cultural and linguistic knowledge appear differently. Rather than being regarded as a Kazakh who has partially assimilated to Russian culture and barely speaks Kazakh, a child of mixed Russian-Kazakh parentage can be considered a Kazakh/Russian who has adopted some elements from both groups' cultures and languages. Or they might identify with the cultures of both parents, but sequentially rather than simultaneously. A child might see herself as primarily Russian while living in the city during the school year and primarily Chuvash (for example) when she goes to live with her Chuvash grandparents in the village for the summer.

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[9]The 2000 U.S. census published data on those who selected multiple races, but counted those who selected white and another race as members of the other race for the purposes of civil rights monitoring. See OMB Bulletin No. 00-02,"Guidance on Aggregation and Allocation of Data on Race for Use in Civil Rights Monitoring and Enforcement," of March 9, 2000 (www.whitehouse.gov/omb/bulletins/b00-02.html).

For many children whose parents are of different ethnicities, ethnic identity choice may become situational, with a distinction made between a person's cultural identity and how he present himself to the rest of the world. Such a person might identify primarily with Russian culture, but register as a member of an indigenous group for the purpose of getting financial benefits, or when applying to university. Such situations have become quite common among members of northern and Siberian ethnic groups that have been given various benefits by the Russian Federation's law on indigenous peoples (Krivonogov, 1998, p. 56).

The preferred ethnic identities of the children of mixed marriages are also likely to be affected by political changes tied to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many people of mixed Russian and Ukrainian descent living in Ukraine who had previously identified as Russian because it was the most prestigious nationality appear to have switched to Ukrainian now that Ukraine is an independent country where it is considered to be more advantageous to be Ukrainian than Russian. In addition to instrumental factors, psychological factors that push individuals to bring their ethnic identity into correspondence with their citizenship, in those cases where such a correspondence is possible, may also encourage identity shift from Russian to Ukrainian.[10] Of course, similarities in religion and language, as well as lack of residential segregation, would make such shifts in identity more likely for Russian-Ukrainians living in Kiev than for Russian-Estonians living in Tallinn or Russian-Kazakhs living in Almaty. At the same time, recent research has shown that members of relatively dissimilar ethnic groups, such as Russians and Latvians, may intermarry in increasing numbers as long as they are provided with greater opportunities to come into contact with each other (Kronenfeld, 2005, p. 266). But the larger point that remains is that by conceptualizing ethnic identities as potentially composite or multiple and accepting that an individual's ethnic identity may vary depending on the context, researchers can get away from simple notions of intermarriage as a product (and cause) of the assimilation of minority groups by majority groups and concentrate instead on explaining the specific factors that shape identity choices in particular contexts.

So far, I have focused on processes by which children of mixed parentage choose one or more identities from a menu of existing options. But there are situations where widespread intermarriage leads to the formation of new ethnic identities along the boundary between existing identities. The formation of an intermediate ethnic identity is particularly likely to occur when there exists a high rate of intermarriage between members of two culturally and linguistically similar ethnic groups, such as Russians and Ukrainians or Tatars and Bashkirs. People with one Russian and one Ukrainian parent may consider themselves not only as both Russian and Ukrainian, but also as forming their own "mixed" group. In rural eastern Ukraine, such people call themselves *pereverteny* (literally "change-

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[10]I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this point to my attention.

lings") and have argued that they were neither solely Russian nor solely Ukrainian. Such people may have their own particular dialect, such as *surzhyk* in Ukraine (Chizhikova, 1968).[11] This "mixed" group identity is unlikely to be stable, because people with such an identity are unlikely to exhibit a preference to marry other members of the "mixed" group. It is theoretically possible, however, that if a change in the political or social environment forces endogamy upon the group, it may gradually, over a period of generations, develop a stable identity as an ethnic group separate from both of its "parent" ethnic groups.

The reconceptualization of the study of interethnic marriage along the lines proposed above means that most of the research on intermarriage that has been conducted in Russia and its neighbors must be reconsidered. We have to question even the basic empirical results of this work, such as the finding that rates of intermarriage in the Soviet Union increased over time. Is it possible that this increase was at least in part the result of a pattern where children of mixed parentage identified with one ethnic group but chose partners from the other ethnic group? Such a situation would go into the statistical record as intermarriage between members of two completely separate groups. Similarly, the interaction of intermarriage and native language must be questioned, since if a child of mixed parentage is not assigned to a particular ethnic group it becomes less clear how to determine what that person's native language should be. And the use of passport data to study the choice of ethnic identity by children of mixed parentage must be treated with suspicion, since government policy did not allow for the registration of multiple identities and restricted the choice to one of the nationalities of the person's parents.[12]

The situation is not hopeless, however. Some of the Soviet-era findings may be tested with surveys that use open-ended questions. David Laitin and his collaborators in urban areas in Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Tatarstan, and Bashkortostan carried out one such survey in 1993–1994. This survey asked respondents to describe their ethnic identity in three separate ways. The first question simply asked respondents to state their nationality. The next question asked them to state their nationality according to their passport. A third question, asked much later in the survey, read as follows: "Regardless of the entry in your passport, how would you answer if you had to specify to which nationality you belong?" The choices ranged along a five-point scale, from only titular through equally titular and Russian to only Russian.[13]

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[11] Although *surzhyk* is used by many Ukrainians and Russians in Ukraine who are not the children of interethnic marriage.

[12] There are numerous records of children whose parents were of different non-Russian nationalities seeking to register themselves as Russian and being turned down. See Tomilov (1972) and Zhalsarayev (1974).

[13] This question was not asked in Estonia or Bashkortostan; for more information on the survey, see Laitin (1998).

By cross-tabulating the answers to the first two questions, one can determine the extent to which a person's self-identity matches the identity inscribed in his or her passport.[14] The findings showed a relatively close correlation between the two indicators. The proportion of the respondents that answered the two questions differently ranges from 1.5 percent in Tatarstan to 9.5 percent in Ukraine. Most of the people whose answers on the two questions did not match, however, are people who are neither titular nor Russian according to their passports but identified as Russian on the nationality question. The proportion of respondents who listed themselves as titular on one question and Russian on the other is significant only in Ukraine, where 5.5 percent of those surveyed answered in this manner. Among the other five regions, this proportion ranges from a low of 0.1 percent in Kazakhstan to a high of 1.0 percent in Estonia and Latvia. In Ukraine, 58 percent of respondents whose answers to these two questions did not match had parents of different nationalities, as compared to only 27 percent of the entire sample. In Latvia, these proportions were 48 percent and 22 percent, respectively. At the same time, about one-third of respondents in Ukraine whose ethnic identity did not match their passport ethnicity had not only parents of the same ethnicity but also all four grandparents of the same ethnicity. Since even in Ukraine we are dealing with relatively small numbers, we must use caution in interpreting these findings. Nevertheless, it seems clear that while intermarriage is the most likely cause of differences between ethnic identity and passport ethnicity, other factors are at work as well.

Although the finding that passport ethnicity and ethnic identity match for the vast majority of the population restores some confidence in the use of passport data, the survey questions analyzed so far allow only a single choice of identity and thus are not much better than the passport data. The answers to the third of Laitin's questions provide an important corrective by showing the extent to which people in the former Soviet Union identified with more than one ethnic group at the same time. In Latvia, for example, 21 percent of the respondents considered themselves as being to some extent both Latvian and Russian. Of these people, 85 percent had declared themselves as Russian on the either/or ethnic identity question. In fact, 38 percent of respondents who considered themselves Russian on the either/or question considered themselves at least partially Latvian on the scaled question, whereas only 5 percent of those who considered themselves Latvian on the either/or question said they were at least partially Russian on the scaled question. Perhaps not surprisingly, ethnic identities were most distinct in Kazakhstan, where only 11.5 percent of respondents placed themselves in one of the intermediate categories. Unlike in Latvia, titulars and Russians were equally likely to consider themselves to be both titular and Russian. Ukraine had the largest proportion

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[14]This is not a perfect measure, since at least some respondents probably stated their passport nationality in answer to the first question, regardless of their ethnic self-identification.

of people with multi-ethnic identities, with 29.2 percent equally distributed among Russians and Ukrainians on the either/or question. Finally, 15.5 percent of respondents in Tatarstan considered themselves both Tatar and Russian. Of these respondents, about 70 percent listed themselves as Tatar on the either/or question.

While a complete analysis of the causes of this type of multiple ethnic identity is outside the scope of this paper, preliminary analysis shows that children of interethnic marriages were far more likely to identify with more than one ethnic group than children of monoethnic marriages. Respondents were also more likely to identify with more than one ethnic group if they were married to a person with a different ethnic identity, although this effect was not as strong as that of mixed parentage. Furthermore, an analysis of the Tatarstan data found that children of interethnic marriages tend to develop a sense of ethnic identity earlier than children of monoethnic marriages. Their ethnic identity is based primarily on where they live and the fact that Tatarstan is considered a Tatar state, whereas children of monoethnic marriages point to their parents' ethnicity, language, and religion as the most important factors for determining their ethnic identity (Titova, 1999, pp. 36–38).

The Laitin survey shows the extent to which ethnic identity is not an either/or choice for many respondents, particularly in areas where interethnic marriage is common. At the same time, since the main purpose of the survey was to study language issues and not ethnic identity, the questions asked by the study authors do not exhaust the types of multiple ethnic identities that may be found in the real world. In addition to the dual ethnic identities discussed above, respondents may have hierarchical ethnic identities, where they see themselves as belonging to both a large ethnic group and a subgroup within that group. Or, as I discussed above, they may believe themselves to belong to one group in some contexts, but another in different contexts. In the latter situation, their survey response may indicate that they belong to just one ethnic group, but which group they put down may depend on the context of the interview.[15]

The open-scale questions used by Laitin are best used if a researcher believes that respondents are arrayed along a spectrum between two possible identities. Such an approach is less useful in situations where respondents could have any of a number of alternative ethnic identities available to them. In such circumstances, after asking respondents for their nationality, a researcher might follow up with "Do you sometimes think of yourself as belonging to some other nationality?" Those who respond affirmatively could be asked both the name of the alternative nationality and in what circumstances they identify in this way. Respondents could also be asked "Do people sometimes regard or label you as belonging to

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[15]Factors such as the language in which the interview is conducted, the ethnic identity of the interviewer, or the dominant ethnicity in the location where the interview is conducted all may affect the response.

another nationality?" This could be followed up with questions about the type of person and/or circumstance in which this type of identification is most likely to occur. This line of questioning would allow the scholar to better understand the situations in which alternative or secondary ethnic identities are likely to present themselves and the extent to which these characterizations are generated within the individual or his/her community versus being imposed from the outside. Thus, this type of questioning might identify the circumstances in which a Yagnob from the Pamir Mountains working in a market in St. Petersburg would identify as a Pamiri (to distinguish himself from other Tajiks) while being identified by his customers as simply a Tajik, or perhaps even just a Central Asian.[16]

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I have shown that both Soviet/Russian and Western scholarship on interethnic marriage in Russia and the Soviet Union has largely failed to address the relationship between interethnic marriage and ethnic identity, treating the latter largely as an ascribed and unified aspect of an individual's identity. While scholars who worked in this field during the Soviet period were limited by both limitations in the availability of data and the dominance of primordialist understandings of ethnicity, current research needs to use the greater openness of the region to survey research and the ready availability of more detailed census data to come to terms with the impact of constructivist understandings of ethnic identity on interethnic marriage. Individuals, and particularly children who grew up in multiethnic families, may perceive themselves to have multiple or hierarchical ethnic identities. Similarly, marriages that appear to include partners of two different nationalities according to passport entries may be more complicated if one or both of the partners are themselves the children of interethnic marriages. Survey research done in several former Soviet states over the last 15 years shows that these scenarios are not simply hypothetical. Many of the respondents to these surveys had complex ethnic identities that reflected their mixed ethnic heritage, their marriage to a person of a different ethnic background, or even the fact that they were of a different ethnic background than the majority in the country in which they lived. Thus, both the theory and the evidence show that interethnic marriage has an impact on ethnic identity that goes far beyond allowing children born in such families to choose one of two possible ethnic identities for themselves.

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[16]I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting the questions described in this paragraph.

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