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Norwegian-speaking Sami and Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults: a comparative study of identities

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Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Research objectives and questions	1
1.2	Limitations of the research	2
1.3	Personal motivation	3
1.4	Relevance to the field of Peace and Conflict Transformation.....	3
1.5	Thesis outline.....	3
2	Background and literature review	5
2.1	Introduction	5
2.2	The Sami in Norway: from norwegianisation to activism.....	5
2.3	The Norwegian Sami identities in previous research	7
2.4	The Kazakhs in the Soviet Union, their independence and a word on indigeneity	8
2.5	The Kazakhstani Kazakh identities in previous research	9
2.6	Summary.....	11
3	Conceptual and theoretical framework	12
3.1	Introduction	12
3.2	Defining the concept of identity	12
3.3	Social identity theory.....	13
3.4	The Foucauldian perspective on identity.....	14
3.5	The concept of language in relation to identity	15
3.6	Applying the conceptual and theoretical framework to the case of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs.....	16
4	Methodological framework.....	17
4.1	Introduction – a qualitative research	17
4.2	Data collection process.....	18
4.2.1	In-depth interviews.....	19
4.2.2	Sampling of participants.....	20

4.3	Thematic data analysis.....	21
4.4	Research ethics, risk assessment and security considerations.....	22
4.5	A word on reflexivity.....	22
4.6	Summary and case study design.....	24
5	Narratives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults.....	26
5.1	Introduction.....	26
5.2	The narratives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults.....	26
5.2.1	Anne – being Sami is natural.....	26
5.2.2	Noa – being Sami is a personal choice.....	28
5.2.3	Ingrid – it is important to take the Sami back.....	29
5.2.4	Liv – I am a Sami in my own way.....	30
5.3	Narratives of the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults.....	31
5.3.1	Aisultan – on stereotypes and insults.....	32
5.3.2	Tomiris – nothing can influence my origin.....	33
5.3.3	Amina – I am like a bridge.....	34
5.3.4	Nurislam – we are all Kazakh.....	35
5.3.5	Medina – it is all in your head.....	36
5.3.6	Amir – language is not an indicator of worthiness.....	37
5.4	Summary.....	37
6	Data analysis.....	39
6.1	Introduction.....	39
6.2	Analysis of the narratives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults.....	39
6.2.1	Applying the social identity theory.....	39
6.2.2	Application of the Foucauldian perspective.....	40
6.3	Analysis of the narratives of the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults.....	41
6.3.1	Applying the social identity theory.....	41

6.3.2	Application of the Foucauldian perspective.....	41
7	Discussion	43
8	Conclusion.....	45
	Works cited	46
	Appendix	49

1 Introduction

Throughout their history, various indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities have been struggling and striving to preserve their individuality and ethnic identities as interconnected elements of their existence. In the second half of the XX century and the beginning of the current one, the world has been witnessing the rise of not only the former colonies becoming independent but also the indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities regaining their rights for being unique and preserving their cultures and languages which in some cases led to their rediscovering their ethnic identities as such.

However, the historical experiences of many of them tend to have one particular commonality present in this way or the other. The given feature implies such elements as culture and language being steadily lost or significantly influenced by the mainstream population of their countries of residence. The Sami people residing in Norway and the Kazakhs currently living in the independent state of Kazakhstan are vivid examples of the process mentioned above. As the following chapter of the given thesis is going to illustrate further on, both peoples have undergone the influence of the mainstream states' policies on their cultures and languages. As a result, a big number of the Sami in Norway have come to using the Norwegian language as their first one, while the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan have acquired Russian as the most widely used language of communication in the USSR thus leading to the vast majority of the Kazakhs still speaking Russian in their everyday lives and some of them even claiming it to be their first language.

Nevertheless, language is considered to be an important part of one's ethnic identity as it provides the feeling of belonging to their ethnic group as well as bonding with it via already established or potentially possible communication (Eriksen, 2001). Being unable to speak the language of your ethnic group or preferring the other one over it inevitably leads to reevaluating one's ethnic identity in order to find other elements and features to hold on to when identifying themselves as Sami or Kazakh, for example.

So how does it feel to be torn between rediscovering your ethnic identity on the level of the whole ethnic group and trying to find alternative elements that would compensate for your first language on the personal level? Is one torn at all? And is it possible to be at peace with yourself and your ethnic group in these circumstances? These are the questions that I am going to dig into in the given thesis while comparing the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults in terms of their perceptions regarding their ethnic identities with relation to their first languages.

1.1 Research objectives and questions

Due to the chosen methodology for my thesis which will be expanded on in one of the following chapters, I have decided not to formulate the hypothesis before the data collection is conducted which is why the research hypothesis will not be addressed here and will be discussed alongside the data analysis and discussion processes.

However, while focusing on the ethnic identities of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults, the given thesis has a number of objectives the

main one being to identify the influence of their first languages on how they construct and perceive their ethnic identities. By doing so, it is going to be possible to draw out the elements of identity construction for the representatives of the both given peoples as well as to compare their perceptions on this question in order to gain a deeper understanding on whether there are any similarities or differences in the ethnic identity construction processes of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities sharing the essence of some of their historical experiences.

In order to achieve the given objectives, I have formulated the main research question of my thesis:

How do the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs construct their ethnic identities?

In addition to that, aiming at guiding the focus of my research towards answering the main research questions as well as operationalizing the theories that I have settled upon for my thesis, I have also formulated the sub questions that are listed below:

1. *What are the elements of the ethnic identities of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults?*
2. *Do their first languages play any role in their positioning themselves in relation to their ethnic groups and their sense of belonging to them?*
3. *Are there any similarities or differences in their ethnic identities construction?*

In pursuance of answering the main research question as well as its sub questions, I have interviewed the representatives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults during my fieldwork both in person and online. I then utilized the thematic analysis in order to best apply the theories and methodology that I had chosen for my research. The choice of methodology, theories and data analysis method will be addressed and expanded on in the following chapters of the given thesis.

1.2 Limitations of the research

As it is going to be explained further on, the concept of identity in the given thesis is considered as subject to change and, thus, it has to be emphasized that the given research is only illustrating the states of the identity formation process of the participants at the moment of conducting the interviews. This, therefore, implies that the identities of the participants might have changed throughout the time after the interviews and are only described as of the year of 2023.

In addition to that, the given thesis does not aim at generalizing the ethnic identities of all Norwegian-speaking Sami and Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults nor does it seek to claim any findings to be a universal verity for any single individual representing the given groups. Moreover, it has to be kept in mind that identity as a term has many connotations such as social, cultural or national. However, my thesis is focused on the ethnic identities of the given groups and the usage of the given term only implies the aspect mentioned above.

1.3 Personal motivation

I myself am a Kazakh who was born in Kazakhstan in the city of Almaty which is situated in the south of the country with the majority population being Kazakh. However, my family has soon moved to the north and I grew up in the town called Petropavlovsk where the majority was represented by the Russians instead which led to me losing connection with both the Kazakh language and, to a smaller degree, even the Kazakh culture. Therefore, I am also a representative of one of the groups that my thesis is focused on, that being the Russian-speaking Kazakhs, as I deem the Russian language to be my first one and barely speak any Kazakh at all. Upon my return to Almaty after turning 17 years old, I have discovered myself torn between the Soviet diminishing stereotypes about the Kazakhs and the Kazakh rise of national identity which, in that particular part of the country, was visibly represented by more and more people immersing in the Kazakh culture and speaking Kazakh language fluently, a big part of them even preferring to stick to their mother tongue in their lives. This controversy has provoked a significant struggle on my long way to embracing my ethnic identity and rediscovering it via means different from language.

In addition to that, when arriving to Norway and learning more about the Sami people in this country as well as talking to the representatives of the given group, I realized that many of them have not only experienced the historical events similar to the ones that had happened on the modern Kazakhstani territory during the Soviet era but are also currently going through the same struggles that the Russian-speaking Kazakhs do. I, thus, grew intrigued by the given discovery and have decided to conduct my research in order to compare the perceptions on ethnic identities of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults so as to dim light on the struggle mentioned above that a lot of people are going through and to let their stories be heard if they are willing to share. As for my positionality as a researcher and the challenges connected to me having a direct relation to one of the groups, they are going to be addressed further on in the methodology chapter of the given thesis.

1.4 Relevance to the field of Peace and Conflict Transformation

As it has been mentioned above, current trends in both the Norwegian Sami and the Kazakhstani Kazakh societies are aimed at reviving and developing the Sami and the Kazakh self-identification respectively which clashes with history-long stereotypes and memories as well as prior education on their languages and cultures. The given struggle may especially be vivid for those who have acquired the languages of their former or current countries of incorporation as their first ones which may lead to them being engaged in the inner conflict of finding and rebuilding their ethnic identities. Such a conflict may be viewed as a reflection of the influence of the former and the existing nation-building and identity-regaining processes in their countries of residence and, thus, has a potential for reviewing those in order to provide not only a better representation of the given groups but also their peaceful incorporation in the Sami and the Kazakh social groupings respectively.

1.5 Thesis outline

Chapter 1 has provided the introduction to my thesis, presented the objectives and the research questions of the given research as well as discussed the limitations to it. In addition to

that, the given chapter has also addressed my personal motivation for writing the given thesis as well as its relevance to the research field of Peace and Conflict Transformation.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the background and literature review which includes the historical outline of the Sami in Norway and the Kazakhs on the Kazakhstani territories as well as previous research on the ethnic identities of the given peoples.

Chapter 3 deals with the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the given thesis.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodology of my thesis by describing and justifying the choice of the methods applied and the methodological framework established for the given research.

Chapter 5 presents the narratives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs young adults individually as found in the interviews with the representatives of the two groups mentioned above.

Chapter 6 analyzes the data presented in the previous chapter by applying the methods described in Chapter 4 with usage of the theories addressed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 7 discusses the findings of the analysis conducted in Chapter 6 in order to answer the research question and its sub questions which were formulated earlier in the introductory chapter.

Chapter 8 aims at concluding and summarizing the whole thesis based on the previous chapters.

2 Background and literature review

2.1 Introduction

In order to gain a better understanding on the topic of the identities of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs, one has to acquaint themselves with the history of the given peoples as well as previous research on the topics relative or similar to the one that my thesis is focused on. For the given reason, this chapter is divided into two main parts which are going to be briefly outlined below.

The first part focuses on the Norwegian-speaking Sami by describing the history of the Sami in Norway with special focus on the norwegianisation policies and the following rise of Sami identities in the late XX and early XXI centuries. Furthermore, it also aims to present a brief overview on the existing research related to the Sami identities in Norway with special attention to youth and young adults.

Similarly, the second part of this chapter presents a brief outline of the history of the Kazakhs focusing on the russification policies during the Soviet times and the following independence of Kazakhstan while also aiming at providing a rationale for comparing the Sami as an indigenous people in Norway and the Kazakhs as a former ethnic minority in the USSR in terms of their ethnic identities. In addition to that, the existing research concerning the Kazakh ethnic identities in Kazakhstan is also going to be described.

Lastly, the chapter is also going to be summarized in the end providing a short analysis of the similarities and differences between the two parts described above in order to bring them to one starting point for the given research.

2.2 The Sami in Norway: from norwegianisation to activism

After its secession from Sweden, Norway has been implementing a number of actions in order to assimilate the Sami into the Norwegian society as part of the nation-building policy (Selle et al., 2013). The given process which later has been called norwegianisation started with the creation of the *Finnfondet* in the national budget in 1851 in order to provide funds for teaching the Norwegian language to the Sami population of Northern Norway as part of their enlightenment which inevitably led to the decline of the usage of their mother tongue by the Sami population (Minde, 2003). Moreover, the instructions were tightened later on in the region by obliging the Sami children to learn Norwegian at schools while the teaching of the Sami language was steadily decreasing in number and quality (Minde, 2003). Furthermore, the usage of the Sami language hit its peak in being discriminated with the 1902 Land Act that ensured that only those able to command Norwegian language were allowed to own land in Finnmark (Selle et al., 2013) which was accompanied by encouraging the teachers to promote Norwegian at schools (Kortekangas, 2017) which, thus, discouraged the whole Sami population to speak the Sami language or even learn it. However, not only the direct governmental actions played role in the norwegianisation process but also the outcomes of them. For instance, it should not be neglected that the historical period mentioned above was also characterized by the rise of the social darwinist ideas both in the political agenda and in the Norwegian society which added

significantly to creating the idea of the Sami being inferior, underdeveloped and subject to extinction (Minde, 2003). Apart from that, the pattern of mixed settlements of Sami and Norwegian representatives which has always been common in the area also became even more widespread which, in its turn, led to intermarriages and further diluting of the Sami population as the Sami were assimilated not only politically but even on a genetic level (Minde, 2003). All of the factors mentioned above resulted in the steady decrease of the Sami population throughout Northern Norway which was documented in the regular censuses that even registered the Sami population dropping to complete 0% in some areas (Minde, 2003).

However, in the second half of the XX century, the Sami people started gaining more representation in a number of specific governmental legislations (Eidheim, 1997). First and foremost, article 110a in the Constitution of Norway of 1988 guarantees the obligation of the state to create conditions necessary for the Sami in order to preserve and develop their language and culture since the Sami are expected to be able to contribute to the development of the Norwegian society (Henriksen, 2008). In addition to that, the Sami Act of 1987 enabled the establishment of the Sami Parliament in 1989 which is to ensure compliance with the Constitution article mentioned above as an advisory organ (UN Commission on Human Rights, 2003). The establishment of a number of specialized Sami institutions in addition to the Sami Parliament is assumed to contribute to creating conditions for the Sami to express, maintain and develop their identities and culture (Selle et al., 2013). However, the Sami Parliament still remains only an advisory body with limited decision-making capacities (Henriksen, 2008).

Apart from the governmental direct and indirect actions, the Sami themselves have been putting significant effort in order to preserve and develop their culture and language. In addition to the eminent political activists engaged with the Sami Parliament and other Sami organizations and activities, the Alta controversy as one of the biggest Sami activist cases where a big number of civilian Sami population was involved should also be mentioned as it is considered to symbolize the rise of the whole movement of the Sami towards voicing their identities and protecting them openly. In the late 1960s, the Norwegian Water Resources and Electricity Board suggested the plan for building the Alta-Kautokeino hydropower plant which implied creating a large water reservoir in the area around the Mazi village (Andersen et al., 1985). However, the given project would affect the natural landscape in the Alta region obstructing both the reindeer migration routes and the salmon fishing (Andersen et al., 1985) which constitute an important part of the Sami traditional way of living, thus, their cultural identity. The Alta controversy, apart from being one of the most extensive and important civil disobedience occasions in Norway (Mankova, 2021), has also become a significant process in the Sami history in Norway as the biggest occasion among many others when the Sami have openly strived to preserve their culture and its elements. Moreover, the development of the Sami self-determination is also represented by the growing number of the Sami youth organizations, artists and political activists as well as cultural events where the Norwegian Sami have a chance to share and celebrate their ethnic identities with each other as well as the other ethnic groups. Lastly, the rise of the Sami self-identification may also be noted by taking a look at the developing educational programs and establishments aimed at promoting and developing both the Sami language and culture (Olsen, 2019) among not only the adult Sami but also the children.

2.3 The Norwegian Sami identities in previous research

To begin with, it is worth noting that a vast amount of literature exists in academia concerning the Sami in general and the Norwegian Sami identity in particular in various languages, such as Norwegian, Sami and English. For that reason, given that there is not enough space in the chapter to analyze every single piece of previous research, only few sources in English will be discussed as examples, while attempting to identify the overall tendencies in existing literature on the Sami identities in Norway.

Given the historical and multicultural realities in Norway, one of the tendencies in research concerning the Norwegian Sami identities aims at examining them in comparison with their identification as Norwegian as well as Sami. For instance, Selle et al. analyze the identity of the Sami in Norway while paying special attention to their determining themselves as Norwegian and the elements constructing the given self-identification. In this regard, several elements possibly adding to forming both Norwegian and Sami self-identification of the latter are outlined in the findings of the survey conducted by the authors. First of all, the strong sense of connection to their areas of birth and residence in term of their bond with land is outlined by the research (Selle et al., 2013). In this manner, it has been found out that the Sami populations of the areas in focus are feeling more attached to the latter than the Norwegian population representatives (Selle et al., 2013). Secondly, the *intensity* of the Sami identifying as such is measured quantitatively and described to be more distinct among the registered Sami in contrast to the non-registered Sami population (Selle et al., 2013). However, the *content*, i.e. the elements, of their identities seems to be somewhat similar being mostly concentrated on the family units as important parts of maintaining the Sami identity and passing it from one generation to the next ones (Selle et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, given the topic of my thesis, it is also considered important to take a brief look at the existing literature on the Sami youth perceptions towards their identity construction elements and features. It is also worth mentioning that the overall research concerning the Norwegian Sami identity altogether mostly focuses on the youth, thus, there is a significant number of sources addressing the given topic. For instance, Mathisen et al. focus their research on the experience and articulation of ethnic identity among the Sami youth. In this regard, the analysis, as expected, pays attention to the relation of the Sami identity to the majority Norwegian culture emphasizing that the Sami youth address their identity in comparison and sometimes juxtaposition with the mainstream Norwegian one (Mathisen et al., 2017). Apart from that, the common elements constructing the Norwegian Sami youth identities are deemed to be family and language as well as land which goes in line with the research conducted by Selle et al. Furthermore, a more progressive perception towards the development of the Sami identities and culture such as combining it with modern trends in culture is also pointed out by the authors to be present among the Norwegian Sami youth which supposedly opens the way for further research of the outcomes and prospects of the given approach (Mathisen et al., 2017).

Kvernmo and Heyerdahl, in their turn, focus more closely on the role of the family element in constructing the identities of the Norwegian Sami young adolescents. While family and language were proven to play an important role in the identity formation of the Sami adolescents, the multiculturalism of the participants was also clearly outlined by the research. In this regard, even given the focus of the research, their findings have also outlined the variety of identities to be present among the participants showing almost equal level of their self-identification as Sami, bicultural and Norwegian (Kvernmo & Heyerdahl, 1996). Therefore, the assumption of the higher possibility of losing their identities in such youth was also made and

presented as a risk factor for the future of the Sami culture and identities (Kvernmo & Heyerdahl, 1996).

Summarizing the sources that have been mentioned above, the existing literature mostly pays attention to the Sami youth and adolescents with regard to their identity construction while the Sami adults are less participant in such research. Nevertheless, the fact of the Sami being multi- or bicultural is usually made clear as a matter of fact or quantitative finding with possible reference to the risk of losing the Sami identities for such participants while their way of coping with it or building their identities around it is addressed less and is more often centered around identity loss risk evaluation rather than examining this particular phenomenon as such. Therefore, my thesis aims at contributing to filling the identified research gap as part of the research objectives and findings.

2.4 The Kazakhs in the Soviet Union, their independence and a word on indigeneity

Quite similar to the case with the Norwegian Sami, the Kazakhs had been experiencing the policies relative to assimilation throughout the time of being part of the USSR (Ubiria, 2015). In this regard, both the Soviet policies addressing the land ownership and the Kazakh culture including language as part of the nation-building process were of importance. On the one hand, the territory of contemporary Kazakhstan was the destination of a huge number of people from the other Soviet Republics as part of the USSR agricultural policies, which also implied expropriation of a significant amount of lands previously exploited by the Kazakhs as part of their nomadic way of life (Esenova, 2002). This led to diluting of the Kazakh population by the representatives of other peoples, mainly the Russians (Sharygin & Guillot, 2013). On the other hand, this was also accompanied by introducing the campaign of *korenizatsiia* as part of the Soviet nation-building policy. The given campaign implied such processes as defining and standardization of the Kazakh language and culture (among the other Soviet peoples) (Ubiria, 2015) as well as promoting the Russian ones as the unifying force for the variety of different ethnic groups residing in the USSR (Kassymova & Kudaybergenuly, 2021). Both of the factors mentioned above contributed to the ethnic identity of the Kazakhs being blurred throughout the XX century.

The rise of the Kazakh self-identification started a few years before the collapse of the Soviet Union, namely in 1986 when the December riots took place (Zhadyrkhan, 2004). The given occasion was connected to the change of the appointed First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party who was replaced by Moscow to Gennadiy Kolbin, an ethnic Russian who did not possess any expertise in the Kazakh affairs. This where the Kazakh studentship rose to rebel against the given decision in favor of the Kazakh representative and this is what up to these days symbolizes the awakening of the Kazakh nation against russification of their language and cultural heritage (Zhadyrkhan, 2004). Soon after that, with the dissolution of the USSR, Kazakhstan became independent and was faced with the consequences of almost a century of russification policies which had been preceded by numerous land expropriation cases back in the times of the Russian empire. Having to deal with the challenge of nation-building, the Kazakhstani government made the focus on the Kazakh language revitalization one of its main ones (Holm-Hansen, 1997). This, supported by the Constitution of Kazakhstan stating the Kazakh language to be the state language (Phillipson, 1992), led to the government implementing numerous programs aimed at increasing the number of Kazakh-speaking population and encouraging the latter to use Kazakh in as much spheres as possible

(Zhumanova et al., 2020). However, a large number of Russian population as well as Russian-speaking ethnic minorities and Kazakhs slows the given process significantly and occasionally sparks talks on discrimination of the Russian-speaking population by enforcing their usage of Kazakh language.

As it can be seen from the historical discourses of both Norwegian Sami and Kazakhstani (former Soviet) Kazakhs, they have experienced the processes quite similar to each other, that being norwegianisation and russification significantly. Moreover, both the of the given processes were implemented as part of the nation-building policies in Norway that had become independent from Sweden and in the Soviet Union after it had been established in the stead of the former Russian empire respectively. The named policies implied a number of negative consequences for the ethnic individuality and identities for both the Sami in Norway and the Kazakhs in the USSR. Such consequences include a significant language loss and cultural assimilation, land expropriations and the dilution of the native populations by the relocated Norwegian and Kven, Russian and other ethnic minority representatives in both states. While the indigenous status of the Sami in Norway is undoubted and officially recognized by the government, I would like to shed some light to the situation in which the newly independent Republic of Kazakhstan found itself in the end of the XX century. First of all, apart from the factors mentioned above, it is worth noting that the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic was the only one on the whole territory of the Soviet Union where the native population, i.e. the Kazakhs, constituted the minority. This can be proven by the 1970 population census that revealed the Kazakhs to be constituting only 30% of the whole population in the KazSSR (Soviet Census, 1970). Secondly, the Kazakh language had been suffering significant discrimination and lack of development up until the beginning of the XXI century as well as had not been taught properly and sometimes completely neglected by the educational establishments (Kaziev, 2015). Lastly, when defining the Kazakhs as an ethnic group, the term *naridnist* was used in the USSR and its censuses which accounts for the transitional stage between a tribal and a “societal” way of life (Ubiria, 2015), thus, regarding the Kazakhs as a less developed people. After taking all of the given points into account, it becomes obvious that the Kazakhs in the Soviet Union were considered to be some sort of an indigenous people (Ubiria, 2015) and subject to assimilation in the “Soviet” culture. Moreover, the historical circumstances as well as the time when the Sami and the Kazakh self-identification have awoken are quite similar to each other and, even though Kazakhstan is now an independent state, the Kazakhs still possess the features common with the Sami people to this or that extent which makes it possible for the comparison in my thesis to be conducted on equal grounds for both ethnic groups without emphasizing the indigeneity of any of them.

2.5 The Kazakhstani Kazakh identities in previous research

First and foremost, it has to be mentioned that when it comes to the Kazakh identities, the amount of literature existing and available on the given topic is much smaller than that regarding the Sami people. Moreover, while presenting the brief overview on the sources, I am going to focus on only the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan and not in Russia or China.

To begin with, when it comes to existing research concerning Kazakh identities in Kazakhstan and the elements constructing them, a very important role and a huge amount of attention is paid to the *Shezire* which stands for the Kazakh traditional genealogical system (Eitzen, 1998). As such, the given system is comprised of two main parts. The first one is centered around dividing the Kazakhs into groups and subgroups which historically was

founded due to the vast territory that the Kazakh Khanate was situated on and, thus, needed some sort of classification (Esenova, 2002). The modern Kazakhs still bear the memories of their *ru* (tribe or kin) and *zhuz* (one of the three territorial grouping of the *ru*) and pass them from one generation to the next one which lead to them attributing a lot of meaning to the given features and associating them with their ethnic identities as well as proof of being Kazakh (Esenova, 2002). The second part deals exactly with the genealogy of a particular family where traditionally one is expected to know by heart at least seven generations of their ancestors which was formerly introduced in order to avoid intermarriages between relatives due to the nomadic way of life of the Kazakhs back in the day and their relatives, consequently, being scattered and residing all across the Kazakh Khanate territories. Since immense importance was attributed to knowing one's roots, it is still carried by the Kazakhs as part of their life and, therefore, is also used to refer to when talking about their ethnic identities (Esenova, 2002).

In addition to that, another element of culture that is often referred to when it comes to their ethnic identities for the Kazakhs is land. As it has been mentioned before, both the territories of modern Kazakhstan and the former Kazakh Khanate were and are vast and spacious. Furthermore, due to the nomadic way of life, one, being a Kazakh, used to have a strong association with their place of birth and/or the land where their *ru* is believed to originate from (Esenova, 2002) and where they felt they could return in the moments of need or grief. Due to the strong historical connection with land as a place of birth and safety as well as the cultural motives serenading the land as the mother nature and the Kazakhs' bond with it, the given element is also quite sound for the modern representatives of the Kazakh population as a feature that helps them to identify themselves as Kazakh (Yeskarauly, 2015).

Furthermore, to a smaller extent, some Kazakhs associate their religion as part of their ethnic identity as well. Even though Kazakh traditional beliefs were not centered around Islam or Muslim values, having adopted it well before becoming part of the Russian Empire, the Kazakhs have been holding on to Islam as a safe ground that would assist them in preserving their cultural individuality during the Soviet secularization and russification processes, since the Russians and many other ethnic minorities that were relocated to the modern Kazakhstani territories were mostly Orthodox Christian (Esenova, 2002). In this manner, with the rise of Kazakh self-identification after the collapse of the Soviet Union, what has been helping them to preserve from blending into the Russian majority started being associated with the Kazakh ethnic identity itself and is highly valued by the majority of the Kazakh population up until modern days (Esenova, 2002).

However, it has to be emphasized that Islam as an important basis for Kazakh identity was developed and praised during the USSR times and, therefore, is more vivid among the older generations of the Kazakhs who was brought up in the Soviet era. As for the current Kazakh young adults and adolescents, their connection with Islam is defined by their families and the way in which the Muslim values were either taught or neglected. Nevertheless, with the start of the governmental programs aimed at revitalization of Kazakh language and culture, huge support was given to promoting and developing Kazakh popular culture as a new turn in Kazakh self-identification and a way to engage the youth in identifying themselves as Kazakh as well as learning and speaking the Kazakh language. Therefore, some research has also revealed a mild connection of the Kazakh popular culture to the Kazakh identities as it enhances the younger generations' consciousness concerning their ethnic origin (Yeskaruly, 2015).

All in all, the elements of Kazakh identities in existing research have been illustrated mostly from the quantitative standpoint and include such characteristics as family and genealogy, land and traditional culture, religion and modern popular culture as those that

construct the modern Kazakh identities. However, all of the sources mentioned focus on the Kazakhs as a single unit without distinguishing between generations and their first languages which means that the outcomes of all the existing research includes both those who have grown up during the Soviet times and absorbed the Soviet values and those who have not witnessed the USSR in their conscious age at all. Moreover, no to very little attention is paid to the Russian-speaking part of the Kazakh population which, though significantly smaller, is still quite present in Kazakhstan and is often underrepresented in such research. Lastly, almost all the existing research happens to be quantitative in nature or rooted deeply in analysis of historical documents rather than applying interviews as a qualitative data collection method. For all the reasons mentioned above, my thesis focuses on the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults who were born after the collapse of the Soviet Union in order to contribute to their better representation in both societal and academic spheres.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the background and the relevant research relating to the Sami in Norway and the Kazakhs in the USSR and Kazakhstan and their ethnic identities. The similar patterns in the history of the norwegianisation process in Norway and the russification policies in the Soviet Union were identified to be in common for the Sami in Norway and for the Kazakhs in contemporary Kazakhstan. Namely, the given commonalities include the nation-building policies applied by the states, the narratives that have been accompanying the given policies and the outcomes for the Sami and Kazakh ethnic identities as well as the rise of the Sami and Kazakh self-identification in the end of the XX and the beginning of the XXI centuries. In addition to that, it has been illustrated how are the Sami and Kazakh ethnic identities presented in the existing research. It can be seen that their common identity construction elements include family as well as strong connection to the land and culture. Furthermore, the lack of literature addressing the perceptions of the Norwegian-speaking Sami towards their first language and its connection to their identity formation as well as the take of the Russian-speaking Kazakhs towards their identities has been pointed out, thus, providing the basis for conducting the research on the given issue for my thesis.

3 Conceptual and theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

After reviewing the background and literature review, one can now see the direct relation of the term of identity to my thesis as well as the minor but important relevance of language as an element involved in constructing and shaping the identity. Thus, it is considered important to define both of the given terms in order to make them clear and put them into the context of the given research.

The given chapter aims at defining the terms “identity” and “language”, with the former being the main focus. Firstly, the term of identity is going to be outlined and presented as articulated in the given thesis. Secondly, the two theories; the social identity theory and the Foucauldian perspective, are going to be discussed as both of them position identity in the center of their attention and are used in my thesis. Thirdly, the concept of language will also be addressed briefly with its relation to the term of identity. Lastly, the application of the given terms and theories to my thesis is going to be summarized and presented.

3.2 Defining the concept of identity

To begin with the general definition, an identity can be understood as one’s sense of who they are, the way they define themselves individually and its relation to others (Abrams & Hogg, 1998). However, one’s identity may be considered in two different ways as either being rigid or dynamic both of which are going to be briefly addressed below.

To begin with the idea of an identity being rigid, the given approach may be defined as primordial and implies one’s identity to be attributed from birth and, thus, stay unchanged throughout their life (Coulmas, 2019). In the given approach, the society which is responsible for passing the identity from generation to generation is viewed as a single objective unit that creates certain social boundaries through which one’s identity is acquired and kept more or less fixed later on.

In line with the primordial approach, Eriksen adds to it the idea of an ethnic identity being based on one’s ancestry interpreting the society from the approach mentioned above as one’s ethnic group and the boundaries being connected to the history and culture of the given people as well as one’s family as the source of their identity being passed to them from the previous generations (Eriksen, 2001). The given approach may be relevant for my thesis given the existing research outlining the family as an important element in the Norwegian Sami and the Kazakhstani Kazakhs identity construction and somewhat similar historical experiences. However, as it has been made clear in the previous chapter, neither of the given groups are viewed as homogenous in the given thesis since not only did different representatives of the two people have varying individual and historical experiences but also the topic of my thesis emphasizes from the very beginning the fact that I am going to focus only on the part of the Norwegian Sami who speak Norwegian as their first language and only the Russian-speaking Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. Therefore, my research does not consider neither the Norwegian Sami nor the Kazakhstani Kazakhs as single units and cannot utilize the primordial approach to

identity formation, even though the historical experiences and family as a starting point for one's identity construction are taken into consideration as possible factors in one's identity formation process.

As for the perception of an identity being dynamic and subject to constant change, the given approach is described as a constructivist understanding of the essence of identity formation (Coulmas, 2019). According to the constructivist point of view, an identity is a socially constructed phenomenon which is shaped and influenced through one's interactions with other people (Wendt, 1994).

Along with the constructivist approach, Foucault views identity as a discourse-mediated unfixed term that is defined by a person's interactions with the others (Foucault, 1998) which is going to be discussed in more detail later on in this chapter. However, it can already be seen that the dynamic approach to the identity formation process is more flexible and allows for speculating on one's identity construction in varying agendas and social realities which is considered to be more in line with the focus of my thesis and, thus, will be taken as a basis for further research on the given topic.

3.3 Social identity theory

Developed in the field of social psychology, the social identity theory revolves around one's sense of belonging to their social group through identifying and defining the categories of "Us" and "Them" (Jackson & Hogg, 2010). Therefore, the elements considered when identifying the features of the former and the latter are to be discussed in more detail.

To start with the "Us" category, it has to be emphasized that its definition for a person is highly dependent on their emotional attachment to the group that they consider as the one they belong to (Brewer, 2001). The given attachment is believed to be based on the common values and cultural features (Brewer, 2001). At the same time, the positive bias is attributed to such commonalities often exaggerating them to the point of being more loyal towards one's in-group and forgiving or even neglecting some of their wrong-doings or disadvantages (Gaertner et al., 2000).

As for "Them" which can also be addressed as one's out-group, the given category often implies the juxtaposition of the group described above and its values against the given one (Kenny, 2011). In this manner, the stereotypization of the image of the out-group takes place which results in and is accompanied by the attribution of the negative bias instead of the positive one that has been mentioned above (Brewer, 2001). Therefore, just as it is the case with the in-group, the cultural values of "Them" are exaggerated to the point of picturing any fault of the group's representatives to be present due to its "wrong" culture, while any virtue is labelled as being solely individual and not connected to the whole unit (Vambheim, 2021).

Now when the features of both the in-group and the out-group are defined clearer, it is worth mentioning that within a society the process of othering might occur as part and a result of the identity formation processes of individuals. In this manner, the given process may imply noticeable differences in the way the representatives of different groups treat each other (Griffin, 2017). As a result, such tendencies may lead to intensifying discrimination in the society which, in its turn, might become potentially conflict-prone (Jussim et al., 2001). In this regard, the Norwegian-speaking Sami in Norway and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs in

Kazakhstan risk to be positioned in between the in-group and the out-group due to their linguistic and/or cultural features and to be placed in the situation of inner conflict of identities. That is why the given theory is considered to be relevant for the given thesis as it may provide for the opportunity to find out the way out of the given vicious circle and building one's identity around the biases and controversies addressed above.

3.4 The Foucauldian perspective on identity

First and foremost, it has to be mentioned that Foucault in his works usually uses the term of subjectivity instead of identity when referring to one's self-identification (Kenny, 2011). However, in order to keep the consistency of the usage of terms in my thesis and not create any uncertainties, I am going to stick to the term of identity further on in the given research even when referring to the Foucauldian perspective. In the course of the Foucauldian perspective, identity is viewed to be heavily influenced by the discourses operating in the society where one finds themselves (Urbanski, 2011). In addition to that, one's self-identification is considered to be an every-changing unfixed phenomenon which goes in line with the constructivist approach to identity formation which has been outlined above.

When it comes to expanding on the societal discourses, Foucault attributes immense importance to the processes happening in the society during one's identity construction period and the many other circumstances surrounding it calling them the societal discourses. In this manner, the Foucauldian perspective implies that the happenings in the society influence the elements of one's identity, therefore, an identity is viewed as being shaped by the discourses, i.e. the happenings, within the society provoking changes that otherwise might not have happened (Foucault, 1995). In order to better outline the given discourses, Foucault leans heavily on the individual and cultural narratives as the source of societal discourses (Urbanski, 2011) and presents them as being interdependent, thus, both the discourses may be shaping one's identities as well as the collective recognition of a discourse may bring it into visible existence and actually being called a discourse (Urbanski, 2011).

As for the period of one's identity formation process that was mentioned above, throughout the course of his works, Foucault has come to admit that the given process is never ending during the life of a person (Urbanski, 2011). In this manner, it can be reasoned by arguing that the society as a source of discourses is ever-changing on its own and the discourses keep emerging and disappearing without orienteering on one's age or level of maturity. Therefore, since the discourses are not fixated in the societies, they can also not be rigid in their influence on one's identity formation. Moreover, Foucault comes to the conclusion that one's identity formation is some sort of a way towards the freedom of identifying oneself and accepting their narratives as well as societal changes (Urbanski, 2011) as inevitable factors and elements of one's life. As it can be seen, the focus on one's individual narratives of their lives and the influences of such on their identities are what is considered relevant for my thesis and that is why the Foucauldian perspective is going to be utilized as one of the theories in the theoretical framework of the given thesis. As for the identities being viewed as ever-changing together with the discourses in the society, the issue of possible problems connected to achieving proper saturation of the data is going to be addressed in the following chapter by considering the sampling of the participants in terms of their age and place of birth and/or residence.

3.5 The concept of language in relation to identity

To begin with, when it comes to defining “language” as a term, it has to be mentioned that, even though it does have other connotations and importance for various fields of studies, the given term is going to be addressed and utilized in the given thesis only in relation to the identity formation process and, thus, only the contexts of the given term usage that are considered relevant for the given research are going to be defined below. The given contexts include viewing a language as a tool for both uniting the members of a social group and expressing of self as an individual as part of their identity.

To start with the former, Edwards defines a language as a communication system of arbitrary elements which convey a meaning agreed-upon in a given community (Edwards, 2009). As it can be seen, social consensus plays an important role in this way of interpreting the definition of a language and the given pattern reminds us about the social identity theory where the common grounds are necessary in order to build one’s in-group identity (Edwards, 2009). In this manner, after reaching such a consensus, the membership in one’s in-group is considered to automatically become of great importance for an individual (Barth, 1969), i.e. feeling themselves as belonging to their in-group becomes both an individual and a group value. Following the given logic, language may be of immense importance for both dividing the society into groups in accordance with the representatives’ first languages and uniting the individuals within one in-group around it. Therefore, in my thesis the Norwegian and Russian languages may be viewed as both the features that help the Norwegian-speaking Sami in Norway and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs in Kazakhstan to identify themselves within the states’ societies and to gain the sense of belonging to their linguistic in-groups.

On the other hand, language may be defined as originating from the community that one has been exposed to and is used as one’s tool of expression of self as an individual (Joseph, 2004). However, while language is treated as a tool, it also becomes less subjective as every individual uses it in different ways, whether consciously or not, when presenting who they are or who they think they are (Joseph, 2004). In this manner, apart from conscious choice to hide or misinterpret the truth, one also has to face their surrounding environment as a basis of their identity (Joseph, 2004). In other words, since a language takes its origin from the society, it is the society that may influence one’s perception of their identity and make it less fixed or stable throughout their life. In this regard, the first languages of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs might have influenced their identity formation which leads to them perceiving and interpreting their identities now using them as a tool while also incorporating them in the narratives of their identity construction processes which is considered to be one of the goals of my thesis.

All in all, language is interdependent to one’s identity both in terms of its formation and its articulation in their narratives. In this manner, both of the given connotations of a language in relation to identity are deemed important to keep in mind while positioning my research within the conceptual framework.

3.6 Applying the conceptual and theoretical framework to the case of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs

Following the definition of an identity as one's sense of who they are, the identities of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs are viewed as dynamic phenomena that are changing throughout their lives and self-discovery processes.

As for the social identity theory, it is deemed important to analyze whether the construction of in-group and out-group divisions could be of use or, on the contrary, hamper the process of identity formation for the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs since their perceptions of cultural norms and values may be influenced by their first languages and come to a clash with their ethnic origins.

In addition to that, the Foucauldian perspective is also taken into consideration in the given thesis as a basis for data analysis since it allows to identify the discourses in the narratives of the participants and the societies surrounding them in terms of their influence on the identities of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs.

Lastly, a language as a concept is also considered relevant in relation to the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs' identities since their first languages may be viewed as being connected to both their definition of their in-groups and out-groups and their articulation of self in the given circumstances.

4 Methodological framework

4.1 Introduction – a qualitative research

As it has been mentioned before, my research aims to be qualitative in its nature based on the choice of ontology, epistemology and approach to theory in relation to the research that I have chosen to position myself with for the given thesis (Bryman, 2012). To mention it briefly, my choice fell on the constructivist ontology, interpretivist epistemology and grounded theory as the main basic elements of my research. Hence it is considered important to illustrate those in more detail below.

To begin with ontology, it is worth mentioning first and foremost that it deals with the nature of social entities as its main focus (Bryman, 2012). In this manner, ontology can be objectivist or constructivist and, thus, the research may become either quantitative or qualitative in nature respectively. Objectivist ontology bases its principles on viewing social entities as objective entities that can play a rather external role for social actors (Walsh, 2021). As for the constructivist ontology, it regards the societies to be built by the social actors through their perceptions of the former and their actions towards them (Becker, 1982). As it could be noticed from the theoretical framework that has been expanded on in the previous chapter, my thesis attributes immense importance to the perceptions of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs concerning the societies they are residing in and their influence on and interconnection with their identities hence the ontology of the given research positions itself within the constructivist perspective which attributes it the feature of the qualitative nature.

Furthermore, epistemology as another way of the research configuration should also be addressed. Unlike ontology, epistemology concerns itself with the field of knowledge as such (Walsh, 2021). In this manner, epistemology aims at considering whether the knowledge is acceptable or not and how is it gained (Anderson, 2012). Just as it is the case with ontology, both quantitative and qualitative research models have the types of epistemology attributed to them. The quantitative research positions itself within the positivist epistemology which is based on the natural sciences approach to social research (Bryman, 2012). At the same time, the qualitative research situates itself within the interpretivist epistemology that states that human-beings, unlike other objects in natural sciences, are all different and possess a certain level of subjectivity to them (Bryman, 2012). In this regard, it can be pointed out that my research leans towards the interpretivist epistemology as it regards the participants as separate human-beings with their own narratives and perceptions concerning their identity formation processes. Therefore, my thesis is once again found to be possessing an element of a qualitative research which, thus, makes it qualitative in nature.

As for the approach to the role of theory and its relation to the research, qualitative research deems the given approach to be inductive which means that it aims at generating the theory after the completion of the research rather than testing the one prepared in advance which is the essence of the deductive method as part of the quantitative research (Bryman, 2012). However, the inductive approach on its own also has two different ways of approaching the data analysis those being analytic induction and the grounded theory approach. Analytic induction as a qualitative data analysis approach tries to find a universal explanation of a hypothesis or an answer to the research question both of which have been formulated before the data collection by conducting the latter over and over again until saturation, i.e. the

consistency of data, is reached (Bryman, 2012). Unlike analytic induction, the grounded theory approach puts a researcher into a position of constant reviewing of their data with the purpose of non-stop comparison of findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and editing the research question if necessary with further formulation of a hypothesis only when relative data saturation is reached. Since I have chosen not to formulate a hypothesis before data collection in order for it not to influence the data analysis and prevent manipulation of data given that I myself am a representative of one of the groups in focus, my choice to data analysis fell on the grounded theory approach as it was deemed the fittest for the purposes and circumstances of the given research.

Lastly, some criticisms regarding the qualitative research are going to be addressed briefly. The qualitative research designs are often criticized for the lack of possibilities to generalize the findings as well as a high level of the subjectivity in the latter (Silverman, 2006). However, while the issue of subjectivity is going to be addressed a little further in the given chapter, the generalizability is not deemed as relevant for the given research due to its limited size as well as the aim of in-depth analysis and presentation of individual narratives instead of turning them into universal truths. In addition to that, the grounded theory approach itself also has faced some critical comments mainly focused on the doubts on whether the given approach contributes to the actual creation of a *theory* rather than a *concept* (Bryman, 2012). Nevertheless, since my research aims at outlining the *elements* of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs' identities which might be deemed as *categories* in grounded theory, the given drawback is considered to be of benefit to my particular research.

4.2 Data collection process

Due to the grounded theory approach, the data collection process in my research was interchanged with data analysis and comparison periods and, thus, was spread in time from November 2021 up to May 2023 and was conducted both online and in person. The data itself as referred to in my thesis represents the in-depth interviews which were conducted with the representatives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults. The semi-structured interviews were held with ten participants in English for the Norwegian-speaking Sami and in Russian for the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults. Four of the given participants belonged to the former group and six – to the latter.

The limitations to the interviews include two factors. The first one is connected to me as a researcher and the sensitivity of the topic which might have caused some of the participants to be biased in their answers during the interviews. The second one concerns the issue of language. While the interviews with the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults were held in their first language and enabled them to express themselves freely, the Norwegian-speaking Sami participants had to use English and, though they all command it fluently, it might have made some of them feel more constricted when sharing their perceptions and, thus, some of the data might have been left out.

To deal with potential deviations from the topic in the flow of the interviews, the interview guide was prepared in advance which included some main questions to ask the participants and left space for detailed questions in case I deemed it important and fit to specify with the participants. All the interviews were recorded and stored safely upon the completion of the research.

4.2.1 In-depth interviews

In order to achieve the objectives of my thesis, I have chosen to conduct one-on-one in-depth semi-structured interviews with the participants. A semi-structured format of interviewing has provided for the flexibility of the flow of the conversation and allowed to ask follow up questions where it has been deemed necessary while also being able to avoid topics that might be sensitive for the respondents (Bryman, 2012). Given the sensitivity of the issue of identity, a fully structured format of the interview was deemed to might have appeared inappropriate as well as not sufficient for gaining detailed information due to inability to ask additional questions. At the same time, a totally unstructured interview may have led to collecting a big amount of data without an exact focus which could constitute a challenge for further analysis. For the given reasons, a semi-structured interview has been deemed to be a justified data collection method for my thesis.

As it has been mentioned above, the interview guide has been prepared in advance to keep the flow of the interviews in focus of the given research. However, oftentimes the interviews ended up being more open to the participants' contributions in terms of their perceptions which made the interviews more loose but gave the respondent the opportunity to add the information that they considered important and which they would be shy to do if the discussions went stricter. Therefore, my concern with the interview guide during the interviews was to check that all or almost all the main questions were answered and the discussions were not going too far astray.

All the interviews started with me describing my research once again for the participants to better grasp the focus of the further discussion and also in order to give them an opportunity to ask questions before the start while some of them also preferred to share their thoughts on the topic before we get to the interview guide which gave them time to get more comfortable with both me as a researcher and the topic itself. I then asked whether they identify as Sami or Kazakh respectively which enabled them to share their background with me in terms of their ethnic origin and occupation as it appeared to often be connected to their identities. In this way, I could lay the basis for the participants to start sharing their perceptions of the societies they reside in and their vision of how they are represented there in terms of their identities. My overall goal was to identify their relation to their societies of birth and residence and the way they define their identities and "live them" in the given circumstances, apart from simply talking about their family history and general opinions on identities which, nevertheless, was still considered important.

In some interviews, the participants would naturally move to their experiences in the society in terms of their identity formation and presentation while in the others I would ask them directly how do they feel in the environments where their first languages are spoken freely or not. My goal was to ask questions from different standpoints and imagine different scenarios in order not to guide the participants towards universal answers and present various stereotypes both positive and negative operating in their societies and their perceptions of those.

It also has to be mentioned that, due to the mixed settlement patterns that were and are operating both in Norway and in Kazakhstan as it was elaborated on in the background chapter, some of the participants deemed it important to say that, apart from being Sami or Kazakh, they also have ancestors of different ethnic origins. I then asked if they identify themselves with the other ethnic groups as well and their way of defining who they are in the given context. In this manner, I could outline their way of building their identities not only around their first languages but also around the ethnic varieties present both in their societies of living and their

own families and how do they tell when does their Sami or Kazakh identity end and the other ones begin.

Lastly, as it has been mentioned above, almost half of the interviews were conducted in the language different from the one that the participants deem to be their first. As it is going to be noticed later in the findings, this led to the constriction of some of the participants and, thus, made the data they provided smaller. Since I still strived to make their voices be heard, I decided to not change the project design, even though I realize that it might have disadvantaged my overall findings. My way of addressing this issue was to let the participants use the translating apps during the interviews if needed and to contribute to what they had previously said by giving them the opportunity to contact me later after the interviews if there was anything that they wanted to add or specify.

4.2.2 Sampling of participants

The sampling of the participants for the interviews was conducted on a purposive basis which implied the selection to be happening based on certain criteria instead of random choice (Bryman, 2012). Thanks to the given method of sampling, the search for the most suitable participants in terms of the focus of the given thesis among those who were willing to share their perceptions was enabled. Namely, the participants were expected to fall into the **categories** fitting the given research.

To begin with, the participants were expected to **identify themselves as Sami or Kazakh** even if they happen to have ancestors of any other ethnic origin. The given criterion was added due to the pattern of mixed settlements that has been referred to above and implied that it was possible for the participants to identify as more than one ethnicity. In this case, the emphasis was made in the beginning of the interviews that their main identity in focus would be Sami or Kazakh respectively.

Secondly, the participants were expected to state their first languages as Norwegian or Russian respectively. The term “first language” was utilized on purpose to avoid confusion with such terms as “native language” and “mother tongue” which some participants would state to be Sami or Kazakh respectively due to their ethnic origin. The explanation of the term of first language was provided to each participant before and during the interviews specifying that in the context of the given thesis the first language is the one that they use in their everyday life and thinking process as well as in the situations when they are free to use the language that they are most comfortable with. At the same time, their usage of Sami, Kazakh and any other language was not dependent on their first language, i.e. they could be proficient users of their native languages as well but would still prefer to use Norwegian or Russian if they had a choice.

Thirdly, due to the elongated and vast territories of both Norway and Kazakhstan, the participants were expected to be **residing in the cities of Tromsø and Almaty** respectively due to both of the given areas serving as meeting places for people of different ethnic origins where the Sami and the Kazakh populations respectively were still visibly present. This, however, did not exclude the possibility of the participants to have lived or be born in other areas but implied that they should have had sufficient experience in the named cities.

Lastly, due to the rise of the Sami and Kazakh self-identification starting at approximately the same historical time, the age of the participants was also defined based on the given fact. In

this manner, the term “young adults” that is utilized in the given thesis refers to the participants aged **between 20 and 30 years old** as of the moment of conducting the interviews.

When it comes to accessing the participants, the snowballing approach was utilized. The first encounters and interviews were conducted with the usage of my personal contacts while the following ones happened thanks to the former respondents recommending those they deemed fit to be contacted. The given process has especially been challenging when it concerned the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults as I was an outsider for the given group and, due to the historical happenings, I had to build trust with them and ensure their safety both physical and mental. I have also faced some insulting and derogatory behavior from some people that I have interacted with concerning my thesis and, despite it being expected to a certain degree, it has tested my objectivity and ability to not fall into my personal sorrows regarding the focus of the given research that have been triggered after such communications. However, in order to recover from such experiences, I had to prolong the breaks between the interviews and this has resulted in conducting less interviews with the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults than it was planned before the start of the project.

Lastly, since some of the participants requested their names to not be mentioned in my thesis, the names of all the respondents were replaced with pseudonyms in order to reach equality between the respondents in terms of their representation in the given research. The pseudonyms were attributed on a random basis with the only requirement for them to be within the same range of the participants’ real names in terms of their etymology in order to keep the consistency of the data when analyzed and presented further on in the given thesis.

4.3 Thematic data analysis

Given the theoretical framework of the given thesis which includes the Foucauldian perspective as one of its two theories, the qualitative nature of my research and the grounded theory approach to data analysis, the thematic analysis of data was identified to be the most suitable method to utilize in order to achieve the objectives of my thesis. Despite being one of the most common methods of data analysis, thematic analysis does not happen to have an elaborate system of application to one’s research (Bryman, 2012) and is often criticized for being vague in its nature as well as the whole idea of “themes” resembling the categories in grounded theory or codes in critical discourse analysis (Bryman, 2012). However, themes may be defined as recurring motives in the participants’ narratives that are outlined and can be applied to data. These are slightly different from categories since they do not necessarily imply some sort of grouping or sorting of the criteria, neither do they fully fall into the term of codes since, when dealing with translated language which represents half of the data that I have gathered, the exact repetitions are less likely to occur and the wording of different participants would highly depend on their education and the content they are exposed to.

In addition to that, one could also argue that utilizing the narrative data analysis is considered to be more beneficial when dealing with the topic of identity since it aims at revealing one’s way of making sense of the happenings in their lives and how they shape them (Mishler, 1986). However, even though my thesis attributes immense importance to the participants’ stories and how they come to identifying themselves as Sami or Kazakh respectively, the overarching goal of the given research is to identify the elements that they use in the given process and not the chronological patterns which, for instance, could be identified while applying the narrative analysis approach.

For the reasons briefly outlined above, thematic analysis was utilized in order to identify the discourses according to the Foucauldian perspective and the categories suiting the grounded theory approach, thus, being used as an instrument for the latter and not an interchangeable alternative.

4.4 Research ethics, risk assessment and security considerations

To begin with, before conducting the data collection, my project proposal has been assessed and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. In addition to that, I have also ensured to be acting with consideration of four aspects of research ethics outlined by Bryman, those being harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception (Bryman, 2012).

In this manner, the participants were given a free choice on whether to participate in the interviews or not after they have heard and asked all the questions about my thesis as well as the right to withdraw their consent whenever they might find it necessary without any implications for them. In addition to that, given the sensitivity of the topic, I was doing the best I could to provide comfort for the participants at all stages, for instance, by giving them the opportunity to choose the preferable place and time to meet, providing breaks in the discussions if they felt emotionally stressed and ensuring that their narratives do not dive too deep and trigger any of their personal pains.

Furthermore, the participants have signed the written consent forms where they could once again read the information about my thesis as well as find contact details of mine, my supervisor and the data controllers.

As for the invasion of privacy, this was ensured by, first of all, anonymizing all the participants as it has been already mentioned above. All personal details that could identify them as individuals were either slightly changed or left out upon their consent. Apart from that, all the recordings were made only upon agreement with the respondents and were later stored on a password-locked device without connection to the Internet.

Lastly, to avoid deception, I have strived not to discuss my perceptions on the matter with the participants and provide polite listening without judging their narratives. Moreover, throughout the interviews, I would suggest different scenarios and stereotypes both positive and negative for the participants to speculate on in order not to guide the conversations in one way or another and manipulate the data in the way to achieve artificial saturation.

4.5 A word on reflexivity

Being involved in qualitative research, one is always exposed to situations when their own background, cultural or social values and other personal characteristics and experiences might influence their way of approaching their studies as well as the participants and further data processing. In such circumstances that my research has put me in, I have to always be aware of the given influence and try my best to remain subjective and reflexive towards my actions as a researcher (Silverman, 2006). In this manner, the given section of the chapter addresses my background in relation to my research topic, my positionality and its implications

for bias and reflexivity as well as a brief outline of the decisions that I was making while dealing with the participants and the data provided by them.

To begin with, I would like to discuss my personal background and its relation to the focus of my thesis. As I have mentioned in the introductory chapter, I myself am a Russian-speaking Kazakh from the city of Almaty in Kazakhstan hence I could even become a participant for the given study myself which I chose not to do in order not to be tempted to reflect my own experiences and perceptions throughout the given thesis since my goal is to share the voices of the others and not my own. However, my background does provide both the advantages and the disadvantages for conducting my research. First of all, it allows me to establish better understanding and trust with the Russian-speaking Kazakhs since they feel and know that I would be more empathetic to their experiences as well as the fact that I would understand local contexts and values better than a foreign researcher would do. In addition to that, this also enhances their willingness to share their stories because they know that their jokes will be understood and their ideas will not have to be “lost in translation” while transmitting them to me. However, for the same reason, I also have to be exceptionally careful when interacting with the participants and the data that they have provided since my approach and understanding can be marred by my own vision of the topic and I might be misinterpreting their words altogether in order to better suit my own opinion. For this reason, I have chosen not to formulate the hypothesis for my research before data collection is conducted and also to conduct the interviews each one or two after one interview with a Sami participant in order not to create a single flow here all the ideas become homogenous. As for the Norwegian-speaking Sami respondents, I happen to be an outsider for the given group, as it has been outlined below. However, since the histories of the Norwegian Sami and the Kazakhs in the USSR resemble each other, I also risk to start reflecting my or the Kazakh participants’ opinions onto the narratives of the given group or force some discussions that are not relevant for them. In order to improve my reflexivity on the given issue, I have put effort to accustom myself with the history and the existing research on the Norwegian Sami identities so as to expand my perspective. In addition to that, I would occasionally rephrase the questions in the interviews and ask them again so as to gain a better understanding of the participants’ answers as well as repeat their words directly and have them confirm that I have understood their narratives in the right way. Lastly, given that some of the Norwegian-speaking Sami participants did not feel completely comfortable speaking English, I would ask them to express their thought or some words in Norwegian to give them more freedom and knowing that I could translate small bits of text on my own while analyzing the data.

As for my positionality within the topic of my thesis, it is worth mentioning that it is influenced a lot by my experiences both negative and positive in embracing and developing my own identity as a Russian-speaking Kazakh. I have gone through a lot of bullying from the Russians residing in Kazakhstan and the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs for speaking Russian as my first language and my traumas and pains as well as my way to not only embracing but becoming proud of being Kazakh enable me to provide my own elements of the given identity which I consider important. However, I realize that the experiences are not the same for everyone and while someone might have gone through something much more traumatizing than me, the other person might have never heard about such struggles at all. In this manner, I also understand that various people have varying views on the elements constructing their identities and their level of importance. This is why I chose not only to not share my opinion with the participants but also be open for their takes on the given topic without attributing personal judgement to their words in, at least, as many occasions as I could control it consciously. However, I do realize that my facial expressions, the tone of my voice or even the way I word my questions might give my feelings off and that is the doubt that has to be taken into consideration when analyzing

the data. For this reason, I have taken time to access my own reflexivity on the topic and become conscious of it at all times of the research. As for the interactions with the respondents, I have made sure to not reveal my background to them in full so that as less context as possible guides their interpretation of what and how they are asked about the topic of the given thesis.

However, given that not all the participants felt comfortable enough to share their personal experiences and perceptions fully, I have faced the issue of making decisions on what to do in such situations. When dealing with in-depth interviews, one has to be careful not to trigger the respondents' traumas while investigating further in the topics that they have risen. Keeping that in mind and also knowing that such a discussion is sensitive on its own even without any pressure from an interviewer, I had to utilize my own judgement as to when to stop enquiring a respondent on a particular question or complete the interview altogether. For this reason, some of the interviews were much shorter than the others (all of them ranging between 30 minutes and 1,5 hours in length) since in some occasions I have decided not to force the participant to speak. In addition to that, some participants have also mentioned that they have never sat down to consider some questions that I was asking and, thus, could not provide sufficient answers to them which also resulted in certain respondents' interviews being shorter than expected. When faced with the two given issues, I then had to decide whether to include such data in my research or whether to look for other suitable respondents instead. Keeping in mind the purpose of my research to let the voices of the participants be heard, I have finally decided to include their contributions into my thesis no matter how long or short their interviews were. In addition to that, I have also come to realization that for some participants the interviews had a therapeutic effect as well as helped them to realize their identities in a different way which, thus, boosted their identity construction processes. Having understood this, I have also learnt to treasure all the interviews that I have conducted since they have allowed me to witness the respondents' identities in the making. Maybe the shortest ones were even more helpful for the participants than the longer ones? In respect and awe for the miracles that I was fortunate to participate in, I have decided to give equal representation to all the people who were so kind to let me witness their thought process and feelings.

4.6 Summary and case study design

In the given chapter, I have provided the brief outline of the methodological framework that I have established for my thesis. Being qualitative in its nature, it incorporates both the theoretical framework from the previous chapter as well as the data collection and analysis methods in the case study design which has been elaborated for the given research. Since neither the grounded theory approach nor the thematic analysis have an established linear way of applying them and both needed to be specified in relation to the Foucauldian theoretical perspective, the case study design was not introduced in the earlier parts of the given chapter and will only be briefly summarized below.

Stage 1. Reflecting on my background and positionality as a researcher within the context of the given thesis.

Stage 2. Sampling of the respondents and accessing them.

Stage 3. Start of the interviews.

Stage 4. The identification of the themes via thematic analysis is applied right after every interview in order to identify the discourses that have influenced the participants' identity formation in accordance with the Foucauldian perspective. Given the analysis being already applied to the interviews, the themes as elements of the in-group and out-group identifications in accordance with the social identity theory are also sought for simultaneously.

Stage 5. Constant comparison of the findings is conducted. The findings are sorted as to identify the categories relevant for them in accordance with the grounded theory approach.

Stage 6. The hypothesis regarding the elements of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults' and well as the influence of their first languages on their identity construction is formulated and constantly revised as the interviews continue.

Stage 7. Relative saturation of findings is achieved. The interviews are completed.

Stage 8. The final hypothesis is formulated and discussed along with consolidation of both theoretical and methodological frameworks.

As it can be seen, the case study design of my thesis does not represent a linear process and the stages can be interchanged as well as repeated as necessary to achieve saturation and formulate the final conclusions. For the given reasons, the presentation of data and findings in further chapter will represent the final outcomes only without diving into the hypotheses and speculations that were worked on along the way.

Lastly, the given chapter has also addressed the issues of participant sampling, ethics and risks as well as my reflexivity and positionality within the context of the given thesis. After presenting all the background data concerning my research design, I will further on move to sharing my research findings in the following chapters.

5 Narratives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults

5.1 Introduction

As it has been mentioned in the previous chapters, the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults' perceptions on their ethnic identities are viewed as separate individual units and are believed to be of immense importance individually, just as their own stories. For the given reasons, it has been decided to present their narratives one by one in order to provide equal representation for all the participants. Although the respondents' names and some personal information have been altered or omitted in order to ensure their privacy, the presentation of their interviews will follow the chronological order in which the interviews have been conducted. However, for the clearer picture of further analysis, the interviews will be sorted in accordance with the participants belonging to the Sami and the Kazakh groups respectively.

In the given chapter, the respondents' narratives are going to be presented as they are, i.e. without any analysis or sorting of their answers within the interviews applied since the given processes are going to be conducted further in the following chapters of the given thesis. For the stated reason, only the information that has been considered irrelevant or redundant due to the limited format of the given thesis will be left out while some other details will only appear here and not in the analysis and discussion chapters further on.

5.2 The narratives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults

In the given section, the data obtained from the interviews conducted with the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults will be presented. The interviews have been conducted in English and, thus, as much information as possible will be presented as it has been mentioned in the conversations including metaphors and citations. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, their names will be replaced with pseudonyms chosen randomly from common Norwegian names since their real ones have the same etymological origin. Is this where their search for identity begins?

5.2.1 Anne – being Sami is natural

Anne is a 26 years old Norwegian-speaking Sami whose parents are both Sami as well and, as she says, she does not “have a single drop of Norwegian blood” in her veins. Anne's perception towards her identity as a Sami is that “being Sami is natural” and, thus, she has never questioned it and accepted as a given.

When asked about her first realization of herself being Sami, Anne states that she has always known that because her dad has always been speaking the Sami language to her as well as her other relatives from the father's side. However, she did not use to state her identity as Sami up until the point when she realized that her mother was Sami also. As Anne shared later

on in the interview, her mom's side has experienced the harsh norwegianisation policies on them and her grandparents did not even know that they were Sami since their parents did not pass this knowledge to them being afraid that it might cause some negative consequences for their children. For the given reason, her mom has not talked to her about her being Sami for a long time until she accidentally knew it in the conversation. Only then did Anne start identifying as Sami fully and soundly.

In addition to that, Anne also emphasizes her identity as Norwegian to also be present in her mind. However, when asked in further detail, Anne makes it clear that "Norwegian" for her is a matter of citizenship and societal norms such as observing Christian traditions and celebrating the Norwegian Constitution Day as its citizen and not an ethnic representative. Anne gives an example about talking to the foreigners and presenting herself as Norwegian since she comes from Norway but revealing her ethnicity to them in further communication if the conversation comes to it.

However, Anne also admits the consequences of the norwegianisation process for her family and the Sami as a people. Apart from the situation with her mother, she mentions that she was embarrassed to speak Sami to her friends in the kindergarten and primary school being afraid to be left out or bullied. In addition to that, she also shared a story of her older family members who were severely bullied for being Sami along with saying that she was the first person from her family who had got the opportunity to study the Sami language in high school, even though the teachers were terribly unqualified.

When it comes to her expression of "Sami-ness", Anne attributes a lot of importance to the Sami culture and traditions such as traditional clothing and jewelry, joik, cuisine, fishing and reindeer herding. She has shared a lot about her childhood closely connected to reindeer herding, about her preferences in the national cuisine and jewelry. Furthermore, she has emphasized the meaning of the Sami national clothes for her saying that she wears it on every significant occasion in her life as well as the Norwegian Constitution day. She mentions that she feels proud of being Sami when she has an opportunity to show her identity among the mainstream Norwegians and wants to promote the Sami culture in masses. In addition to that she also feels a strong emotional attachment to her family, the way they have taught her the rules of wearing the traditional clothing and devoted joik to her.

As for speaking the Sami language, Anne says that she completely understands her relatives addressing her in Sami but prefers to answer mostly in Norwegian since she deems her knowledge of the Sami language to not be sufficient enough to hold a long consistent conversation. In this regard, she states that if there is anything that would make her feel even happier about her Sami identity, it would be speaking the Sami language both to her relatives and as a means to keep it from dying out. Moreover, she seems to be quite concerned in the further promotion of the Sami culture among her counterparts since she believes that it has to be revived and passed to further generations as well as to those who have lost their Sami identities during the norwegianisation process.

All in all, Anne is of an opinion that "you don't need to know anything to be Sami" if you were born one, "it is only natural to be Sami" but it is much more beneficial when you know the culture and language of your people in order to pass them further on.

5.2.2 Noa – being Sami is a personal choice

Noa is a 25 years old Sami who has come to learning more about and embracing his Sami identity consciously in high school, even though he knew from birth that he was Sami due to his father belonging to the given ethnic group. In this manner, it can be seen that for Noa being Sami is not only about being born Sami but also about making a conscious decision to embrace one's identity as such.

When talking about his first conscious realization of being Sami, Noa refers to his high school times when he decided to learn more about his culture and history after understanding the importance of heritage in one's life. In this regard, Noa has a bit of regret about not doing that earlier and mentions that his younger sibling was luckier in this sense and is exposed to being Sami more naturally and extensively.

As part of his strengthening self-identification as Sami, Noa mentions his political activism playing an important role in both his learning more about the Sami as a people and being proud of representing his ethnic group on a political level. However, such occasions also provoke a tiny amount of bitter feelings for him since he has mentioned that sometimes he feels that he is "not Sami enough", especially in the situations when there are Sami-speaking representatives around him and he struggles to understand the conversations.

In addition to that, Noa also thinks that those who have suffered norwegianisation and its consequences feel that they are Sami more because they have had something to resist and possibly unite against. Furthermore, Noa deems it important that having more Sami experiences, for instance, engaging in the political activities, cultural events and so on, helps him to feel that he is Sami more intensively than on an everyday basis, since "you don't experience being Sami everyday".

Apart from that, Noa also states that he is "a hundred per cent Sami and a hundred per cent Norwegian" and, when referring to experiencing his identities, he mentions that his Norwegian identity has been influencing him since childhood and he has been exposed to it more, thus, it is very hard for him to draw the line as to where one of his identities ends and the other begins. However, Noa feels positive about being bicultural and deems his "Sami-ness" to be "a cool bonus" that he has, even though he admits being reluctant to mention his origin to his classmates in his primary school since he was afraid not to blend in with them properly.

Speaking of modern days, Noa shows great interest in developing the Sami culture and language in order to both spread them among the Sami who are "taking back" their identities that have been "taken away and stolen" by Norway during norwegianisation and promoting their progress in the future. Namely, he points out several examples of popular culture fusion with joik, modern artists and representation in films. However, he also emphasizes that it should not be done in a commercial way but rather to "bring the Sami culture to modern age" so that it is not "frozen in time and backward".

As for his personal experiences, Noa mentions the interactions with one of his grandparents as being ones of the most memorable and important and emphasizes the given importance for both him as a way of discovering his identity and his relative as a means of reviving their sense of "Sami-ness" after years of shame and passing their knowledge to further generations. In addition to that, Noa also mentions getting his traditional clothing as an occasion that is crucial for him when talking about the strengthening of his Sami identity since he feels that this was the day when he has got a material proof that he was Sami.

Lastly, Noa also mentions he is currently taking the courses of the Sami language which, he hopes, will help him to get rid of the tiny feeling of not being Sami enough. For the given reason, Noa deems the Sami language to be of immense important both for him to experience himself as a Sami and also for the action of reviving the Sami culture as a whole.

All in all, Noa emphasizes that you can be Sami from birth but in order to actually become such you need to make a conscious choice towards embracing your identity and, while there are some “group qualities” that are attributed to the Sami people, it is important to define those qualities for yourself as an individual in order to become comfortable with who you are and the way you prefer to feel it. “You are allowed to be Sami in any way you want” but you have to find these ways on your own.

5.2.3 Ingrid – it is important to take the Sami back

Ingrid is a 26 years old Norwegian-speaking Sami who also happens to have a mother of Kven decent. When talking about her Sami identity, Ingrid attributes a lot of importance to “taking the ownership” of being Sami as well as fighting the historical memories of shame that have been created during the norwegianisation process.

Ingrid first consciously realized herself as a Sami in her early teenage years when she got a Sami clothing from her relatives as a birthday present. Only then did she start to discover and embrace her ethnic identity as Sami. Ingrid mentions that in her family, the Sami language has not been spoken and her grandmother has even given up her Sami identity during the norwegianisation period. In this manner, she emphasizes that her grandmother was denying and refusing to admit that she was Sami and only recently has started to occasionally recognize herself as Sami. Therefore, Ingrid states that, even though the Sami language was spoken a lot by her relatives in her presence when she was a child, due to the lack of Sami language and culture in her immediate family, she feels that she did not grow up with the sense of being Sami.

Furthermore, Ingrid is now actively engaged in Sami political activism, which enhances her personal research on the Sami history and culture and enables her to feel connected to the Sami people. Moreover, she mentions that she is the first one from her family to vote in the Sami Parliament elections and deems it to be important for her family history as well as signifying she is the first one to be proud of being Sami. However, for the same reason, Ingrid also admits to feeling lonely in her own family when it comes to her Sami identity and immensely responsible for not letting them down by her action.

Talking about loneliness, Ingrid mentions that she does not feel “fully Sami when the other Sami people are around”. She assumes that it might be due to the fact that she lacks the knowledge of the Sami language as well as the feeling of “Sami-ness” passed from her family which makes her sense her difference with other representatives of the given group.

On the other hand, when it comes to communicating with the mainstream Norwegians, Ingrid reckons that it is important for her to be “completely open about being Sami” in order to represent her ethnic group and make their presence in the society more visible. However, the same will to represent the Sami better puts a lot of pressure on her and she admit to being hesitant to start learning the Sami language since she feels that if she fails, she is going to let down her whole family. In addition to that, she describes learning the Sami language to be a very emotional process since it would mean facing all the historical trauma, shame and sorrows

that the Sami have gone through during the norwegianisation process, and one has to be prepared for that if one wants to start the learning process.

As for what helps her to feel her Sami identity, Ingrid attributes a lot of importance to the Sami cultural elements. She mentions her relatives giving her national clothing, wearing her favorite jewelry, immersing in the storytelling traditions and enjoying the national cuisine as her warm family memories as well as the elements that keep her sure that she is Sami. In addition to that, she emphasizes the traditional strong bonds with nature and land as something that enables her to realize her origin stronger as well as embrace it.

All in all, Ingrid mentions a lot of the Sami practices that she has been part of and that she thinks are important for her feeling herself as Sami while also emphasizing that a lot of the given practices are performed by her relatives unconsciously without taking actual ownership of who they are and, thus, deems it important to be talking about the feeling of “Sami-ness” in order to both “take the Sami back” and embrace one’s origin. In addition to that, the struggle of Ingrid to decide whether she wants to be representing her “Sami-ness” more vividly or not has also been noticed during the interview when she was interchanging her remarks on whether she was not very open in being Sami and, at other times, completely open about. The given struggle could be viewed as her inner conflict with self in her Sami identity formation process, since she does not yet feel completely comfortable with being Sami and expressing it and attributes a certain amount of shame to her way of being Sami and talking about it.

5.2.4 Liv – I am a Sami in my own way

Liv is a 26 years old Sami who has gone through a lot of conscious considerations of her identity and has come to embracing her identity as Sami in a positive way. When talking about the Sami identities, she emphasizes that it is important for a person to find their own way of being Sami and making sense of what that means for them.

Liv first started realizing herself as Sami in high school when she had to interact with a lot of international students and tell them about where she is from and what does it mean. Her full embracing of her Sami identity happened when she turned 21 years old and moved to Tromsø where she has encountered a lot of the Sami people and faced their positive and accepting approach towards her being Sami without questioning the essence of it for her.

She mentions along the way of the whole interview, that it is important for her to be allowed to be Sami and express her “Sami-ness” in the various ways that she deem to be fit and comfortable for her. In this regard, she has done a lot of personal research to order to know more about the Sami history and culture and found out that many activities that she has been exposed to as a child were actually the elements of the Sami culture that her family was keeping.

For instance, she mentions the farming experiences as an important element of the Sami traditional way of life, extensive interactions with her extended family which she states to be more typical for the Sami culture rather than Norwegian culture, national cuisine and many other things that she has realized to be directly connected to her ethnic identity as Sami. In addition to that, she also attributes a lot of importance to her traditional Sami clothing that she considers to be the main element for defining and ensuring her Sami identity mentioning that “it is almost like a document” proving one to be Sami.

In addition to that, when it comes to the Sami traditional clothing and forms of art, she finds it fascinating how they have managed to be incorporated into the modern culture by contemporary artists and believes that this is the way to keep the Sami culture alive and promote it. Moreover, when she talks about progressive thinking, she also states that those Sami who have experienced the most violent aspects of norwegianisation were very reluctant to change the traditional ways of practicing the Sami culture since they are afraid to lose it completely.

As for the language, Liv speaks some elementary Sami language enough to be able to participate in “easy conversations”. She expresses her willingness to learn it better in the future and mentions that when she is around Sami people who speak the language fluently, she feels happy for the Sami culture and language and also left out since she struggles to understand people’s speech on some occasions.

It is also worth mentioning that Liv provides a very interesting metaphor for the Sami from the areas where the Sami language and culture are represented stronger and those who have lost some bits of those. “While we are knocking on the door and asking to let us in, they actually want to get out”. By saying this, she explains that the traditional Sami community representatives often feel constricted by the norms and traditions that they are prescribed with and would like to develop the Sami culture and its elements to be more suitable for today’s realities while those who have lost their language and/or culture, on the contrary, want to become part of those communities as a sign of being admitted to be Sami enough.

As for her overview on being Norwegian, she admits to be having Norwegian citizenship and having acquired some Norwegian values but differentiates clearly between her “Sami-ness” and “Norwegian-ness”. Her main concern lies with the previous norwegianisation policies that she is very sorrowful about as well as the issue of the lack of awareness about the Sami issues from some Norwegians. However, she strives to be compassionate about the Sami feeling sorrow, shame and pain concerning their historical experiences and hope that the situation is going to improve in the future.

All in all, Liv is a Sami who has managed to find her own way of belonging to her ethnic group which she is comfortable about. She shows deep understanding of those who do not feel Sami enough and hope that one day they will be able to find their own ways of being Sami and pass them to the next generations.

5.3 Narratives of the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults

In the given section, the narratives of the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults obtained during the interviews are going to be presented. Since the interviews were conducted in the Russian language, any citations referred to in the given section are going to be translated to English. Lastly, just as it was the case with the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults, the names of the participants are going to be replaced by the pseudonyms randomly assigned to them from the list of the common Kazakh names, since all the real names of the participants happens to have the same etymological origin.

It has to be mentioned before one proceeds to the actual sections that there are two types of schools in contemporary Kazakhstan, one of them being where the Kazakh language is used as a language of instruction and obligatory lessons of the Russian language are held several times a week and the other one where the language of instruction is Russian and Kazakh is only

spoken on the similar kind of obligatory lessons. Despite its compulsory nature, teaching of the Kazakh language in “Russian schools” varies significantly in its quality and most of the Russian schools’ graduates do not command Kazakh fluently enough to be able to call it their first language.

In addition to that, there are three terms in Kazakhstan that can be used towards a Kazakh in a derogatory way which also have to be explained in order to grasp a better understanding of what some respondents are referring to. The first word is *shala* which translates as “half Kazakh” and is used as an insult towards a Kazakh who does not speak the Kazakh language. The next one is *mambet*. This refers to the stereotypical image of a Kazakh-speaking Kazakh who possesses a “small-town” mentality, is not well educated and is often considered stupid. The last and the strongest one is *mankurt*, which is used to say that the person has lost all connection to their ethnic group (here, to their Kazakh-ness) and forgotten their heritage. While the first term has a connotation of a broken Kazakh, the last one implies a person to not be existing for his ethnic group any more. Unfortunately, all of the given terms are still used in the Kazakhstani society by both the Russian speaking and the Kazakh-speaking citizens against each other.

5.3.1 Aisultan – on stereotypes and insults

Aisultan is a 25 years old Kazakh who is confident with his identity as a Kazakh. He is one of the few participants who did not have the moment of doubt as to who he is and why and, thus, is quite calm when it comes to the stereotypes existing in the Kazakhstani society both since the USSR nation-building policies and after the country becoming independent.

Aisultan has first started realizing himself as Kazakh in his childhood when he understood that his parents were occasionally inserting Kazakh words in their speech while his first language has always been Russian. Despite having obligatory Kazakh language lessons at school, Aisultan has not acquired it fully and can only maintain everyday conversations if needed.

However, he mentions that he is able to act his Kazakh identity out if needed which saves him from a lot of stress. For instance, he says that he can grasp the idea of what he is being told and use some basic vocabulary to agree with a person. Another example may be his participation in the traditional rituals that his family conduct as part of complying with the Kazakh culture when he knows what to do and say in order not to be criticized by the older relatives.

On the other hand, he admits to being interested in the Kazakh cuisine and history, especially the latter as the source of his ethnic identity. In this manner, he mentions researching the Kazakh history personally in his teenage years when he was faced with the questions “Who am I? And who are we?”

As for what he considers important when identifying himself as Kazakh, he mentions his connection to the Kazakhstani land that he was born on as well as his general appearance as a vivid sign of his ethnic group. However, knowing that there is a small per cent of the Kazakhs with lighter skin, hair and eye color, he does not consider this an essential criterion for one’s self-identification and only regards it as an additional tool in case of doubts.

Lastly, when it comes to stereotypes and insults, Aisultan shows a very calm reaction to all of them and, while he disapproves of the term *mankurt* and its usage in the society, he states the other two to not bother him at all and rather he has a humorous attitude towards them.

All in all, Aisultan shows himself as a person who is comfortable in his skin and his identity as well as the way it is and does not let any stereotypes or doubts make him question his origin and ethnic identity.

5.3.2 Tomiris – nothing can influence my origin

Tomiris is a 25 year old Kazakh whose appearance pattern happens to not be as widespread amongst Kazakhs since her hair and eye color are significantly lighter than it is usual for most Kazakhs. However, she stands firmly on the ground of her identity and believes that no artificial divisions should exist in one ethnic group.

Tomiris first realized herself as being Kazakh when she went to primary school and had a lesson on different ethnicities which made her question her own one. In addition to that, Tomiris graduated from a Kazakh school where she found it extremely difficult to cope with the materials since her command of Kazakh was much lower than that of Russian. However, this helped her to learn the former better and it lets her feel comfortable in everyday interactions, even though sometimes she finds it hard to find words for what she wants to express.

As for her family, almost every relative of hers is also a Russian-speaking Kazakh which has normalized it for her from her childhood that the Kazakhs may be both Kazakh- and Russian-speaking and there is no distinction needed to be made. In addition to that, she mentions her mother telling her about some traditions and her father and sister engaging her in the conversations about Kazakh history which, she feels, help her identify herself as Kazakh as well as spark her interest in learning more about her ethnic group.

Apart from that, she also mentions the importance of the *Shezire*, i.e. the Kazakh genealogical system, for her to know who she is and be sure about her ethnic identity. “Whatever they say, nothing can change my origin”.

As for her attitude towards the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs, Tomiris believes that no division with the Russian-speaking group should be made whatsoever and, though she feels less comfortable while surrounded by the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs due to her inability to express herself freely in the language, she mentions feeling anger when she is criticized for that. She also admits that she does think that the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs feel that they are Kazakh stronger and do not face such “disgusting comments and insults” that the Russian-speaking Kazakhs do just for the language that they are speaking.

Tomiris feels stronger affiliation to the Russian-speaking Kazakhs since she believes that their first language makes them equal. However, she has emphasized her wish for all the Kazakhs to be united no matter what languages they speak as their first language.

All in all, Tomiris strongly believes that one’s origin and genes stand above their first languages when defining their ethnic identity and that is a given that no prejudices can change. However, she expresses frustration about such a division in the Kazakhstani society and admits

that it makes her feel uncomfortable, since she does not have to prove her identity to anyone based solely on her first language.

5.3.3 Amina – I am like a bridge

Amina is a 22 years old Kazakh who admits to being bilingual, i.e. speaking both Russian and Kazakh fluently. However, in her thoughts, communication and content that she consumes she prefers to use Russian and thus states Russian to be her first language. Due to her command of both languages, she sometimes feels torn between the Russian- and the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs when it comes to her identity.

Amina has first realized herself as Kazakh in her childhood when her Russian-speaking friends were speaking a simplified version of Russian to her while interacting with each other regularly and it became clear for her that she was different from them. It also has to be mentioned that she has been speaking Kazakh from birth and has gradually learnt Russian when growing up which led to her choosing the latter as her first language.

When talking about her background, Amina says that her parents have always been speaking Kazakh to her, she has graduated from a Kazakh school, her family has been practicing Kazakh traditions and culture which all led to her strong articulation of what a Kazakh is. In addition to that, she also knows her *zhuz* and *ru* as part of her *Shezire* and has even had some interest in the history of her ancestors at some point in her life. All of the given factors enable her to give a clear answer on what elements she deem important when defining herself as Kazakh, those being her ethnic origin, the articulation of Kazakh, her connection with land and Kazakh culture.

However, Amina also admits that it is harder for her to comprehend information in Kazakh and she prefers to have it in Russian when she can. At the same time, she also mentions that the Russian-speaking Kazakhs, in her opinion, lose a part of their culture and become a bit less Kazakh than the Kazakh-speaking ones. In addition to that, she mentions having witnessed the Russian-speaking Kazakhs being arrogant towards the Kazakh-speaking ones due to the common stereotype of them being *mambet*.

Simultaneously, she also mentions that she does not associate herself with the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs since she feels that their mentality is different from hers and they do not share any interests. This, in its turn, creates a certain moment of doubt for her when she is asked about her ethnic identity which she has even demonstrated in the beginning of the interview. For the given reason, she says that she sometimes feels torn between the two groups “Like I am a bridge between them”.

All in all, it can be seen that Amina both enjoys the benefits of being bilingual as well as feels torn and doubts her identity for a second before she confirms to be Kazakh. In this regard, she expresses her hope for the Kazakhstani society to become more balanced in the future without the two extremities where one often excludes the other.

5.3.4 Nurislam – we are all Kazakh

Nurislam is a 24 years old Kazakh who has a history-based approach to his ethnic identity as he defends his reasons and attitude with references to the Kazakhstani history. He uses the given approach to justify the unity of the Kazakh people and despises the current division present in the Kazakhstani society.

Nurislam has first realized himself as Kazakh in primary school at the geography lesson when he first understood what Kazakhstan as a country is and what its people is called. He also adds that he was unconsciously acquiring his “Kazakh-ness” from his family where some Kazakh traditions have been followed.

In addition to that, Nurislam also states himself being bilingual since he speaks Kazakh fluently enough in order to navigate his everyday life. He has learnt the language from this grandmother and still sticks to her dialect, even though he feels uncomfortable when he has to interact on complicated terms or in a written form.

Furthermore, he also shows a lot of personal interest towards studying the Kazakh traditions, cuisine and history. He shared his opinion on the *ru* system and deems it important as part of his identity as Kazakh to know his *ru* as well as its history and distinctive features.

However, Nurislam has made it clear that he is only encouraged to learn more about his “Kazakh-ness” when he has his personal interest in the topic and, thus, criticizes the governmental policies aimed at imposing the “cultural awakening” on the population. The given policies, as it has been mentioned in the background chapter, attribute a lot of attention to reviving the Kazakh language. Nurislam added his voice to this particular subject by sharing that the given process is often accompanied by trying to eliminate the Russian language from the Kazakhstani society completely. His stance on this is that it activates the Kazakh nationalism which, in its turn, creates an artificial division of the Kazakhs to Kazakh-speaking and Russian-speaking ones.

Nurislam makes it clear that the presence of the Russian language in Kazakhstan is based on the fact that Kazakhstan has been part of the USSR and, after being historically present in the society, it cannot be forgotten in one day. For the same reason, he admits to sometimes being torn when defining his ethnic identity due to his first language being Russian but views this as being normal due to the reason outlined above and thinks that “we are all Kazakh, no matter what language we speak”.

In addition to that, he admits having heard all the three offensive words being used in the Kazakhstani society and is strongly against all of them giving a solid historical reasoning for every single one and denying their validity. In his opinion, a language is only a tool for communication and does not define a person.

All in all, Nurislam appears to have conducted a lot of research on the Kazakhstani history and the Kazakhs as an ethnicity and, thus, may both be more conscious in his identity formation and also more opinionated. However, his attitude towards his identity is clear in terms of his strong belief in the unity of the Kazakh people despite the artificial division currently present in the society.

5.3.5 Medina – it is all in your head

Medina is a 24 years old Kazakh who was born in Russia and, despite speaking Kazakh upon her birth, has almost forgotten it after going to school. She is now using the Russian language as her first one.

Medina fully embraced herself as Kazakh when she was 22 years old. She made a decision that it was important for her to know more about her background in order to better understand who she is. In this regard, she mentions that even though the “Kazakh-ness” was probably kept in her family since they returned to Kazakhstan in her teenage years, she was not realizing it consciously and cannot associate it with her ethnic identity.

She speaks some simple Kazakh but is usually shy to use it in everyday conversations and is only learning it on her own for now. More on this, she also adds that she realized that she likes the Kazakh language and culture as objects of interest and, though she is still on her way to taking ownership of them, she is fascinated by learning more about them.

Being engaged with art, she deems it important for herself to analyze how people define themselves and reckon that language and culture are very powerful elements of self-identification. Thus, when creating her pieces of art, she now deems it important to incorporate some ethnic elements in order to express herself through them. In order to achieve that, she conducts her own investigations into the Kazakh culture and history to make it possible to understand them deeper and give context to the elements of the Kazakh traditions that are nowadays followed by many people without addressing their initial meanings.

As for the elements that she considers important when identifying herself as Kazakh, she relies heavily on her knowledge of the Kazakh culture and traditions as well as her origin. As for the role of the Russian, she, first and foremost, emphasized that speaking it as the first one is natural for many Kazakhs due to the historical circumstances. Therefore, even though she cannot fully rely on the Kazakh language as part of her ethnic identity, it does not bother her much since she realizes that she actually knows more about the Kazakh culture and its history unlike many other representatives of the given ethnic group.

However, she has faced numerous instances of discrimination both in Russia and Kazakhstan for being Kazakh and speaking Russian respectively. “It is all in your head” is how she comments on such cases, emphasizing once again that what is important to identify oneself as Kazakh in her opinion is conscious knowledge of culture rather than blind following of the words of some other people.

In addition to that, Medina also attributes immense importance to finding one’s place in their culture by providing modern interpretations for it and embracing the various ways it pans out for different people. For example, “art is the manifestation of my culture and the way it resonates with me” is one of the ways of interpreting the given attitude. Apart from that, Medina also emphasized the importance of modern interpretation of the Kazakh culture as a means of preserving and developing it in the future.

Lastly, when it comes to the rise of nationalism in Kazakhstan, Medina propagates promoting of Kazakh language education programs in the society instead of erasing the Russian language from existence on the territory of Kazakhstan.

All in all, Medina demonstrates having acquired both positive and negative experiences of being a Russian-speaking Kazakh and promotes the idea of education as a tool for both

exploring and expressing one's identity as well as preventing discrimination and division in the Kazakhstani society.

5.3.6 Amir – language is not an indicator of worthiness

Amir is a 27 years old person of Kazakh and Russian origin who identifies himself as both Kazakh and Russian but has Kazakh stated as his ethnicity in his passport as well as the appearance closely resembling the Kazakh features.

Amir first realized himself as Kazakh in secondary school when he was involved in a rivalry that ensued between the Russian school that he was going to and a Kazakh one. That was the moment when he started questioning who he is and where does he belong to.

He has learnt elementary Kazakh from his grandmother when he was a child and can still use it in simple conversations. However, Amir has not acquired much of the cultural knowledge from her since she was a “Sovietized Kazakh” that did not connect to her ethnic identity much.

Nevertheless, Amir has realized the current trend in the Kazakhstani society towards reviving the Kazakh language and culture and does sometimes read materials on Kazakh history and culture when he deems it interesting. In addition to that, he considers it important for himself to keep his identity as a Kazakh since it is his ethnic origin and he wants to pass it to further generations.

As for the elements that he considers relevant for his identity formation, he tends to rely on his origin and appearance and natural signs of who he is. Apart from that, he also mentions the long history of the Kazakhs as encouraging him to continue it and feel himself as Kazakh.

When it comes to discussing stereotypes, Amir mentions that he has faced all of them being used against him and considers them to be irrelevant since in his opinion, the only difference between the two groups is their first language. To buttress this point, he asserts that a language is “just a tool” and not an indicator of one's worthiness. Nevertheless, he does admit that the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs feel themselves as such stronger, since they are “using the virtue of the Kazakh language from birth and do not even have to question their identities while a Russian-speaking Kazakh has to think before they say”.

All in all, Amir is positive about his Kazakh identity and wants to keep developing it and to learn Kazakh in the future. He states that it is probably easier for him in terms of being torn between the Russian language and being a Kazakh because he does have both Russian and Kazakh ancestors. However, it is his opinion that whether a person speaks their native language as their first one or not does not define them in any way, and what is the most important is his own sense of self-identification.

5.4 Summary

In the given chapter, the narratives of all the participants were presented individually in the form of raw data that has not been analyzed or grouped yet. The only modification that has been made is leaving out some of their comments that appear to be either too revealing in terms of their anonymity or redundant due to the limited format of the given thesis.

By presenting the interviews in the given way, I was hoping to let the voices of the participants be heard before any analysis to their narratives is applied so that they do not appear to be marred by my judgement or speculation. In addition to that, some of the elements might become identifiable for the reader on the given stage and it may, thus, be easier and clearer for them to see the connections further on in the following chapters.

As it can be seen, some of the data has achieved saturation while the other parts were either contradicting each other or not confirmed by other participants. It is now my job as a researcher to consolidate the given data using thematic analysis in order to identify the discourses and categories within the given narratives.

6 Data analysis

6.1 Introduction

The given chapter aims at conducting the thematic analysis of the data that has been presented in the previous chapter in order to identify the participants' perception on their in-groups and out-groups as well as the main discourses that have played important roles in their identity formation processes. By doing that the factors and elements influencing the construction of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults' identities are going to be identified. The analysis will take place separately for the two groups and will be addressing their narratives in terms of the social identity theory and the Foucauldian perspective one by one.

6.2 Analysis of the narratives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults

6.2.1 Applying the social identity theory

When applying the social identity theory to the narratives of the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults, three main themes were identified. The given themes include the analysis of the narratives of the participants and their identities in relation to:

- a) the mainstream Norwegians
- b) the Sami-speaking Sami
- c) the Norwegian-speaking Sami

In this manner, by analyzing their approaches to the three given groups, it is going to be possible to identify when the first two groups can be considered as out-groups for the participants and whether the application of the third group would provide for their sense of an in-group.

As for the mainstream Norwegians, all the participants have admitted themselves to be bi- or tricultural, however, emphasizing that the given feeling is associated more with the sense of citizenship and commonsense societal values rather than compassion.

When it comes to the Sami-speaking Sami, half of the participants have mentioned feeling lonely in their presence since they do not speak the language and feel judged or frustrated about as well as feeling "not Sami enough". Another half of the respondents have outlined that the given group representatives have been very accepting of them and, thus, they feel comfortable around them, even though one of them has still mentioned some pinch of distress when faced with the situations of interacting with the given group.

Lastly, the given group was not directly mentioned by any of the participants except for the last one that has mentioned being happy and grateful to be part of the group. However, half of the participants have alluded to being shy to express themselves in the given group due to either the lack of knowledge or feeling that they have a right to claim their belonging to it.

As it can be seen, neither of the given groups were clearly identified by the participants as an in-group or an out-group. This illustrates their identities being unfixed and fluctuating from feeling shame and being shy to the state of indifference or anger towards the given groups. This finding emphasized the yet unstable way of the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults to identify themselves as such since most of them have mentioned that they are the first ones in their families to take their identities as Sami back and are still on their way of defining their sense of belonging.

6.2.2 Application of the Foucauldian perspective

Since the Foucauldian perspective implies identifying the discourses in the society that have influenced the identity formation of the respondents, the occasions on which the participants have felt their identities stronger or more vividly are going to be mentioned one by one in order to be able to apply the grounded theory and choose the repeating discourses that were common for most or all of the participants.

To begin with, the first respondent has identified the occasions that have helped her to feel herself as Sami to be:

- her mom telling her that she was Sami, thus, giving her reassurance that she is Sami from both her mother and her father's sides
- visiting her reindeer every summer and immersing in the Sami lifestyle
- being devoted a joik to by her relative
- celebrating the Sami national day
- wearing her national Sami clothes for the Confirmation ceremony, the Norwegian Constitution day and the Sami national day

The second participants' important occasions were as follows:

- witnessing the Sami culture in modern works of art, such as Frozen 2
- acquiring his traditional Sami clothing
- engaging in Sami political activism
- celebrating the Sami national day

The participant number three has outlined the memorable occasions that have influenced her Sami identity formation to be the following:

- moving to Tromsø
- engaging in Sami political activism
- voting in the Sami Parliament elections

Lastly, the list of memorable occasions for the participant number four includes:

- moving to Tromsø
- spending time with her extended family
- taking a course on Sami law
- celebrating the Sami national day
- engaging in Sami activism
- getting her national Sami clothing

As it can be seen from the given lists, there are some occasions common for most or all the participants. Those that fall into the concept of social discourses are celebrating the Sami national day and engaging in the Sami activism. However, the act of getting a national Sami clothing is also considered important since it has been mentioned by almost all the participants and, even though it will not appear in the further discussion chapter, it is still considered crucial to be mentioned in the findings since it was attributed a lot of attention by the respondents as it is their perceptions that matter the most.

6.3 Analysis of the narratives of the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults

6.3.1 Applying the social identity theory

When applying the social identity theory to the narratives of the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults, the themes that were analyzed were as follows:

- a) the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs
- b) the Russian-speaking Kazakhs

When talking about their self-identification in relation to the first group, all the participants have outlined that they do not feel comfortable enough due to their inability to communicate in a completely free manner. In addition, one participant has also mentioned lack of common interests and differences in mentality with the given group. Apart from that, all the participants have admitted the existence and the use of the derogatory and insulting terms by the representatives of both groups and some of them have even mentioned that they themselves were targets of such comments made by the first groups' representatives.

As for the second group, most of the participants have outlined feeling more comfortable and safe when interacting with the given group as well as having common values and interests.

As it can be seen, even though both groups come from the same ethnic backgrounds as the participants of the given research, the first one is clearly viewed as an out-group and the second one – as their in-group. This explains why most of the participants have mentioned to go through a moment of doubt before they state their ethnic identity. The linguistic division in the Kazakhstani Kazakh society causes both the intergroup conflicts as it could be noticed by the existence and use of the derogatory and insulting terms and the individual ones forcing the representatives of the Russian-speaking Kazakh group to reconsider and rebuild their identities around such a trend and the fact that they cannot claim Kazakh as a core element of their ethnic identity.

6.3.2 Application of the Foucauldian perspective

Similar to the case with the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults, the memorable occasions that the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults have considered important for their identity formation will be presented below first.

To begin with the first participant, the occasions that he has mentioned include:

- realizing that his parents were speaking Kazakh
- having to talk about the Kazakhs abroad

For the participant number two such events included:

- a lesson on ethnicities in primary school
- talking to mom about traditions
- learning her *Shezire*

The participant number three has outlined the following occasions:

- realizing that her Russian-speaking friends were treating her differently
- hearing the national anthem
- learning news about the famous Kazakhs and their achievements
- learning more about her *Shezire*

The participant number four consider the following happenings important:

- having a lesson about Kazakhstan at school
- having to tell the people more about the Kazakhs when traveling abroad
- his public speeches and performances representing Kazakhstan
- talking to his family about traditions
- studying the *ru* system

The list of the memorable events for the participant number five is as follows:

- being bullied at school
- talking to foreigners about Kazakhstan
- studying and speaking Kazakh
- witnessing the works of art that include Kazakh ethnic elements

Lastly, the list of the memorable occasions for the participant number six is presented below:

- being involved in the rivalry between the Russian and the Kazakh schools
- celebrating national and/or traditional holidays

As it can be seen, the results of the analysis here are quite scattered and proper saturation could not be achieved with the case study design and the limited format of the given thesis. However, learning one's *Shezire* has still been mentioned by half of the respondents and, thus, can be taken as an important finding. Nevertheless, the main result of the analysis lies exactly in the scattered manner of the themes provided by the participants. This finding emphasizes the variety within the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults as a group. Along with the constructivist ontology of the qualitative research as well as the Foucauldian perspective itself, it can be proven via the findings of the given research that every human-being constructs their identity in their own way and it keeps changing and evolving throughout their life.

7 Discussion

In the previous chapter, the interviews conducted during the data collection process for my thesis were analyzed with application of the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the given research. Therefore, it is now time to compare the findings for both groups and address the research question and its sub questions of the given thesis.

First of all, the social identity theory application has revealed that the identities of the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults are still undergoing the initial stages of construction and are still unstable in terms of identifying common group values and their in-groups and out-groups. At the same time, the same approach has revealed a significant division within the Kazakhstani Kazakh society which leads to both inner problems in the entity of the Kazakhstani Kazakhs and the identity formation processes of the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults in particular.

Secondly, after applying the Foucauldian perspective to the data collected from the representatives of both groups, it has become clear that, in line with the qualitative nature of the given research, the ethnic identities of the groups in focus are still undergoing development and changes as well as happen to be individual for every participant.

After summarizing the data analysis process and its outcomes, I can now move to answering the main research question:

How do the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakhs construct their ethnic identities?

The given question is going to be answered by addressing its three sub questions one after another.

The first sub question that was formulated was: *What are the elements of the ethnic identities of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults?* The elements constructing their identities are quite different and individual based on their personal experiences and narratives. However, one may outline cultural elements such as national clothing for the Norwegian-speaking Sami young adults and the *Shezhire* for the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults as well as personal acts of activism and curiosity to be the pillars for the stages of the identity formation processes that the participants of the two groups were at at the moments of conducting the interviews.

The second sub question was worded as follows: *Do their first languages play any role in their positioning themselves in relation to their ethnic groups and their sense of belonging to them?* Yes, the first languages of the participants played an immense role in their positioning themselves in relation to their ethnic groups and their sense of belonging. In both cases, the first languages of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults have made them feel not fully belonging to their ethnic group. In the first instance, the participants were often identified to be feeling “not Sami enough”, while in the second case, the respondents were identifying with only one part of their ethnic group as an in-group while deeming the other one to be their out-group which. Both instances were revealed to be disrupting the identity formation processes of the respondents.

Lastly, the third sub question was asked in the given manner: *Are there any similarities or differences in their ethnic identities construction?* Yes, and no. Both groups share the influence that their first languages have on their ethnic identity formation, as it has been addressed below. However, they are also both similar and different at the same time due to the elements involved in constructing their identities to be varying a lot even within one of the given groups. In this manner, even though some elements have been outlined in the answer to the question number one, it should be kept in much that such an outline is highly generalized and the findings of the data collection and analysis have revealed a whole lot of scattered features that the participants deemed to be important.

8 Conclusion

The given thesis has provided a study of the ethnic identities of the Norwegian-speaking Sami and the Russian-speaking Kazakh young adults in relation to their first languages. Being qualitative in its nature, the given research has applied thematic analysis to the in-depth interviews with ten representatives of the two groups in focus. Application of the social identity theory and the Foucauldian perspective has provided for analyzing the data from two different perspectives which have outlined both the differences and the similarities in the ethnic identity formation processes of the representatives of both groups. The unpredictability and individual approach of qualitative research was demonstrated through the outcomes of the given project.

The importance of their first languages in defining their identities has been illustrated for both ethnic groups. Sadly enough, historical memories and traumas are too fresh for the representatives of both of them to deal with their identity formation flawlessly. It has been demonstrated and shared with the reader that at times of doubt and frustration, having something or someone to hold on to makes the pain to be a bit easier to recover from. Similarly, the absence of such a safe haven, may disrupt the healing and obstruct the revitalization process.

While writing the given thesis, I was hoping the let the participants' voices be heard but instead have gained one of the most treasured moments of trust of ten people to be given to me with their sorrows, emotional revelations, healing and insights. If it happens to be therapeutic for at least one of them, it means that the given research was not conducted in vain. I hope that both groups have learnt a little bit more about each other and will remember that they are not alone in their struggles for figuring out who they are. Even on the other side of the Earth, there is still someone who understands you.

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Appendix

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Side note: the questions gradually increase in sensitivity and some of them might be changed or omitted along the flow of the conversation, if the informants seem to be uncomfortable.

Name (/pseudonym):

Age:

1. Do you identify yourself as Sami/Kazakh?
2. When did you first realize yourself as Sami/Kazakh?
3. Do you speak the Sami/Kazakh language? If yes, how did you learn it and where do you usually speak it?
4. Did you get any formal education about the Sami/Kazakh language and culture, e.g. at school or university?
5. Did your family teach you the Sami/Kazakh language or introduce you to the Sami/Kazakh traditions or cuisine?
6. Did you yourself take any attempts to know more about the Sami/Kazakh?
7. What is important for you when determining yourself as Sami/Kazakh? E.g. the fact that you can speak the Sami/Kazakh language, know Sami/Kazakh traditions, live in the Sami area/Kazakhstan, etc.
8. On what occasions do you feel yourself as Sami/Kazakh? E.g. on the Sami National day, when speaking the Sami/Kazakh language, being abroad, etc.
9. Were there any memorable occasions in your life when you strongly felt yourself being Sami/Kazakh?
10. *Only for the Sami participants.* When you are around the (mainstream) Norwegians, do you feel yourself different from them? (If the person answers “yes” and seems to be comfortable: In what way do you feel different?)
11. *Only for the Kazakh participants.* When you are around the Kazakh-speaking Kazakhs, do you feel yourself different from them (If the person answers “yes” and seems to be comfortable: In what way do you feel different?)
12. Do you identify yourself as bicultural/bilingual (or Norwegian)? (If yes, in what way do you feel so?)
13. Is it important for you to keep identifying yourself as Sami/Kazakh or would you like to be more “Norwegian”/ “Kazakhstani”/neutral?
14. Overall, are you satisfied with your Sami/Kazakh identity? What makes you think so?
15. Do you think that those who can speak Sami/Kazakh feel that they are Sami/Kazakh more intensively?
16. Overall, what do you think about the Sami identity in Norway/the Kazakh identity in Kazakhstan? Are you satisfied with its contemporary state?

