

Are There Only Two Ethnic Groups in Moscow: “Slavs” and “Southerners”? Research on Vernacular Categorization Using Elicitation Methods

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Abstract

This report presents the results of a study of the construction of ethnicity in Moscow in terms of categories used in everyday categorizations, as well as indicators pointing that people encountered belong to certain ethnic categories. The study was conducted at the intersection of classical and innovative methods, including video elicitation, walk-along, etc. During the study, 41 interviews were conducted. Informants differed based on a variety of characteristics, including migration history/length of residence in Moscow, ethnic category of identification, gender, age, etc. The study showed that categorization in everyday Moscow occurs on the basis of two classifications: the official classification by nationality, the roots of which go back to the Soviet ethnic policy, and the vernacular classification, which includes two or three categories: “Slav” and “Southerner”, while the latter category includes “Caucasus” and “Asian”. The classification by nationalities is, on the one hand, too detailed for “users”, and such specificity has no practical sense, on the other hand, the categories within it lack indicators for it to be used in everyday life. The binary/ternary classification, in turn, while being based on meaningful categories, is too informal and does not have its own imaginaries and institutions to displace the classification by nationalities. As a result, each classificatory act is essentially a compromise between these two classifications and uses them both. In addition to these findings, the report provides answers to the question of what thought processes are used in categorization in everyday life, what ethnic imaginaries exist within the Moscow construction of ethnicity, how non-Russian-speaking foreigners who have recently arrived in Russia categorize other people, etc. The report is addressed to everyone interested in the topic of ethnicity and is intended as a basis for an interdisciplinary dialogue on ethnicity between representatives of social and cognitive sciences.

Keywords

ethnicity, categorizations, cognitive turn, Moscow, nationalities.

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Introduction

The notion that representatives of different nationalities¹ live in Russia, and that Moscow, being the capital, is the city where one can encounter representatives of all the nationalities of Russia, is an element of the established set of ideas about the ethnic diversity of Russia, as well as a “natural” reality, an absolute fact for the majority of its residents and various experts. However, are nationalities also a framework for spontaneous classifications in urban context, or in other words, do people living in or visiting Moscow “see” Russians, Belarusians, Armenians and Uzbeks when walking down the street, or do they classify people in a different, perhaps simpler or more pragmatic, way? Is or is not the entire diversity of nationalities reduced in the course of spontaneous categorization to two, three or four categories? And is this categorization more important than classification by “official” nationalities, playing a larger role in organization of social life?

Consideration of the problem from such an angle became possible within the framework of the so-called *cognitive turn* in constructivist studies of ethnicity, proclaimed by Rogers Brubaker in his work “Ethnicity as Cognition” (Brubaker et al., 2004). According to this approach, ethnicity is a common denominator in continuous acts of categorization carried out by people and institutions, or, metaphorically speaking, it is a categorization “hardened” in institutions and practices. Within such an approach to the question, on the one hand, more attention is paid to formal, institutionalized classifications carried out by “large” collective actors (e.g., the state), on the other hand, the pragmatics of studying spontaneous classificatory acts carried out by ordinary people in everyday life and the underlying categories of this process become clear². These pragmatics imply, among other things, that it is exactly in everyday life that the absolute majority of acts of categorization are carried out, which, considered together, make up the collective ideas about the inherited differences between people, which, according to current attempts to define ethnicity³, are the thing that constitutes “the core” of ethnic phenomena.

These theoretical considerations, however, require a revision and expansion of the “toolbox” of methods used by the social sciences to study ethnicity. To the extent that a significant part of them is tied to conversation (various types of interviews, focus group discussions, surveys), the researcher gains access to discursive reality, that is, established ways of talking about certain things. Ways of

¹ The term “nationalities” is commonly used in Russian to refer to various ethnic categories recognized at official/administrative level in Russia.

² Among key works on the topic of state-level categorizations are (Appadurai, 1993; Kertzer, Arel (eds.), 2001; Simon et al. (eds.), 2015). An additional push to such ideas was undoubtedly given in Anderson’s “Imagined Communities” (1983). As for vernacular dimension of ethnic categorizations, “pre-Brubaker” sociological and anthropological research rarely delves into such issues explicitly, quite often the papers on it are not among the most quoted (e.g. Sanjek, 1971). As far as we know, there exists only one recent paper on the topic: (Roth, 2015).

³ Specifically, the tradition of “minimalistic” definitions of ethnicity that have been, in recent years, primarily associated with K. Chandra (2006, 2012).

talking about the world and the factual view of the world, however, are definitely not in a one-to-one relationship, and as a result, other methods are required that bring the researcher closer to the actual views the research participants have of the world. The most obvious move in the development of such methods is to turn to the cognitive sciences for various kinds of insights—and above all, methodological ones. This, among other things, is the *cognitive turn* mentioned by Brubaker.

It is important, however, that we are talking about insights and not about direct borrowing. Indeed, the cognitive sciences (primarily psychology and anthropology) have studied ethnicity in a broad sense at length and in detail. However, research on ethnicity in these sciences is carried out primarily via the use of quantitative methods based on predetermined categories that are usually used for ethnic categorizations in the relevant context. These categories are not necessarily official and administrative, but to the same extent they are rarely reflected upon and placed in the focus of research. As a result, the most important questions of what categories people actually use to think about ethnic diversity, how the categories used differ from person to person and from situation to situation, and what these differences are caused by, often fall outside the focus of cognitive research. Inattention to context, on the one hand, and to the vernacular aspect of ethnicity, on the other, is often emphasized by cognitive scientists themselves as a “blind spot” of their science (Cohen, Lefebvre, 2017), but this problem is either not solved or is solved by compromise.

Meanwhile, it is precisely in the modern social sciences devoted to ethnicity, within which ethnicity is conceptualized as a fundamentally context-dependent phenomenon, tools for studying context and the inscription of ethnic classifications into them have been developed (see, for example, Wimmer, 2013; Varshaver, 2024), and, in general, research programs in these sciences—simply based on the logic of these sciences—are attentive to context. All this indicates the great benefit that interdisciplinary studies of ethnicity at the intersection of social and cognitive sciences could bring. Interdisciplinarity, however, is a complex task, the path to solving which is full of dangers. The inherent logics of disciplines, the institutions that ensure their “preservation”, and at the same time the real incompetence of researchers entering interdisciplinary territory in terms of approaches and methods of “partner” sciences—all of this often “breaks” interdisciplinary attempts and projects, makes them “unserious” from the point of view of critics rooted in their discipline. As a result, this kind of research is rare and cautious, while it is precisely where breakthroughs in ethnicity research should be expected.

In this study, the goal of which is to understand what ethnic categories are actually used for categorization in everyday life in Moscow and what indicators they are based upon, a set of methods is used, mainly within the scope of social sciences, but “inspired” by cognitive sciences. The main methods are video elicitation and “walk-along”-s or simply walks with the informant, which allow us

to access the informants' direct experience of perception and classification of other people in everyday life in the city. These techniques, however, are "built into" the classical sociological method—the semi-structured interview. This method inevitably creates a distance between the informant's direct perception of reality, on the one hand, and the researcher's, on the other; however, for social scientists, based on their methodological toolkit, this is, in all likelihood, the maximum possible dive into people's direct classificatory experience. At the same time, this study is devoted specifically to the Moscow context and answers the question of specifically Moscow-based categories, which may differ slightly, significantly, or fundamentally in other contexts.

The general relevance of this study (to put it in formal terms) is explained by the fact that people live in vernacular, not ascribed, categories, and it is precisely these categories that are reflected upon in the course of social life, and that shape their perceptions of the world, thereby determining their behavior. And the *cognitive turn*, which pays attention to spontaneous categorizations in everyday life, is an important, novel theoretical agenda, the methods for the implementation of which are yet to be developed. As a result, this study is innovative both methodologically and thematically. Moreover, although there are studies devoted to ethnicity in everyday life in Moscow, where the categorical aspect is also mentioned (see, for example, Sahadeo, 2019), studies that would be directly devoted to the ethnic categories, through which long-time and recent residents of Moscow see those around them, have not been conducted to date.

This report presents the results of a study conducted in Moscow in February–March 2024. The study participants were people (N=41) who identified themselves as belonging to various ethnic categories, different in terms of the time spent in Moscow (from life-long residents to those who've spent just about several months there), and varying in other significant characteristics. Some of the informants went on walks with the researchers⁴ (in reality, as it will be elaborated on in the corresponding section, the "walks" entailed joint stationary observation of passers-by); others participated in a video elicitation procedure⁵, the stimuli for which (a series of short videos) were filmed in different parts of Moscow. The informants were asked to comment on passers-by and people in the video according to the following questions: (a) "Which ethnic group can this person be classified as?" and (b) "Based on which features is it determinable?" Before or after the described procedures an additional standard semi-structured interview was conducted on the topic of ethnic

⁴ Variations of the "walk-along" or "go-along" interview method, relatively widespread within the framework of ethnicity and various other types of research, are elaborated on in the following papers: (Carpiano, 2009; Warren, 2017; Lorinc et al., 2022).

⁵ A relatively new method, existing at the intersection of visual and cognitive sociology and following in the footsteps of photo-elicitation methods. Video elicitation, focusing on other objects, was used in the following research: (Henry, Fetters, 2012; Keesman, 2022; Karahan, 2023). Photo elicitation was used to research ethnic phenomena in (Roth, 2015; Gold, 1991). As far as we know, video elicitation has never been used to study ethnicity.

diversity in Moscow. The interview opened with an “entry question”: “People belonging to which ethnic groups live in Moscow?”, as well as a biographical segment. The interviews were transcribed, the transcripts (as well as audio and video recordings) were analyzed by other (non-interviewing) team members, and short texts were prepared on the basis of this analysis, describing the informants’ categorizing “views”. These texts (documented via a specially prepared casebook, where socio-demographic and other information on each informant was also listed) then became the object of collective analysis. The report first explicates the research methodology in detail (the study is considered by the authors as methodologically innovative, which means that meticulousness is required in terms of describing the methodology), then the results are described, in particular, the differences between discursive and spontaneous classifications, the way some “transition” into others, the indicators people use to distinguish representatives of ethnic categories on the streets, the imaginaries (social “memes”) people use to think about individual categories and ethnicity in general, etc. Then general conclusions and considerations “for the future” are made.

How, why and who should read this report? The research on which it is based is exploratory, and the report on it is less structured than in the case of most official reports. It combines three large fragments—the methodology, the main substantive results and the “results in the margins”. Those who want to get acquainted with the results in a relatively short time are advised to first read the fragments of the results that concern the categories and indicators, and then move on to the rest of the fragments. For those who want to delve deeper into the research methodology—in order to conduct their own research, based on this one (which is only welcome) or to criticize it (which is also welcome)—a large corresponding section follows. Those who want to learn about the real structure of ethnicity in Moscow should read the Results section in its entirety, as should those interested in ethnicity in general—it contains various non-obvious ideas revealed in the Moscow material. We would be especially pleased if this report were read by cognitive scientists, in which case it could be used to initiate an interdisciplinary conversation. We also welcome any feedback, which can be sent to the addresses listed in the author information.

Methodology

Research design

The study was conducted based on a methodology that combined different empirical components within each actual interview. All empirical components that were used in the study can be divided into two types—“elicitation” segments, which used stimuli, and “unprompted” segments. “Elicitation” segments were divided into “video-elicitation”, which involved showing video stimuli previously filmed in different everyday contexts of Moscow, and “classificatory walks”, which involved the researcher and informant being together in an everyday context and discussing the people around them, i.e. working with “natural” stimuli from the surrounding reality. The unprompted segments involved a conversation, the main part of which was initiated with the following question: “People of which ethnicities are there—residing permanently or temporarily—in Moscow?”, and the supplement to this fragment of interaction was work with “cards”—small sheets of paper on which the interviewer recorded the categories mentioned during the interview, and asked to sort the “cards” into “piles” based on the “similarity and closeness” of the categories.

Within each actual interview, the described segments were combined in such a way that it always included one of the elicitation segments (video or walk), as well as the unprompted segment with the addition of working with cards. In addition, each interview included a biographical segment, as well as a direct question about the significance of ethnicity in the informant’s life (interview guides are provided in the Appendix). Moreover, the described segments were arranged in different order in the interviews—this was done in order to reduce the influence of each individual segment on the research results. As a result, in 17 interviews the “elicitation” segment was “walks”, and in 24 it was “video elicitation”. In terms of all the described combinations, 7 interviews were conducted according to the “walk—unprompted” order, 10—to “unprompted—walk”, 13—“video—unprompted”, and 11—“unprompted—video”. These interviews were also balanced in terms of the criteria that also served as the basis for selecting informants.

The selection of informants was carried out on the basis of quotas for gender, age, place of birth and ethnic category of self-identification (determined during screening). Quotas “crossed”, resulting in a specific “requirement” for the number of informants corresponding to certain characteristics. In addition, during the intermediate discussion of the interviews already conducted and the characteristics of the informants, additional “requirements” were determined (for example, to the extent that informants often mentioned migrants from Central Asian countries of various categories, two additional interviews were conducted with representatives of those categories, which, however, did not go beyond the initially determined quotas).

A total of 41 interviews were conducted, lasting 2,470 minutes. The interviews were

transcribed manually and in the MyMeet.ai app, the transcripts were then carefully read and the audio recordings were re-listened to⁶. As a result of this work, firstly, the ethnic categories that were encountered in the interviews were identified, secondly, the indicators—features by which people were categorized as representatives of certain categories—were derived, and thirdly—based on the entire interview—assumptions were made about why exactly these categories and these indicators appeared in the interviews. This analysis was carried out by the participants of the research group in relation to the interviews conducted by other participants of the group, as a result of which each case was “in the backlog” of at least two (and sometimes all three) researchers, thus achieving triangulation. During the analytical meetings, conclusions were formulated, discussed and clarified in detail, and thus this report presents the results that are consensus for all participants of the group.

Next, within the remainder of this methodological section, methodological detailing of the video elicitation, classifier walks, and card procedures will be presented, as well as sampling procedures, informant recruitment, field questions, and analysis strategy. Then, a transition will be made to the Results section.

Video elicitation

Preparation for the video elicitation began with the production of stimuli—a series of videos recorded with a smartphone camera. The research team, which included people with different ethnic and migration backgrounds, compiled a list of ethnically diverse places in Moscow, which allowed them to cover most of the city’s ethnic diversity (in both cases—to the extent that the researchers imagined it). To prepare the stimuli, the following places were identified: the “Sadovod” market, RUDN University, the “Atrium” shopping mall, and the various lines of the Moscow subway. The first two places, namely the market and the “international” university, are “responsible” for maximizing ethnic diversity in Moscow. The second two places, the shopping mall with one of the highest visitor traffic rates and the subway, the main means of transportation for most Moscow residents, were chosen to ensure the typicality of the locations.

The research team recorded a total of 75 videos, with their duration varying from 3 to 15 seconds. Of these, 19 videos were selected (duration from 3 to 12 seconds): 7 shot on the subway, 4 in the shopping center, at Sadovod, and at RUDN. The general logic of the selection was to: 1) include several people in one video, 2) represent the phenotypic diversity of people. At the same time, emphasis was placed on the videos from the subway, since this location, of all the others selected, is the most familiar and frequently visited by most interview participants. An example of

⁶ The interviews were carried out in Russian, in preparation of the current report all of them were translated into English with the intention of preserving the original tone, cadence and connotations of the conversation.

stimuli is presented in Appendix 1. It is worth noting that, in the end, informants were shown not all the videos, but only some of them (usually up to 12 of all those shot in a pre-established sequence), and the demonstration of stimuli stopped the moment the categories were reproduced, and the researcher noted that the categorization method used by the informant could already be “read” from the interview.

The interviewing procedure itself consisted of the researcher turning on the video from their laptop and starting the video recording of the meeting, as well as the screen recording. The screen recording was carried out in order to track which particular person was being discussed in the video by the interview participants, and the video of the interview situation itself, in turn, also helped to understand who exactly the informants were non-verbally pointing to when discussing ethnic categories and their attributes. It should be noted that the video-elicitation procedure itself was designed in such a way that it combined the advantages of both the photo-elicitation techniques, which are much more often used in research, and video-elicitation: from the very beginning, the researcher showed the video in full and asked the informant to pay attention to specific people in it (one after another, in the order in which they appear in the video). At the second stage, the video was rewound to the beginning, and the part of the video with the people of interest was shown to the informants on repeat. In the third stage, the video could be paused if necessary for the informant to look at it in more detail, and sometimes it was extended so that the informant could pay attention to details.

The general request addressed to the informant was that they should determine what “ethnic group” the people represented in the video belonged to, and what features pointed to this being so. In parallel, the researchers made free-form conclusions/comments regarding the way the informant’s classification process went, and asked clarifying questions. The latter could include a request to compare several people in the video, to find out how important this or that attribute was, as well as the context captured in the video, etc. It is worth emphasizing separately that the research team discussed the issue of how to formulate for informants what exactly the study was about—ethnic groups, ethnic categories, nationalities, etc. This issue is important due to the fact that these words are supposed to be “keys” to certain categorical “libraries”, and depending on what “key” is given to a person, they will carry out such categorization (or, at a minimum, the first will significantly influence the second). The most neutral keywords chosen for the interviews were “ethnicity/group”.

How was the elicitation actually carried out? Below is a detailed fragment from the relevant segment of one of the interviews:

[The informant, a school teacher, and the interviewer are in a physics classroom in a

Moscow school. The interviewer turns on a video.]

Interviewer: *Look, the girl in the video, the one wearing a hat. What do you think? What ethnic group might she belong to? And why do you think so?*

Informant: *To Moscow one. [Laughs]*

Interviewer: *Okay, but why Moscow?*

Informant: *No, I'm joking. Well, probably some Caucasian ethnic group⁷.*

Interviewer: *Yeah, why?*

Informant: *Dark hair. Or maybe something mixed. Maybe mom is Russian, dad is Caucasian. Or vice versa. Or Tatar. Okay. Armenian. That is, somewhere, you know, different like that.*

Interviewer: *In general, are Tatars and Armenians different in any way?*

Informant: *Of course. And in terms of appearance, and, well, basically, nose, eyes. That is, surely you won't confuse an Armenian that is in front of you with a Tatar.*

Interviewer: *But is she still an Armenian or a Tatar?*

Informant: *No, neither Armenian nor Tatar. I would say more of a Chechen.*

Interviewer: *What are the characteristics of the Chechens?*

Informant: *God knows. Like, you know... Something eastern. Azerbaijani. Somewhere over there.*

Interviewer: *Okay. There's a man in a blue jacket.*

Informant: *A man in a blue jacket. You know, you can't tell by his appearance. He could be Slavic. He could be Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian. And maybe, by the way, from Kazan.*

Interviewer: *Why Kazan?*

Informant: *Tatars can be red-haired and fair. Absolutely. And there are a lot of them in Moscow now, a lot. So I don't know. That is, you can't tell if he's a Slav or... I can't say.*

(Female, 62 years old, Moscow, Russian)⁸

The main and additional questions within the framework of the classificatory walk were formulated in a similar way, the methodological details of which are described below.

⁷ "Caucasian" in Russian context (and thus the rest of the current paper) refers specifically to the region of the Caucasus mountains, as opposed to the common usage of it to refer to the category of "white" in the English and international literature.

⁸ Here and below, informants are described using the following formula: gender, age, place of birth (country, if abroad, city, if Russia), self-identified category (based on the answer to the screening question).

Classificatory walk

Another “elicitation” segment of the interview is classificatory walks. This method was initially named by analogy with the walk-along interviews method, which looked procedurally similar to the method planned for development. The result, in reality, could hardly be called “walks”—rather, it was a joint stationary observation of passers-by in urban everyday life by the researcher and the informant. It is these conditions of categorization, however (it does not matter whether the informant examines passers-by while walking or sitting down somewhere—the second option simply turned out to be more convenient and practical), that are the closest to how it occurs in people in everyday life, and the advantage of the method in comparison with video elicitation is that such potentially important indicators as gestures, language or accent, as well as a more complete context in which the person being classified is immersed, are often impossible to use when categorizing people on prepared video stimuli.

It was decided to conduct interviews in crowded places, since in such cases the probability of being surrounded by representatives of phenotypically diverse people was higher. As a result, all interviews were conducted in food courts in shopping malls, where the interviewer and informant could sit at a table and categorize the people around them. On average, no fewer than 7 people were categorized during the interview; in some cases, the researcher asked the informant to walk around the floor of the shopping mall if the location of the sit-down portion of the interview was not too crowded. As for the selection of specific people for categorization, as already noted, the researchers were guided by the principle of achieving the maximum diversity of stimuli (to the extent that the interviewers determined themselves). Similar to the video elicitation procedure, informants were asked to determine what “ethnic group” or “category” a person nearby or passing by belonged to, as well as to list the indicators that helped to determine it. Particular attention was paid to the extent to which the context of the interview could be an indicator that would allow passers-by to be categorized in a certain way (for example, that the interview took place in a shopping mall), as well as other attributes that were barely discernible on video, such as language or accent. It is worth noting that any clarifying questions were asked only after the informant themselves named the attributes that were significant to them. Let us demonstrate how the questions were asked and the interview itself was organized when using “walk-along” method:

[The informant (a housewife) and the interviewer are in the food court of one of Moscow’s shopping centers. The interviewer is asking questions.]

Interviewer: *Okay, let me just write this down real quick so I have it. At this point we can move on to the walk. If you feel uncomfortable looking at someone, tell me.*

Informant: *Well, there are two Chinese people walking there...*

Interviewer: *Not Koreans? Why are you so sure about it?*

Informant: *I don't know. Visually, they are definitely Chinese.*

Interviewer: *We can definitely say that we are not Slavs.*

Informant: *Yes, because it's a different race.*

Interviewer: *And the one who sits and smiles at the phone...*

Informant: *Well, it's hard to see here, but there's a Kyrgyz.*

Interviewer: *Well, I wouldn't say that he is Kyrgyz.*

Informant: *We need to come up and ask: "Are you Kyrgyz?"*

Interviewer: *Is it that his hair is dark?*

Informant: *Well, the Kyrgyz are short, stocky, have narrow eyes, and, in fact, always have dark hair.*

Interviewer: *And fair skin?*

Informant: *No, not always, but it can be darker. By the way, Kazakhs don't usually sunbathe, because a fair-skinned Kazakh woman is considered really cool.*

Interviewer: *And the guy in black? With glasses?*

Informant: *I don't think he's a local resident of Russia. He's definitely from somewhere else. Not a Muscovite.*

Interviewer: *Well, sitting in a hat...*

Informant: *Probably to prevent it being stolen. Well, Muscovites don't sit around in a warm jacket and hat... Well, we can actually walk around some more.*

(Female, 38 years old, Kazakhstan, Slavic)

Non-stimulus interviews and card work

In addition to the video elicitation or walk, the informants were asked—without using visual stimuli—to answer the question about the “ethnicity/group” of people who permanently or temporarily reside in Moscow. This interview fragment was conceived as a control in relation to the main (“elicitation”) components, designed to answer the question about what categories are used for spontaneous categorization of people in everyday urban life. This listing was supplemented by work with cards. As part of the latter procedure, all the categories that the informant listed were first recorded by the interviewer on cards—pieces of paper. Then the informant was given the following

task: “Now let’s try to divide the residents of Moscow you named, who is similar to whom, who is closer to whom. Please say out loud how and why you divide this way and not otherwise.” This procedure was developed and included in the research design in order to determine the ratio of categories in people’s ideas. In particular, the researchers were interested in whether informants were able to carry out such clustering, what factors were significant when designating categories as similar or different, whether there were general terms that could be used to name the categories combined together, etc. The laid out cards were then photographed and subsequently served as a supplement to the main analysis. Below is a photograph of the results of working with the cards, as well as a corresponding fragment from the interview.

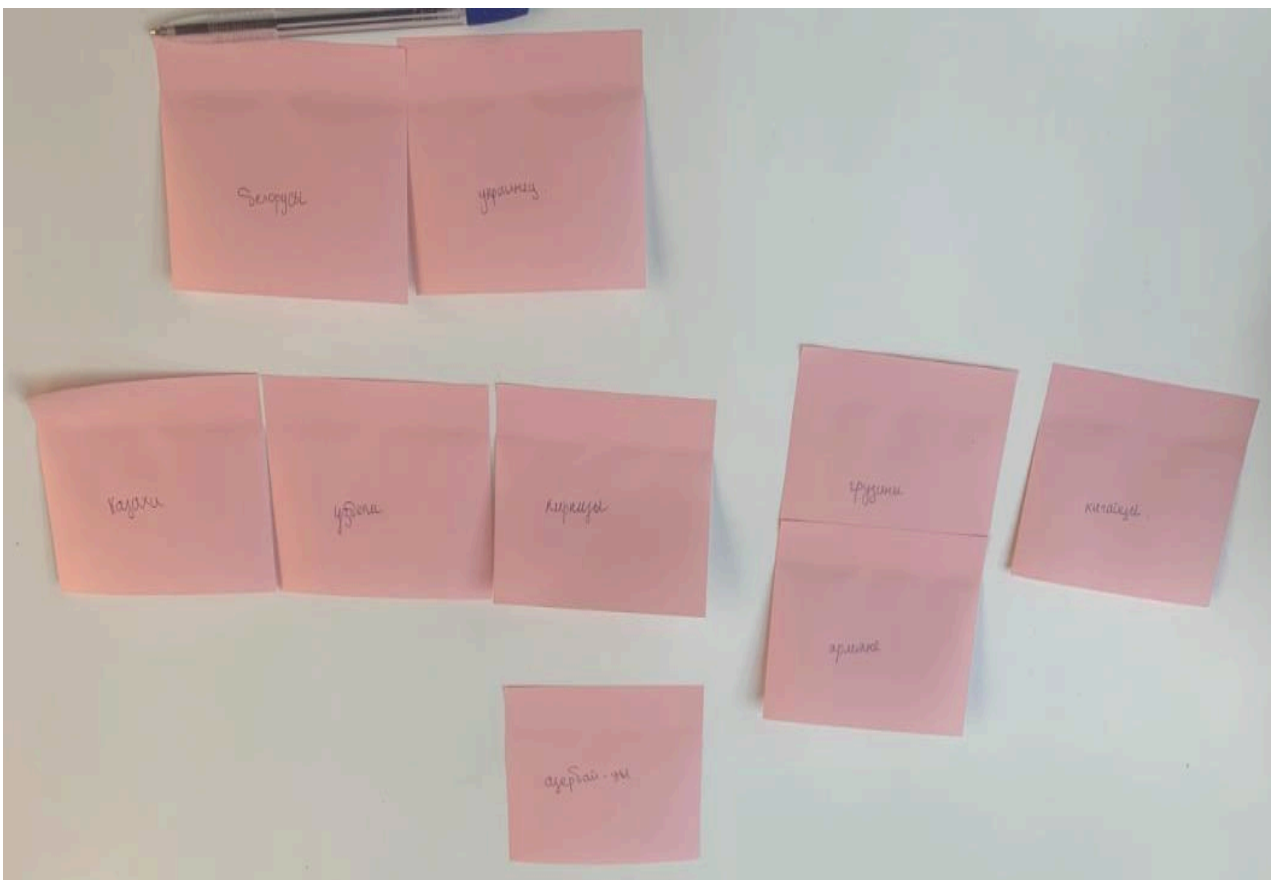


Figure 1—Cards with categories laid out by the informant

Interviewer: *[After the ethnic categories were written on the cards]. I have this task, perhaps a specific one: I wanted to lay these cards out in front of you and ask you to divide them: who is similar to whom and who is closer to whom. Maybe I can add some other categories, if necessary, if you remember someone else living in Moscow.*

Informant: *Kazakhs, let’s add them. There are no Kazakhs [in the cards]. And*

Azerbaijan.

Interviewer: *So, the Kazakhs have been added.*

Informant: *And Azerbaijan...*

Interviewer: *You can think out loud to...*

Informant: *Yes, well, let's say, Georgians and Armenians, they are somehow together, but taking into account, probably, that their faith is the same. Well, Kazakhs and Uzbeks are closer, and the Kyrgyz, they kind of fit into this group, but they don't really like each other. Belarusians, Ukrainians, Russians, that's understandable, we like them too. Well, Azerbaijanis are on their own, the Chinese are also on their own. To be honest, I just haven't seen Koreans. That is, when I start telling stories there, for example, my first teacher in Kazakhstan was named Kim Albina Fedorovna. She is Korean, that is, when we start remembering something, I say, oh, I had such a teacher, and you can immediately understand who is from Russia, who is from Kazakhstan. When you tell Kazakhs, that is, "Kim Albina Fedorovna", no one asks any questions or is surprised, but when I told Russians that my teacher is Kim Albina Fedorovna: "What kind of surname is that?" For any Kazakh, the surname Kim, Sen, Pak, Nom, Yan, Yu, these are absolutely normal, familiar, but here they are surprised. When I told my friends, they said this... she said, "What's surprising is that I have never seen anyone know anyone... well, Koreans." For anyone to study with anyone, she is my age, I have never had any Koreans in my circle.*

Interviewer: *Although my friends confused the Yakuts...*

Informant: *Well, I also get Yakuts and Buryats mixed up. I can also doubt about a person being Buryat or Kazakh, because they are also visually similar to each other, but Yakuts and Buryats for me are the same. Like we have one friend, a Kazakh, he says that this one looks like that one, I say that they are not similar at all, he says, "Come on, you Russians all look the same!" Probably, every nationality has another nationality—the same face.*

Interviewer: *By the way, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Russians are also...*

Informant: *Yes, absolutely. The speech and maybe the character... Someone is more cunning, Ukrainians are always more cunning, Belarusians wear their hearts on their sleeves. I just communicated with a Belarusian company for some time and it was very comfortable to work with. That is, in Kazakhstan, the customers were Belarusians and it was very good, no deception, no cunning. We talked, did it and everything was fine. That's why I have such an association.*

(Female, 38 years old, Kazakhstan, Slavic)

Sampling

The general population for the study was “permanent or temporary residents of Moscow”, with residence/regular stay in Moscow for at least two years as the minimum criterion. This cut-off point was established due to the fact that the theoretical focus of the study was on ideas about ethnic differences that are social in nature and are transmitted in the process of socialization in certain (including migrant) Moscow environments, but in any case, it takes time to perceive and habituate these ideas. However, in two cases, the actual period of residence was shorter.

The criteria used to form the sample included: sex (male-female), age group (18-25, 26-49, 50+) and level of education. However, the last criterion was no longer controlled at the latter part of data collection since, based on the preliminary analysis, it was not a determinant for the informants’ methods of categorizing people. Informants were also selected based on the category of identification (“Russians” and any other categories, which was determined by a special question during screening) and place of birth. The last criterion was split into three groups: those born in Moscow, those born in other regions and those born in other countries.

The study involved interviews with 21 women (10 of whom were born in Moscow, 5—in other regions of Russia, and 6—in another country) and 20 men (3 of whom were born in Moscow, 7—in other regions, and 10—in other countries). In terms of age distribution, 15 people were 18-25 years old, another 15 were 26-29 years old, and 11 were 50+. The majority of respondents, despite the age range from 18 to 73, were 20-46 years old, making up slightly more than a third of all respondents, with the average age of the respondents being 36 years old.

As for the place of birth, informants from other regions of Russia can be divided into people from the “national republics” of Russia—there are 4 such people (from cities such as Makhachkala, Ufa, Ukhta and Elista)—the division into “Russians” and “others” by the category of identification among them was 50-50. Foreigners can be roughly divided into residents of the countries “near” (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and other countries) and “far from” (Palestine, Algeria, Haiti, China) Russia, their representation in the final sample is 11 to 5 people respectively. Of these, only 3 people identified themselves with the category “Russian”. It should be noted that out of 13 Moscow residents, only one person identified herself as “Tatar”, and as a result was included in the quota of “non-Russians”, while the rest classified themselves as “Russians”.

In the course of such classification, the researchers encountered some difficulties typical for ethnicity studies. Thus, people who could not name one ethnic category with which they identified

themselves, and, for example, spoke about being “a mixture of Komi, Belarusian and Ukrainian” or “Ukrainian or Cossack”, were assigned to the quota of “non-Russians”. The same applied to a person who could not name their ethnic self-identification at all, indicating its absence. In turn, those who explicitly said so were assigned to “Russians”, as well as people whose identification category was “Russ”, “Slavic”, etc., since it was then clear from the context of the interview that these categories are synonymous with the category “Russian”.

It was the ethnic and migration characteristics that were primarily “crossed” with different sequences of interview components within one interview. With people from other countries, namely 16 people, 5 walks and 11 video elicitations were conducted, with 13 people from Moscow—5 walks and 8 video elicitations, with 12 people from the regions—7 walks and 5 video elicitations. In total, “Russians” participated in 11 video elicitations and 10 walks, and “non-Russians”/“others”—in 13 video elicitations and 7 walks. For details, see Table 1.

Table 1—Combinations of informant characteristics

	Moscow	Region of Russia	Abroad	18-25	25-49	50+	Male	Female
Moscow								
Region of Russia								
Abroad								
18-25	4	4	8					
25-49	4	5	5					
50+	5	3	3					
Male	3	7	10	7	9	2		
Female	10	5	6	9	6	9		
Russian	11	6	3	5	8	8	8	13
Non-Russian	1	6	13	11	6	3	12	8

Recruiting informants

In the first stage, when piloting the guide, the selection was carried out via snowballing, including through acquaintances of the interviewers. It was important to select people for interviews who were not directly acquainted with the researchers, so as not to create the problem of “excessive understanding” due to the acquaintance of the interviewer and the informant. However, this method gave significant sampling bias, and as a result, other methods of “entering the field” were used, tailored to the tasks of each specific stage of the study. For example, at the 20-interviews point, it became clear that the age of informants was mainly in the range from 22 to 29 years, so it was

important to find older people, and, in addition, to ensure greater diversity in terms of the category of informant identification. For this purpose, recruitment was carried out through communities on the popular Russian social network VK, as well as using a number of Telegram channels, which made it possible to make a corresponding mailing for the search. People with suitable socio-demographic characteristics were sent a message asking to participate in the study, where its topic and details of the interaction between interviewers and informants were indicated. The other difficulty lay in finding people from other countries, since the networks of the researchers recruiting informants mainly covered Muscovites or those who came to the capital from other regions of Russia. Informants fitting criteria were eventually found through a posting on a specialist recruitment service YouDo. Similarly to the scheme described above, people fitting the socio-demographic and other requirements were offered to participate in the study for a reward of 500–600 rubles (5–6 USD), resulting in 5 people being successfully recruited. Several more informants were found in public places (shopping centers, recreation areas in educational institutions): the researchers approached the candidates for an interview, described the idea of the study and, after receiving verbal consent, began the interview. Informants were paid 500 rubles (5 USD) for their participation, but in some cases they agreed to participate for free.

Data Analysis Procedures and Strategies

Following the interviews, a casebook (an excel spreadsheet) was filled in, containing both technical and substantive information about each informant and their responses. Video and audio recordings were uploaded to Google Drive. In-depth interviews, recorded via audio or video, were transcribed manually or using the MyMeet.ai app. The interviews were analyzed by other team members who did not conduct the interviews. This last step was taken for the purpose of triangulation: other team members could detect nuances and features that the researcher conducting the interviews might miss, thus contributing to a more complete and comprehensive analysis of the data.

The main aim of the analysis was to describe the informant's process of categorization of passers-by or people in videos. This description was based on a theoretical framework developed by one of the authors and presented in detail in other papers (Varshaver, 2024). Being a development of Brubaker's work, its defining characteristic is that the object of the description is collective ideas prevalent in a certain context, and in particular the construction of ethnicity, consisting of variously combined and juxtaposed ethnic categories, their various attributes and general ideas about the nature of ethnic phenomena. Among the attributes, indicators stand out—features by which representatives

of certain categories are recognized in everyday life. Other attributes, however, are almost any phenomena associated with ethnic categories—places, people, qualities, images, etc. Thus, the study aims to examine the construction of ethnicity in Moscow primarily in terms of categories and indicators, but also other attributes (see the respective section).

For visualization, a system of symbols was developed based on the aspects described, with the help of which the first interviews were analyzed in the form of a simple scheme. From the general rules, it is worth highlighting that the schemes were built from the top down, thus the categories were arranged in the order of their taxonomy, all equivalent categories were arranged in one row and designated with a sticker of the same color, while each type of attribute also had a specific symbol assigned to it. The memo, guided by which the analysis was carried out, as well as an example of such visualization are presented below (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2—Visualization memo

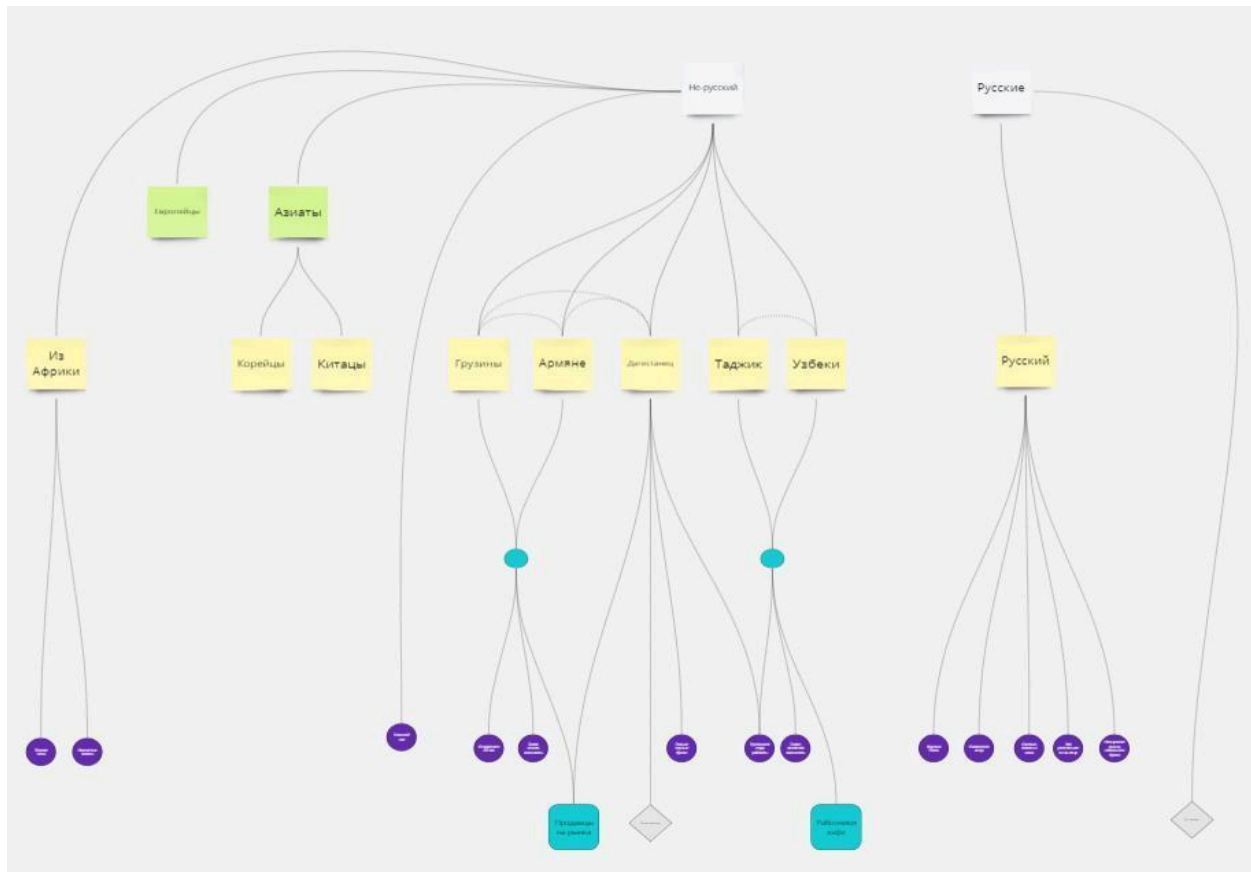


Figure 3—Scheme visualization example

However, it was then concluded that such a schematization was only marginally useful for describing the ways in which informants spontaneously classified, and the remaining interviews were analyzed in verbal form only, with the results of this analysis documented in the casebook. In it, the column “Categories” listed the ethnic categories that were named in response to the question about who, in terms of “ethnic groups/ethnicities”, permanently or temporarily resides in Moscow. The column “Organization of categories” documented the relationships between various categories. The column “Indicators” presented the main features that informants used to categorize and “recognize” the categories. The column “Analysis of informant’s thought process” included the most complete and heuristic interpretation of how, from the researchers’ point of view, the informant thought about ethnic categories, as well as hypotheses about why he thought this way. Then, in a separate column, a summary was made regarding the “leading classification scheme,” that is, which categories and categorizations were key for the informant when categorizing, and the reasons for making such a conclusion were also indicated there. In addition, free-form methodological comments were made about the course of the interview, the successful or unsuccessful phrasing of the questions used by the interviewer, the difficulties that the interview participants had faced, and other points that could

be relevant for the analysis.

The resulting texts, after being read by each member of the research team, then became the object of collective analysis, which took place in various formats, including: a more detailed discussion of each case that seemed most interesting, identifying marginal cases and discussing them, a collective attempt to structure the analysis based on the emerging patterns of the interviews. Then generalizations were formulated, which—after discussion—became a fragment of this report.

Methodological reflection: what does and does not the method show

Both video elicitation and walks are oriented toward empirical work with ethnic categories that are as close as possible to their “spontaneous” form and presented in such a form where they are used in the process of categorizing people in everyday life, as well as indicators, that is, those features by which classification occurs in such situations. Visual stimuli have an advantage over conventional in-depth interviews, which is creating, in artificial conditions, the opportunity for the informant to immerse themselves in a semblance of an everyday situation and build a narrative on their basis. Thus, video stimuli, and to an even greater extent walks, provide more direct access to everyday life. Since the surrounding reality is dynamic, dynamic stimuli, including, in addition to the image of a person, the way they hold themselves, their gestures, language or accent, help informants to fully immerse themselves in everyday situations they might encounter in Moscow more effectively than alternative interview methods. Moreover, the interviews employ a combination of research techniques described in the toolkit, some of which involve reading discursively named ethnic categories and the ways in which they are organized. Thus, the research methodology developed is clearly useful as a tool for studying spontaneous ethnic categorizations and indicators carried out “in situ”, outside of “lab conditions”.

This method, however, has a number of limitations, which will be outlined below. First, despite the attempt to come as close as possible to the process of natural categorization by informants in everyday life, the stimuli were still not a complete reflection of the informants’ everyday life in which they spontaneously categorize people around them. Another question that inevitably arises is related to the relevance of ethnic categories in the informants’ lives. As was indicated, the toolkit is aimed at understanding the process of ethnic categorization, but “ethnic schemes” in everyday life do not always “switch on”, and the methodology created is not sensitive to whether this would happen in reality in response to similar stimuli, but outside the research context.

In addition, the non-stimuli interview could have prompted the informant to a certain train of thought and answers, if it preceded the elicitation. A multitude of categories that presumably reflect

not what the informant sees in everyday life, but discourses—standard ways of talking about ethnicity and listing ethnic categories—could have set the categorization angle in the elicitation part. In some cases, the informant initially conveyed a detailed classification with one set of categories, but after the elicitation, admitted that in reality they did not adhere to it and used other, large-scale, categories in “real life”. It is worth noting that not all informants carried out such reflection, therefore in some cases the researchers were deprived of such an additional way to find out which categories are really used in the classification. Moreover, what could not be avoided was the “interviewer effect”, asking clarifying questions in which their own angle on ethnicity was implicitly conveyed.

The combination of methods within a single interview, however, allowed us to alleviate the above-mentioned problems to a certain extent. Moreover, to the extent that walks are “responsible” for immersion in immediate, typical Moscow everyday life, video elicitation allows us to take into account the phenotypic diversity of people who can be encountered in Moscow (at the expense of frequency and, accordingly, typicality of the context), and the unprompted segments of the interviews allow us to connect discursive and observed reality, the created methodological design probably includes an optimal set and combination of sociological methods that allow us to study how people categorize each other in urban everyday life.

Research results

The logic of the description of the research results is a function of the main research question: what categories are used by permanent and temporary residents of Moscow for everyday categorizations of other people and what indicators are used in this regard. In this regard, the resulting part of the report will open with the subsection dedicated to categories. Within its framework, first—briefly—an answer will be given to the question about the “habitual” metacategories as they appear for the informants, which describe the entire set of ethnic categories and being the entry point into the conversation about ethnicity, then—we will describe the variety of answers to the question about ethnic diversity in Moscow in the case when visual stimuli are not used. This point is a kind of methodological baseline, necessary in order to demonstrate the contrast between how people talk about diversity and what—as will be seen in the following fragments—people actually see in everyday life. The third point of the subsection on categories is directly devoted to the results of elicitation. It focuses on the variations of categories and categorizations that informants use “in the streets” and shows how the discursive (revealed during the unprompted segment) and spontaneous (revealed during the elicitation segment) categorizations interact. At this point, the subsection devoted to categories concludes, and the next subsection focuses on indicators—features by which people recognize representatives of different categories in everyday life. Again, this subsection compares “discursive” and “spontaneous” indicators—that is, those that informants say are significant (during unprompted segments) and those that informants actually use in categorization. This concludes the description of the key results of the study and the following sections will be devoted to several important and interesting, but rather additional topics, in particular how and based on what mental operations do categories, indicators and people observed come together, what *imaginaries*, or, figuratively speaking, symbolic condensates, are used to imagine ethnic diversity or individual ethnic categories, what conclusions can be made (to the extent that such conclusions can be made on the collected data) about socialization in the construction of ethnicity if we study how foreigners “absorb” ethnic categories and indicators, etc. Then the presentation moves on to the Discussion section, which will briefly describe what was essentially learned in the course of the study and what role these results play in the general understanding of the phenomenon of ethnicity.

Categories

Metacategories: What words are informants accustomed to when talking about ethnic diversity?

To begin with, it is necessary to answer the question about metacategories—the most common and understandable words used to denote the entire sets of ethnic categories in context and, metaphorically speaking, the “keys” to the “libraries” containing ethnic categories. These categories contextualize the conversation and presumably have their effects on how ethnic diversity is imagined. For the vast majority of informants, the word “nationality” became such a key. At the moment when the researchers, according to the methodology, asked the question about “ethnic groups”, some informants could not understand this question:

Interviewer: *What ethnicity were all the people living there?*

Informant: *What is meant by ethnicity?*

Interviewer: *You can talk about nationalities...*

Informant: *All nationalities. At the time when I lived there, no one asked such questions. It's now that they ask.*

(Male, 52 years old, Moscow, Russian)

In general, however, the term proposed by the researchers was understood by the informants, but then they re-interpreted it in a way that was familiar to them—through “nationalities”:

Interviewer: *In general, what other ethnic groups lived in Kalmykia?*

Informant: *Other nationalities?*

Interviewer: *Yes, you could say that.*

(Female, 55 years old, Elista, Kalmyk)

For some informants, however, the familiar “nationalities” and the proposed “ethnic groups” were not entirely synonymous, and, when asked to reflect on the differences, their versions could be different:

Informant: *Well, I thought that you probably mean some larger group rather than individual nationalities <...> Ciscaucasia, Transcaucasia, if I understood.*

(Female, 61 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Informant: *It seems to me that there are many more nationalities than ethnic groups.*

Interviewer: *There are more nationalities- And what is nationality?..*

Informant: *For me, let's say, a Northern person that I see there, he will be a Yakut or a Chukchi or someone else, this is, roughly speaking, a Northern person, I do not distinguish between them. Close to the way that Europeans call us all Russians, yes,*

and we also call ourselves Russians, regardless of what our nationality is.
(Male, 51 years old, Ukraine, Cossack)

However, in general, informants almost automatically “translated” the question using the word “nationalities” and then talked about them or, without such a “translation”, used the term that was suggested by the researchers.

Unprompted categories: “list of nationalities”

To the extent that different interviewing methods “embedded” in one actual interview allow us to compare how informants talk about diversity and how it shows itself in everyday life, for contrast and subsequent focusing on the results of interviews with stimuli, it will be shown which categories informants use when they talk about ethnic diversity in Moscow speculatively, unprompted.

In a significant number of cases, informants, regardless of their origin, answered the question “who lives in Moscow permanently or temporarily” with what could be called a “list of nationalities”:

Interviewer: *And who lives in Moscow in general? And I suggest now that you simply name, as you see fit, the people of what ethnicity live permanently or temporarily in Moscow.*

Informant: *Okay. Well, does it make any difference in percentage?*

Interviewer: *No, just [name the categories].*

Informant: *Russians, Tatars, Armenians, Georgians, Azerbaijanis. Who else? Tajiks, Uzbeks. And Dagestanis, Chechens, Ingush. Who else, who else? Ossetians, Ossetians. Who else do we have here? Buryats, I don't know...*

(Male, 22 years old, Armenia, Armenian)

Interviewer: *Can you please name the ethnicities of people who, in your opinion, live in Moscow? Both permanently and temporarily. Can you list some key ones?*

Informant: *Well, like, Russians live in Moscow. Tatars. Chechens. I'll go through the classes, who lives in Moscow permanently. So, Azerbaijanis. So, Americans live in Moscow. I know Poles who live in Moscow permanently. <...> Azerbaijanis, Americans. Bulgarians, too. But it seems to me it's easier to name those who doesn't live here than who does. There are a huge number [of categories] in Moscow. It seems to me that everyone is represented. If you dig into it, everyone is represented.*

(Female, 62 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Sometimes this “list” was also accompanied by an indication that there were many such categories or groups in Moscow:

Interviewer: *What ethnicity do you think people living in Moscow belong to?*

Informant: *There is great ethnic diversity in the world. Permanently or what?*

Interviewer: *Both permanently and temporarily, in general, who is there in Moscow? Whom can you identify, whom not?*

Informant: *List the nationalities?*

Interviewer: *Yes, ethnic groups that...*

Informant: *I know that everyone is here. That is, the 170 that exist, all live here.*

(Female, 45 years old, Moscow, Russian)

The “list” could be ordered in different ways and sometimes it was impossible to find an obvious order conveyed by the informants in it; in several cases, they explicitly structured it based on the number of representatives of the corresponding category in Moscow, “in descending order”:

Informant: *Yes, in my opinion. And who lives? Damn, that's the hardest part. Can I think about it a little?*

Interviewer: *Yes, of course.*

Informant: *I would say a large block, about 60 percent, I would say, are the Slavs. That is, “Slavs”, I can't tell the difference, I can only tell them apart by language. I would put 60 percent of the Slavs. Somewhere around 35 percent are residents of the Southern Republics, starting from Tashkent, Tashkent, for example, our Caucasian republics, Tajikistan, that is, there really are a lot of them <...> And then there are these remaining 10-15 percent, which I would say are foreign students, that is, foreigners of all sorts, if you walk near RUDN, well, Chinese, Indians, Africans, that is, we have quite a lot of them too...*

(Female, 28 years old, Balashov, no self-identification)

Interviewer: *Alright, then the next question. Can you just tell me what ethnicities people living in Moscow permanently and temporarily belong to? Just some, maybe, key categories. And I'll write it down for now.*

Informant: *Well, who am I talking about most often? Tajiks, Uzbeks. And Dagestanis, they are probably the most common in Moscow. People come mainly, probably, from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan to earn money. Dagestanis often come to earn money, among other things, and simply... Well, they move to live. Well, also Georgians, Armenians too. These are probably the five nationalities that are most common here in Moscow. And Russians? Well, Russians, that goes without saying.*

(Male, 30 years old, Moscow, Russian)

It is important (and this quote shows that) that such a “list”, despite attempts, for obvious reasons never fully reproduces the conventional statistical collection describing the ethnic composition of Moscow (the possible sources of the list will be discussed in detail in the Imaginaries section). It is necessarily simplified and modified relative to the “common denominator”—a conventional list of 10-15 “nationalities”, sorted by the number of their representatives. In what direction does the simplification and modification occur? First of all, in the direction of reducing the number of categories, of which there may be very few left:

Interviewer: *Then here is my next question. Can you please name, as you see fit, what ethnicities people living in Moscow belong to? Living permanently or temporarily. You can list them directly, and I will write them down.*

Informant: *I think Uzbeks.*

Interviewer: *Uzbeks?*

Informant: *Yes. Belarusians. Ukrainians. Tajiks. Well, Russians. Well, I think these are the most common ones that live here.*

Interviewer: *Is that all?*

Informant: *Well, in general, everyone can live [here]. The Chinese can live [here]. From those countries.*

Interviewer: *Well, these are the main ones?*

Informant: *Well, I think so.*

(Female, 20 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Another method of modification is the incorporation into the conventional “generally significant” list of unexpected categories, for example, those that clearly fall outside the first 10-15 “largest” categories in terms of the number of representatives:

Informant: *Now let's see who I haven't offended yet in Russia. Oh, more precisely, so as not to offend anyone in Russia, now it's still simple. Those who live in terms of subjects. Mari!*

Interviewer: *Have you seen the Mari in Moscow?*

Informant: *Well, I don't know, but they probably exist. Okay, let's not.*

(Male, 19 years old, Kostroma region, Russian)

As one might suppose, such a method of modification may be connected with the informant's experience “brought” from other contexts, and categories taken from there. Moreover, it often incorporates the category of identification into this list:

Informant: *Well, all sorts of people live there. These are Russians. Who do we have a lot of? Tatars, Bashkirs. Tatars, Bashkirs, what else. A few Belarusians, a few Ukrainians... I belong to the category of Buryat, but we also have our diaspora here.*

(Female, 53 years old, Kolotovka village, Buryat)

There are, however, other types of categories that partly “dilute” the list, and partly set a different logic for describing diversity. In particular, informants, answering the question about ethnic groups in Moscow and illustrating the thesis about its diversity, mention categories that can be designated as “limiting”—setting the broadest boundaries of diversity.

Informant: *Well, at the Lyublinsky [market] there are all the nations. Well, here is Lyublinsky, Moscow. Everything is there. Even the blacks are there. The black*

diaspora. It is very large in Kuzminki.

(Female, 53 years old, Kolotovka village, Buryat)

Other categories of this kind are the categories “Chinese”, “Americans”, etc. It is important to note that sometimes, in addition, more general, “non-list” categories are also used, which will be discussed further. For example:

Interviewer: *Who do you think lives in Moscow from an ethnic point of view, again, temporarily, permanently?*

Informant: *Russians, Caucasians, Asians—practically everyone lives here.*

(Male, 20 years old, Belarus, Belarusian)

Such a reduction, however, was not typical and, basically, to the question of what ethnic categories were represented in Moscow, informants responded with a list, modified in one way or another. Is it possible, however, to “see” these categories on the streets of Moscow and how did informants solve the task of categorizing “stimuli” during video-elicitation?

Categories with stimuli: binary and ternary categorizations

When informants were asked to identify people’s ethnicity during videos or walks, the categories they used changed significantly. In general, these categories were categorizations consisting of only two (binary) or three (ternary) categories. Binary categorizations of this kind usually involved contrasting “Slavs”, “Russians”, and “Slavic-looking people” with categories such as “non-Slavs”, “non-Russians”, “non-Slavic-looking people”, “Eastern”, “foreigners”, “migrants”:

Informant: *I think [the person in question is] Russian. That is, you need to ask the person to find out. You can't tell this way. If it [a person's appearance] is pronounced, then you don't need to ask. But specifically where they're from, I think, needs to be clarified. Because it's not clear.*

Interviewer: *We won't watch all the videos. Let's look at this one, for example.*

Informant: *This one, for example. Well, it's immediately clear that these aren't Russians. Some[where from] Uzbekistan or Tajikistan, something like that. I can hardly tell them apart, but it's definitely something like that. <...>*

Interviewer: *Good. The woman in the green hat?*

Informant: *Well, she's obviously not Russian. But for some reason it's difficult to identify her exact nationality.*

(Male, 30 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Interviewer: *You can't really see the face now, right?*

Informant: *No, I can't really see the face, but just off the top of my head, some approximation, I would say that this is not a Slavic appearance. What kind, I don't know. Like, maybe closer to Asians, maybe something... <...>*

Informant: *Like, I don't know, I can't see well. The nose is so big, you know, kind of drooping. Well, that is, based on some external identifying features, well, you can somehow assume that... I don't know. Like, I wouldn't classify it as Slavic in appearance either. More like something with some kind of big nose, I don't know. It's hard to choose a nation for her.*

Interviewer: *Well, let's say, not Slavic.*

Informant: *Not Slavic, yes.*

(Male, 51 years old, Ukraine, Cossack)

Informant: *Here's a guy with patterns. Yes, but here I would classify him either as Russian, probably, or as something like Tatar, because, generally, generally, he's, like, this dark hair, dark eyebrows, such a rich color. But at the same time, I wouldn't say that his facial features are too eastern, so he's either just Russian, because there are also such Russians, or, like, wow, we're Tatars, it turns out.*

(Female, 20 years old, Ufa, Tatar)

Within the framework of the ternary categorization, the second category from the “binary” (“non-Russian”, “Eastern”, etc.) was divided into two categories, which denoted vaguely defined sets of people originating from the countries and republics of the Caucasus (“from the Caucasus”, “Caucasian-looking people”) and from Central Asia (“from Asia”, “Central Asian republics”, “Asian-looking people”).

Interviewer: *Here, a woman in a green hat.*

Informant: *A woman in a green cap. It's hard to say. Most likely, [she's from] Asia.*

Interviewer: *Mm... Why Asia?*

Informant: *It could be the Caucasus, Dagestan.*

(Male, 46 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Interviewer: *Who do you think lives in Moscow from an ethnic point of view, again, temporarily, permanently?*

Informant: *Russians, Caucasians, Asians—practically everyone lives here.*

(Male, 20 years old, Belarus, Belarusian)

It is important that this binary and ternary categorization was reproduced both by those who, to one degree or another, considered themselves to be conditional “Slavs”, and by those who could be classified as “Caucasian” or “Asian” within the framework of the same task:

Interviewer: *So we can have a range from Kyrgyz to Vietnamese, just in theory. Okay, he has... he's like an Asian. It's the eyes. His eyes and the shape of his face are sometimes chubby. <...>*

Informant: *I think she's Russian. Why not a Caucasian girl? Because they don't dress like that in the Caucasus. Caucasian girls are more collected. <...>*

Informant: *An older Caucasian man dresses more respectably, but here it's*

scandalous, something for teenagers.

(Male, 29 years old, Makhachkala, Avar)

Moreover, it is precisely this simplified categorization in a rather “hinged” manner and, as it becomes clear from the subsequent analysis, with obvious errors in attributing categories to specific people that is quickly “mastered” by foreigners from distant countries whose experience of life in Moscow is short:

Interviewer: *Okay. Look, this young man.*

Informant: *From the country around Russia.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Informant: *Black hair, and a beard, and black eyes.*

Interviewer: *Okay, right next to it.*

Informant: *Also from a country around Russia [further in the interview she also uses the word “foreigners”].*

(Female, 19, China, Han)

In general, therefore, it is this scheme, which assumes the reduction of the entire set of categories to two or three, that is the actual, real alternative to the list that is used in cases where informants are faced with the task of telling the interviewer about the representatives of which ethnic groups—temporarily or permanently—live in Moscow.

Actual Classification Acts: Between Binary/Ternary Categorization and List

The described method of “interaction” with categories, which, in all likelihood, is the leading method of categorization in everyday life, is, however, more useful to consider as an ideal type, to which the actual categorizations of informants “gravitate”. At the same time, the categories “from the list” are also used to one degree or another (it varying from one informant to another) for everyday categorization, and in actual categorizations, categories from binary/ternary categorization and from the “list” can be used simultaneously in approximately the following way:

Informant: *This is [a person from] the Caucasus, one hundred percent.*

Interviewer: *Because she’s wearing a hijab?*

Informant: *Because she’s wearing a hijab, yes. I would say she’s Chechen. Doesn’t look like a girl from Dagestan. The boy is fair-haired, and Chechens are fair-haired.*

(Male, 29 years old, Makhachkala, Avar)

Moreover, one can observe how informants, trying to cope with the task, sometimes first try to use the “list” nationality, but then, however, give up and use the “generalized” category.

Interviewer: *Okay. The most recent video. The cashier. What is her ethnicity?*

Informant: *Well, I would put her in [the category of] Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, the Slanted-eyed Caucasus. <...> You know, this is this Southern-Eastern region. That is, the Islamic population, the Caucasus... <...>*

Interviewer: *So, Eastern and Caucasian are one and the same?*

Informant: *I just see them as one block. I don't distinguish them at all. I can't. For me, everything that starts below Stavropol and ends in Tashkent, for me, it's all...*

Interviewer: *And what is the difficulty? What prevents you from distinguishing?*

Informant: *They all look the same to me. I'm ashamed to admit it. To me, they all look so... Well, it's like asking a Chinese person if he can tell a Russian and an American apart, he can't. To me, their appearance, if you separate them, if you put ten of them in a row, I'll be able to tell that this one is probably [from somewhere] further south, and this one is probably [from somewhere] further north. But if you tell me to pick them out from the crowd, I won't be able to tell them apart.*

(Female, 28 years old, Balashov, no self-identification)

Informant: *Well, maybe he is from Uzbekistan.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Informant: *Well, I see narrow eyes, dark eyebrows. Well, this is very hypothetical, but in general, it seems to me that this is so.*

Interviewer: *And the man in the middle? In green. You can see his face better here. <...>*

Informant: *Well, he also looks like an Uzbek. Or maybe he's from Tajikistan.*

Interviewer: *Do you generally see difference between Uzbeks and Tajiks?*

Informant: *No. Well... no <...> No, I can't say whether he's Uzbek or Tajik. I just assumed he was from somewhere around there.*

(Female, 20 years old, Klin, Russian)

There were also—in a sense—reverse situations, when informants used “list” categories synonymously with categories from binary categorization, or two “list” categories were used for the same purposes, separated by a conventional slash or hyphen:

Informant: *Oh, my God, Uzbek-Tajik. Obviously construction workers. Or those laborers who... Like, can't you tell by their faces?*

(Female, 62 years old, Moscow, Russian)

However, even those informants for whom binary/ternary categorization was the main one, did not describe everyone with its help. In particular, a black girl recorded on video in the area of RUDN and included in the stimuli for elicitation “did not fit” into it:

Interviewer: *There's a man in a blue jacket.*

Informant: *He is Russian. I think he is Russian.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Informant: *Such a standard Russian Slavic face, and what does it mean, what features should there be eyes, well, fair hair. Firstly, already having served time [in prison], of course... well, there is no hair on the face, beard, there are large, pronounced eyebrows. Well, and just facial features of a certain image. <...>*

Interviewer: *And there's a woman behind this one.*

Informant: *Well, it's clear that <...> [she] is not Russian. Naturally, it's her grandmother or mother. Grandmother, most likely. Naturally, the same features come through.*

Interviewer: *Okay. The girl in the blue jacket. <...>*

Informant: *Well, this is Africa. It's obvious here, there's no need to explain it in any way.*

Interviewer: *So, Africa can be defined?*

Informant: *Of course. Why? Well, because curly hair, dark face, dark skin. It's not even like here... it would be difficult to understand now who it was if it was just a darker-skinned person from some southern countries, but here it's obvious <...> because these features are clearly expressed.*

(Male, 30 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Other categories that “fell out” of the binary or ternary categorization were Arabs, Jews, Hindus, and Romani:

Informant: *Well, it's hard for me to say about this one, honestly.*

Interviewer: *In general, it's difficult for everyone to say anything about them.*

Informant: *<...> Well, she could be anyone. I mean, let's say, in this case I won't even take to stating that she's Central Asian, she could even be a gypsy⁹. I mean, she's not... She's very difficult to identify. <...> But they [gypsies] are also dark-haired, quite tan. I mean... Well, it seems to me that I even... Well, it seems to me that sometimes some of these Eastern women look like, well, gypsy women look like Eastern women, but still the shape of their eyes, gypsy women have more prominent eyes, well, their eyes are bigger, it seems to me. But flowers, well, it's difficult to understand, it's completely incomprehensible.*

(Female, 52 years old, Ukraine, Russian)

In other words, although the categorization of stimuli—in comparison with the case of unprompted interviews—tends to be binary/triple, the categorizations carried out by each individual informant combine “large” and “list” categories in a rather “liberal” way. It can be concluded that it is precisely in the context of these two categorizations—the more empirical one and the more discursive one—that specific classificatory acts in everyday life are carried out.

⁹ In the Russian vernacular the term “gypsy” (Russian: *цыган*, IPA: /'tsigən/) is much more commonly used to refer to Romani people, than “Romani”, “Roma” or any other terms, which are generally common only among younger or far-left demographic. To preserve the accuracy of original quotes and their connotations, the decision was made to keep the English phrasing as close to the original as possible.

When a list is used for categorization: exceptions

It is necessary to mention separately the cases when this was obviously not the case, and the informant used “list” categories to categorize the stimuli. There were three such informants. In the first case, a young man from Ulyanovsk with a variety of “interethnic” experience based on “list” categories and rather unusual indicators (Armenians “are more confident and have this hooked nose and small ears”, an Uzbek woman “will look like a kawaii bear”, “it is very easy to distinguish a Tajik—look who talks on the phone the most of all”) categorized passers-by without using categories at all that refer to binary or ternary categorizations:

Informant: *No, for me they are immediately obvious as Georgians. But an Armenian is completely different.*

Interviewer: *Compared to Georgians?*

Informant: *Yes. First of all, they always walk differently, more relaxed, because they're... like Italians at a fiesta. They are more confident and they have this hooked nose and small ears. Why?*

Interviewer: *Do they all have small ears?*

Informant: *Damn, I looked at more than 600 stalls at the AKOS market in Odintsovo—while I was working in security there—more than 600 stalls, all Armenians.*

Interviewer: *Wow, and everyone looks more or less alike with these ears? <...>*

Informant: *Well, that's 100%. Damn, even I have a hard time guessing her [ethnic category]. She's short, has small ears, a big nose, but she walks like an Uzbek. But no, she's Kyrgyz. Most likely, somewhere closer to Issyk-Kul. Because there are mountains there, and the Kyrgyz are lighter there.*

Interviewer: *Wait, you said she walks like an Uzbek woman?*

Informant: *Look at her, she's tense. Not so relaxed, not vibing.*

(Male, 28 years old, Ulyanovsk, Russian)

The other two cases are a young man born in Armenia and a woman from Kazakhstan:

Interviewer: *There's a girl walking...*

Informant: *Most likely Uzbek.*

Interviewer: *Uzbek?*

Informant: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *And this woman?*

Informant: *She is also most likely Uzbek.*

Interviewer: *Why are they Uzbeks?*

Informant: *They are, by skin color, I think, somehow else, I don't know. They have, I wouldn't say dark skin, but a darker shade of it. That is, if I see that someone is darker and, as it were, Asian-looking, then for me they are immediately Uzbeks. <...>*

Informant: *He looks like a Tajik.*

Interviewer: *Okay then. Why not, for example, a Kyrgyz? They just look very similar, with a flat face, don't they?*

Informant: *They don't look alike at all. Firstly, the Kyrgyz don't have the same beards and so on. In general, Asians don't have that very often. Tajiks have bigger beards. That's one thing. Secondly, his eyes aren't Asian. Not Asian at all. Plus, they're also darker-skinned. I don't know, I'm 80-90% sure they're Tajiks. <...>*

Informant: *Listen, this one looks a lot like an Armenian.*

Interviewer: *Yes?*

Informant: *This one, yes. This one, I don't know, I'm 90 percent sure that he's Armenian.*

Interviewer: *This guy?*

Informant: *Yes. As I understand it, the hair, the hairstyle, this is a purely Armenian theme. And, actually, the look and eyebrows, are specifically Armenian. Well, and, of course, the handbag. I love such handbags.*

(Male, 22 years old, Armenia, Armenian)

Informant: *Well, there are two Chinese people walking there...*

Interviewer: *Not Koreans? Why do you say that so confidently?*

Informant: *I don't know. Visually, they are definitely Chinese. <...>*

Informant: *In Kazakhstan there is such a thing as the art of akyn, an akyn is a person who can play the dombra and compose songs according to the "sing-what-you-see" principle. Go to the forest—sing about the forest, go to the field—sing about the field. I do the same: whoever I see, I speak about.*

Interviewer: *Got it, got it.*

Informant: *There are also 3 Kyrgyz here...*

Interviewer: *I understand that you also have your flair for the Kyrgyz...*

Informant: *Yes, yes, because they are visually different, more, let's say, facial features, the curve...*

(Female, 38 years old, Kazakhstan, Slavic)

In all cases, however, there was an explanation for this categorization. In particular, in the first case, it is ethnic categorization that is the “key” to people for the informant, and it is vital for him to understand them. In the second case, the detailed categorization seems meaningful to the informant in the context of his work in construction—he expects varying behavior from contractors and employees depending on their ethnicity, and they, in general, do not “let him down”. In the third case, the informant shows off her “experience” to the interviewer (while she could not name specific indicators based on which she categorizes). It is important that in all cases, the informants had a real—each their own—“experience of diversity”, and such categorizations are in fact its projection onto specific cases.

These three cases, however, are rather deviations than the norm, and most of them in the actual classification maneuver between “list” categories and categories from binary/ternary categorization.

How do “list” categories relate to categories from binary/ternary categorization?

The question of how the “list” categories and the categories from binary/ternary categorization relate to each other is not trivial. The nominal “nested-doll-ness” or “enlargement” of some categories in relation to others is only a representation of the relationship between the categories, however, a rather ingrained one, and not an actual relationship. And these representations are elements of the construction of ethnicity to the same extent as the categories themselves. Their analysis and deconstruction are the tasks of this study. The relationship of categories and the extent to which the “list” categories are unambiguously “translated” by informants into categories from binary/ternary categorization or these categorizations are not reducible to each other, and the first exists only in the discursive space, and the second—in situations of everyday categorizations, can also be judged on the basis of the collected data.

In general, the answer to this question is as follows. “List” categories and categories from binary/ternary categorization are indeed “translated” into each other, and the latter are indeed most often general in relation to specific “list” categories. This is clearly seen in how the problem of uncertainty in categorization is “solved”—informants first name “list” categories, then—when they realize that they do not have enough indicators for categorization—they use a more general category, which includes several “list” categories:

Informant: *Well, at least... well, no... why... well, at least I haven't seen anything like that with Armenians. I have Armenian friends. I haven't seen anything like that with them. Well, maybe a Chechen, maybe, well, also, generally speaking, from the East. What are you asking about, the Eastern peoples? <...>*

Informant: *Well, that too. It's either, well, these are the possible options. Armenian, Azerbaijani, maybe Chechen. So it's clear that the person is from the East. Well, or the parents are from the East.*

(Female, 62 years old, Moscow, Russian)

However, this “translation” can be carried out in a rather unusual way. In particular, “list categories” could end up in “large” categories that are unexpected for an observer familiar with conventional taxonomies:

Informant: *Although, let's say... By religion, because religion sets all the rules that we all, accordingly, pull or impose.*

Interviewer: *But still, are they very different or not?*

Informant: *It's like there are Chechens there... In terms of name, Chechens are a completely separate universe, there is a completely different culture there.*

Interviewer: *So, in principle, we can even write them down separately?*

Informant: *The Chechens we should probably list separately. Another one would be*

the Dagestanis, the Chechens, and I would also list the Kabardins, Adyghe, Karachays and whatever else, the Balkars, this one, and the Georgians, the Abkhazians also in one.

(Male, 29 years old, Makhachkala, Avar)

Moreover, the taxonomy was not always maintained, and a “list” category could be placed next to a category from a binary/ternary categorization:

Interviewer: *And that’s why she’s Asian, right, because of the shape of her eyes?*

Informant: *Yes. Oh, and she has black hair too.*

Interviewer: *Yeah. And look, her mother? Presumably, maybe her grandmother.*

Informant: *Most likely, too. By the way, she reminds me a little of people from Chuvashia, because she has a straight nose, slightly downturned eyes. Reminds me. But it is clear that this is the [hair]color of her mother, she definitely... corresponds to the same characteristics that I gave the girl.*

(Female, 20 years old, Klin, Russian)

In general, therefore, it can be said that in Moscow—in the perceptions of its permanent and temporary residents—two ethnic categorizations coexist. One is predominantly discursive in nature and is a “list”, apparently borrowing the way of imagining diversity, as well as specific categories, from the official categorization. These categorizations “live” thanks to various statistical collections, their sources (censuses) and “popular” presentations (for example, Wikipedia). The “list” categorization, however, can only be used to a limited extent for spontaneous categorization of people in everyday life. For this task, as can be assumed (and as will be discussed in the corresponding section), it partly lacks the distinctive power, and partly it—being too detailed—turns out to be unnecessary for those classifying. The scheme that is actually used, or, to be more precise, the scheme to which a significant number of categorizations in everyday life gravitate, consists of two or three categories, in which, firstly, the variously named Slavs/Muscovites/Russians and foreigners/southerners/Eastern-looking are contrasted, and secondly, the last category is divided into two—the conventional “Caucasus” and “Central Asia”. It can also be said that—to the extent that the “list” is the main discursive way of imagining diversity, it is often attempted to be used for categorization. The result of such categorization, however, turns out to be too complex and imprecise for those categorizing themselves, and, as a consequence, the process and result of categorization are actually reduced to a binary or ternary distinction.

The next section will discuss indicators—features by which informants attributed an ethnic category to stimuli during elicitation.

Indicators

Indicators are features by which ethnic categories and specific people are “connected” with each other. Which indicators were used during the categorization in the “stimuli” part of the study, to the extent that the corresponding conclusions can be drawn based on interviews with informants? (Given that—as will be said in the summary section—the indicators actually used and reflected upon may differ).

The key indicators by which categorization was allegedly carried out were phenotypic. More specifically, these were: skin color, hair color, eye color, eye shape, face shape, nose shape, height, body type:

Interviewer: *Now there will appear a man. Maybe it's easier with the man.*

Informant: *Well, also a Kazakh. It seems to me that this is a typical Kazakh. Like, I'm telling you, Uzbeks and Kazakhs, they are different. Uzbeks, it seems to me, are more, like, puny. And they... Well, and those have bigger cheekbones. That is, there are steppes there. Steppes. Because of this, their cheekbones are pronounced. Cheekbones, eyes, that is, these sandstorms, it seems to me, because of this.*

(Female, 62 years old, Moscow, Russian)

In this example, the informant designates attributes inherent to “Uzbeks” and “Kazakhs”, while the latter’s attributes turn out to be derived from the geographical features of the place of origin of the category’s representatives—as it seems to the informant. In addition, some typical links between phenotypic indicators and ethnic categories can be identified on the available data array: “Russians”—light hair, light skin, blue eyes, “Caucasians”—beard, “Chinese”—short stature, “Blacks”—dark skin, curly hair, etc. At the same time, however, the phenotypic diversity of representatives of one category is sometimes recognized:

Interviewer: *And what about the man on the edge?*

Informant: *He is possibly a Tatar. Again, it's just that Tatars, again, they are very different in type. He is either a Tatar, or again some Volga Finno-Ugric.*

(Male, 20 years old, Ukhta, Komi, Belarusian, German)

Informant: *A man in a blue jacket. You know, you can't tell by his appearance. He could be Slavic. He could be Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian. And maybe, by the way, from Kazan.*

Interviewer: *Why Kazan?*

Informant: *Tatars can be red-haired and fair-haired. Absolutely. And there are a lot of them in Moscow now, a lot. So I don't know.*

(Female, 62 years old, Moscow, Russian)

In the examples given, the category “Tatars” is described as internally differentiated by phenotypic features, as a result of which the task of classifying the stimulus into the category “Tatars” is complicated by the lack of a strictly defined “prototype”. Another example:

Informant: *In Turkmenistan, people look like... Cubes.*

Interviewer: *Honestly?*

Informant: *You know, in fashion, if you want to, for example, make some kind of coat, then there's the body type. That is, a rectangle, a cube, a cylinder. That thing. People are divided into such shapes. And Tajiks always have cubes. It's not funny, that's how it is. <...>*

Interviewer: *And the Uzbeks aren't?*

Informant: *No, the Uzbeks aren't. They have different shapes.*

(Male, 29, Palestine, Arab)

In this case, one of the types of phenotypic indicators—body type—appears to the informant as differentiated among representatives of the category “Uzbeks” and as an undifferentiated average of representatives of the category “Tajiks”. Sometimes attempts are made to overcome the difficulty caused by the phenotypic diversity of stimuli that a person processes as belonging to one ethnic category:

Interviewer: *Good. And the man in the suit sitting behind her [what ethnic group does he belong to]?*

Informant: *Also Russian.*

Interviewer: *Why? They seem different.*

Informant: *What do you mean different? Different hair color?*

Interviewer: *Hair color, face shape...*

Informant: *The girl may have been a blonde before, but now she dyed her hair. And then, we don't have any blonde Russians, all blonde Russians are Balts. Russians have never been blonde. Ukrainians were blonde.*

(Male, 52 years old, Moscow, Russian)

In this case, at the level of spontaneous reaction, the informant first says that Russians are blonde, then “faces reality” and partly rejects this idea (“Russians are not blonde”), and partly comprehends the contradiction by changing the initial indicator (“the girl was blonde, but dyed her hair”).

Phenotypic indicators may include not only individual phenotypic features of the face/body/etc., but also some integrity, a “gestalt” of appearance. Moreover, this “gestalt” may be non-specific and not have specific properties that can be named. Thus, in connection with the category of “Russians”, such an indicator as “standard”, “typical” appearance, the absence of any clearly expressed features is sometimes named:

Interviewer: *How are Mordvins different from Russians?*

Informant: *He also has a face that is a little strange for a Russian, I don't know. It's a little darker [in skin color], but it seems to me that it's still not Turkic, that is, he has some kind of facial shape, it seems to me, some kind of... <...>*

Informant: *It seems to me that they are Russian.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Informant: *They look ordinary, in some way.*

(Male, 20 years old, Ukhta, Komi, Belarusian, German)

In this case, the indicator “ordinary appearance” is attributed to “Russian” and, due to the fact that the stimulus turns out to be unusual in this sense (“the face is also a little strange for a Russian”), he is defined as a representative of a different ethnic category.

Along with phenotypic indicators, indicators related to a person’s behavior and clothing style play a role in ethnic classification. Clothing style indicators can be divided into two types: elements of “national” costumes (for example, headdresses), associated, in informants’ worldview, with one or another ethnic category; and everyday clothing style, which is a feature of category representatives. It is more correct to refer to the indicators of the first type—since they are rarely encountered in everyday life—as elements of imaginaries, potential indicators, the presence of which, in the opinion of informants, would allow ethnic classification to be carried out with a greater degree of confidence.

Interviewer: *So, Jews and Ukrainians are practically no different, right?*

Informant: *Well, outwardly, it seems to me, it is difficult to distinguish them. In general, it seems to me that it is difficult to tell people apart like that. Unless, of course, they wear some kind of national, like, Jewish clothing. Once I was walking through Moscow, and a man in this sort of a Jewish cap just bumped into me. I was like, sorry...*

Interviewer: *And you realized that he was a Jew?*

Informant: *Well, because he has a Jewish hat. Maybe he was from some, I don't know, carnival or something like that.*

(Male, 20 years old, Ukhta, Komi, Belarusian, German)

Indicators related to the everyday style of clothing that has developed among representatives of specific ethnic categories are varied. They can be related to the cost of clothing, wearing specific brands or elements of clothing (for example, a woman’s covered head was considered by all informants as an indicator of “Muslims”, although they often failed to name a specific “Muslim” category), the relevance of clothing in the Moscow context, and other reasons. Here is an example of such a connection:

Informant: *I think she's Russian.*

Interviewer: *What was the first thing you looked at?*

Informant: *Her appearance, her clothes. Simply, if she were... Why not a Caucasian girl? Because in the Caucasus, more or less, they don't dress like that. This style is typical for Russian girls. So, no, of course not.*

Interviewer: *And how would this girl dress if she were just... Caucasian? Caucasian, yes.*

Informant: *Yes, yes, yes. More collected, I think. It's just that Russian girls have this theme, that there's oversize, there's these coats, there's St. Petersburg vibe, I've seen coats like that.*

Interviewer: *Yes, yes, long ones.*

Informant: *I think it's Russian.*

(Male, 29 years old, Makhachkala, Avar)

In this case, the informant has the idea that “Russians” have a “relaxed” style of clothing, while “Caucasians” have a stricter one, and by this feature they can be recognized in everyday life.

The use of indicators related to the relevance of clothing in the Moscow context is especially characteristic of people who were not born in Russia and who have lived in Russia for a relatively short period of time:

Interviewer: *And what about a man?*

Informant: *Also Russian.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Informant: *Gestures.*

Interviewer: *And what about gestures?*

Informant: *The way he walks, and he also has gloves. In my opinion, foreigners in winter do not always realize that they need to wear gloves, and they usually does not have any. After I came to Russia, I do not have any gloves at all, because I do not need them.*

(Female, 19, China, Han)

Here, the stimuli are classified by informants into the “foreigners” category due to the clothing indicator, which does not fit the Moscow/Russia context.

The following indicators are related to behavior: a person's gait; the way a person sits; the way a person behaves in a public place, etc. The latter, in particular, includes the norms of “taking off a hat in a public setting” and “behaving with restraint in public setting”, and some informants classify those who do not comply with them as not belonging to the “locals”. In the example below, the indicator of a “guest worker” who came “from the South” is the specific pose that the person adopted while sitting at a table in a public catering establishment.

Interviewer: *Okay. The man in the cap?*

Informant: *Well, this is clearly a guest from the South, who also most likely came to earn money, that is, those who are called guest workers. And his work is, it seems to*

me, quite difficult, because he uses different, well, physically, because he uses this moment to relax completely. Again, a Muscovite would never sit down like that. He would be more, let's say, reserved, yes.

(Female, 62 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Earlier, when describing the indicators associated with national costumes, it was noted that they are rather potential and desirable for a more effective solution to the classification task. The same kind of indicators (potential and desirable) include human speech, language and accent. Despite the fact that the video-elicitation method was used in the study, it was rarely possible to record the speech of the stimuli on video. The significance of the speech indicator was noted by informants both during the spontaneous classification task (especially in relation to those categories that were imagined by informants to be phenotypically similar) and throughout the interview:

Informant: *That is, it is for some reason difficult to [determine what ethnic category a person belongs to] by appearance. Like, you can distinguish between Chechens and Dargins. Like, and when he starts speaking, it is immediately clear that he is a Chechen or a Dargin. By the way, Dargins also live here, lots of them. Neighbors.*

(Female, 55 years old, Elista, Kalmyk)

Another type of indicators are context indicators. Context indicators can be divided into narrow context indicators and broad context indicators. Narrow context indicators work in such a way that the proposed stimulus (person) is categorized based on knowledge of the ethnicity of its immediate environment (e.g., several people are nearby or it is clear from the context that the people are in friendly or familial relations). In this study, narrow context indicators were defining for the ethnic categories of a number of stimuli—the categories of stimuli that were perceived as being in family/friendly relations with other stimuli were determined in relation to each other, based on the first classified one. For example:

Interviewer: *Okay. Look, this young man.*

Informant: *From the country around Russia.*

Interviewer: *Why?*

Informant: *Black hair, and a beard, and black eyes.*

Interviewer: *Okay, right next to it.*

Informant: *Also from a country around Russia.*

Interviewer: *And why is that?*

Informant: *After all, he is this man's friend.*

Interviewer: *And had they not been together, would that have changed your opinion?*

Informant: *If we look at his appearance separately, he also looks like a Japanese person, but he has a higher nose.*

(Female, 19, China, Han)

In this interview (as in many others), the stimulus shown to the informant was assigned to the same ethnic category as the stimulus shown before (in the video, three men are sitting next to each other in the subway car). However, when the interviewer asked for clarification, the answer was that if the informants had been apart, the classification task could have been solved differently.

Broad context indicators work differently, in the following way: informants understand the approximate “ethnic composition” of the location where the stimulus was filmed/where they are (in this case, representatives of which ethnic categories live in Moscow) and categorize on this basis:

Informant: *Regarding the boy, I would say that he is possibly Chinese.*

Interviewer: *Chinese? Not Japanese, not Korean, but Chinese?*

Informant: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *You're just...*

Informant: *Well, I mean... It's not that I directly said that he's Chinese, but... There are more Chinese in Moscow than Japanese and Koreans. Statistically.*

(Male, 26 years old, Smolensk, Russian)

It should be noted, however, that in some cases informants failed to identify specific indicators by which they determined the ethnicity of the stimulus, despite the fact that some indicators were indeed used. At this stage, such indicators were designated as “tacit knowledge” (its nature will be discussed in subsequent sections). Examples of such indicators include: “it feels like they're one of our own”, “it looks right”, “I recognize it in their eyes”, etc. Often, such indicators “work” for the ethnic category to which the person categorizing identifies themselves. For example:

Informant: *Yes, I recognize Armenians very easily. Honestly, it may be strange to say, but by the look, by the eyes... Here, if there is a person, I will recognize an Armenian right away. Just like that.*

Interviewer: *Just like that?*

Informant: *Just like that, even without any communication and so on.*

(Male, 22 years old, Armenia, Armenian)

Interviewer: *Who would you single out in Moscow, in your opinion?*

Informant: *Tajiks. My own. They stand out. Well, maybe because I'm a Tajik myself, that's why, maybe, but... I can tell them apart right away. I immediately see a person and I understand right away.*

Interviewer: *How?*

Informant: *Well, I don't know, I just see and understand.*

(Male, 18 years old, Tajikistan, Tajik)

In general, therefore, to “assign” people to ethnic categories, such indicators as phenotype, style, behavior and context are used. But, as we see from the last fragment, it is clear that the actual

process and tools of categorization are more complex. In what way exactly? This will be discussed in the next point.

How does categorization actually happen?

With the important caveat that neither the method nor the disciplinary affiliation of the authors of the report allow us to fully answer this question, on the basis of the collected material (the results of observation of the categorization process, as well as the reflections of the informants themselves), “thought patterns” can be identified that are presumably used by people faced with the task of spontaneous ethnic classification. Thus, almost universally we are talking about comparing the stimulus with some—generalized or specific—“referent”. The objects of comparison can be either collective images of certain ethnic categories (“looks like a Russian”), or people familiar to the informants or some other iconic figures (for example, at the level of notions, people who are alike to the head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov are often described as “Chechens”). Here are examples of comparison with collective images:

Interviewer: *Well, if you can see, this woman is sitting here.*

Informant: *She looks something like Russian.*

Interviewer: *Looks like Russian?*

Informant: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *And what about Russians, what do they usually look like?*

Informant: *Russians? Their face shape is like this, well, how should I say it? Like, straight. Yes, like, long, yes.*

Interviewer: *So, just by her face or are there other signs? Like, what, so to speak, gives her away as Russian?*

Informant: *There's something about her eyes, something about her eyelids, you know? And her eyes are there, right here. Like more bulging, yeah.*

Interviewer: *Okay, great.*

(Female, 45 years old, Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz)

Interviewer: *Here, behind you. They'll pass you by now. The one with the child.*

Informant: *Oh, they will be similar to Ukrainian, maybe.*

Interviewer: *Yeah, why?*

Informant: *I don't know, it's just... To be honest, it's hard to describe. But... It's similar to Ukrainian to me. Yeah. Well, it's just that I... The first year, because I already knew, well, I already, well, saw that people are also similar.*

Interviewer: *So you have a Ukrainian friend?*

Informant: *Specifically I don't have, but I just, well, looked, well...*

Interviewer: *Internet?*

Informant: *The Internet, that's it.*

Interviewer: *Uh-huh.*

Informant: *That's why I said so.*

(Male, 25, Haiti, African American)

If the comparison is made with specific people, both individual indicators and the collective image of the person as a whole can be compared. Below is an example of a comparison “as a whole”:

Interviewer: *Good. Where did the number seven go?.. Eight. Here, woman first, go off.*

Informant: *Oh, she looks just like the saleswoman from Odintsovo. There is a saleswoman in Odintsovo and she looks almost exactly like her.*

Interviewer: *Who is she? What is her nationality?*

Informant: *Well, she's from the North Caucasus. Most likely, also from the North Caucasus. Maybe, by the way, it is her... Can you imagine if it is her?*

(Male, 20 years old, Ukhta, Komi, Belarusian, German)

Here is an example of comparison by indicators:

Interviewer: *This man?*

Informant: *It seems to me that it is... It is difficult to determine. It could be Uzbekistan, it could be the Caucasus. No, most likely Uzbekistan, Tajikistan.*

Interviewer: *What are you looking at [to determine that]?*

Informant: *Well, the eyes, the eyes are more European, but different from Slavic, I think. Central Asia, well, the countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, such slanted eyes.*

(Male, 46 years old, Moscow, Russian)

In such cases, at the level of spontaneous categorization, a range of options to which category the stimulus can theoretically be assigned is determined, then—through a comparison of attributes—the range of possible options is narrowed. We also note that the absence of people “in experience” of the informant who are outwardly similar to the stimuli can lead to difficulties in performing the categorization task.

Moreover, sometimes informants carried out another, more specific, mental operation and did not “narrow” the range in a “shuttle” manner, as in the example above, but first compared the appearance of the informant with a certain basic category, sometimes being satisfied with the results of this comparison and not going further. This category for informants was often the category “Russians”:

Informant: *Well, I don't know, it's probably hard to call her Russian. She probably has some Eastern roots. Maybe Tatar [roots].*

Interviewer: *Why do you think so?*

Informant: *Dark, wavy hair. Dark eyes as far as I can see, eyebrows are drawn with them.*

(Female, 42 years old, Moscow, Russian)

In this case, the features of the stimulus shown to the informant were compared with the attributes of “Russians” (in relation to “Russians” in the view of informants, as mentioned above, there is a typical set of attributes—light hair, blue eyes, light skin, which, however, can be supplemented by less typical attributes—for example, tall stature or the tendency of “Russian” women to be overweight), a discrepancy was revealed, and as a result, a conclusion was made about the belonging of the stimulus to another ethnic category—Tatars.

Some other patterns can be identified. In particular, occasionally an informant could not cope with the task of categorizing the stimulus using “list” categories and turned to categories from binary/ternary categorization. However, in general, it is the differently structured comparison with a differently structured “template” (general category, specific person, known or familiar) that is “at the core” of categorization. How this process is structured more specifically can only be answered by using cognitive literature.

To what extent do categorization results match across informants and what happens when categorization is difficult?

From the preceding presentation, we can conclude that the informants have somewhat similar but somewhat different categories and indicators planted “in their heads,” and that a limited number of mental operations are used to determine the ethnic category of the stimulus. However, to what extent do the informants “agree” in the results of categorization, or, in other words, do the categories (“list” and “generalized”) that the informants use to describe the stimuli match?

The following table (Table 2) shows how the informants defined the same demonstrated stimuli (Figures 4, 5, 6).



Figure 4—Stimulus 1



Figure 5—Stimulus 2



Figure 6—Stimulus 3

The table shows that for some stimuli the variability lies almost exclusively in whether a list category or a corresponding category from a binary or ternary categorization is used (stimuli 1 and 2), while for others (stimulus 3) the variability can be significantly higher. In the case of the woman shown in the video, such an indicator as hair color (note that the options for determining the hair color of the stimulus were different—from “red” and “dark” to “fair”) was simultaneously read as an indicator of “Russian”, “woman from India”, “Georgian”, and the indicator “big nose” was used as an indicator of “Georgian”, “not Slavic”.

Table 2—Results of stimulus categorization

Informant #	Stimulus 1	Stimulus 2	Stimulus 3
1	First man—Tajik/from Uzbekistan, second man—cannot determine, third man—from Uzbekistan	Cannot determine	Cannot determine
2	Central Asia (first man—Uzbek/Kyrgyz, second man—Turkmen/Tajik, third man—Kyrgyzstan)	Russia	Russian
3	Uzbeks	-	-
4	Representatives of Asia (Kazakhstan/Uzbekistan)	Russian	Central Asia/Caucasus
5	Third man—Russian from Central Russia, second man—Republics of the Caucasus/Eastern appearance, first man—Uzbekistan	Slavic from the Southern regions of Russia (Stavropol)	Russified India
6	First man—Northern Russian, second man—Central Asia/Azerbaijani, third man—Tatar/Volga Finno-Ugric	Russian/Mordvin	Azerbaijani
7	First man—from the East, second man—Russian, third man—foreigner	Tatarstan/other region	Russian/Arab
8	Kyrgyz	Russian	Romani
9	Uzbekistan/Tajikistan	-	Hindu/Jordan
10	Uzbek/Tajik	Russian/Ukrainian/Belarus	Belarus/Russian
11	Countries around Russia	Russian	Cannot determine (looks like Russian or Jewish)
12	Non-Russian (on the right—more Asian-looking, others—more Caucasian-looking)	-	Cannot determine (possibly, some Caucasian category)
13	Republics of Central Asia	Slavic	Cannot determine
14	First man—Volga/Northern peoples, second man—from the South, third man—Volga	Russian, Muscovite	Volga peoples
15	Uzbek/Tajik	Slavic/Tatar	Azerbaijani
16	Left and right—Asian, middle—Moldavian	Moldavian	Russian
17	Non-Russian (Uzbekistan/Tajikistan)	Russian	Not Russian
18	Asia (Tajik)	-	Arab/Uzbekistan
19	Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan	-	Not Slavic
20	First man—Central Asia or Southern Russia (Buryatia, Tyva), second man—closer to Russian, third man—cannot determine	-	Pakistan/Iran
21	First man—Kyrgyz, second man—cannot determine, third man—Uzbek	-	Georgian
22	Eastern	-	Russian, mixed
23	Uzbek	-	Central Asia (Uzbek, Tajik)
24	Uzbek	-	Tajik

In addition, as can be seen from the table, where a dash means no answer, ethnic categorization often proved difficult for informants. In such a case, the interviewer's question about

the ethnic category to which the stimulus being shown belonged could be answered with “I don’t know”, or the idea of “mixedness”, or “Metis” could be used, according to which it is impossible to determine to which ethnic category a person belongs, since “different bloods are mixed” in them. Here is an example of the first:

Interviewer: *And the man in the middle? In green. You can see his face better here.*

Informant: *It’s harder to tell with him, because his eyes are not narrow, but you can see that the man is dark-skinned, with dark eyebrows and eyes. I can’t say anything about him.*

(Female, 20 years old, Klin, Russian)

And here is an example of the second:

Interviewer: *And now there’s a boy walking there.*

Informant: *Well, I don’t know, he seems to me like a mixture.*

Interviewer: *A mixture of what?*

Informant: *Well, that’s what I said. I’m not ready to say about him.*

(Male, 52 years old, Moscow, Russian)

The category “Metis”/“mixed” also arises when the image of the person being classified does not correspond to the image of a typical representative of any ethnic category. For example:

Interviewer: *So, you can do the same... Look, there’s a girl sitting behind me [what ethnic category does she belong to?].*

Informant: *Like, how? Either Russian or another nation. Another nation, probably. Well, I don’t know what nation, but another for sure.*

Interviewer: *And the other... Why the other?*

Informant: *She looks like an Uzbek. She looks like another nation.*

Interviewer: *Well, let’s then separate what is Russian about her and what is Uzbek about her.*

Informant: *The skin color it seems. The hair is also brown, like dark brown. Maybe some kind of Metis.*

(Male, 19 years old, Uzbekistan, Uzbek)

Informant: *Well, I don’t know. Maybe something like Moldova. Well, something like that. But he doesn’t look like an Asian. Why not? Well, his eyes are not narrow. And... Well, if you just look now. Well, no. Well, or he’s mixed. If Asian, then some kind of mixed. That is, not pure.*

(Female, 42 years old, Moscow, Russian)

The category “Metis” in these cases arose due to the discrepancy between the stimuli and the image of a typical representative of some categories: “Uzbeks” in the first example, “Asians” in the

second example. Some features of the appearance of the demonstrated stimuli (hair color, skin color, eye shape) turned out to “deviate” from the indicators of “Uzbeks” and “Asians”, and at the same time pointed to other categories, as a result of which the stimuli fell into the category of “Metis”. This category (“Metis”/“mixed”), in addition, also exists at the level of ideas: people believe that representatives of different categories give birth to people who cannot be clearly attributed to the category of a father or mother and call them “Metis”:

Informant: *And nationality-wise? They were all Uzbeks [in their hometown].*

Interviewer: *All Uzbeks? Yes.*

Informant: *No one at all... Well, there were Tatars and Metises. <...>*

Interviewer: *So, it's only Russians who are like that... They can't define all this. Okay, then, actually, I have some assignments with cards, they're all crumpled up, but I just wanted to ask, who lives in Moscow? Permanently or temporarily? You've already started saying that it's Kyrgyz, Tajiks. You can list them and I'll write them down.*

Informant: *Tajiks... damn. There are also a lot of Azerbaijanis.*

Interviewer: *Azerbaijanis, right. Maybe someone else?*

Informant: *Still Metises.*

Interviewer: *Metises. And Metises, who are they usually?*

Informant: *Well, they are different. With the Russians, like, with the Tatars, that's what they are like. The Russian Cossacks, there, are mixed Metises, it turns out.*

(Male, 19 years old, Uzbekistan, Uzbek)

It is interesting that the category “Metis” in the given example is placed alongside other non-collective categories, such as “Russians”, “Uzbeks”, moreover, the interviewer’s clarifying question about the “what type of Metis” the stimuli are, often seems redundant to informants. All this points to the possible ethnicization of the category “Metis” in the informants’ perceptions, to which characteristics of appearance are often attributed (“Metises are beautiful”).

However, to generalize, informants generally coped with spontaneous categorization of stimuli; in the case of some stimuli, the categories used largely coincided (differing in the degree of detail), but in some, the categories differed significantly from informant to informant; moreover, informants encountered difficulties. In the case of the latter, they could refuse to perform the task and tell the interviewer that they do not know what “nationality” the stimulus is, or indicate that the stimulus is “mixed”/“Metis”. This category, therefore, arose in response to informants’ categorization uncertainty.

Imaginarities and Folk Ethnologies

Ethnicity is imagined by people through some verbal or material “phenomena”—the so-called

imaginaries. Imaginaries are translators between people's ideas and social phenomena that are more complex to comprehend. Some of the imaginaries in this report have already been discussed—these are specific and generalized images of ethnic categories. Another type of imaginary that is important for categorization is the idea of ethnic diversity in general. Below, the types of imaginaries will be successively disclosed and illustrated.

In addition to Ramzan Kadyrov, “the prototype Chechen” whom informants imagine and with whom they compare people in order to determine whether the passers-by are Chechens, informants mentioned figure skater Kamila Valieva as a “prototype Tatar”:

Interviewer: *Got it, good. What are the distinguishing features of these nations? How do you distinguish Tatars from Russians, for example?*

Informant: *I know that Kamila Valieva is Tatar.*

Interviewer: *And how is she different from Russians?*

Informant: *Maybe Tatarian is more... stronger? They have such character traits that they are always ready to fight for success, ready to fight for something that they would like to get.*

(Female, 21, China, Han)

The characteristics of all representatives of the category “Tatars” are imagined through the reference to the figure of Kamila Valieva, who, in the opinion of the informant, has some unique characteristics. In the interview, in isolated cases, some other personalities were also mentioned, but often the imaginary is a collective image, the specific source of which is difficult to trace in the view of the informants:

Interviewer: *But he, probably, also didn't really look like Ivanushka [in the context of a conversation about gypsies that the informant saw in childhood]?*

Informant: *Well, he was dark-skinned. He was a typical gypsy in appearance. Dark skin, brown-eyed, with dark hair.*

Interviewer: *Interesting.*

Informant: *Cunning.*

(Male, 20 years old, Belarus, Belarusian)

“Ivanushka” (a form of the name Ivan), as is obvious from the context of the conversation, turns out to be a collective image of a “Slav” and in verbalized form refers to popular culture, as it is widely used in Russian folklore. This collective image is opposed to another category—Romani, the latter, in turn, is constructed in opposition to the collective image of a “Slav”.

Imaginaries exist not only in relation to individual ethnic categories, but also in relation to the construction of ethnicity as a whole. A typical example are paintings that show caricatured representatives of various ethnic groups standing next to each other in “national” clothing. Such

images, however, can also exist in text form. In the context of Moscow, one of the imaginaries of ethnic diversity of this kind are statements along the lines of “*Moscow is a multinational city*”. Such a statement is an easy mode of imagining cultural diversity, designed to reduce its complexity to a short phrase, and with its help—to communicate this diversity to another. For example:

Interviewer: *What ethnicity do you think people living in Moscow belong to?*

Informant: *There is great ethnic diversity in the world. Permanently or what?*

Interviewer: *Both permanently and temporarily, in general, who is there in Moscow? Whom can you identify, whom not?*

Informant: *List the nationalities?*

Interviewer: *Yes, ethnic groups that...*

Informant: *I know that everyone is here. That is, the 170 that exist, all live here.*

(Female, 45 years old, Moscow, Russian)

In this case, the imagination of which ethnic groups live in Moscow is achieved by referring to the discursive idea of the city’s cultural diversity. Another example:

Informant: *Now let’s see who I haven’t offended yet in Russia. Oh, more precisely, so as not to offend anyone in Russia, now it’s still simple. Those who live in terms of subjects. Mari!*

(Male, 19 years old, Kostroma region, Russian)

Ethnic diversity in this case is also imagined through the idea of the cultural diversity of Moscow/Russia, which, at the same time, is not expressed in verbal form—the informant “remembers” different ethnic groups, and their number turns out to be so great that the informant uses the phrase “who else haven’t I offended yet”, indicating, in addition, the equality of these categories among themselves, which can be violated if one of these categories is not listed.

Another imaginary of ethnic diversity are the so-called “nationality lists”. Such “lists” are a way of imagining cultural diversity by referring to an existing material or immaterial “conclusion” about the current status quo of ethnic diversity. Such “lists” can be census data or, for example, information from Wikipedia.

Interviewer: *Can you please tell me, as you see it, people of what ethnicities live in Moscow? Both permanently and temporarily. You can list them directly.*

Informant: *It seems to me that there are many ethnic ones. Well, for me, it seems to me that practically all ethnic ones live in Russia. Oh, sorry, in Moscow. All ethnic ones that exist in Russia live in Moscow, let’s say. <...> I will simply list all the peoples that I know.*

Interviewer: *Well, let’s stop at 10, for example. <...>*

Informant: *Well, maybe, I don’t know... Let’s say, the rest, let’s say, everyone else. I’m just a little bit like that, because I looked at, like, data, well, censuses, how many*

people, what peoples live in Russia.

(Male, 20 years old, Ukhta, Komi, Belarusian, German)

Finally, geography is another type of imaginary of ethnic diversity. Ethnic diversity of a city/region/country is understood through references to maps, cardinal directions, regions and specific countries. And the diversity of Moscow in such a situation can be “mediated” by such images and, for example, imagined through the countries whose residents “inhabit” Moscow. With this approach, ethnic categories are most often designated by the name of the corresponding country—not “Uzbeks”, but “Uzbekistan”, not “Kazakhs”, but “Kazakhstan”, not “Tajiks”, but “Tajikistan”, etc. When diversity is imagined through regions, then such expressions as “from Asia”, “from Europe”, “from Africa”, etc. are used. If we are talking about cardinal directions, such expressions as “from the East”, “from the South”, “people of the North”, etc. are used. Let us give the following example of a geographical imaginary:

Interviewer: *So, what are we going to start with [in terms of describing which categories are closer to each other]?*

Informant: *I’ll just lay everything out like it is on the world map... How should they be laid out?*

Interviewer: *Who is similar to whom, who is closer to whom. So, Russians. Let’s go.*

Informant: *Now I’m just laying them out the way they are located in my head.*

Interviewer: *Okay, so who do we have? People from Belarus. Somewhere lower down, Kyrgyzstan. Then people from Ukraine. Then from Africa. From Turkmenistan. From Kazakhstan.*

(Male, 26 years old, Smolensk, Russian)

During the interview itself, the listed types of cartographic imaginaries can be expressed both verbally and by informants using gestures (for example, drawing maps in the air or on the table to show their own understanding of how ethnic diversity is organized).

More infrequent imaginaries are also encountered in interviews—for example, museums. The example below uses a map imaginary, a museum imaginary and other imaginaries (pictures) at the same time, with the museum in turn being a reference to the Darwin Museum, where, according to the informant, the existing ethnic diversity is “explained”:

Informant: *This has to do with geography. If you’ve been to the Darwin Museum, there are topics there about who we are, where we’re from, appearance. Even in our dorm, somewhere in Goroshkino, there’s a picture of girls with their nationalities at the bottom. What would Russian be [like], what would Ossetian be [like], what would... Uzbek, Tajik, all the girls are drawn there. This is not a topic about nationality, but about geography. It’s possible for one nationality to exist, but some look different. Why? Geography. People who live in the north have never seen the*

sun. What should they look like? They are Russian, but they look different. And it all comes from the fact that we all come from the same father [ancestor]. You can't tell the difference, but it's somehow interesting to know where you're from. I mean, this person lives in the mountains. They have a lot of mountains. Or they have some harsh place. The nature is harsh. They have a lot of horses. Even in Kyrgyzstan there are more horses than in the Caucasus. These people should look different. A person who is on a horse every day, they have a difficult land, what they eat there, drinking milk every day. Everything looks different for them. Again, everything comes together. The sun, the weather, nature, food. It all characterizes how a person looks.

(Male, 29, Palestine, Arab)

Through different imaginaries people imagine and interpret diversity in general, but for some people the desire to recognize and understand the ethnic diversity of the world/country/city is more significant for some reasons, as a result of which they develop, partly on the basis of disparate readings, partly—their own experience, their own theory of ethnicity. Such people, in the context of the literature devoted to “folk sociology”, can be called “folk ethnologists”. In the course of the study, the train of thought of an informant classified as a “folk ethnologist” was reconstructed.

The informant is 51 years old, he was born in Lugansk, identifies himself as a “Cossack”, “Russian” and “Ukrainian”, his profession (in his words) is “riskologist”. In general, it becomes clear from the interview that the informant is immersed in some historical and philosophical discourses (in particular, the ideas of Lev Gumilev, who is mentioned in the interview), through which he understands (imagines) the existing ethnic diversity. An important role in his reasoning is played by the concept of “cultural-historical identity”, which, according to the informant, is absorbed into human DNA and sooner or later manifests itself. At present, according to the informant, historical differences and national identity are being erased throughout the world, a certain common identity is being established, which the informant describes as “transhumanism”. In the conditions of such “mixing”, the key way to determine a person’s ethnicity is self-identification—“whatever a person calls themselves, that’s what they are” (moreover, most often people identify themselves, according to the informant, on the basis of “historical and cultural identity”, which is gradually disappearing). That is why the informant singles out clothing, behavior, and gait among the significant indicators of ethnic categories, since these indicators depend on a person’s self-identification:

Informant: *Ethnicity is, first of all, your personal awareness of who you are, because we have so many different bloodlines mixed in us.*

(Male, 51 years old, Ukraine, Cossack)

When the informant was shown elicitation stimuli, the absence of characteristic national clothing on the person in the video prompted the informant to think about a “common nationality”

and that the person was trying to “blend in the crowd”, “get away from his nationality”. He “does not agree with” phenotypic indicators, since modern “ethnogenesis trends” lead to “mixing of bloods”:

Informant: *Clothes, makeup, gait, behavior in the street. This primarily speaks about a person, about their identity. Everything else is secondary. Why? Because there are a lot of Metis, mulattos, from whom we cannot clearly say what nationality [they are].*

(Male, 51 years old, Ukraine, Cossack)

How are such “folk ethnologies” formed and why do people become “folk ethnologists” is a question that is beyond the scope of this study, but people who have their own—often eclectic and “plucked” from different sources—view on the problem of ethnicity, which, among other things, influences how they categorize people in everyday life, are not uncommon, and at least two more people were included in the sample who, with certain reservations, can be classified as “folk ethnologists”. It is important, however, to understand that such complex and verbalized ideas are a variation of general ideas about the nature of ethnicity, which—in one form or another—are present in every person and are a social phenomenon that organizes relationships between people and how people categorize other people in everyday life.

Foreigners’ Responses as a Model of Internalization of the Ethnicity Construction: Insights and Limitations

The text above had quotes, coming from interviews with people who have limited experience of life in Moscow and Russia in general and who are not very proficient in Russian (thus the quotes having mistakes in their English translations), that may have looked odd. However, including such informants in the design was a conscious methodological decision, the idea behind which was to see how the construction of ethnicity—categories, indicators, etc.—is “absorbed” in a situation where until recently knowledge about it was completely absent. Although all foreigners can be conditionally divided into those originating from countries of the near (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and other countries) and far (Palestine, Algeria, Haiti, China) abroad, the latter will be discussed in this section for the most part.

Such foreigners in most cases use a binary classification as a leading one, dividing people into “locals/Russians” and “foreigners”, and in some cases the first terms turn out to be synonymous with each other, since the meaning behind this classification seems to be a dichotomy between people for whom the context of life in Russia is familiar and people who have to master it:

Informant: *Well, there are two more people in front of him.*

Interviewer: *Ah, the ones walking?*

Informant: *Probably foreigners.*

Interviewer: *Yeah. So, by what criteria did you understand that they were foreigners?*

Informant: *The hair is also the one, like, a little bit. It's just the color, not racism.*

Interviewer: *No, everything is fine. It's just...*

Informant: *Yeah, like, black, I don't know. And the other one also looks like an Arab, Iran. Yeah. Middle East. So, we can't, like, say he's from Russia if you see his face. <...>*

Informant: *He doesn't seem to drink at all. Sorry. The one holding the drink? He's also Russian.*

Interviewer: *Also Russian?*

Informant: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *Well, does he look like the girl we were talking about in the headphones, for example?*

Informant: *No. Well, in my opinion... In my opinion, he is Russian from another region. Probably from Southern Russia.*

Interviewer: *Interesting. Why?*

Informant: *Well, when I was in Belgorod, I also met people, they are a little bit different from people from Northern. I visited St. Petersburg, I visited Kazan, and I visited Belgorod, and other cities in Russia. And like from each region. They changed a little bit like a face. East... Well, there is West, East... East part in Russia.*

(Male, 25 years old, Algeria, Arab)

The quote above shows how a binary classification can be made with further detailing of what specific ethnic category a person may belong to. This detailing is done on the basis of experiences gained during life in Moscow (and Russia). A striking and characteristic example of the inclusion of experience is the case of a girl who, when listing ethnic groups living in Moscow, named “Ryazan” (a city in Russia, which is absolutely never considered as an ethnic category) and “Tatar”, which she knows from her experience of watching figure skating, and two famous figure skaters whom she likes are representatives of these groups:

Informant: *I know how they're called in Mandarin, but in Russian... Tatarian?*

Interviewer: *Tatars. Maybe someone else?*

Informant: *I don't know, can we say it nowadays—Ukrainian?*

Interviewer: *Yes, you can. You said yourself that there are no bad people among nations. Therefore, you can.*

Informant: *Is this a nation? Ryazan?*

Interviewer: *It's a city. But maybe there is such a nation, I don't know. I don't know every one there is.*

Informant: *It seems to me that these are the only ones that have come to mind now.*

Interviewer: *And where did you hear about such a last nation, as you told me, Ryazan?*

Informant: *I am interested in figure skating, and a very famous figure skater, Trusova, goes from this city.*

Interviewer: *Got it, good. What are the distinguishing features of these nations? How do you distinguish Tatars from Russians, for example?*

Informant: *I know that Kamila Valieva is Tatar.*

Interviewer: *And how is she different from Russians?*

Informant: *Maybe the Tatarian is more... stronger?*

(Female, 21, China, Han)

In addition, as can be seen from the quote above, the girl had adopted the discourse, which can be associated with the current political situation, about the otherness of Ukrainians, so she did not know for sure whether it is possible to talk about this ethnic category publicly or even say it out loud. In addition, from the remark about the university, which will be given below, it becomes clear that not only her own life experience, but also the stories of teachers become part of her idea of ethnicity:

Informant: *I think she is Russian. After all, I noticed that many Russian girls wear hats of different colors. Our teacher at Moscow State University said that if this girl or this person is wearing the green hat, it is normal. But she must not be from China. After all, in China, if you wear a green hat, it is a symbol that your lover cheated on you, so in China we definitely do not wear green hats. <...> I think that most Russians may know that I am foreign, but I heard from the teacher that a few Russians who live in the Far East, they are a little similar to people who live in the East. If they are Russian, they may think that I am Russian. <...> After all, my teacher at Moscow State University said that in Russia, a man has an important place in society and in the family. Therefore, I think that the nation of Russians is inherited from the father.*

(Female, 21, China, Han)

Sometimes categories and their attributes arise in connection with the experience of traveling around Russia and meeting and communicating with representatives of various ethnic groups. A consequence of this is also the “inclusion” of categories in simpler categorizations that are unexpected for people accustomed to “lists of nationalities” or binary categorizations of people. One of the informants who recently arrived in Moscow actively used two or three of the “list” categories, and in cases where the stimuli did not fit the indicators of these categories that he had in mind, he got lost or used “larger” categories:

Informant: *Look, let's say there's a young man sitting here in a grey sweater, you see him reading a menu or something, I don't know [if that's a menu], he's holding a piece of paper in his hands. What ethnic group do you think he belongs to and why?*

Informant: *It will be similar to, well, like Tatarian, like Tajikistan, that's it.*

Interviewer: *Tajikistan?*

Informant: *Yes.*

Interviewer: *Why did you decide on that?*

Informant: *I have a Tajik friend, and he also, well, looks a little like him.*

Informant: *Yes. For example, I can say, in this...*

Interviewer: *Sweatshirt.*

Informant: *Yeah. It's a bit like those from... Dagestanian. Well, maybe he's Russian too, but he's not a Muscovite. A Muscovite doesn't dress like that.*

(Male, 25, Haiti, African American)

Another informant, who has lived in Moscow for 7 years, has a more detailed understanding of ethnic categories (the differences between Armenians and Georgians, Tajiks and Uzbeks, etc.), and also actively applies his contextual knowledge of Moscow in the process of categorization (for example, that “only Uzbeks work at Rostic’s [the Russian equivalent of KFC]”).

It is also important that not only categories are mastered, but also the entire construction of ethnicity, including metacategories that designate ethnic categories as a whole and serve as a way to “switch on” the corresponding “libraries”. Communication breakdowns in interviews with informants who otherwise understood what the interviewers wanted from them clearly demonstrate the thesis about the high contextuality of ethnic categorizations, into which foreigners are socialized—with effort and not without problems:

Interviewer: *So, in the province where you grew up, people of what ethnicity lived there?*

Informant: *People of what...*

Interviewer: *Which ethnic groups?*

Informant: *Sorry, I didn't understand this word.*

Interviewer: *Ethnic groups? [Looked at the Russian-Chinese translator]*

Informant: *There are 56 provinces in China. And in my province, more people belong to the Han. There are the largest groups in China. But in my province, there are also Maya. That's in Mandarin. I don't know what it's called in Russian. Maya. And these are people who belong to this nation <...> For example, my name is [name] in Chinese. But people who belong to this nation, they can have a name in this [“their own”] language.*

(Female, 21, China, Han)

Once, the informant even tried to start using the terms used by the interviewer, which, given his imperfect knowledge of the language, turned out to be rather artificial, so he then switched to the word “nation”, which was more familiar to him:

Interviewer: *But in general, if we talk about Moscow, what ethnic groups live in Moscow?*

Informant: *I can say, well, first of all, Russians, Tatars, also Belarussians, these people. Well, yes, also, you know, in Moscow, this is where... They always say that Moscow is like Europe, yes. And, in general, in Russia... this is one of the countries where more different, how to say, different ethnic nationalities can meet, yes. <...>*

So, and this is mixed French and Spanish, for example. So, and that's why we have Haiti, I can say, nations from Africa, and also people from France and Spain.
(Male, 25, Haiti, African American)

It is also interesting that—in cases where the informants' Russian language skills are not confident—at the word-formation level the method of “forming” ethnic categories derived from the word “Russian”. Many such informants in interviews said not “Belarus”, but “Belarussian”, not “Tatars”, but “Tatarian”, etc. It seems that such a remark, although primarily indicating an insufficient mastery of the Russian language, also allows us to look differently at the construction of ethnicity in Moscow, namely at the “model nature” of “Russians/locals/Russians”, which serve as a referent category in categorizations and, probably, within the framework of other processes.

Thus, foreigners who have recently arrived in Russia and are learning the construction of ethnicity and the skills of orientation in social space and ethnic categorization from scratch are indeed a useful case in understanding how ethnicity is internalized in general, including in childhood, and then turns out to be a “natural” reality. Sources of information—interactions in the place of residence, travel, experts and teachers, the media, as well as patterns of assimilation of this information—all this is presumably relevant for mastering the construction of ethnicity at any age, as well as any other social facts. In the case of foreigners, this process turns out to be shorter and can be reflected upon by them themselves. It is not without reason that one of the foreign informants compared his learning of ethnicity in Russia with learning a computer model:

Informant: *And I was at the exhibition, there was a girl there too, I said, “Where are you from?” She said, “From Omsk.” And I understood.*

Interviewer: *Now someone else has appeared in the picture.*

Informant: *We study machine learning. We see, we learn, we see, we learn. That's it.*
(Male, 29, Palestine, Arab)

Research into how recently migrated foreigners categorize in everyday life, to the extent that this approach partly allows us to model the internalization of categories in general and partly to highlight some important aspects of the specific construction of ethnicity, seems to be possible and necessary to be continued.

The Construction of Ethnicity in Moscow—Other Attributes: Reproduced and Single-Instance

How are categories and indicators—which are the attributes of categories that allow us to “recognize” representatives of ethnic categories during spontaneous categorization—included in a

wider network of attributes of ethnic categories, which together form the so-called construction of ethnicity in Moscow? The primary attributes (in addition to indicators) are characteristics—generalized qualities of representatives of the category, and norms—rules of behavior in interaction with representatives of the category (or as such). Secondary attributes include those related to the categories of history, historical figures and modern figures, places and territories, time, etc. Below, an “audit” of such attributes will be conducted to the extent that they were mentioned by informants, while attributes can be reproduced from interview to interview, or they can be unique, existing in the imagination of a specific person. Reproducible attributes are less common, which suggests that in the current design (which, however, was not centered on this issue) “data filling” did not occur, and this fragment of the report should be perceived as a sketch for a full description of the ethnicity structure in Moscow. Nevertheless, based on the data, we can say the following.

The most common characteristics of ethnic categories include the following: “Caucasians”—“aggressive”, “Tatars”—“sly/cunning”, “Belarus”—“neat”, “Kazakhs”—“hardworking”. Among the characteristics mentioned once, for example: “Tajiks”—“honest”, “Kazakhs”—“stupid”, “Uzbeks”—“inappropriate”, etc. Ideas containing such characteristics are formed partly on the basis of “discourse” and partly on personal experience of interaction with representatives of the corresponding categories. However, it is rarely possible to empirically “untangle” which characteristic contains more of what (even specific personal experience is ultimately made “discursive”). Nevertheless, it is sometimes possible to link the emergence of characteristics with specific situations and periods in a person’s life. In the following excerpt, a woman who has lived most of her life in Kazakhstan talks about Kazakhs:

Informant: *And Kazakhstan residents, especially those of Kazakh nationality, love to show off their status, there will definitely be 3 million rings on, everything that is in the house, what was inherited from grandma, what the husband bought recently—all of this should be on you. Now it's less so, but when we were leaving, there was a lot of it. Kazakhs even have their own saying, it's so funny, but it's really true: “A Kazakh without show-off is a Kazakh you don't show off”.*

(Female, 38 years old, Kazakhstan, Slavic)

Attributes of the norm, which are closely related to the characteristics, are encountered in the informants’ narratives much less frequently than attributes of the characteristic. Moreover, these attributes are practically not reproduced from one interview to another. Here is an example of such a characteristic-norm pair—personal and mentioned only once—related to the category “Vietnamese”. An informant working in the trade sector formed a normative “correction” in his own behavior in

business interactions with representatives of this category:

Interviewer: *You said that they told you, say, that the people were from Vietnam, but when you looked at them, how important is it for you to determine that he was from there?*

Informant: *It's important because they don't give in on the price. It's very difficult to negotiate the price with them.*

Interviewer: *Who are you talking about now?*

Informant: *With the Vietnamese.*

Interviewer: *Does anyone else you work with have this trait?*

Informant: *No, no. This is really typical. If, for example, you are walking around the center of Moscow, you liked some clothes, there are two stalls. The Vietnamese and any other nation, if they both artificially priced the clothes to be 1000 rubles [10 USD], I will know that there is no point in haggling with the Vietnamese. [If] they say 1000 rubles, they will not lower it.*

Interviewer: *Super interesting. So for you, this directly determines your behavior?*

Informant: *They are very responsible, but the boys won't come to an agreement with them.*

(Male, 29 years old, Makhachkala, Avar)

As with norms, secondary attributes of ethnic categories are mentioned quite rarely—places and territories, histories, historical figures and contemporary figures. The latter include the connection of “Chechens” with the figure of the head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov, “Tatars” with the figure of the Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva and, once, “Arabs” with the figure of the actress Zendaya. As for the attributes of places and territories, they were mentioned only in a few interviews. The informant who in the quote above moderates his interaction with the Vietnamese in a special way also connects some places in Moscow with ethnic categories:

Informant: *Even if, roughly speaking, if we divide Moscow into sectors, then if we take, for example, Moscow-City, there are a lot of Caucasians there.*

Interviewer: *Caucasians?*

Informant: *A lot of Caucasians, yes. If we go to Sadovod, no, to the “Moscow” shopping mall, there are a lot of Chinese and Vietnamese there. I was there yesterday, there were a ton of Vietnamese there. <...>*

Interviewer: *And where are there other sectors?*

Informant: *Well, like, kind of popular, of course, you can also say, for where, for example, only Dagestanis gather, for example. For example... Coffeemia on Bolshaya Nikitskaya [street].*

Interviewer: *Yes, yes, I have heard this opinion too.*

Informant: *This is not an opinion, this is a fact. It's indeed so. By the way, this is a very interesting topic, I even thought about it. Why, for example, is it important for the Dagestanis, the Caucasus, to gather somewhere. We are from the villages, we have a godekan. Do you know what a godekan is? We have a godekan, and we needed a similar place in Moscow. And so it happened to be that exact Coffeemia. Why Coffeemia? 24/7, inexpensive and in central Moscow.*

(Male, 29 years old, Makhachkala, Avar)

In the given example, a certain space in Moscow is attributed to three ethnic categories (Caucasians, Dagestanis, Vietnamese). In the case of the Coffeemia restaurant, the mechanism behind this attribution is explained and it is claimed that this place was purposefully chosen by representatives of the category “Dagestanis” as a meeting place. Finally, the attribute associated with stories is divided into two types: general stories (for example, historical narratives) and personal stories (series of events from the lives of informants). General stories were rare in the study. Among those, the reign of Ivan the Terrible (in connection with the category of “Tatars”) and V. Putin’s statement about “combat Buryats” (in connection with the category of “Buryats”) were mentioned once. Specific stories about a representative of any ethnic category were told by informants quite often, having positive or negative connotations. Stories can acquire the status of a norm if they affected a person’s behavior:

Informant: *I am a little afraid of Caucasians and Chechens. <...> A couple of times a Chechen almost [beat me up] because I was playing the guitar in the house yard. A couple of times I had a conflict with a Chechen, and that also left a mark. He somehow unconsciously blocks my further intentions to interact with his fellow countrymen, so to speak.*

Interviewer: *It turns out that during this time, while you were quote-unquote “communicating”, you managed to determine that he was indeed a Chechen?*

Informant: *Yes, he looked very much like Ramzan Akhmatovich [Kadyrov].*

(Male, 20 years old, Belarus, Belarusian)

These were some of the other attributes of ethnic categories that emerged from the study, and it is clear how densely “networked” categories and different types of attributes, including indicators, are: informants see a stimulus, determine its categorical affiliation using indicators, and then various kinds of representations (characteristics, norms, places, stories, people) are “strung” onto a category, shaping the idea of the stimulus and influence interaction with it.

Ethnicization or de-ethnicization: the relevance of ethnic categorization in Moscow for informants

As was said in the “methodology” section, one of the limitations of the study (though “traditional” for most studies of ethnicity) is the so-called ethnicization of the research design. A study designed to research ethnicity, in one way or another, focuses its participants on this topic, as a result of which it is difficult to determine how central or peripheral the studied subjects are to a

person's life. This fragment will provide some considerations on this topic, based partly on a generalization of the informants' reflections on the importance of ethnic categories in everyday life in Moscow, and partly on an analysis of indirect signs from interviews.

Opinions on the importance of ethnic categorization in a large city in general and in Moscow in particular were mixed. Some informants said that the city erases the distinction between ethnic categories, making them invisible. According to this narrative, people in the city eventually come to a single common denominator in terms of appearance and train of thought. Interestingly, such statements were more often made by informants who identified themselves as "Russians" or had lived in Moscow for a long time. Moreover, they not only acknowledge the disappearance of ethnic differences in the capital, but also reflect on the possible reasons for this:

Informant: *Listen, Moscow is a certain megalopolis, where everything is mixed up and people change, adapt to this rhythm of life, they become Muscovites, this is really so, people change, their life sets into rhythm, relationships. If a person used to treat something this way, then they can change their mind. They adapt to this life. It is a huge megalopolis, which simply swallows people, their personality, identification. And people become sort of a big common mass, in many ways faceless...*

(Male, 51 years old, Ukraine, Cossack)

What are the signs of such unification, from the informants' point of view? These include a certain manner of dress and behavior. In this regard, as an important category "Muscovites"/"Russians"/"locals" who know the city, behave confidently, and look appropriate to the context, stand out:

Interviewer: *And what about the young guy in the jacket?*

Informant: *This is also ours, I think. [laughs]*

Interviewer: *And "ours" is..?*

Informant: *Russian, Muscovite. Frankly, I am absolutely sure that Moscow, like any city, is very large, it very quickly unifies people. And, as Famusov said: "All Muscovites have a special imprint." I think he is a Muscovite or a person who has lived in Moscow for a very long time.*

Interviewer: *Can you differentiate, for example, a Russian from Moscow and a Russian from, say, Tyumen?*

Informant: *Probably, yes. By the way they speak, the way they dress, the way they behave. In Moscow, I think, people are more reserved.*

Interviewer: *I think the common notion is that, on the contrary, they are hastier.*

Informant: *Well, hastier, yes, but reserved in terms of emotions.*

(Female, 62 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Other informants are of the opinion that Moscow, on the contrary, emphasizes ethnic

differences. In this case, the special role of the megalopolis is also noted, but it actualizes the division of people into ethnic categories. Moreover, such a narrative in the sample was encountered mainly among people from other countries and regions. As an example, the case in which one of the informants notes that in Moscow he has to obey the already established “gameplay rules”, that is, study and see the differences between individual categories:

Informant: *Because it is a fact. I can't help but look at it. <...> Yes, I can't change the people who live here. I can, that's why I go, as I choose, what is, because it wasn't me who divided Tatars from the Caucasus. Many nationalities live in Russia. That's good and excellent. They are friends with each other. In my homeland, too, there are many nationalities, but we have never distinguished between them. That is, whoever lives with us is also ours. For example, we have... I started to consider this later. When I lived there, there were Kurds, Armenians, and Chechens. This is there, in my area. But we never said, "Oh, you're Circassian", "Oh, you're Armenian." Never.*

(Male, 29, Palestine, Arab)

Moreover, the capital is not only capable of actualizing the view of people on ethnic categories, but also changing the main category of human identification. Some informants reflect on such a change. For example, this is how an informant from Tajikistan, born in a “mixed” Russian-Tajik family, speaks about such “recategorization”:

Interviewer: *And what do you consider yourself to be? The dad is Tajik, the mom is Russian.*

Informant: *Well, I don't know. All my friends called me Russian in Tajikistan, but here they call me Tajik. I don't know.*

Interviewer: *Why is that?*

Informant: *I don't know. I always thought that I didn't really look like a Tajik. I always...when I came, I... I said that I was a Tajik, and everyone said, well, you can tell. Well, alright. <...>*

Informant: *Ah, about ethnicity. Well, I thought I was Russian when I was in Dushanbe, I came here, I realized that I am Tajik, I am not Russian at all.*

Interviewer: *You had a realization.*

Informant: *Yes. But I thought I was Russian mainly because of my friends and those around me, they called me Russian.*

(Male, 19 years old, Tajikistan, Tajik)

Thus, the sample presents two discourses on the relevance of ethnic categories in the city. The first discourse indicates the unifying and de-ethnicizing role of the capital. The second discourse, on the contrary, points to the actualization of ethnic categories in the city, to the relevance of the ethnic framework and everyday ethnic categorization.

But is it possible—based on indirect indicators—to draw a conclusion about the relevance of

ethnic classifications in the lives of informants, about the extent to which they themselves use the ethnic framework in life? In this respect, the cases also differ. Some informants were surprised by the topic of the interview itself, they admitted that this is not something they think about on a regular basis:

Informant: *But they also have a lot of different ethnic groups there. So I just don't know, I'm not an expert.*

Interviewer: *I know, yes, I understand, but still it turns out that they all look very similar to each other. This Easter-looking people, they can be combined.*

Informant: *If I had prepared, I probably would have been able to tell the difference, but that's how I am...*

Interviewer: *And that's the most interesting thing. You go outside, it turns out, look around and you don't need a textbook.*

Informant: *Well, I don't really need to look at who is who.*

(Female, 73 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Typically, however, the ethnicity of the informant is background, not key, but sometimes (in some reproduced situations and contexts) relevant knowledge. In particular, this may concern teachers and their interactions with students who represent different ethnic categories:

Interviewer: *That's all for the video for now. How difficult was it to determine ethnicity?*

Informant: *No, it's not difficult, but, honestly, I rarely do it for myself. It's like I don't particularly... Probably because my students are of all different nationalities, and I also worked abroad, because various children studied at the embassy school. There were Korea, Cuba, Brazil, Africa, America, and France. <...> That's why I had to communicate, and in general, I understood that it didn't interfere with my work, let's say.*

Interviewer: *Got it. Now here's a question. Can you please name the ethnicities of people who, in your opinion, live in Moscow? Both permanently and temporarily. Can you list some key ones?*

Informant: *Well, like, Russians live in Moscow. Tatars. Chechens. I'll go through the classes, who lives in Moscow permanently. So, Azerbaijanis. So, Americans live in Moscow. I know Poles who live in Moscow permanently.*

(Female, 62 years old, Moscow, Russian)

There were, however, informants about whom one could conclude that the ethnicity of partners in everyday interactions turns out to be the main interpretative framework, the “key” to understanding people. Thus, one of the informants, who categorized stimuli in detail and on the basis of witty indicators, described his life trajectory in detail in the biographical part of the interview, from which it became clear that in life he “bets” on understanding people, and at least one of the important tools for this understanding is ethnic classification:

Informant: *I visited Kazakhstan, I noticed such a difference between the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz. The gap is huge, although they are one people. But the Kyrgyz are more sociable, more indifferent, they will always help you. The Kazakhs are more reserved. <...>*

Interviewer: *And with whom... for 7 years, I just... 7 years is a lot, whom were you friends with? Who was in your circle? Well, communication-wise.*

Informant: *95% are Kazakhs.*

Interviewer: *Your friends?*

Informant: *Yes. I got to know them, how they eat. First of all, I should say, a Kazakh invited me to his home, and I just crawled out here.*

Interviewer: *So, some kind of hospitality.*

Informant: *Very much so. Like the Tajiks. They'll pour you tea little by little, so you drink it constantly. They'll feed you pilaf, beshbarmak, cake, then they'll give you some burusaks, then they'll say, let's eat some more salad, and then another dish, and you can't eat any more. And we also had lamb cooked in a tandoor for 12 hours.*

Interviewer: *Well, accordingly, for free, not for anything, they just want to share.*

Informant: *If you come up to them and say, well, I want to eat at the tandoor shop, they will say, like, give me three samosas and a Coca-Cola.*

Interviewer: *And are Russians in Kazakhstan the same?*

Informant: *They're not. Russians, there are no Russians there. I noticed right away, if a Russian sees a Russian, they go the other way. "He'll come up to me now, ask for something, no, don't need that." <...>*

Informant: *I even had a good year, of course, in 2019, when I met Tajiks who work in the kitchen in the area. And the finished stuff that they prepared in the morning, they were like, "Our religion does not allow us to throw it away." I said, "Yes, food should not be thrown away at all, I was taught that too." And they were just like, "Take it." So for a whole year I, in short, only ate their food. <...>*

Interviewer: *It turns out that for you it is very important, well, it is important what nationality a person is, in order to understand, well, what...*

Informant: *Yes. Including in order to... How to approach them, how to start communication with them.*

Interviewer: *Did it become particularly relevant in Moscow or do you use it everywhere in general?*

Informant: *I realized that it would work everywhere. Everywhere, no matter what environment you were in.*

Interviewer: *To find an approach to a person, among other things?*

Informant: *You need to understand the person. You watch and you communicate. You wouldn't go up to a Chinese person and start joking with them like you would with a Russian.*

(Male, 28 years old, Ulyanovsk, Russian)

For some categories of informants, in addition, in contrast to the informant described above, ethnic categorization itself may not be a favorite practice, some categories or oppositions may be important, and categorization on their basis may be carried out constantly. In a typical case, we are talking about foreigners whose category of identification is different from "Russian", and who in everyday life spontaneously "recognize" people who can be attributed to "their" category. At the

same time, foreigners from distant countries can “pick out” other such foreigners from the surrounding reality—without reference to any country.

In general, however, it can be restated that ethnic categorizations, while not being a universal and commonly used “key” to interpreting reality, are background knowledge for the informants, which—in connection with certain contextual factors and triggers—can be actualized, and ethnicization can occur. How exactly this process is structured, in response to which triggers this knowledge and framework are actualized, and how this is connected with people’s biographies, the contexts in which they find themselves immersed, and other factors—is a question for future research.

Conclusions and discussion

Given that ethnicity in Moscow is only one of the categorization frameworks, actual spontaneous categorization predominantly uses binary or ternary categorization: “Slavs”/“locals”/“Russians” are opposed to “foreigners”/“Southerners”/“migrants”, and the latter category is “split” so that within it the categories of “Caucasians” and “Asians” are distinguished. At the same time, the discourse on ethnic diversity (understood through the metacategory of “nationality”) presupposes a more detailed, “list-like” classification of people, which informants also try to apply, but often do not have sufficient indicator tools for such a detailed categorization. As a result, the actual categories that people use when categorizing lie between binary-ternary and “list” categorizations.

Various indicators are used for categorization—facial features/body structure, clothing/style, language/accent, as well as so-called contextual indicators that “link” the ethnicity of stimuli to people they are with where the event is taking place and what ethnic categories are most common in this location. These indicators are also partially “borrowed from discourse”, as a result of which informants often admit that their generalizations are unfounded. Moreover, informants determine the ethnic categories of stimuli based on a set of indicators that they themselves often cannot reflect on, and in such a situation they say that they use “intuition” when classifying.

Informants who have “experienced Moscow” generally categorize in a more or less similar way based on binary or ternary categorization. This speaks to the stability of categorization, to the fact that this categorization (as well as the desire to use “list” categories, and “inclusions” of categories that do not fit into any of the “large categories”) in terms of categories and indicators is a stable social fact that, as interviews with foreigners from distant countries demonstrate, is mastered quite quickly in the course of socialization in Moscow environment.

Moreover, as a basic element of any ethnicity construction, this categorization—due to indicators that allow one to recognize representatives of the category in everyday life, and other attributes that “suggest” the peculiarities of behavioral strategies towards a person as a representative of the category—regulates a certain part of everyday interactions. Which part is that and for whom it is regulated? The relevance of ethnic categorizations varies from person to person and interaction to interaction; there were informants for whom ethnicity was perceived as a “key” to a person, and, accordingly, the ability to spontaneously determine this affiliation turned out to be critically important; however, there were also informants for whom this frame was not perceived as “heuristic”, and it was obvious that in everyday life they did not use this frame very often, although

they were familiar with categories, indicators, and other attributes.

How is ethnicity thought and imagined? To give a general answer to this question, we need to combine the results of two fragments: the first is devoted to the thought processes (schemes) used in categorization, and the second is devoted to imaginaries. Let us try to carry out this synthesis. When categorization is necessary (what it is connected with and what triggers cause it—these questions go beyond the scope of the study and the approach used, but these questions are important), there happens something that, by analogy with programming, can be very approximately referred to as “loading an ethnic library”. This “library” includes the ethnicizing perspective itself (that is, the notion that people should be considered from the position of their ethnicity), the categories in relation to each other, and the variety of information related to the categories (including indicators). As stated earlier, in Moscow there are two such categorizations—the “list of nationalities” and the binary/ternary one. Usually, the first step was to initiate categorization using the “list” classification, which was familiar to informants from various sources of information that they consider to have authority (statistical reference books, textbooks, Wikipedia), but the next step was to find indicators that would allow the stimulus to be linked to a specific category. Sometimes these indicators were sufficient, and then categorization was carried out; sometimes they were not, and then the informant turned to the binary/ternary categorization. Sometimes, however, this latter categorization was used from the very beginning. The actual indicators that were used were apparently different from those that were named out loud, although informants often said directly that they could not understand why they categorized in one way or another and that they categorized “in general”. Sometimes, in addition, informants said that they were actually comparing either with a generalized image in their head or with a specific person, a “representative” of the ethnic category. In the latter case, Ramzan Kadyrov was mentioned more than once or twice in relation to the category of “Chechens”. When the results of categorization are recognized as valid by the informant, other information contained in the library regarding the corresponding category “surfaces”. In general, thus, actual categorization is a kind of shuttle movement between social imaginaries that allow one to interpret human diversity and specific cognitive categorization actions (for example, comparison with a generalized image or with specific people). Due primarily to indicators, social imaginaries are linked to observable reality (in particular, stimuli in categorization tasks). Further detailing of this complex system and its structure is a question of further research at the intersection of sociology, “responsible” for imaginaries and the mechanisms of their production and maintenance, and cognitive science, specializing in the process of direct interpretation/categorization of reality.

The study of the entire “path” of categorization, from immediate mental operations (and perhaps even their neurophysiological level) to the social imaginaries of ethnicity and the entire social machinery of ethnic production, is an important and ambitious task in the field of ethnic studies, segmented by disciplines. An important aid in this direction has been the development of a special set of methods, which—when combined within the framework of this study—have proven to be a useful way of looking at the object of study. Video-elicitation and classificatory walks (both rare and previously unused in ethnicity research methods), combined with conventional interviews and work with cards, have made it possible—to the extent that sociological methods allow—on the one hand to place the subject in a situation of spontaneous categorization, and on the other to provide a contrast with discursive reality. A detailed description of the research procedure makes this methodology alienable.

The main methodological limitations of the study are, firstly, that the methods used only allow informants to approach the situation of spontaneous categorizations, but do not place them in such situations naturally; moreover, to the extent that the interview began with questions about ethnic categories, these methods are only of limited use in identifying the actual relevance of ethnic categorizations for informants and when and in what situations ethnic categorization is “switched on” for them, and in what situations it does not. It is also important that these methods only allow us to speak indirectly about the cognitive process of ethnic categorization, as a result of which the reasoning presented above is rather speculation that should be discussed with experts in cognitive science. However, to the extent that there are only a limited number of studies that pose similar questions, much less use similar methods, the methodology and results of the study have both scientific novelty and importance in creating an interdisciplinary explanation of the phenomenon of ethnicity.

The last point that remains is to try to answer the question of why the ethnicity structure in Moscow is the way it is and thereby formulate hypotheses for future research and discussion. As follows from the results of the study, people socialized in the “Moscow social life” and, accordingly, the ethnicity structure, have two categorical frameworks in their heads at the same time—one is the vernacularized official classification by nationalities, the second is the binary/ternary classification. The roots of the first should be sought in the Soviet national policy, which placed nationalities at the foundation of the state structure and, through the passport system, “tied” people to these categories. The nationalities themselves, “collected” in the 19th century by linguists and anthropologists as series of “ethnographic facts”, due to this policy were granted a second life and firmly entrenched themselves in the collective ideas of the inhabitants of the USSR

(and subsequently Russia) about what “types of people” there are, living in the country. Russian national policy has come as a continuation of the Soviet policy by momentum of the latter, and the images of nationalities, as well as their unity, have continued to be broadcast within its framework. As a result, rather on the periphery of the consciousness of a Russian citizen, the idea has settled that people are divided into nations that differ in appearance and behavior. This framework of understanding, set by official notions, however, although influential and authoritative (most Russians do not consider themselves specialists in ethnic issues and prefer to “delegate” understanding of this issue to scholars and public figures who reproduce the structure according to which nations live in Russia), is far from being always vital and convenient for everyday situations: in some cases ethnicity is not an important factor that structures social life, but in some cases it is of importance, organized, however, via a different set of ethnic categories, some of which correspond to the official ones, while some do not. Moscow is a special case in this sense. Residents of Moscow know the classification by nationalities, but they do not particularly need it in life, because it has almost no practical meaning for a resident of Moscow whether a person is a Buryat or a Yakut, an Avar or a Lak. But the dichotomous categorization Slav–Southerner does have a “practical application”. The former speak their native Russian, the latter do not, the former are atomic, the latter are collective, etc., and such framework and not always functional (however related to reality) ideas structure the behavior of people in Moscow. For approximately the same reasons, the category of “Southerner” is “split” into “the Caucasus” and “Asia”. The former are perceived as hot-tempered entrepreneurs with whom one must be rather careful, the latter—as disenfranchised, unresponsive “guest workers” who can be “adapted” to build a dacha¹⁰. Such ideas are widespread among the “Slavs”, who in this categorization turn out to be “everyone else” or “ordinary people” with no cultural specificity, but “Southerners” do also absorb and interpret in their own way the categorization existing in the Moscow ethnicity construction. It is also important, however, that these categories are connected with “functional” indicators—“Slavs”, albeit with errors (and, perhaps, not on the basis of the features that informants told us about), can really be distinguished from “Southerners”, as well as “Caucasians”—from “Asians”, as a result this categorization is constantly “trained” and becomes one of the “functional” interpretations of reality. However, this categorization has not received its own authoritative and popular descriptive language, and as a result, when it comes to ethnic differences, a resident of Moscow finds themselves “sandwiched” between it and the significantly more authoritative, but less “functional” classifications of Soviet nationalities. And it is precisely at the junction of the first and second that

¹⁰ Country house or plot of land, weekend/holiday home.

they speak and think about ethnic differences and interpret the surrounding reality.

This study is innovative and experimental in many ways—for the first time the video-elicitation method is used to study ethnicity; thematically, it is located at the still poorly developed frontier of social sciences “leaning towards” cognitive science; its results describe a number of ideas rarely encountered in other empirical studies (imaginaries of ethnic diversity, folk ethnologies of ethnicity). As a result, the report turned out to be voluminous and multidirectional. The further plan is to prepare several more “classical” articles on its basis, devoted to the video-elicitation method, categorization in Moscow, indicators, and imaginaries of ethnic diversity. However, the main purpose of this report being published at this stage is communicative. The authors will be grateful if it becomes the field for discussion by the scholars and experts of different disciplines, and above all—sociologists and cognitive scientists.

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Appendice

Appendix 1—Example of a guide (walking sequence—no-stimulus)

Introduction:

“Hello, my name is [*researcher’s name*] and I study/work at [*study/work place*]. I am interested in how people perceive each other. The interview is anonymous, which means that only my supervisor and I will watch/listen to this recording, and any excerpts from the interview will be provided only in a form that eliminates any indication of the speaker. If that’s okay, let’s get started.”

Block 1

Let’s talk a little about you. Where and when were you born? How old are you? Tell us about your family. What did your parents do as their job? Where did you finish school? Did you study after school? Did you live anywhere else? People of which ethnicities lived in the place where you grew up [*ask about each context separately*]? In what ways were they different from each other? What were the relationships between them? What ethnic group did you consider yourself to belong to and do you consider yourself belonging to it now? What category do people determine you to be here, in Moscow? How long have you lived in Moscow? Where do you live, what areas and places do you visit?

Block 2

Okay, let’s get started: as we walk, I will point out people, and you will need to guess what ethnic group, in your opinion, the people belong to. Please name them however you would normally name them. Please, also explain your choice.

[Point to the passers-by, ask about each one: 1) who are they in terms of ethnic category and 2) what signs helped the informant to pinpoint it. If the informant has doubts (for example, the person passed by too quickly), ask what they would like to focus on in order to draw a conclusion about what ethnic category the passer-by belongs to. In parallel, draw free-form conclusions about how the informant classifies people, and ask clarifying questions].

Block 3

People of which ethnicities, permanently or temporarily, live in Moscow? [*while the informant speaks, write down or remember all the named categories*] Do you usually differentiate passers-by by ethnicity? How do you determine it, what are their distinctive features? What do you pay attention to? [*The informant lists the categories, the task is to determine whether they differentiate these categories from each other, by what criteria, sample text: “You said that there are also Uzbeks in Moscow. How are they different from Tajiks to you? Do you differentiate Indians and Pakistanis from each other, by what features? Who do [*representatives of ethnic category*] resemble?”*].

Let's now try to range the residents of Moscow you named, who is similar to whom, who is closer to whom. Please say out loud how exactly you divide them [*determine the logic the informants use to distribute people into groups, how these groups differ from each other; how the informants name these groups*].

Block 4

Two last (but not least) questions. Imagine the situation—representatives of *category 1* and *category 2* [*ethnic categories mentioned by the informant in the interview*] have had a child. What do you think the child's ethnicity is? Why? And the second question. Imagine that there is a family where the father and mother are *category 1*, they have a child; when this child is less than a week old, the family get into a car accident, both parents are killed, and the child survives. The child is then adopted and raised by the father's best friend, he's *category 2*. The child was raised in the new family to be equal with the biological children of the father's best friend, learned the language of *category 2*. What do you think the child ethnicity is? And finally, how important are ethnic groups [*belonging to them*] in your life?

Appendix 2—Sample Interview with Video-elicitation

Moscow

Informant is female, 62 years old, has higher pedagogical education, works as a physics and astronomy teacher in a Moscow school. Born in Moscow, never moved. Identifies herself as “Russian”.

The research group member found the informant through a close relative who worked at the school. The informant agreed to meet the interviewer during her free time (school break) at her workplace. The interview took place in the school physics room.

Interviewer [0:00:02] ...from videos, from pictures, and so on. And, actually, in the first part of the interview I will show you a video. And I have a request: tell me what ethnic group do the people in the video belong to and why you decided that.

Informant [0:00:13] What ethnic groups are there? Let’s start with that.

Interviewer [0:00:17] What do you think? That’s the whole point.

Informant [0:00:21] Look, I spent three days supervising the CSE¹¹, the USE¹² and everything else.

Interviewer [0:00:27] No, you don’t [need to] look. Just from your memories. Purely based on the associations of the task.

Informant [0:00:31] No, but what are they called correctly?

Interviewer [0:00:38] You can use wrong names. We study people’s perceptions. That’s what’s important.

Informant [0:00:43] No, well, okay. What ethnic groups do we have, in general?

Interviewer [0:00:46] Let’s think about it.

Informant [0:00:51] Oh, you want a lot from me.

Interviewer [0:00:57] You can just list it simply as you think about them. It may not be correct, but it doesn’t matter.

Informant [0:01:06] Ah, Mordvins, Ukraine, right?

Interviewer [0:01:09] Yeah, in that vein.

Informant [0:01:13] Are Slavs an ethnic group or what?

Interviewer [0:01:16] It’s up to you to decide. Everyone thinks differently. So, can we

¹¹ Compulsory State Exam—the exam for students of the 9th grade in Russia, which results in being able to graduate the compulsory level of schooling.

¹² Unified State Exam—the exam for students of the 11th grade in Russia, the results of which are used to apply for higher education.

start?

Informant [0:01:27] Let's try.

Interviewer [0:01:29] Look, the girl in the video, the one wearing a hat. What do you think? What ethnic group might she belong to? And why do you think so?

Informant [0:01:41] To Moscow one. [Laughs]

Interviewer [0:01:43] Okay, why Moscow?

Informant [0:01:44] No, I'm joking. Well, probably some Caucasian ethnic group.

Interviewer [0:01:52] Yeah, why?

Informant [0:01:56] Dark hair. Or maybe something mixed. Maybe mom is Russian, dad is Caucasian. Or vice versa. Or Tatar. Okay. Armenian. That is, somewhere, you know, different like that.

Interviewer [0:02:20] In general, are Tatars and Armenians different in any way?

Informant [0:02:23] Of course. And in terms of appearance, and, well, basically, nose, eyes. That is, surely you won't confuse an Armenian that is in front of you with a Tatar.

Interviewer [0:02:36] But is she still an Armenian or a Tatar?

Informant [0:02:41] No, neither Armenian nor Tatar. I would say more of a Chechen.

Interviewer [0:02:47] What are the characteristics of the Chechens?

Informant [0:02:50] God knows. Like, you know... Something eastern. Azerbaijani. Somewhere over there.

Interviewer [0:03:00] Okay. There's a man in a blue jacket.

Informant [0:03:10] A man in a blue jacket. You know, you can't tell by his appearance. He could be Slavic. He could be Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian. And maybe, by the way, from Kazan.

Interviewer [0:03:33] Why Kazan?

Informant [0:03:35] Tatars can be red-haired and fair. Absolutely. And there are a lot of them in Moscow now, a lot. So I don't know. That is, you can't tell if he's a Slav or... I can't say. Well, he looks more like... I can definitely say that he smokes and drinks. At least he likes beer. Their face becomes somehow, you know, it's similar and the same. The ethnicity of beer lovers. I wouldn't be surprised if he takes off his jacket, he'll have a beer belly.

Interviewer [0:04:07] Maybe. But what about this guy?

Informant [0:04:11] Well, this guy too. Either Slav, or Balt. Or, well, something, yeah.

Interviewer [0:04:19] How are the Balts different from the Slavs?

Informant [0:04:23] They probably have a lighter... Look, it's hard to say. You know,

Plaksina, would you say that she's Estonian? That is, she has... You have to, when you talk to a person, communicate, she's calm. That is, she's a Balt, a Baltic person. And so, her appearance, black hair. That is, in general... That is, by character. You and I can only determine people's appearance... only Southern peoples, essentially.

Interviewer [0:04:56] Let's try some more. What do you think? For example, this one.

Informant [0:05:05] Oh, my God, an Uzbek-Tajik. Obviously builders. Or those laborers who... Well, can't you see it in their faces?

Interviewer [0:05:14] Are they all Uzbeks and Tajiks, or are they all different?

Informant [0:05:17] This, this. Maybe this one is Kazakh, this one is Tajik. And these are most likely Southern peoples too... Slanted eyes, wide nose, eyes, lips. Are you kidding me?
[Laughs]

Interviewer [0:05:42] Okay, let's go to the next video. Here's a girl.

Informant [0:05:52] Well no, well she's a Kazakh, that's obvious.

Interviewer [0:05:57] Why Kazakh and not Uzbek?

Informant [0:05:59] You know, they've all mixed up now, it seems to me, but still, Kazakhs, they somehow have wider cheekbones and more slanted eyes.

Interviewer [0:06:10] That is, the shape of the eyes is specific?

Informant [0:06:12] Although, maybe she is Uzbek. You can't tell who her mother is either.

Interviewer [0:06:18] Why can't you tell? Because they're all alike?

Informant [0:06:20] No, but she... There are Kazakhs living on my landing [at home]. She married a Chechen. What baby will they have?

Interviewer [0:06:35] I have this question further on. Who will it be?

Informant [0:06:41] He is a mixed child. His eyes are like this. That is, he comes out, well, you know, anyway. An ethnos lives. And the shape of the eyes. Well, in general, culture also means a lot. As far as I remember.

Interviewer [0:06:59] So it's not really clear who she is?

Informant [0:07:05] Maybe an Uzbek woman. A plump one.

Interviewer [0:07:11] Okay. Now there will appear a man. Maybe it's easier with the man.

Informant [0:07:14] Well, also a Kazakh. It seems to me that this is a typical Kazakh. Like, I'm telling you, Uzbeks and Kazakhs, they are different. Uzbeks, it seems to me, are more, like, puny. And they... Well, and those have bigger cheekbones. That is, there are steppes there. Steppes. Because of this, their cheekbones are pronounced. Cheekbones, eyes, that is, these sandstorms, it

seems to me, because of this. If a person came from Mongolia, I don't think you and I would be able to tell a Mongol from a Kazakh. Maybe a Chinese.

Interviewer [0:07:56] Why Chinese?

Informant [0:07:58] They all have similar eye shape. He's overweight. And it's hard to understand anything about overweight people.

Interviewer [0:08:03] So if he was thin, maybe... Maybe we would have understood something there?

Informant [0:08:08] Although now I can't understand anything at all lately.

Interviewer [0:08:13] Okay. Now, maybe we'll figure it out with the man. A man in a cap.

Informant [0:08:23] Well, it looks more like a Tajik. I also have a hard time telling Tajiks and Uzbeks apart, but it looks like...

Interviewer [0:08:30] Why Tajik?

Informant [0:08:32] Well, it feels like there's something... God knows.

Interviewer [0:08:45] Okay, but the man, of course, is hard to see, but he has a beard.

Informant [0:08:50] You know, lately Russians have been like that too, but in general they look like Chechens. They have recently, they have a new fashion trend—beards. No, they really do. If you move around the center, you probably notice that all young Chechen people look approximately like this. And once a taxi driver with such a beard came to pick me up. I said, "I won't go." Well, he said, "I won't touch you." I said, "I'll believe you. So I'll go." But it was creepy.

Interviewer [0:09:30] Okay, Chechen.

Informant [0:09:32] Well, at least, well, no, why, well, at least I haven't seen anything like that with Armenians. I have Armenian friends. I haven't seen anything like that with them. Well, maybe a Chechen, maybe, well, also, generally speaking, from the East. What are you asking about, the Eastern peoples?

Interviewer [0:09:54] Sociology. So now here's the girl in the jacket. Can you tell what ethnic group she belongs to?

Informant [0:10:14] Well, black. Most likely, dad was a student, mom fell in love with this student. I can make up a story for you. Well, these are "children of friendship of peoples".

Interviewer [0:10:33] [*Mutual acquaintance*] said the same thing.

Informant [0:10:36] Well, maybe, you know, they... And they live in our neighborhood. I was always amazed. But I haven't seen them for a long time. He's Indian. And she's a very-very tall, plump woman, you know, fair-haired, white. And he's like this little. And I've never seen the

child. Well, they've been around for many, many years. That's it. And Zabrodsky, you probably didn't live to see them. Ah, no. We graduated her that year, in '09. And the eldest graduated in '20. Already after them.

Interviewer [0:11:12] In the twentieth, yes. But I can't tell you by last name.

Informant [0:11:17] But he doesn't even look like he's a son. Mom is fair, dad is black. They're not Metis. They just have dark hair and light skin. Whether it's the daughter or son. Absolutely. I would never have said that their dad was black. Because dad went to school all the time. He was as tall as they were. So that's how I knew that their dad was black. But not by their complexion, not... Here they are... He's so round. Here they are, you know, kind of round-faced. That is, absolutely Russian-Russian.

Interviewer [0:12:00] And how did you know that that young man is Indian, the one who is short, as you said, and walks around the neighborhood?

Informant [0:12:07] Well, Indians have this special skin color, special nose, special hair. It's just, you know...

Interviewer [0:12:15] And what kind of nose? That is, how is it different from the Russian nose?

Informant [0:12:18] You and I have a potato nose, at best, straight. Or with a hump. And he has, well... No, by the way, Armenians have those, the old men. I already thought so. I thought, wow, there's this old man, and I... Dimitry. Well, you know, we communicate and are friends. He, I thought to myself, I think, has a nose like that Indian. Well, you should know yourself that Southern people and Northern people even have a different nose structure. Because Northern people need to make it so that the cold air warms up a little. Why do Southern peoples quickly get sick in the North? Because their nasopharynx is designed that way, as far as I remember. They are adapted. Yes. Well, and then, I don't know, it seems to me that even the Indians have a different shade to their skin. Blacks have their own, even Metis, yes, they, that is... And here is an Indian. And then, she sometimes wore a sari. Ah, well, that's definitely clear.

Interviewer [0:13:39] It becomes clear right away. Look, such an interesting woman. In a hat.

Informant [0:13:46] You know, oddly enough... Maybe an Azerbaijani. That is, maybe some kind of... And this one is Kazakh. Well, look too. By the eyes. By the way, this also does not mean by appearance. My daughter-in-law, my husband is from Tomsk. Altai. They all have cheekbones, they all have slightly slanted eyes, but there is a [Tatar-Mongol] yoke, how I laugh. When she first came to my husband's workplace, his boss said: "Oh, yoke, yoke." They were

completely different. He was a redhead, with such eyes, you know, and she was absolutely black, with these protruding cheekbones.

Interviewer [0:14:58] It's clear right away.

Informant [0:15:00] The Tatar-Mongol yoke. That's why I don't know, maybe the lady lived here her whole life.

Informant [0:15:08] And it could just be that they had some relatives there and so on. But it looks like that. Well, by the way, I'm saying it looks like Altai. That is, maybe with Altai. Not Kazakh. Maybe it is. Kazakhstan is next to Altai. Let me remind you that Altai was also... Altai... No. Siberia. Everything is there... Everything is mixed there. I'll show you my husband's friends now. All Russian. All Russian, but they have some mixed in their family as well.

Interviewer [0:16:46] So maybe her mother is from Altai, her father is from Altai?

Informant [0:16:48] Yes, the same as with my daughter-in-law. She has Balts, Germans, Russians, Kazakhs. She also has everything mixed up. That is, you know, it seems to me that it's very difficult to say now. It seems to me that everything has been mixed up for a long time. There are no such pure groups anymore. These are only the newcomers who come to work. Okay, let's see the last videos.

Interviewer [0:16:08] The last two videos. Here's a woman.

Informant [0:16:14] Well, a Russian woman, excuse me, she married a Muslim, that's obvious.

Interviewer [0:16:21] Why Russian? And not, for example, Chechen?

Informant [0:16:25] No, no, she's a Russian girl. Well, and these, it's clear. And the boy, too, you see, he's like that, chubby. Yes, chubby. But he also has some kind of mixture. That is, either his dad is Kazakh, or his mom... Well, something, yes, there is. Well, that's clear. A migrant worker.

Interviewer [0:16:51] Okay, last one, eight. Here's a young man.

Informant [0:16:59] The only thing, could you make it closer? Which one, this one?

Interviewer [0:17:13] Well, both of them.

Informant [0:17:14] Well, that too. That's either, well, these are your possible options: Armenian, Azerbaijani, maybe Chechen. That is, it's clear that the person is from the East. Well, or his parents are from the East. It's hard to tell the difference between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. You know, I, for example, have a hard time differentiating. Well, no, in principle I understand it, but there are Armenians who are very similar to... They also look like... Well, not Georgians, it seems to me. Georgians, they are more... Let's say, they have a slightly different build. There. But his

friend, I don't see him, my dear. [*Manipulations for the informant to be able to see the person in question*] Oh, that's better. The friend looks more like Russian. Or not. Or, by the way, it could also be... No, he could be the same.

Interviewer [0:18:21] Why the same thing? If they were not together, for example, could we say that they were different, or would it still be the same thing?

Informant [0:18:28] You can tell that one of the parents is definitely from the East. Well, at least from these groups. Well, who is it really?

Interviewer [0:18:38] I haven't asked.

Informant [0:18:40] Why haven't you asked?

Interviewer [0:18:42] That's the point, what do people think? Well, like, we're filming in the subway, it's awkward to come up and film them first, and then ask. Who are you? Yes. However, maybe not everyone would like to talk about it. And in general, how difficult was it to identify people from video?

Informant [0:18:56] No, like, you see, the thing is that they all look more or less the same, yes, that is... Like, if you take Ukrainians, Belarusians, you won't be able to tell them apart. And it's also very difficult to tell a Tatar from a Russian. Especially since, as I say, there are fair-haired ones, there are... It's like the Greeks. A true Greek, my sister-in-law married a Greek. And Manus always liked to repeat, I'm a true Greek. He has blue eyes and fair hair. Read the legends. Like a Russian. And the Greeks were like that. After the Turks captured them, they got mixed up, and they... And now they have Armenians in the north of Greece, a lot of Armenians began to live there. That's why they all got mixed up. And Manus was very proud that he was a true Greek. I say, Manus, you're really true. He says, yes, I'm a true Greek. Of noble blood. That is, blue eyes, that is... Read the legends of Ancient Greece. They have it like this, somewhere like this. No, these Uzbeks, Tajiks, in principle, really do have everything in common, as we do for them. I had Tajiks working for me many years ago. And there was one Uzbek, whom my husband and I later saved from these Tajiks. Called him a taxi at 4 in the morning, put him in this taxi, and he went somewhere near Ryazan to his Uzbeks. It happened, what do you mean, it happened to us... I said, "[informant's husband's last name], these Tajiks will come and shoot us now". Because first they wanted to take away his passport, they wanted him to be like sort of a... Sort of a slave. They kind of did something for us, repaired the roof and so on. And I was surprised. I said, "Why did you—" There was a young boy, his father... Dushanbe is Tajikistan, right? The chief dentist. I said, "Are you are here?" He said, "That's how it's supposed to be. You are supposed to have lived in Russia for a year, earn enough for the bride price". I said, "Have you earned enough for the bride price?"

He said, “No.” I said, “Will dad add to that sum?” He said, “Probably.” That is, you see, I was actually... There were a few of these people living there, and we were just constantly communicating with them. The other one has vineyards there. I say, my God, why did you come here if you have entire vineyards? It’s considered prestigious. You know, it was before the pandemic, somewhere around 2018, that... That is, it was always considered prestigious for them, and that they worked in Russia, earned some money and then came back.

Interviewer [0:22:16] What city were you born in? Moscow or...

Informant [0:22:19] Moscow. My mother was born, although not in Moscow, but in the town of Pushkino. My father was born in Moscow.

Interviewer [0:22:24] And then here’s a question. Can you please name the ethnic groups that, in your opinion, live in Moscow? Maybe some of the main ones?

Informant [0:22:34] Oh, my God, everyone lives. It seems to me that we have everyone here nowadays. Well, it’s clearly Russians, Armenians, Jews have become fewer. There were a few of these... Ukrainians, Belarusians. There are many, many Chechens. Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazakhs. By the way, there could have been Kyrgyz there too. That lady in the green hat. But there are few Kyrgyz.

Interviewer [0:23:21] But would you distinguish the Kyrgyz from the Tajiks?

Informant [0:23:28] From the Tajiks, yes. But from the Kazakhs, I doubt it. They are very similar. They have the same... their eyes. But the Kyrgyz are more evil and less educated. That’s simple, that’s really true. And what year was it, in 2010, 2009, I don’t remember, when they came down from the mountain, there were German settlements there, they were killing all the Germans there, shooting them. We had a boy who also helped us, he’s a Russian from Kyrgyzstan, he and his father fled, saved... His wife, he says, “I don’t know where she is”. He saved the child, well, and he and his father, he, the father and the child, made it in time, because, he says, they were burning houses there, killing everyone in sight. So, he says, they just walked like that, slaughtering Russian villages. That’s why the Kyrgyz, they are very... Well, at least that’s what they told me.

Interviewer [0:24:34] And even those that are now, that is...

Informant [0:24:37] I don’t know. I don’t communicate with them.

Interviewer [0:24:39] Okay, then I have this question. I’ve written out the groups. Who do you think is more similar to whom? You can just drag the pieces of paper around. So we have Russians, Belarusians, Kyrgyz, Armenians, Tajiks, Ukrainians, Uzbeks.

Informant [0:24:55] Well, let’s see. Also the Balts, you could say, Ukrainians, Belarusians. As I say, you know, I joke, I say, “Armenia is already ours”. So, well, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz.

Interviewer [0:25:13] The Balts are still here.

Informant [0:25:15] So, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, who else do we have there? There are also Tajiks. Tajiks. Well, that's something, no. Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz and these... Who else did we talk about? Kazakhs. They also have a lot in common. Mongols. That is, they are all Chinese. By the way, sometimes I don't... I think, "I'll say it now, and she will turn out to be Chinese". That is, it's very... Balts. Well, Balts can be... I'm saying, Plaksina—can you tell that she is a Baltic? Zhanna [inaudible 0:25:50], will you say that she is a Baltic?

Interviewer [0:25:53] But are they completely different from each other?

Informant [0:25:57] You see, everything is so mixed up now, so it seems to me that they are all Slavic siblings. Although they are different. Germans are different. My daughter-in-law is German. You would never tell her [apart]. Well, no, of course, she is absolutely emotionless. You see, when you communicate, then you understand it, this absolutely cold rationalism. And their home is not just perfect, they don't have a single unnecessary thing.

Interviewer [0:26:28] Order.

Informant [0:26:29] She throws everything away. I say, my God, Lyosha, you could have at least left your worn-out torn boots for when you came to the dacha. She throws everything away. And a minimal amount of things. Why so many things? Like, she doesn't... You see, I think you can tell by her actions. Although my aunt was a Ukrainian. She laughed. You see, she was kind. This broad type of kindness. And my second aunt is Russian. By the way, my mother and aunt are two sisters, my mother has white hair, blue eyes, absolutely. My aunt has black hair, pitch black. And black eyes. From the same parents. How did that happen? I wonder. From the same parents. Like, absolutely. My uncle and my middle brother, he was... These two [the mom and the aunt] were small, my uncle was almost two meters tall, but he was fair-haired, also with blue eyes. And the dominant trait, in principle, is dark. You know yourself that brown eyes are dominant over blue ones. And the greens too. So I can't tell you anything. It seems to me that it's very difficult now, because the world has mixed up. This mixing of bloods. Our neighbors... He is Mordvin, and she is Tatar. So, it's clear that, you know, from somewhere in the East. Their granddaughter is a mix of Mordvin and Tatar, and her father is Jewish. Can you imagine what kind of mix that is?

Interviewer [0:28:31] It's all very mixed up, yes.

Informant [0:28:33] And it's only by character that you begin to understand what is where, and what kind of people they are. So it's very... Here, for me, it's just like that. Here are the Tatars. Seryozhka, well, he's dark, absolutely kind. You see, it's two houses away. Sashka is also purely Tatar, but he's fair. That's why I can't tell you. I kept joking. I said, "You're a Tatar, you're a Tatar.

In which place are you Tatars?" I said, "Both are Russians." He said, "Yes, we're all Russians already." You see, it seems to me that this is some kind of united nation of Russians.

Interviewer [0:29:12] So everyone in Moscow is Russian?

Informant [0:29:15] Yes, everyone thinks that these are it. So it's very difficult to say.

Interviewer [0:29:17] But the Armenians, but they will be, purely in theory, closer to the Russian Ukrainians?

Informant [0:29:22] To the Georgians.

Interviewer [0:29:23] Armenians, Georgians... There are Georgians in Moscow, too, right? Is there a lot?

Informant [0:29:30] They used to keep flower shops. We always went to the central market, bought flowers, there were Georgians there. Now, it seems to me, there are very few Georgians in Moscow. Now there are more Armenians, Azerbaijanis. Azerbaijanis, they are smaller, very nimble. You know, they are a little different. You always have to be very careful with Georgians. With them in general. By the way, they all have a sensitive attitude. Horrible, horrible. God forbid, God forbid you call an Armenian an Azerbaijani there. The Southern peoples will quickly... react to it. I had a class in 2000, in 2003-2004 we went to a disco at the House of Pioneers. There was Nikos... Actually, Kolya Baglarov, but his dad went to Greece, bought Greek citizenship there, so he became Nikos Baglaridis. I was dying. "Olga Stanislavovna..." I said, "What the hell kind of Greek are you? Armenian-like Armenian." It was horrible. But the most terrible thing was... Those were terrible times. There were children there, well, it doesn't matter. A different school. That battle-cry: "Beat the Khach¹³, save Russia", when I was shielding my boys, and pushing all the girls into the car, just so that they would be taken away and not beaten, that was what scared me. And there were drunk teenagers there, whose dads were bosses in the police, they knew that they would go unpunished. Only our car, all of ours left, and we took them all away. We had already climbed the stairs, I see the police arriving. I think, thank God. It was scary. As Shevchenko, dying over me, says: "I just see [the informant's last name] tumble out, her hat on her side, this fur coat, waving her arms and shielding..." I said, "Go try to shield in this, huh..." And they came, it turns out, ready, with knives. That is, they knew that there would be a general district disco. School No. 994, I will remember it for the rest of my life.

Interviewer [0:32:06] Terrible. But there is no such thing now.

Informant [0:32:07] No, there is no such thing now. Although who knows. Look, these bald ones are already walking around. Although there are bald ones, they are just fooling around,

¹³ A slur used to refer to people from the republics of Caucasus, especially Armenia, in Russian.

and there are those who are clearly dangerous. So it's not that simple. Your topic is complicated. Very subtle. Here, you know, it's very subtle.

Interviewer [0:32:27] But the Jews, are they separate or are they against someone...

Informant [0:32:32] Well, they are also Eastern people. Well, the south? Can you tell a Palestinian from a Jew? I can't. In Egypt... Lord, who are they there? Oh, Lord.

Interviewer [0:32:55] There are Arabs in Egypt.

Informant [0:32:57] Arabs, yeah, but again. It just slipped my mind. Starting with a P? Or whoever it is?

Interviewer [0:33:10] There are Turks in Egypt too. It is clear that they are in Turkey.

Informant [0:33:13] No, no, no. Not Arabs now. Wait. Just in the store... So, how to say, the peoples of Egypt... Bedouins. And there, well, of course, the Greeks, they too, look, they all look alike. Because we went into a store in Hurghada, no, probably, well, I don't remember. We started buying something there, we're standing there, and he's so proud. That is, you see, they're also very sensitive to this. There in general, and our fools, when they travel, are not educated at all. They don't know anything. It's the same in Thailand, for example. You can tell the difference... Thais, this is, let's say, when I've been there several times, but even a man who's had surgery, and women, too, are very difficult to tell apart, you know. But mostly real Thais, they're small, they have such round faces, big round faces. And there too, they come from China, they come from Vietnam, they also have everything mixed up. And it all becomes, it's... But if they're tall, then... If a woman is tall, then I understand that they are former men. Because in Thailand, women, Thai women, they are small. That's why it's very difficult for all of our people there. And they all have a sensitive attitude. Especially ours... Tajiks. No, Georgians, Armenians. God forbid, you say the wrong word there. They will fight among themselves. Karen came to us then, he helped us. I said, "Karen, you have a black eye." "With the Azerbaijanis," that's what he told me. I said, "Karen, you have a sharp tongue," I said, "you're definitely the one..." Well, he's also Armenian, but you know, he's also some kind of... He's short. That is, they, Arsen and Karen are completely different, but they are brothers.

Interviewer [0:36:03] So you can't tell either?

Informant [0:36:08] You know, it's very difficult to say now. Who are you? Russian? Baltic?

Interviewer [0:36:12] Well, I consider myself Russian.

Informant [0:36:13] So who knows? I had a friend. He laughed. Dad is Belarusian, mom is Karelian. And I am Russian according to my passport. Mom is a native of Karelia, right?

Petrozavodsk. What is there?

Interviewer [0:36:31] Well, it's up to each individual...

Informant [0:36:33] Dad is Belarusian, but they wrote in his passport that he is Russian. That's all. That's why it seems to me, well, you can have this south, these Kazakhs, Uzbeks, they have, yes, their own uniqueness, Chechens, Georgians, well again, yes, the Georgians have more, you know, they are somehow... They are different in some way. Even from Armenians. Georgians will never say that this is an Armenian. An Armenian is maybe curlier. But earlier, since there were no others, this was very different.

Interviewer [0:37:21] And why did you say this, when these are South, there is East, they belong there?

Informant [0:37:26] Well, look, South-South, these Tajiks, Uzbeks, that is, here a little to the West. Georgia, Armenia, well, Azerbaijan, they... Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan for some reason they are somehow... Separate. Yes, they are somehow separate. But they really are all similar. So. Russians, Balts, well, these are all European-looking people, as I say. Well, who do we have there? There were also Kazakhs and Kyrgyz. Well, that's what I'm saying, here they are. Look, here, yes, here, this is also determined by the terrain, the steppes, the deserts. What else do we have there? Skin color.

Interviewer [0:38:16] Then now I will have slightly different thematic questions about migrants.

Informant [0:38:21] Please don't, this is a sore subject for me.

Interviewer [0:38:23] A little bit. Just a second.

Informant [0:38:25] Well, go off then, or Plaksina will kill me now.

Interviewer [0:38:34] Quickly. Do you think that any of these groups could be classified as migrants?

Informant [0:38:46] As migrants? All of them. People come from Tambov. Are they migrants? Well, migration is probably happening. Sorry, but there are practically no Muscovites in our school now.

Interviewer [0:39:07] So everyone who was not born in Moscow will be migrants for you?

Informant [0:39:21] You know, they've "come in droves"¹⁴. I get angry when there's nowhere to park. There's the 58th [regional code], the 48th [regional code], the 32nd [regional code]. The 32nd is Ryazan, I know, that's it. They're our own guys, I don't mind. But they're getting on my nerves. No, of course, they're probably not migrants, those're all Uzbeks, Tajiks. If an Uzbek was

¹⁴ An expression jokingly used to refer to people who come to live in Russian megalopolises from smaller communities.

born in Moscow, that's it. No, of course, he won't be a migrant. He's already, like, it's not by chance that people sometimes go to America to give birth.

Interviewer [0:39:55] But, for example, Belarusians, Ukrainians, will they be immigrants in Moscow or not? They will also be Slavs, won't they? So, it turns out, any person who was born in another city or country...

Informant [0:40:06] No, in another country.

Interviewer [0:40:08] So, they are not immigrants from Tambov after all?

Informant [0:40:15] No, of course not. They "came in droves". From Tambov. [Laughs]

Interviewer [0:40:17] Okay. And do you think there are any differences in communication with local migrants?

Informant [0:40:25] You know, I can say that they are more rude. I don't know. It makes me sad. Even now, someone on our landing, well, probably not one of the migrants, but one of the "drove-comers", bought an apartment. We didn't have anything like that. Even these Kazakhs, they always choose... You see, they have this thing. They love it [tidiness] and monitor it in some way. And here, someone from the other wing, I'd like to look them in the eye. They leave their garbage near these... That is, you see, if they threw it out, that would be it... Sometimes I want to kill them. I think, if I knew who it was, I'd beat them up. Now, they, like, in the summer when you're walking, [you see] Kazakhs and Uzbeks, they gather in these groups of theirs, and they, yes, they carry their own culture. But if you carry your culture, then you should also think about the fact that you came to another country. They sometimes behave very shamelessly, unfortunately.

Interviewer [0:41:43] Disrespectful. And what kind of people do you associate with migrants? The kind you described? What if migrants have some places, for example, in Moscow, that are connected to them, or important professions?

Informant [0:42:12] You ask me, except for MCKO, Semenovskaya, look, I don't go anywhere at all. It seems to me that we just work, work, work, I don't know. Professions... Well, janitors, of course. It's very strange that they don't take our [people]. I know that guys, for example, students wanted to earn extra money as janitors. Well, they took these Uzbeks.

Interviewer [0:42:38] I thought, on the contrary, that our people don't go [to work] for a small salary.

Informant [0:42:42] 60-70 thousand [600-700 USD]? Not a small one. Sorry, but they all ran off here, as soon as it started snowing, where did they all go? To food delivery. A taxi driver. Taxi drivers are terrible. That's all of them. I was yelling at this one Kazakh or I don't know who it was. I said, at least learn Moscow. I said "This house..." I said, "your head seems to be working.

You're pulling up from the other side [of the house]. There're no entrances here. Where will the person walk out to you from?" "The navigator brought me here." I said, "Listen, really-" it seems to me that their level is... Absolutely. They don't even think.

Interviewer [0:43:29] Do you think it is possible to stop being a migrant? That is, say, a Tajik who came to earn money, can he somehow stop being one?

Informant [0:43:35] He formally stops. He formally stops, but... You can take the girl out of the village but you can never take the village out of the girl.

Interviewer [0:43:49] So it will still remain. But what do you think, if a local girl and a migrant get married and they have a child, who will the child be? A local or a migrant?

Informant [0:44:00] Locals, of course. But again, it all depends on what the culture will be.

Interviewer [0:44:07] But if a local child is given to be raised in a migrant family, who is more likely to grow up as a child, a local or a migrant? Let's say he was born into a Russian family, who are Muscovites in the tenth generation, and he was given to a Tajik family. Something happened to the parents.

Informant [0:44:24] He will honor their traditions. He will grow up like this... This is the most wonderful thing. There were many such cases, especially after the war.

Interviewer [0:44:34] Still, to migrants or just local Tajiks? Who is he more likely to be?

Informant [0:44:39] Yes, he will be a local. With their traditions, with their... And he won't go anywhere... You see, that's still half of the upbringing. No, but he's like a local in his behavior, in his character.

Interviewer [0:44:56] Okay, then we'll have some quick questions about you, about your biography. Can you tell, a little bit, just for the sake of statistics, where were you born, how old are you, where do you work? Just briefly.

Informant [0:45:11] I was born in 1962 in Moscow, in the city center. I lived my whole life on Efremova Street, well, almost more than half of my life, that is, in the center. Subway stations of Frunzenskaya, Sportivnaya. It was a 15-minute, well, 20-minute walk to the Kremlin. When I moved here, I was in shock, a cultural shock. I... The thing is, my husband simply signed up. I had two small children, dear God. In general, it was terrible. When I came here, I said, my God, it's a full-on village. For me, it was just a shock. Yes, they gave me two apartments, but for me it was a shock.

Interviewer [0:46:09] And you graduated school in the center, then? And then where did you go? Where did you study?

Informant [0:46:16] At MGPI. Ten minutes from home to the physics department.

Sportivnaya subway station, physics department.

Interviewer [0:46:25] Here's a question: what ethnicity do you consider yourself to be? That is, you said that you are a mixture of everything.

Informant [0:46:31] Yes, it's all mixed up. The Tatars always took my father for one of their own. And he was very-very Russian. He was born in Moscow on Valovaya Street. His grandmother... Well, their mother died early, and he lived with his father. And they had a lower lady and an upper lady in the house. So, his grandmother was the lower lady. Well, that's what they called her in the house, because she was this... And he was everything, really... Although I wouldn't say why the Tatars took him for one of their own, I can't say.

Interviewer [0:47:09] Who do you consider yourself to be?

Informant [0:47:11] Yes, Russian.

Interviewer [0:47:13] Do you think others also consider you Russian? Or maybe a Tatar?

Informant [0:47:20] No, the Tatars definitely don't consider me a Tatar. You see, all this has been building up for centuries, for years. Ryazan province. That's all. My mother was also born, well now it's the town of Pushkino, you could even say Moscow, the Moscow region. But she was just born, and they immediately moved to Frunzenskaya station. Well, Frunzenskaya didn't exist then. There was no Luzhniki then, no stadium. That is, of course, there was nothing. That is, there were... There was the "Kauchuk" factory, and there was a recreation area, like a cultural park opposite Gorky. It was a long time ago. Across the Moscow River. And so it all slowly began to be created. At first there were only barracks there. I remember when the last barracks, the last two barracks were torn down during my time. And a nine-story building was built. It was a breakthrough. We lived in a five-story building. Our gray houses are like that. I grew up there. Then we started... improving little by little. Then, when we were given an apartment, two apartments, I remember, they tried to persuade us, "In the same building, where will you get that? Your mother is on the third, you are on the tenth." You just... I said, "Where are you going?" I said, "Do you think I'm going to leave here for that wilderness," I said. For me, I was in shock. That is, I think for about a year and a half... For the first six months I went to school at Park Kultury station, I worked... And by the way, we lived there for the last, probably, three years. After six months, I realized that I was no longer capable. I had a small kid. So, I took maternity leave. And I walked around here, I shied away from everything. Well, Lord, what kind of village are we going to end up in?..

Interviewer [0:49:35] Are you in Zyablikovo or Orekhovo-Borisovo Severnoye neighbourhood now? Do you live in Zyablikovo?

Informant [0:49:42] Borisovsky passage.

Interviewer [0:49:45] Orekhovo-Borisovo... Actually, here's the very last question about ethnicity. Was it different in the center, where you lived here? Ethnic groups? That is, maybe there were more of some, less of others. Is that true?

Informant [0:50:02] Don't forget, Moscow was a closed city for a long time, and no one could get here, not even those from villages... For those from other Russian cities, it wasn't just difficult, it was catastrophically difficult. They only took those who were employed by companies, they put them in dormitories. So, for a certain period of time. No Uzbeks, no Tajiks, they all lived in their own places.

Interviewer [0:50:30] So when you were studying at school there were no such people?

Informant [0:50:32] When I was growing up, well, we had, as I joke, two ethnic groups, three, probably, Russians. There were mostly Jews, they were intellectuals. And all sorts of janitors, and not all of them. There were janitors, plumbers, they were Tatars. They gradually started coming from Kazan. That's all. No one else. You see, the Georgians were only those people who, you know, lived their whole lives here. Those who were really from science... That is, everything was there, that is, they were there, undeniably, everyone was there, the Balts and everyone was there, but it was all a little different. And we in general, we in our life... I didn't care. I don't care now, too. I'm just irritated by these "drove-comers". When there's nowhere to park a car. That's when I get angry.

Interviewer [0:51:36] You don't care about anything else. [Laughs]

Informant [0:51:38] And they are hooligans on the roads. [People from] all these regions [of Russia], they drive, you know, I say, as if they're in their own village. Regions. Migrants don't have cars, Tajiks, they earn money and send it home. Every time the dollar goes up, the ruble falls, they all leave at once. You can't even earn money. And so they send half of their salary home all the time. And they support all their numerous families there. Because, I say, they worked for us for three months. I was jokingly saying about their whole life, about their family, I said, "I feel like now your whole family will settle here." It's prestigious for them. I said, my God, you should've stayed at home. There are so many hectares of vineyards there. Sorry, but that's enough to piss yourself. And he has workers. And he came here as a builder. I said, why? But last year the grapes there didn't yield a good harvest. That is, he will now earn some money and go back. And then these migrants, by the way, are very dangerous as drivers: they do not know how to drive, and then if they violate, their license is taken away, they go home, buy new ones and return to this again, they introduce it.

Appendix 3—Example screenshot of the process of an elicitation interview

