



Managing Stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway through the Barents Regional Youth Programme

Liudmila Sorokina

SVF-3901

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Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education
University of Tromsø
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Table of Contents

Chapter 1.

Introduction	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Starting point.....	4
1.3. Problem statement and research questions.....	5
1.4. Motivation for the research and relevance for peace studies.....	6

Chapter 2. The Barents Regional Youth Programme.....8

2.1. Introduction.....	8
2.2. Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.....	8
2.3. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat.....	10
2.4. The Barents Regional Youth Programme.....	12
2.5. Summary.....	16

Chapter 3. Methodology.....17

3.1. Introduction.....	17
3.2. Study area.....	17
3.3. Selection of informants.....	18
3.4. Sampling.....	19
3.5. Field experience.....	20
3.6. Choice of methodology.....	22
3.7. Advantages and challenges of the interview process.....	25
3.7.1. Developing questions for interviews.....	25
3.7.2. The role of my Russian nationality in the research process.....	28
3.7.3. Ethical considerations.....	32
3.8. Summary.....	32

Chapter 4. Theoretical and conceptual orientation.....33

4.1. Introduction.....	33
4.2. Main concepts:.....	33
4.2.1. Stereotype and prejudice.....	33

4.2.2. The concept of culture.....	37
4.2.3. Understanding of another culture.....	39
4.3. Theoretical approach.....	42
4.3.1. Allport's contact hypothesis.....	42
4.3.2. Further development of Allport's contact hypothesis.....	46
4.3.3. Critique of Allport's contact hypothesis.....	50
4.4. Summary.....	53
Chapter 5. Data presentation and analysis.....	54
5.1. Introduction.....	54
5.2. Young people involved in the Barents Regional Youth Programme.....	54
5.3. The existing stereotypes and the change of attitude after participation in the Barents Regional Youth Programme.....	56
5.4. How did the Barents Regional Youth Programme facilitate the change?.....	60
5.5. The impact of the Barents Regional Youth Programme on reduction of stereotypes in Northern Norway.....	68
5.6. Summary.....	71
Chapter 6. Concluding remarks.....	73
Bibliography.....	76

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

It is common to form an opinion about foreign countries on the basis of stereotypes. Therefore, stereotypes can seriously influence the relations between people because they often guide our attitude towards people. Even if we have never had personal contact with a person from another country, we already have some expectations and some kind of attitude towards him or her. Why does it happen?

It is a part of everyday life that people categorize persons and events, and the consequences of how people interpret events can be significant. This categorization can lead to formation of stereotypes that will guide our expectations. For example, such words as American, Norwegian or Russian immediately invoke in our heads some specific meaning. When we categorize people, we already have expectations about future interaction based on our stereotypes. These expectations influence the way we think and make judgments about people.¹

Is it possible to reduce the influence of stereotypes? What is the role of cooperation in this process? Several studies were conducted with the aim to develop programs that can help breaking down stereotypes²; however, they did not find a solution to how it is possible to overcome stereotypes on a large scale. Therefore we can talk about a reduction of stereotypes' influence, but not the disappearance of the stereotypes themselves. People cannot know about everything, they need to have some kinds of 'simplified pictures' of the world, therefore stereotypes are important.

I am interested in relations between Norway and Russia, particularly in the Barents region. I have chosen the Barents cooperation due to the fact that it is "the largest

¹ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: pp. 143-144

² See, for example, Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company; Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (2005) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing; Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). "Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice" in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA; ² Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) "Intergroup Contact Theory" *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.

peace-making exercise in the north ever”.³ I want to examine how this cooperation works, particularly how it helps in overcoming barriers posed by stereotypes.

The Barents region is a special region because extensive relations have existed among the people there for thousands of years. Pomor trade is an important feature in the history of the region.⁴ As a result of this interaction the “russenorsk” language was invented. “Russenorsk” is a pidgin language of some 400 words; Russian and Norwegian words have approximately the same share in the common vocabulary. Relations between people from Northern Norway and Northern Russia were built on a basis of equality.⁵ In his article *Inventing the Barents Region: Overcoming the East-West Divide* Tunander emphasizes the importance of the Pomor trade. He describes it as the glue of Arctic Europe.⁶

However, even at the time of the Pomor trade, almost all local inhabitants of Northern Norway considered the Russians to be strangers because they were representatives of a different culture and religion, inaccessible to the Norwegians. Such attitude led to a great deal of mutual suspicion in their relations.⁷ The Soviet period, which was characterized by closed borders and absence of any contact, only added tension and mutual fear between the two nations.

The Pomor trade became the cornerstone in the Norwegian-Russian relations.⁸ However, it did not help people to overcome their suspicion. There is still need to work on gaining trust. One of the objectives of this thesis would be to explore possible strategies for developing trust among people with emphasis on the Regional Youth Programme.

The Kirkenes Declaration, signed in 1993, has made a basis for cooperation in the Barents Region. Stoltenberg emphasizes that this cooperation has been special from its

³ Troms fylkeskommune “Barents Co-operation” (accessed 09.03.2011) [online] – URL <http://www.tromsfylke.no/Forside/Spr%C3%A5k/English/BarentsCooperation/tabid/329/Default.aspx>

⁴ Pettersen, Oddrunn (2002) *The vision that became reality: the Regional Barents Cooperation 1993-2003*. Kirkenes : The Barents Secretariat: p. 11

⁵ Nielsen, J. (1994) “The Barents Region in Historical Perspective”, in Stokke, O. and Tunander, O. (eds.) *The Barents Region: Cooperation in Arctic Europe*. London: Sage Publications: pp. 87-88

⁶ Tunander, O. (1994) “Inventing the Barents Region: Overcoming the East-West Divide”, in Stokke, O. and Tunander, O. (eds.) *The Barents Region: Cooperation in Arctic Europe*. London: Sage Publications: p. 31

⁷ Nielsen, J. (1994) “The Barents Region in Historical Perspective”, in Stokke, O. and Tunander, O. (eds.) *The Barents Region: Cooperation in Arctic Europe*. London: Sage Publications: p. 88

⁸ Ibid.: pp. 91-92

start because people form the core of cooperation and people have an initiative for what kind of cooperation should exist in the region.⁹ Key areas of cooperation that are emphasized in the Kirkenes Declaration are: “economy, trade, science and technology, tourism, the environment, infrastructure, educational and cultural exchange, as well as projects particularly aimed at improving the situation of indigenous peoples in the North”.¹⁰ It is stressed in the declaration that “wider human contacts and increased cultural cooperation in the Region should be encouraged to promote constructive cooperation and good neighborly relations.”¹¹

The Barents Regional Council¹² gives a special priority to youth issues and programs.¹³ In September 2001 the council decided to develop a youth program for the Barents region. The first Barents Regional Youth Programme was adopted in 2002. This Programme proved to be successful and is working until now.¹⁴

Extensive cooperation on the regional level has resulted in the emergence of a kind of third level – people-to-people cooperation. Pettersen emphasizes that on a regional level Barents cooperation is characterized by a rapid transition from the first phase of network and trust creation to a next phase – development of bilateral and multilateral projects. All sectors of the society are involved in cooperation, including teachers, students, media people, medical personnel, businessmen, artists, etc. One of the main strengths of the cooperation is that all the inhabitants of the region have personal interest in the cooperation.¹⁵ Such kind of popular diplomacy was and is continuing to help avoiding deterioration of relations in the region. People live here, they have established friendships and tensions in the area are not probable to occur. For example, Barents cooperation has survived after deportation of Russian spies from Norway. The

⁹ Stoltenberg, Thorvald. (2002) in Pettersen, Oddrunn. *The vision that became reality: the Regional Barents Cooperation 1993-2003*. Kirkenes : The Barents Secretariat: p. 9

¹⁰ The Kirkenes Declaration from the Conference of Foreign Ministers on Co-operation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region (11.01.1993) (accessed 09.02.2012) [online] – URL http://www.barentsinfo.fi/beac/docs/459_doc_KirkenesDeclaration.pdf

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The Barents Regional Council (BRC) (accessed 09.02.2012) [online] – URL

http://www.beac.st/in_English/Barents_Euro-Arctic_Council/Barents_Regional_Council.iw3

¹³ Pettersen, Oddrunn (2002) *The vision that became reality: the Regional Barents Cooperation 1993-2003*. Kirkenes: The Barents Secretariat: p. 32

¹⁴ The Barents Youth Regional Programme 2011-2014. (accessed 09.02.2012) [online] – URL [http://img0.custompublish.com/getfile.php/1628387.900.yurrptspr/The+Barents+Regional+Youth+Program+new+2011-2014+\(2\).pdf?return=www.barents.no](http://img0.custompublish.com/getfile.php/1628387.900.yurrptspr/The+Barents+Regional+Youth+Program+new+2011-2014+(2).pdf?return=www.barents.no)

¹⁵ Pettersen, Oddrunn (2002) *The vision that became reality: the Regional Barents Cooperation 1993-2003*. Kirkenes : The Barents Secretariat: p. 34

former editor of the newspaper Nordlys, Ivan Kristoffersen, wrote in this connection that if there was no Barents cooperation, 'a ten-year ice age' might have appeared between Norway and Russia.¹⁶

1.2. Starting point

I was originally interested in studying possible ways to overcome stereotypes, focusing on stereotypes about Russians in the context of the Barents cooperation, for two reasons.

Firstly, being of Russian origin myself, I feel in a good position to study the issue. While traveling around the world, I have met people who have only judged me based on the fact of me being Russian. Most of the comments were negative. At first I was surprised and upset by such reactions, later I found an explanation of their reactions in stereotypes. I decided to explore possible ways for overcoming stereotypes and their implementation.

Secondly, I am interested in the phenomenon of the Barents Cooperation. The cooperation that started less than 20 years ago appears to be successful and active. I was particularly interested in the people-to-people cooperation because it is considered to be effective in the Barents region. It is interesting to explore how the Barents cooperation has made it possible to build trust between people after the Cold War.

I went to fieldwork to investigate how attitudes of Norwegian youth were changing towards Russians; what made them see diversity in Russians; what helped them to overcome stereotypes. However, while conducting fieldwork I realized that the majority of my respondents often referred to their knowledge of the Russian culture and way of life. So I decided to include in my analysis the process of cross-cultural understanding, as experienced by some of the respondents. I am going to explore the conditions that lead to overcoming stereotypical thinking and understanding of another culture.

¹⁶ Pettersen, Oddrunn (2002) *The vision that became reality: the Regional Barents Cooperation 1993-2003*. Kirkenes : The Barents Secretariat: p. 39

1.3. Problem statement

Norway and Russia are partners and neighbours with a rich history of cooperation. Many different cooperation projects are being conducted between the two countries nowadays. The level of contact is also diverse: between ordinary people, business partners, politicians, scholars, etc.¹⁷ However, the existence of stereotypes affects both parties in the communication process. Stereotypical thinking leads to erroneous judgments and formation of incorrect ideas about a social group. Often stereotypical thinking creates barriers for effective cooperation and communication. It causes misunderstanding, unpleasant experiences, distrust, disagreements, conflicts, and even hostility. This arises from the fact that stereotypes shape behavior; they form prejudices and opinions that are difficult to change. The target group of stereotypes can be offended by these stereotypes and even start to behave in the way that their partner is expecting. It is a both-sides process.¹⁸

In this study I am going to investigate the phenomena of stereotyping and cross-cultural understanding. There are stereotypes about Norwegians in Russia as well as about Russians in Norway. I have chosen to focus on the stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway. I am going to examine *cooperation as a tool for reducing the influence of stereotypes on formation of impressions about people*. I have chosen the Barents Regional Youth Programme as a concrete example of the Norwegian-Russian cooperation. Establishment of contacts among youth is prioritized by the Barents Regional Council, because the youth are the future of the region and their good relations are crucial for the stability in the region. Cross-cultural understanding is an integral basis for fruitful cooperation. I discovered this understanding during the interviews and see the need to explore what conditions are necessary for starting the process of cross-cultural understanding.

The research questions have been formulated to serve the aims and objectives of the thesis. I want to find the answer to such questions as:

- What are the stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway?
- What is the focus of the Barents Regional Youth Programme?

¹⁷ Alnes, Margrethe (2010) "Connecting Barents People. The Barents Secretariat's Grant Programme in Steady Change" in Staalesen, Alte (ed) *Talking Barents. People, Borders and Regional Cooperation*. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat. Kirkenes: p. 38

¹⁸ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: pp. 304-323

- Can Norwegian youth change their attitudes towards Russians through participation in the Barents Regional Youth Programme? How can the Youth Programme contribute to management of stereotypes among Norwegian youth?
- How can Norwegian youth start to understand Russian culture through participation in the Barents Regional Youth Programme? How can the Youth Programme facilitate the cross-cultural understanding among participants?

The focus of the thesis is to test the hypothesis that the Barents Regional Programme can help to reduce stereotypes and improve understanding in the Norwegian-Russian relations.

1.4. Motivation for the research and relevance for peace studies

The conception of this project has been motivated by my scholar interest to combine knowledge about stereotypes, cross-cultural understanding and cooperation and to test their effects in the context of the Norwegian-Russian Barents Cooperation. This research can help us get a deeper understanding of this issue, and develop ideas on how to make people not judge others on the bases of stereotypes. It will expand our insight on possible ways to understand other cultures.

People always meet people, and today people cross national and cultural borders more than ever. A number of studies has been conducted about the nature of stereotypes and its consequences.¹⁹ Several studies were undertaken with the aim of finding possible ways to overcome stereotypical thinking.²⁰ Cross-cultural communication and cross-cultural understanding are relevant issues today. Number of studies deal with these issues.²¹ Hence, I want to combine this knowledge and examine it on the Barents Youth

¹⁹ See, for example, Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company; Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (2005) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing; Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers

²⁰ See, for example, Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). "Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice" in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA; Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (2005) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing; Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp (2005) "Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence" in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing; Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) "Intergroup Contact Theory" *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.

²¹ See, for example, Roberts, C., M. Byram, A. Barro, S. Jordon and B. Street (2001) *Language Learners as Ethnographers*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters; Holliday, A. R. (2005) *The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Gullestrup, Hans (2006) *Cultural Analysis – Towards Cross-Cultural Understanding*. Aalborg University Press; Browaeys, Marie-Joelle,

Cooperation Programme. In my research I have focused on the possibilities of cooperation where successful communication is an integral part.

As Galtung writes about the achievement of peace – “there are tasks for everybody”.²² My research interest is within the wide field of Peace Studies. Examples of peace policies include improved human understanding through communication, peace education, international cooperation, dispute resolution, conflict management, etc. The phenomenon of stereotyping is relevant for all areas where communication is an integral part. The main challenge that stereotypes cause is the problems in communication.

UNESCO adopted a Declaration on ‘A Culture of Peace’ in 1999. This Declaration thoroughly explains what peace culture is and how it can be achieved. It underlines the importance of communication and cooperation. A culture of peace is “a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviour and ways of life based on respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation...” and among others “adherence to the principles of ... *tolerance, ... cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations*”.²³

This Declaration suggests possible ways to develop a culture of peace. It is connected with promotion of “peaceful settlement of conflicts, *mutual respect and understanding, international cooperation; enabling people at all levels to develop skills of dialogue, negotiation, consensus building and peaceful resolution of differences*”.²⁴ Therefore the very purpose of my research is to find out how it is possible to improve mutual understanding and international cooperation through reduction of stereotypical thinking.

Roger Price (2011) *Understanding Cross-Cultural Management*. Second Edition. Pearson; Holliday, Adrian, Martin Hyde and John Kullman (2010) *Intercultural Communication*. Second Edition. Routledge Applied Linguistics

²² Galtung, J. (1980) *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective*. New York: Free Press.: p. 396

²³ UNESCO (1999) *Culture of Peace. A Declaration on a Culture of Peace*. A/53/243 Fifty-Third Session Agenda Item 31 (accessed 21.04.2011) [online] – URL

<http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/2000.htm>: Article 1

²⁴ *Ibid.*: Article 3

Chapter 2. The Barents Regional Youth Programme

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the Barents Regional Youth Programme. In order to understand how the Barents Regional Youth Programme is working on the reduction of stereotypes there is a need to get the background information about the Programme, its objectives and activities. The chapter consists of three sections. I will start with the explanation when and why the cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region was initiated. In the second section I will present structure, functions and objectives of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat due to the fact that this institution funds and coordinates the Barents Regional Youth Programme. In the third section I will present the Barents Regional Youth Programme, its aim, objectives, projects and activities.

2.2. Cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region

The intergovernmental cooperation in the Barents Region was established when the foreign ministers of the participating countries and the European Commission signed the Kirkenes Declaration in 1993.²⁵ The Barents Euro-Arctic Region includes the 13 northernmost counties in Norway, Sweden, Finland and North-West Russia. Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, Karelia, Nenets, Komi – from the Russian side participate in the cooperation; and Nordland, Troms, Finnmark from the Norwegian side.²⁶

The structure of cooperation has two levels: national and regional. The Barents Council is at the national level. It consists of ministers, who represent the central government authorities in Moscow, Stockholm, Helsinki and Oslo. The Regional Council is at the regional level. Members of this council are the political and administrative leaders of the participating counties, who represent the county authorities.²⁷ Rune Rafaelsen, General Secretary of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, underlines that “the strong

²⁵ Ministry of the Environment “The Cooperation in the Barents Region” (accessed 20.04.2011) [online] – URL http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/md/Selected-topics/svalbard_og_polaromradene/Environmental-cooperation-in-the-Barents-region/the-cooperation-in-the-barents-region.html?id=496772#

²⁶ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat “The Barents Region” (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/barents-cooperation.137584.en.html>

²⁷ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat “The Barents Regional Youth Programme” (accessed 10.05.2012) <http://www.barents.no/youth.137536.en.html>

emphasis of political regional cooperation has made the Barents structures quite unique in European East-West cooperation with Russia”.²⁸

This cooperation in the Barents Region is an important forum for promotion of interregional contacts in the northernmost parts of Norway, Russia, Finland and Sweden.²⁹ The main objectives of the Barents Cooperation are to secure stability and development in the region.³⁰ Improvement of living conditions, encouragement of sustainable economic and social development contributes to stability, environmental progress and peaceful development in northernmost Europe. These aims can be achieved with “continuous, multifaceted efforts in a broad range of areas, spanning from overall security, environmental concern and economic development to the human dimension”.³¹ Activities within the Barents cooperation can be summarized to improvement of the cross-border infrastructure and support of contact between people living in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region.³²

The Barents Cooperation has for almost 20 years “successfully brought people, politicians and businesses closer together”³³ across the borders. As a result it is possible to assume that relationship based on trust and confidence have appeared in cross-border cooperation.³⁴ Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, for example, during the meeting in 2009 stated: “Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Barents cooperation over the years is respect, mutual trust and warm personal relations between people living in this northern region”.³⁵

²⁸ Rafaelsen, Rune (2010) “The Barents Cooperation. New Regional Approach to Foreign Policy in the High North” in Staalesen, Alte (ed) *Talking Barents. People, Borders and Regional Cooperation*. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat. Kirkenes: p. 25

²⁹ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat “The Barents Region” (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/barents-cooperation.137584.en.html>

³⁰ Ministry of the Environment “The Cooperation in the Barents Region” (accessed 20.04.2011) [online] – URL http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/md/Selected-topics/svalbard_og_polaromradene/Environmental-cooperation-in-the-Barents-region/the-cooperation-in-the-barents-region.html?id=496772#

³¹ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat “The Barents Region” (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/barents-cooperation.137584.en.html>

³² Holm-Hansen, Jørn, Aadne Aasland and Elena Dybtsyna (2008) *Building Neighbourhood. Evaluation of the Barents Secretariat’s Grant Programme*. NIBR Report 2008:4, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research: p. 17

³³ Staalesen, Alte (ed) (2010) *Talking Barents. People, Borders and Regional Cooperation*. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat. Kirkenes: p. 10

³⁴ *Ibid.*: p. 13

³⁵ Rafaelsen, Rune (2010) “The Barents Cooperation. New Regional Approach to Foreign Policy in the High North” in Staalesen, Alte (ed) *Talking Barents. People, Borders and Regional Cooperation*. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat. Kirkenes: p. 27

2.3. *The Norwegian Barents Secretariat*

The Norwegian Barents Secretariat serves the Norwegian-Russian relations in the North. The Secretariat was established in October 1993. The main office is situated in Kirkenes.³⁶ Offices in Murmansk, Arkhangelsk and Naryan-Mar were established with the purposes to follow-up activity in Russia and to inform about the Barents Cooperation.³⁷

With the initiation of the regional Barents Cooperation and establishment of the Barents Secretariat in 1993, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs made funds available for the financing of cooperation projects. The purpose of the funds was to “enable and encourage people to renew contacts across the newly reopened Norwegian-Russian border”.³⁸ The overall objective of project funding is to create trust and welfare through increase of Russian-Norwegian interaction between regions.³⁹

The Norwegian Barents Secretariat has three main areas of responsibility:

1. Project financing

- On behalf of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Secretariat funds bilateral Norwegian-Russian cooperation projects.
- Resource center and coordinate the projects within the Barents Programme.
- The Secretariat grants approximately 200 Norwegian-Russian projects annually.

2. Resource center

- Information work within the Barents Region on the Barents program and the project funding.

³⁶ Holm-Hansen, Jørn, Aadne Aasland and Elena Dybtsyna (2008) *Building Neighbourhood. Evaluation of the Barents Secretariat's Grant Programme*. NIBR Report 2008:4, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research: p. 17

³⁷ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat “Russian offices” (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/our-russian-offices.139562.en.html>

³⁸ Alnes, Margrethe (2010) “Connecting Barents People. The Barents Secretariat's Grant Programme in Steady Change” in Staalesen, Alte (ed) *Talking Barents. People, Borders and Regional Cooperation*. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat. Kirkenes: p. 35

³⁹ Holm-Hansen, Jørn, Aadne Aasland and Elena Dybtsyna (2008) *Building Neighbourhood. Evaluation of the Barents Secretariat's Grant Programme*. NIBR Report 2008:4, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research: p. 29

- Updates Government, Parliament, economic life, organizations and similar outside the region on the development and possibilities of the Barents Region.
- Visualize the regional activity and increase the international support for the cooperation.
- Carry through or finance various types of reviews or reports on relevant topics in the region.

3. Barents Cooperation

- Coordinates the national goals with the regional political priorities within the frames of the multilateral Barents Cooperation.
- Work as a resource center for the councils, committees and working groups of the Barents Cooperation.⁴⁰

The Norwegian Barents Secretariat funds projects within five areas: business development; competence-building and education at all levels; environmental protection; welfare/culture; indigenous people.⁴¹ Within these areas the Secretariat funds and administers six main programs:

- The Barents Secretariat's projects funds (all Norwegian-Russian cooperation projects)
- The Barents Regional Youth Programme (multilateral cooperation projects for youth). The main focus of the thesis is on this program.
- The Barents Secretariat health fund (Norwegian-Russian health projects)
- BarentsKult (larger Norwegian-Russian culture projects for professional artists)
- Sports program (Norwegian-Russian sports cooperation projects)
- Media travel support program (Norwegian or Russian journalists covering news in their neighbouring country).⁴²

People-to-people cooperation has been considered as an effective mechanism to create a common, trustful identity in the Barents region.⁴³ Therefore, the Norwegian Barents

⁴⁰ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat "Promoting Norwegian-Russian relations in the north" (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/about-barents-secretariat.137550.en.html>

⁴¹ Holm-Hansen, Jørn, Aadne Aasland and Elena Dybtsyna (2008) *Building Neighbourhood. Evaluation of the Barents Secretariat's Grant Programme*. NIBR Report 2008:4, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research: p. 22

⁴² The Norwegian Barents Secretariat "About the funding program" (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/project-financing.137551.en.html>

Secretariat has prevalence of small projects in its project portfolio.⁴⁴ The Secretariat has contributed in bringing together tens and thousands of Norwegians and Russians through thousands of project grants.⁴⁵ The Secretariat has co-financed 3200 Norwegian-Russian cooperation projects since 1993.⁴⁶ Rafaelsen states that “with these projects, a significant “cooperation capital” has been accumulated, and that can today serve as a resource bank for the growing business cooperation”.⁴⁷

2.4. The Barents Regional Youth Programme

The Barents Regional Youth Programme is a multilateral youth project. The main aim of the program is to make the Barents Region more attractive for young people and also to contribute to the achievement of increased cross border youth cooperation within all areas. This Program offers young people opportunities for mobility and active participation in the Barents cooperation and the development of the Barents Region.⁴⁸

The Barents Regional Council decided to develop a youth programme for the Barents Region during the meeting on September 5th 2001. The first Barents Regional Youth Programme was adopted in 2002. The same year the Norwegian Ministry for Children and Family Affairs decided to assign funds for multilateral youth projects in the Barents region. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat administers the funds.⁴⁹

The Barents Regional Youth Programme objectives are:

- To increase youth participation in the Barents Regional cooperation’s networks by giving young people increased influence and possibilities for cross border activities.

⁴³ Holm-Hansen, Jørn, Aadne Aasland and Elena Dybtsyna (2008) *Building Neighbourhood. Evaluation of the Barents Secretariat’s Grant Programme*. NIBR Report 2008:4, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research: p. 23

⁴⁴ Ibid.: p. 27

⁴⁵ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat “The active cooperation” (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/project-activity.137552.en.html>

⁴⁶ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat “About the funding program” (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/project-financing.137551.en.html>

⁴⁷ Rafaelsen, Rune (2010) “The Barents Cooperation. New Regional Approach to Foreign Policy in the High North” in Staalesen, Alte (ed) *Talking Barents. People, Borders and Regional Cooperation*. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat. Kirkenes: pp. 26-27

⁴⁸ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat “The Barents Regional Youth Programme” (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/youth.137536.en.html>

⁴⁹ Ibid.

- To facilitate the integration of young people into society at large and encouraging their spirit of initiative.
- To strengthen young people's sense of identity as members of the Barents Region by establishing contact across cultural and geographical borders.
- To encourage young people to play an active role in strengthening civil society in the Barents Region.
- To encourage young people to give free expression to their sense of solidarity in the Barents Region and the wider world, as well as supporting the fight against racism and xenophobia.
- To strengthen the position and rights for indigenous youth and minorities through increased multilateral and multicultural cooperation.⁵⁰

Target group of the Barents Regional Youth Programme is young people of the region who aged between 15 and 30. Groups that can participate in the Programme are:

- Groups of young people who want to organise a multilateral youth project
- Youth organisations
- Youth leaders
- Youth workers
- Project managers or organisers in the field of youth and non-formal education
- Other non-profit-making organisations, associations or structures working with or for young people.⁵¹

Priority areas of the Programme were developed on the basis of the problems youth face in the Barents Region. These areas are:

- Culture and sport (including tolerance and anti-racism)
- Competence and entrepreneurship
- Environmental issues
- Social and health related issues
- Community development (including promotion of active citizenship).⁵²

⁵⁰ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat "The Barents Regional Youth Programme" (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/youth.137536.en.html>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

Culture and sport

Culture is an interesting arena for young people to meet and make contact. It forms the foundation for extended cooperation in all the fields of the Barents Cooperation. Young people need knowledge of the different cultures of the region and opportunities to participate in cultural exchanges. The Youth Programme is seen as a tool to highlight cultural diversity, for example, by facilitating dialogue and joint activities of young people from multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-faith backgrounds. It has a vital aim to contribute to the fight against racism and xenophobia. Examples of activities in this field are: cultural exchange, festivals, attitude campaigns, training courses.⁵³

Competence and entrepreneurship

Education is among the priorities of the Youth Programme. It is highly relevant to young people. Entrepreneurship is an important tool that stimulates economic development in the Barents Region. Involvement of youth in entrepreneurship is an investment in the future. Examples of activities in this field are: cooperation and networks between educational institutions; network of young entrepreneurs; exchanges between students and trainees; meeting places like conferences/seminars; projects to coordinate educational standards; projects on entrepreneurship and innovation.⁵⁴

Environmental issues

The environment is a heritage of young people. It is an area of special concern especially in the North where the nature is vulnerable. Its protection has a particular importance for people in the Barents Region due to the fact that the environment influences the quality of life. Examples of activities in this field are: information campaigns; conferences/seminars on environmental challenges in the arctic; campaigns/seminars on energy efficiency; establishment of environmental NGOs and support to their right to work independently from government structures.⁵⁵

⁵³ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat "The Barents Regional Youth Programme" (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/youth.137536.en.html>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Social and health related issues

The main focus of this area is on healthy nutrition, alcohol and drug free leisure time activities, safe sexual behaviour, supportive social and work environment as well as constructive social skills. The Youth Programme contributes to the creation of supportive physical and social environments to protect and promote health and social wellbeing. This work is of great importance for future generations in the Barents Region. Examples of activities in this field are: attitude and information campaigns; events promoting alternative lifestyle; exchange of knowledge between the various actors working in these fields.⁵⁶

Community development and promotion of active citizenship

Experience shows that young people in general are willing to participate in activities that improve their communities and their own lives. However, there is a lack of structured opportunities that help young people to develop their skills, knowledge and values necessary to build strong communities and democratic and participatory cultures. The Youth Programme is working on creation of these opportunities. It is working on the empowerment of youth to play an active role in community development. Civil society can be strengthened through promotion of active citizenship, volunteer work and establishment of NGOs. Young people should be provided the possibility to study, live, and work in the areas where they grew up. Examples of activities in this field are: promotion of voluntary work; cooperation and exchange of experience between NGOs; contact making seminars and youth expos for NGOs; training courses; methodology development.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ The Norwegian Barents Secretariat "The Barents Regional Youth Programme" (accessed 10.05.2012) [online] – URL <http://www.barents.no/youth.137536.en.html>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

2.5. *Summary*

This chapter provides information about the cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region with a special focus on the Barents Regional Youth Programme. First section of the chapter was about the establishment and structure of the cooperation in the region. Second section was devoted to the Norwegian Barents Secretariat. It is an important institution that coordinates and funds cooperation program between Norwegians and Russians in the Barents Region; the Barents Regional Youth Programme is one of such programs. The structure, objectives, areas of responsibilities and funding, as well as programs of the Secretariat were presented. The last section was dedicated to the Barents Regional Youth Programme. This Programme is chosen to be a focus of the study; therefore the main information about the Programme was presented including aim, objectives, target group, priority areas and activities.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I present the study area, define informants and describe sampling techniques that were used, as well as my field experience. I will discuss the choice of methodology, advantages and challenges of qualitative interviewing with special attention to the development of questions for the interview and the role of my Russian nationality in the research process. I will dwell on the issue of ethical considerations in the end of the chapter.

3.2. Study area

The focus of the research is the Barents Cooperation, precisely the Barents Regional Youth Programme; therefore the study area is the Barents region. My study area originally consisted of Kirkenes and Murmansk. However, during the field experience it was extended to Kirkenes, Tromsø (Norway) and Murmansk, Arkhangelsk (Russia).

I have chosen Kirkenes on the Norwegian side due to the fact that the office of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat is situated there as well as considerable number of events and projects take place in this town. I went to Kirkenes to interview coordinators of the program and youth. On the Russian side Murmansk is the main cooperation partner town, with a lot of cooperation projects taking place there. One of the offices of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat is also located in Murmansk. I went to Murmansk to interview coordinators and youth participants. But during the fieldwork I did not manage to find enough participants from Kirkenes. I made a decision to include Tromsø due to the fact that there are considerable number of cooperation projects between Tromsø and Murmansk, Tromsø and Arkhangelsk. Another factor that led to this decision was the fact that I study in Tromsø and this made it possible to find time to meet with the informants. Therefore Tromsø and Arkhangelsk were included in the study area.

3.3. Selection of informants

I decided to contact the office of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat as a first step to select informants. As I have a focus on the youth cooperation projects I contacted the coordinator of the Barents Regional Youth Programme and she agreed to provide me with information and to help me get in touch with Norwegian and Russian youth that participated in different programs. I have interviewed 4 employees of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat who are working with youth programs and Russians. As a second step I contacted the office of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat that is situated in Murmansk. Two employees are working there. They agreed on interviews and helped me find youth informants. My starting point was to interview 5-6 Norwegian and 5-6 Russian youth participants.

I have conducted interviews in Murmansk, Kirkenes and Tromsø. I interviewed Russian and Norwegian participants and coordinators of projects within the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I have in total 25 interviews. The table below characterizes the informants:

Place	Interviewed people	
	Participants of cooperation projects	Coordinators of cooperation projects
Murmansk, Murmansk Oblast', Russia	4 Russians	2 Russians at the Barents Secretariat 1 Norwegian school teacher
Kirkenes, Finnmark, Norway	1 Russian	5 Norwegians at the Barents Secretariat 1 Norwegian school teacher
Tromsø, Troms, Norway	11 Norwegians	No planned interviews

Norwegian youth participants are my main research group. I focus on how Norwegian youth transform their views on Russians through participation in the cooperation. Therefore these interviews constitute the empirical data for the research. As Norwegian

youth participants are my main target group I decided to increase the number of informants from planned 5-6, to 11.

I went to Murmansk to interview Russian youth participants to investigate if there is a problem of stereotyping. I interviewed employees of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat in Murmansk and Kirkenes and also teachers at schools to understand the tendencies in the cooperation process. These interviews provided me with the needed background information for my project.

3.4. Sampling

In this part I will discuss the sampling techniques that were used in selection of informants. I applied two sampling techniques: snowball sampling and purposive sampling. If the researchers choose cases on the bases of their judgment of typicality, it is called purposive sampling. In this case the researchers choose a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs.⁵⁸ In the case of snowball sampling, researchers search for a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested. These selected people are then used as informants who help the researchers identify and get in contact with other informants relevant for the study.⁵⁹ The choice of these two techniques was based on the research topic as well as time and resource limitations.

While planning and preparing for the fieldwork I made a decision to use snowball sampling. This decision was made due to the fact that I needed to get access to “a population where access is difficult”⁶⁰; because I wanted to interview Norwegian youth who participated in the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I chose employees at the Norwegian Barents Secretariat who are working with youth issues as informants that could help me find and get in contact with youth participants. As a result, in Murmansk I got contact information and assistance with interviewing several youth participants and one coordinator of a program. In Kirkenes I also got the contact information of several youth participants as well as one coordinator of a program.

⁵⁸ Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison (2003) *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge Falmer: p. 103

⁵⁹ Ibid.: p. 104

⁶⁰ Ibid.

At the Norwegian Barents Secretariat in Kirkenes I received access to all the reports of cooperation projects conducted. This opportunity gave me a possibility to apply one more sampling technique – purposive sampling. I looked through the reports searching for projects that satisfied such requirements as: location (correspondent to my study area), purpose (youth programs), type of projects (cooperation, I did not include youth sport competitions) and time (last 2 years). I contacted coordinators of the selected projects asking for information about the participants. However, without direct recommendation from the Norwegian Barents Secretariat it appeared to be difficult to get an answer. Using purposive sampling I found few informants, and that number was not enough.

In the search for more informants I used snowball technique again. The initial informants' group this time consisted of people whom I know personally. I am a member of one project within the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I decided to use people from this project as my initial informants, due to the fact that they participated in other cooperation projects before. I interviewed some of them and I asked them to recommend people for further interviews. It appeared to be successful and I got enough informants.

The total number of conducted interviews is 25. The sample size of the Norwegian youth participants is 11. Sample size is based on feasibility and representativeness. Every interview ranged from 1 to 1,5 hour. Also starting from the 6th interview I stopped getting essentially new information from the informants. I could predict their answers. I considered this an indicator that I had an appropriate number of interviews to start my analysis of the received data.

3.5. *Field experience*

I conducted fieldwork from June 2011 until November 2011. It was divided into three periods: 1) one week in Murmansk, 2) one week in Kirkenes, 3) September – November in Tromsø. I should also mention that I am a member of a cooperation project between Tromsø, Alta and Murmansk (since September 2010 until now). I have some experience as a participant myself.

I went to the offices in Kirkenes and in Murmansk to collect information about the program's goals and achievements, about the coordinators' experiences, as well as to get in contact with youth participants. First I went to Murmansk to get information about the cooperation and to interview youth participants in order to evaluate the topic. Later I went to Kirkenes where I interviewed coordinators of youth projects. I got to read reports about the results of past cooperation projects. I tried to find out and evaluate what they have really learned about their partner and what they have experienced. Having collected and analyzed the received information, I started interviewing Norwegian youth participants.

My experience in the offices in Murmansk and Kirkenes were rather positive. Employees found time for interviews; they were friendly, open and supportive. I contacted the offices in Murmansk and Kirkenes asking for interviews while planning fieldwork. When I came to both offices they provided me with a working place for the whole week where I could use internet and phone. During my stay I received support and had a chance to collect more information. In the Norwegian Barents Secretariat I received access to the archives of reports from all cooperation projects. There I searched for projects that were relevant for my study. I also got to interview teachers at schools in Murmansk and Kirkenes who are coordinating some cooperation projects. Employees of the Barents Secretariat in Murmansk and Kirkenes helped me organize these interviews.

I should mention the interviews that were conducted with Russian youth. I interviewed 5 participants of cooperation projects. They were open for my questions, however, did not allow me to record their answers even though I ensured them that I would guarantee their anonymity. The questions to the Russian youth participants focused on their experience of cooperation, relations with their Norwegian partners, and whether they tried to convey a positive image of the Russians.

Finding and getting access to Norwegian youth participants were not so easy. I got the contact information of coordinators of projects in the office of the Norwegian Barents Secretariat. I contacted the project coordinators to ask for the contact information of youth participants. It was difficult due to the privacy regulations. The coordinators often did not provide me with contact information, but said that they would forward my request to youth participants. I am not sure if the coordinators actually did this, because

in the two cases I did not get any response. In one case the coordinator of the program did provide me the contact information of youth participants. In order to find more informants I used my network which I described in the sampling section.

The Norwegian youth participants were interviewed in Tromsø. They are originally from different parts of Northern Norway, but all of them are studying at Tromsø University now. The youth participants with whom I had interviews were good informants in the sense that they were open to answer my questions, were ready to think and remember details that I was asking them about. They also allowed me to record their answers, which helped me analyze the interviews. My questions to Norwegians focused on their perceptions of Russians before and after participating in the programs, about whether their experience had changed or had not changed their attitude towards Russians.

3.6. *Choice of methodology*

I decided to make qualitative study because I am searching for meanings and interpretations of experience. Stereotyping is a phenomenon that can be understood by exploring people's experiences. The qualitative approach focuses on the deep understanding of social phenomena, "the individual's point of view and the actor's perspective".⁶¹

Considering the nature and purpose of my study I hold to the emotionalist model within qualitative approach as the most appropriate one. This model prioritizes the study of perception, meanings and emotions. Silverman argues that the emotionalist model's focus is on "eliciting authentic accounts of subjective experience".⁶² In-depth interviews are recognized to be the most appropriate data collection technique for the emotionalist model. In interview study with open-ended questions respondents are "encouraged to offer their own definitions of particular activities".⁶³ Qualitative interviewing is useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes, beliefs and values. These are

⁶¹ Silverman, David (2005) *Doing Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications: p. 10

⁶² Silverman, David (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. SAGE Publications: p. 123

⁶³ *Ibid.*: p. 25

things that cannot necessarily be observed. Qualitative interviewing “when done well is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity”.⁶⁴

The results of my research “are conditioned as much by the limitations” of my approach “as by its strength”.⁶⁵ Balanced understanding of my perspective is essential for the reliability and validity of the data. In this part I will name advantages of qualitative interview method and discuss challenges that I faced during the data collection.

This is a list of qualitative interview’s advantages that had a particular importance during the data collection:

- Qualitative interview setting allow me to ask additional questions or reformulate questions. Therefore the possibility of misunderstandings between me and my respondents were seriously reduced. Shared understanding in the interview process is not possible in many other research methods.⁶⁶
- During interviews I gathered detailed description of respondents’ experience. I was using open-ended questions and follow up questions to get deeper data.
- It was important for my study that my respondents answered spontaneously.
- I asked questions about personal experiences and respondents felt more comfortable to talk about their experiences in a face-to-face and anonymous setting.
- Interviews with open-ended questions resemble conversation, so after a while, respondents started feeling more relaxed and some interesting memories and ideas came to their mind.
- I was allowed by the respondents to record interviews, which is valuable for my research because “recordings and transcripts can offer a highly reliable record”⁶⁷ to which I can return during my work on the thesis.

The qualitative interview method also poses certain challenges. Here, I present the challenges that I found relevant for my research.

⁶⁴ Byrne, Bridget (2004) ‘Qualitative Interviewing’ in Seale, C. (ed.) *Researching Society and Culture*. SAGE Publications: p. 182

⁶⁵ Oliver, Paul (2008) *Writing Your Thesis*. SAGE Publications: p. 114

⁶⁶ Brenner, Michael, Jennifer Brown, David Canter (eds.) (1985) *The Research Interview. Uses and Approaches*. London: Academic Press: p. 3

⁶⁷ Silverman, David (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. SAGE Publications: p. 21

- Qualitative interview is seen as conversation that can provide a greater depth than other research techniques.⁶⁸ But the success depends much on the possibility to establish good rapport between the respondent and interviewer. Gaining trust with respondents is essential.⁶⁹
- It is important to evaluate if interviewee gives us insights into ‘unique’ experiences or simply gives us what we expect to hear.⁷⁰
- Due to the fact that the contact between interviewer and interviewee is face-to-face, the personality of the interviewer influences the process of interviewing.⁷¹
- It is also challenging to find the right questions to elicit relevant data and not to be “affected by own perspectives and research questions”.⁷² In order to avoid such mistakes, the researcher should carefully and critically formulate questions when preparing for and during the interview.
- Language can be a challenge. Interviews were conducted in English, which is not the native language for the informants or for me. However, I did not notice any obvious problems with misunderstandings or difficulties with formulating ideas in a foreign language.
- It was challenging to find informants. It took 3 months to find informants, to get in contact with them and to arrange the interviews.

However, it is possible to reduce the influence of the challenges by “appropriate preparation; demonstration of appropriate respect for participants; intensive listening on the part of the interviewer; development of thoughtful interview guides that use appropriate question formulation; posing of short, open-ended questions; flexibility on the part of the interviewer to deviate from prior plans when necessary; and effective use of follow up questions within interviews to elicit the participants’ understandings of topics”.⁷³ During the preparation for the interviews I took these recommendations into consideration and tried to apply them in the process of interviewing.

⁶⁸ Silverman, David (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. SAGE Publications.: p. 124

⁶⁹ Denzin, Norman K., Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) (1998) ‘Interviewing: The Art of Science’ in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. SAGE Publications: p. 59

⁷⁰ Silverman, David (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. SAGE Publications: p. 126

⁷¹ Brenner, Michael, Jennifer Brown, David Canter (eds.) (1985) *The Research Interview. Uses and Approaches*. London: Academic Press: p. 4

⁷² Bryman, Alan (2001) ‘Interviewing in Qualitative Research’ in *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: p. 327

⁷³ Roulston, Kathryn (2010) *Reflective Interviewing. A Guide to Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications: p. 178

In addition to the qualitative interviewing I also conducted document review. Document analysis was my secondary source of data collection. Data was collected from written material: informative and analytical articles, monographs, researches about stereotypes, culture, cross-cultural understanding and the Barents Cooperation, reports of the Barents Secretariat.

3.7. Advantages and challenges of the interview process

This section looks at the process of interviewing and the challenges it can bring about; both as a method for reliable data gathering, and for me as a Russian student studying stereotypes about Russians. I have decided to focus on this problem because I came to learn that “asking questions and getting answers is a much harder task than it may seem at first.”⁷⁴ I start with a discussion about the search for appropriate words, the formulation of questions, and the sequence of questions. Afterwards I will discuss the possible influence of Russian origin to the research. In the conclusion of this section I will dwell on the issue of ethical considerations.

3.7.1. Developing questions for interviews

Formulation and preparation of questions is crucial. Focusing on how to ask questions is important because sometimes answers might not relate to the particular question, or interviewees may tend to say what they think the researcher wants to hear.

Working on the wording of the questions was an important part of preparing for the interviews. The topic of research is management of stereotypes. The term stereotype has a negative meaning per se because stereotyping leads people to “assign identical characteristics to any person in a group, regardless of the actual variation among members of that group.”⁷⁵ Most people recognize that stereotypical thinking is criticized. Therefore I made a decision not to use word ‘stereotype’ in my questions. I used the notion ‘general ideas’ about Russians; because this notion reflects an idea about identical characteristics of a group. I realize that I will make conclusion about stereotyping based on questions that did not have direct reference to stereotype.

⁷⁴ Denzin, Norman K., Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) (1998) ‘Interviewing: The Art of Science’ in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. SAGE Publications: p. 178

⁷⁵ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: p. 311

However, I made this choice deliberately, because I think that in this way I have received deeper data.

I developed an interview guide and conducted semi-structured interviews. The interview guide allowed me to have the same starting point with all respondents. However, each interview took its own direction according to what was said by the interviewee. My questions focused on experience, opinions, feelings and knowledge. I was using both closed questions to get facts and open questions to get descriptions. Careful work with shaping questions was essential, because “how a question is worded and asked affects how the interviewee responds”.⁷⁶

An open-ended interview does shape what people say. It is recommended in qualitative interview to use few questions, however, that can cause constrain on the interviewer to talk.⁷⁷ I was focusing on making questions clear and easy to understand. I decided to ask numerous questions and specific questions to avoid vague questions and responses. I was working on questions and checking them on other people, to make sure that questions were understandable not only for me.

When using open-ended questions, interviewers need to be sure that “the topic is sufficiently specific so that the interviewee will be able to respond. If topics have not been explained, or are unclear to interviewees, they may have difficulty in answering broad open-ended questions”.⁷⁸ It is also important that all respondents understand the questions in the same way.⁷⁹ For this purpose I explained the topic of my research to each respondent before interview. I told them about general issues that would be discussed so that they could be a bit more familiar with the topic. Also at the beginning of each interview I spent time explaining my research once again. Interview questions are “tools to draw out the participant to reflect on the experience itself and its implications in his or her life,”⁸⁰ and with this in mind, I was planning the questions sequence. With the first questions I was trying to make participants feel relaxed and focus on the phenomenon: to describe the experience and feelings. Questions in the

⁷⁶ Patton, M. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. SAGE Publications: p. 353

⁷⁷ Silverman, David (2006) *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. SAGE Publications: p. 125

⁷⁸ Roulston, Kathryn (2010) *Reflective Interviewing. A Guide to Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications: p. 13

⁷⁹ Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison (2003) *Research Methods in Education*. RoutledgeFalmer: p. 121

⁸⁰ Rudestam, Kjell Erik, Newton, Rae R. (2001) *Surviving Your Dissertation. A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*. SAGE Publications: p. 92

beginning were easy to answer; they showed respondents that “questions are manageable”.⁸¹ Questions in the beginning also formed the foundation for further questions. Further questions served the purpose to encourage respondents to “dig deeper and reflect on the meaning of the experience”.⁸² I was asking questions about their thoughts, understanding and knowledge.

There also exists the problem of leading questions.⁸³ In leading questions, “the interviewer makes obvious the direction in which he or she would like to go”.⁸⁴ I was checking my questions to make sure that they did not have any directions or emphasis of preferable answers. I was focusing on making neutral and open-ended questions, so that interviewees could choose their own ways to answer because “in order to reduce bias it is important to formulate questions carefully so that the meaning is crystal clear”.⁸⁵ It is important to be aware of possible problems.

I am also aware of the fact that “the spoken or written word has always a residue of ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the questions and report or code answers”.⁸⁶ Language issues matter. Even in an interview setting with a common language for the interviewer and the respondents, there is a place for ambiguity. The native language of my respondents was Norwegian, mine – Russian, and the interviews were conducted in English. Therefore I suppose that there was place for some degree of ambiguity, in spite of my careful work with question formulation.

After having planned the interview, I moved to the next stage of the fieldwork. However, logical order of my interviews was changed to different extents during the interviews. I was flexible when asking the questions because respondents were talking and answering to various parts of my questions. Sometimes another logic of answers emerged, but I managed to cover questions. The natural flow of the conversation was influencing the

⁸¹ Glesne, Corrine (2006) *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*. Pearson Education: p. 85

⁸² Rudestam, Kjell Erik, Newton, Rae R. (2001) *Surviving Your Dissertation. A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*. SAGE Publications: p. 96

⁸³ Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison (2003) *Research Methods in Education*. RoutledgeFalmer: p. 122

⁸⁴ Glesne, Corrine (2006) *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*. Pearson Education

⁸⁵ Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison (2003) *Research Methods in Education*. RoutledgeFalmer: p. 121

⁸⁶ Denzin, Norman K., Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.) (1998) ‘Interviewing: The Art of Science’ in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. SAGE Publications: p. 47

interviews. This was valuable because people showed to me their own connections and emphasis; and I did not want to interrupt them by my straight questions' order.

I would also like to focus on follow up questions. They are an integral and crucial part of open-ended interviews. Open questions generate detailed descriptions about the research topic. These "descriptions can be further explored when interviewer follows up on what has already been said by asking further open-ended follow up questions".⁸⁷ Follow up questions depend on what the interviewee has already said, therefore it is possible to prepare for them, but every time it is an improvisation. When asking follow up questions I kept in mind the challenges of question formulation.

Common elements for follow up questions are to use the participant's terms and to formulate them as open questions.⁸⁸ Follow up questions can be posed in a close format (yes/no response or short answer) to check their understanding of prior talk.⁸⁹ Kvale suggests that one criterion for the 'quality' of interviews is that interviewers check their understanding of talk throughout the interview. Follow up questions to "check repeatedly the reliability of interviewees' answers, as well as to verify the interviewers' interpretations".⁹⁰

3.7.2 The role of my Russian nationality in the research process

In this section I will discuss the issue of subjectivity in the qualitative research, specifically the positioning of a researcher towards the researched. As I see it as an important issue, I will reflect on my positioning as a researcher.

Interviewing is an interpersonal interaction and it is inevitable that the researcher has some influence on the interviewee and on the produced data.⁹¹ In qualitative interviews the researcher is considered to be an instrument and there is no escape from the self. As argued by Roulston, "whether acknowledged or not, researcher selves are implicated in every aspect of a research project – from the formulation and design of a study, to the

⁸⁷ Roulston, Kathryn (2010) *Reflective Interviewing. A Guide to Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications: p. 12

⁸⁸ Roulston, Kathryn (2010) *Reflective Interviewing. A Guide to Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications: p. 135

⁸⁹ Ibid: p. 143

⁹⁰ Kvale, Steinar (1996) *InterView: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. SAGE Publications: p. 145

⁹¹ Cohen, Louis, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison (2003) *Research Methods in Education*. RoutledgeFalmer: p. 121

interview interaction, and analysis and representation of a data”.⁹² Therefore researchers in qualitative studies “are inevitably part of the study that they conduct”.⁹³

Subjectivity in the research has long been considered as

something to keep out of one’s research, something, at least, control against through a variety of methods to establish validity. It has had a negative connotation in the research world and has not traditionally been a topic for discussion.⁹⁴

However, in contemporary qualitative research practice, “investigation and acknowledgement of one’s subjective positions in relation to one’s research topic and research participants”⁹⁵ is seen to be an important part for the reflexive researcher. Subjectivity can be considered not to be a problem when it is monitored throughout a project and is acknowledged.⁹⁶ Recognized subjectivity can contribute to the reliability of research.⁹⁷

All researchers are positioned “by age, gender, race, class, nationality, institutional affiliation, historical-personal circumstances, and intellectual predisposition”.⁹⁸ Complex specific positions of both researcher and respondents have influence on their relationships and on the outcome of the research. Therefore, it is useful for qualitative researchers to consider critically their subject positions in relation to their research topic and respondents involved in their studies.⁹⁹

Considering the issue of positioning reflexivity is very important in qualitative research because reflexivity requires “critical self-reflection of the ways in which researchers’ social background, assumptions, positioning and behavior impact on the research

⁹² Roulston, Kathryn (2010) *Reflective Interviewing. A Guide to Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications: p. 127

⁹³ Ibid: p. 115

⁹⁴ Glesne, Corrine (2006) *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*. Pearson Education: p. 119

⁹⁵ Roulston, Kathryn (2010) *Reflective Interviewing. A Guide to Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications: p. 119

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Glesne, Corrine (2006) *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*. Pearson Education: p. 119

⁹⁸ Chiseri-Strater, E. (1996) ‘Turning in upon Ourselves: Positionality, Subjectivity, and Reflexivity in Case Study and Ethnographic Research’ in Mortensen, P. and G.E. Kirsch (eds) *Ethics and Representation in Qualitative Studies of Literacy*. Urbana: p. 115

⁹⁹ Roulston, Kathryn (2010) *Reflective Interviewing. A Guide to Theory and Practice*. SAGE Publications: pp. 115-116

process”.¹⁰⁰ In contemporary qualitative studies it is recommended to be open about the question of subjectivity. In my research, subjectivity can have an influence on my findings, and therefore, I consider it important for discussion. As a researcher I am positioned by age, gender, race, class, nationality, institutional affiliation and historical-personal circumstances. All of these factors influence my relations with the respondents and my findings to some degree or another. Some of these factors caused challenges, and some of them became advantages.

The focus population of my research is Norwegian youth who participated in cooperation projects. During interviews, I felt that being approximately at the same age as the respondents helped me gain their rapport. I suppose that if the age difference had been larger, the interview atmosphere could have been tenser. I am also a participant in one cooperation project myself, and I felt this to be an advantage because I could ask specific questions and understand the respondents better. The majority of the interviewees are University students, just like me, and this issue helped me to be seen as one of them.

The factor that was most challenging for me as a researcher was my nationality. The fact that I am Russian and I asked Norwegian respondents questions about Russians and about their feelings and attitudes towards Russians caused challenges. I took this issue into consideration while preparing for the interviews. During the interviews I also kept it in mind because I felt that sometimes my Russian origin could influence the respondents' answers. I will discuss the limitations and advantages my nationality imposed on the research.

In order to provide a critical perspective on the role of my nationality in the research process, I will discuss the impetus of the study, my interests and background related to the research topic. One of the main motivations for my research is based on my personal experience. I have experienced that people judge me based on stereotypes about Russians. I was wondering why stereotyping is so influential. Therefore the topic of this research is sensitive for me and it encouraged me to deeper explore the topic. While conducting interviews, I tried to be friendly, nice and neutral and I did not try to change

¹⁰⁰ Finlay, Linda and Brendon Gough (eds) (2003) *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Sciences*. Oxford: Blackwell Science: p. ix

or comment on stereotypes during interviews when focusing on revealing stereotypes about Russians.

My main challenge was that I felt that I could have problems with getting honest and complete answer because respondents did not want to offend my feelings as a person from Russia. In order to distance myself and distance interviewees from the fact that I am Russian, I use 'they' or 'Russians' and did not use 'we' (meaning that I am Russian).

Among my respondents there were people who knew me personally from before and people who did not know me. I had a hypothesis that interviews with people who did not know me would be more fruitful. I was thinking that if they did not know me they could be more open with me, because we did not have any relations and they would not be afraid to hurt my personal feelings. I was reluctant to interview people whom I knew, because I thought they will not be sincere with me. However, it turned out that interviews with people whom I knew gave me richer data. This could have been so because I was able to explain the idea of my research better to respondents I already knew.

Being 'an insider' has also been a challenge for me. I am Russian and conduct research about Russians. I am aware that I have my own view on Russians and I tried not to let this influence the questions, the interpretations, and the research in general. I listened carefully to my respondents and asked additional questions to be sure that I understood correctly the interviewees' point of view. I tried to be as objective as possible and to communicate the informant's point of view.

Being Russian also has its advantages. I am able to better understand the realities in the Russian north. I went to Murmansk to interview Russian participants. These interviews did not have so many challenges because we have a common language and common background. I have experienced being judged by stereotypes. Therefore I can see the issue in more details: I understand the ways how stereotyping can cause negative consequences, undermine relations and cooperation, because "for people who have

never experienced prejudice, it is difficult to understand the feelings of a target of prejudice”.¹⁰¹

3.7.3 Ethical considerations

It is important to take into consideration the factor of research ethics. Researchers have ethical responsibility to the participants, their colleagues and to themselves in their research. Ethical responsibility is essential at all stages of the research process.¹⁰² Voluntary and informed consent is the central norm that regulates the relations between the researcher and participants.¹⁰³

With regard to the ethical considerations I took several measures. I explained to my informants the purpose of the research and outlined the questions that would be asked during the interview. I also guaranteed their anonymity. At the beginning of every interview I again reminded the informants about the aim of the research and assured them that their names are not going to be used in the thesis. All recorded materials will be deleted after the submission of the thesis.

3.8. Summary

This chapter was dedicated to the justification of qualitative interview method for the data collection in the context of my research topic as well as to the detailed account of interview implementation in practice. Qualitative interview has been the main method of data collection. The advantages and challenges of this method were presented and discussed in connection to this particular topic. Special attention was given to such issues as development of questions, the role of the researcher and research ethics. The study area and the informants were defined in the beginning of the chapter. Issues such as sampling and field experienced were scrutinized in order to present nuances of the choices made throughout the research process.

¹⁰¹ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: pp. 322-323

¹⁰² Miller, Robert L., John D. Brewer. (2003) *The A-Z of Social Research*. Sage Publications.: pp. 95, 98

¹⁰³ Ibid.: p. 96

Chapter 4. Theoretical and conceptual orientation

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will present and discuss concepts such as ‘stereotype’ and ‘prejudice’, ‘culture’ and ‘understanding of another culture’. I will dwell on Allport’s contact hypothesis.¹⁰⁴ I will also discuss the development that followed Allport’s work as well as present critical comments on the contact hypothesis.

4.2. Main concepts

There are several concepts important for the understanding of the main problem of this study. The presentation of the concepts will show the complexity of the phenomena under investigation.

4.2.1. Stereotype and prejudice

The concept of *stereotype* was first introduced to the social science by Walter Lippmann, an American editorialist and political thinker, in the 1920-s. According to Lippmann, stereotype is “the little pictures in our heads that help us interpret the world we see”.¹⁰⁵ To stereotype means “to allow those pictures to dominate our thinking, leading us to assign identical characteristics to any person in a group, regardless of the actual variation among members of that group”.¹⁰⁶

Allport considered that Lippmann “confuse[d] stereotype with category”.¹⁰⁷ Allport explained that a *stereotype* is not equal to a category because stereotype is a “fixed idea that accompanies the category”.¹⁰⁸ In his book *The Nature of Prejudices* he has demonstrated the difference: the category ‘black American’ can be held in mind simply as a neutral, factual, non-evaluative concept. Stereotype occurs when, and if, the initial category is accompanied with ‘pictures’ and judgments of the black American as musical, lazy or superstitious. Therefore he concludes that a stereotype is not a category

¹⁰⁴ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 281

¹⁰⁵ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: p. 311

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: pp. 191-192

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

but often exists as attached mark upon the category.¹⁰⁹ Allport's attention on the role of stereotypes, "not merely as group descriptions, but also as cognitive structures that shape thoughts, feelings, and action"¹¹⁰ is considered to be one of his strongest legacies.

According to Aronson *stereotype* is "the simplistic generalization about a group of people – assigning them identical characteristics consistent with one's prejudices".¹¹¹ Allport also believes that stereotypes have a strong connection with prejudice.¹¹²

Aronson defines *prejudice* as

a hostile or negative attitude toward a distinguishable group on the basis of generalizations derived from faulty or incomplete information. It contains a cognitive component (a stereotype and set of beliefs about a group), an emotional component (dislike of or active hostility toward the group), and behavioral component (a predisposition to discriminate against the group whenever possible).¹¹³

According to Allport, *prejudice* is "an avertive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group".¹¹⁴ Allport also gives a definition to *ethnic prejudice* as "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization."¹¹⁵ Allport's definitions will be discussed later in the chapter.

Stereotypes are deeply rooted in our heads; they are formed and supported by informal education that comes from our social background (culture, tradition and literature), and our social environment (family, neighbours, and the mass media).¹¹⁶

Most stereotypes are not based on valid experience. They are based on rumors; images formed by the mass media or generated within our heads. It is a way to form and justify our own prejudices. One consequence of stereotyping is that when we make judgments

¹⁰⁹ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: pp. 191-192

¹¹⁰ Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (2005) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 4

¹¹¹ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: p. 437

¹¹² Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 189

¹¹³ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: p. 303

¹¹⁴ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 7

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*: p. 9

¹¹⁶ Kharakoz, M. (2005) *Stereotypes and Informal Learning Dialogue (A Comparative Analysis in the Aspect of Russian-Norwegian Extra-Mural Communication)* University of Oslo. Faculty of Education: p. 29

about people, we often disregard or underestimate information that does not fit the stereotype.¹¹⁷ We often find connection between two entities that we think should be related – but, in fact, they are not. Stereotypes make us see relationships that seem for us as evidences that the original stereotypes are true.¹¹⁸

Holliday, Hyde and Kullman in *Intercultural Communication* give an example of how mass media can create stereotypes.¹¹⁹ Media often creatively manipulates information to make it most saleable, sensational and ‘exotic’. We often get images of ‘foreign other’ on television, radio and press, in the form of news, documentaries and current affairs discussion. For example, many countries less well-known to the West are represented very selectively. The authors point out that while people may be naturally cynical about much of what the media shows, they may be often less critical of the images of the ‘exotic’.¹²⁰

Allport states that some stereotypes are totally unsupported by facts, while other can be based on facts. However, the latter stereotypes are developed from sharpening and overgeneralization of facts;¹²¹ these stereotypes are sustained by “selective perception and selective forgetting”.¹²²

Stereotyping does not always have negative connotations. Stereotypes may exist together with a favorable attitude.¹²³ Stereotyping is often a way to simplify the complexities of our social world, and all people do it. At a very basic level all people think stereotypically. People learn to assign characteristics to other groups at a very young age.¹²⁴

However, stereotyping is potentially dangerous because it ignores individual differences within a class of people. Stereotyping can be harmful to the target even if the stereotype has neutral or positive meaning; because stereotypical generalization is abusive, a

¹¹⁷ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: p. 313

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*: pp. 145-146

¹¹⁹ Holliday, Adrian, Martin Hyde and John Kullman (2010) *Intercultural Communication*. Second Edition. Routledge Applied Linguistics: p. 41

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 190

¹²² *Ibid.*: p. 196

¹²³ *Ibid.*: p. 191

¹²⁴ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: pp. 311-312

person is not seen as an individual.¹²⁵ Allport sees a serious problem in stereotypes because they justify hostility.¹²⁶

For people who have never experienced prejudice, it is difficult to understand the feeling of being a target of prejudice. Therefore there is a tendency to blame the victim. For example, “if the Jews have been victimized throughout their history, they must have been doing something wrong”.¹²⁷

Summing up, we can see that negative stereotypes lead to erroneous opinions and formation of prejudices. We need to assume that all people have some degree of prejudice. It can be against an ethnic, national, or racial group, against people with different sexual orientations, against specific areas of the country, or even against some kinds of food. It is easy to criticize other people for their prejudice but it is difficult to see our own.¹²⁸ However, most people recognize that stereotypical thinking is criticized. Therefore people are trying to avoid saying biased things. But when people have little control over their stereotypes; we may express our prejudices.¹²⁹

This section demonstrates the complexity of the negative consequences that are caused by stereotyping. In the chapter devoted to the data analysis I will show that the issue connected to the stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway exists.

Allport believes that it is probably not the best solution to try to protect everyone’s mind from all encounter with stereotypes. He sees the possible solution in strengthening one’s “ability to differentiate among them, and handle their impact with critical power”.¹³⁰ This way of solution will be discussed later in this chapter in the section devoted to Allport’s contact hypothesis.

¹²⁵ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: p. 312

¹²⁶ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 200

¹²⁷ Ibid.: pp. 322-323

¹²⁸ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: pp. 304-305

¹²⁹ Ibid.: p. 303

¹³⁰ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 202

4.2.2. *The concept of culture*

Culture is one of the concepts in social science which has been understood and defined in variety of ways, ranging from narrow and specific concepts to broad and blurred ones.¹³¹ The English anthropologist Taylor was the first who defined the concept of culture more specifically. Taylor defined cultures as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.¹³² This definition provoked sharp debate about what culture is seen to ‘include’ in this model and the idea that culture is ‘acquired’.¹³³

The concept of culture is very broad and different researchers were trying to find their own way of grasping the content of culture. Wallerstein, for example, offers a general idea about the culture. He sees culture as “the set of characteristics, which distinguish one group from another”.¹³⁴ Hofstede interprets the concept from another perspective. He refers to the culture as to an abstract idea. Hofstede sees the culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”. When explaining the definition, he argues that “culture, in this sense, includes system of values; and values are among the building blocks of culture”.¹³⁵ Definition of Hofstede is frequently referred to in cross-cultural literature, because on the one part it is rather broad to include other definitions, but on the other part is rather sharp to reflect key elements of a culture.¹³⁶

Gullestrup presents detailed definition of the concept, trying to include in it all key elements. Culture is

a world conception and the values, moral norms and actual behaviour – and the material and immaterial results thereof – which people (in a given context and over a given period of time) take over from past generations, which they – possibly in a modified form – seek

¹³¹ Gullestrup, Hans (2006) *Cultural Analysis – Towards Cross-Cultural Understanding*. Aalborg University Press: p. 32

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Holliday, Adrian, Martin Hyde and John Kullman (2010) *Intercultural Communication*. Second Edition. Routledge Applied Linguistics: p. 69

¹³⁴ Wallerstein, Immanuel (1990) “Culture as the Ideological Battleground of the Modern World-System” in Anthony D. King (ed.) *Global Culture – Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*. London: Sage Publications: p. 26

¹³⁵ Hofstede, Geert (1980) *Culture’s Consequences*. London: Sage: p. 25

¹³⁶ Browaeys, Marie-Joelle, Roger Price (2011) *Understanding Cross-Cultural Management*. Second Edition. Pearson: p. 10

to pass on to the next generation; and which in various ways make them different from people belonging to other cultures.¹³⁷

When explaining his definition, Gullestrup underlines that cultures have “some sort of fluid ... boundaries that can be crossed, and which separate individuals belonging to one culture from individuals belonging to another culture”.¹³⁸ From the variety of definitions this one is chosen to be the basis for the research.

Browaeys and Price consider that the central aspect of culture “is that it is something all humans learn... It is not something people inherit, but rather a code of attitudes, norms and values, a way of thinking that is learnt within a social environment”.¹³⁹ They continue that family, the social environment, school, friends, work, national culture form this code and define how people see themselves and the world.¹⁴⁰

I would like to dwell on the difference of essentialist and non-essentialist views on culture. This dichotomy reveals complexity of views on culture. It is possible to state that essentialist point of view nourish existence of stereotypes. From the essentialist view cultures are coincidental with countries, regions, and continents. It means that one can ‘visit’ another culture while travelling and that cultures contain ‘mutually exclusive types of behaviour’. From this view, for example, people ‘from’ or ‘in’ French culture are essentially different from those ‘from’ or ‘in’ Chinese culture. This essentialism seems natural and normal, because it is in many ways the common way of thinking about how we are different from each other. Holliday explains why this way of thinking is problematic: “if we think of people’s behaviour as defined and constrained by the culture in which they live, agency is transferred away from the individual to the culture itself, so that we begin to think that ‘German culture believes that...’, and that ‘she belongs to German culture, therefore she...’”¹⁴¹ This leads to stereotyping and oversimplified view on culture.

¹³⁷ Gullestrup, Hans (2006) *Cultural Analysis – Towards Cross-Cultural Understanding*. Aalborg University Press: pp. 23, 57, 326

¹³⁸ Gullestrup, Hans (2006) *Cultural Analysis – Towards Cross-Cultural Understanding*. Aalborg University Press: p. 23

¹³⁹ Browaeys, Marie-Joelle, Roger Price (2011) *Understanding Cross-Cultural Management*. Second Edition. Pearson: p. 3

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Holliday, A. R. (2005) *The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp. 17-18

From the non-essentialist view culture is not a geographic place but a “social force which is evident wherever it emerges as being significant”.¹⁴² This concept of culture is within the critical, constructivist and symbolic views of culture.¹⁴³ Culture is an abstract and changing force. Culture can bind people or separate them; this depends on time and circumstances. Holliday agrees that there is a notion of cultural difference, but “this difference is not locked into essentialist culture blocks”.¹⁴⁴ He accepts that there are aspects of behaviour which are ‘culturally different’. However, for example, the way in which someone might behave may be connected with the small cultures of family, age, occupation or other background factors rather than with large cultural differences in nationality. Holliday underlines that when cultural difference is connected with nationality, it does not necessarily follow that all people of that nationality will behave similarly.¹⁴⁵

4.2.3. Understanding of another culture

As it was demonstrated above culture is a complex and sophisticated phenomenon. It may be difficult to understand one’s own culture; moreover, it is rather complicated to get insight into and understanding of a different culture.¹⁴⁶ However, in today’s world communication between cultures is reality; in a growing number of contexts we face a need to understand another culture, people belonging to another culture and their way of thinking.¹⁴⁷ This topic has a vital interest and a number of researchers are working on how it is possible to get insight into a different culture.

Browaeyns and Price have divided culture in three layers. It is possible to see these layers as an indicator that understanding of another culture is a complicated task. The first, outer layer is ‘behavioural’ or ‘explicit’ level. This layer is easy to notice; it consists of the language, the communication style, the food, the architecture, the houses, the buildings and so on. The second layer consists of the ‘norms and values’. Every culture

¹⁴² Roberts, C., M. Byram, A. Barro, S. Jordon and B. Street (2001) *Language Learners as Ethnographers*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters: p. 54

¹⁴³ Roberts, C., M. Byram, A. Barro, S. Jordon and B. Street (2001) *Language Learners as Ethnographers*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters: p. 54

¹⁴⁴ Holliday, A. R. (2005) *The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: pp. 23-24

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Gullestrup, Hans (2006) *Cultural Analysis – Towards Cross-Cultural Understanding*. Aalborg University Press: p. 227

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.: p. 26

has its own system of norms and values. Norms are the rules of a society, defining what is good or bad with regard to behavior. Values are what is considered important, beautiful or not beautiful, right or wrong. The third and innermost layer represents the core of each 'culture' and contains assumptions and beliefs. The third level is difficult to describe or explain.¹⁴⁸

Browaeys and Price add to the complexity of understanding that the system of values and norms varies from culture to culture and also from one part of a society to another. Not every individual or subcultures within a society have the same basis. Moreover, a culture does not have static nature, norms and values are always changing. However, since every culture is so deep-rooted, the changes are never sudden or extreme and certain constancy is maintained.¹⁴⁹

Gullestrup, when describing the practical intercultural process of understanding, outlines the ideal scenario that leads to an upward-moving spiral of understanding as an "ongoing ping-pong process" in which new insight leads to new problems and consequently new methodological needs. Solutions of these problems will lead to deeper understanding; however, it will also lead to new problems and new solutions.¹⁵⁰

From the point of view of Gullestrup value-neutral cultural understanding partly depends on how much time and resources were used for the observation of another culture and on person's own openness and abilities to put himself beyond his own cultural boundaries and place himself within the mindset of foreign culture.¹⁵¹ However, value-neutral cultural understanding is rather abstract idea, because people see each situation through their cultural glasses and it leads to the fact that any intercultural situation will be perceived differently by actors involved.¹⁵²

Holliday, Hyde and Kullman in their book *Intercultural Communication* reflect on the cultural understanding in the context of intercultural communication. The authors have a premise that "intercultural communication should grow from understanding of people,

¹⁴⁸ Browaeys, Marie-Joelle, Roger Price (2011) *Understanding Cross-Cultural Management*. Second Edition. Pearson: pp. 10-11

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.: p. 11

¹⁵⁰ Gullestrup, Hans (2006) *Cultural Analysis – Towards Cross-Cultural Understanding*. Aalborg University Press: p. 230

¹⁵¹ Ibid.: p. 257

¹⁵² Ibid.: p. 27

culture and society generally”.¹⁵³ For achievement of such understanding they urge to analyze interaction with others and to look on situations with fresh eyes. The authors, in opposition to the widespread tendency to define the person before understanding the person, have developed the non-essentialist strategy about how to approach and learn about a person as a human being.¹⁵⁴ They have developed 21 principles that disclose the strategy of good intercultural communication. I will give four basic principles that embrace other principles.

- ✓ Respond to people according to how you find them rather than according to what you have heard about them.
- ✓ Avoid easy answers about how people are. Bracket – put side – simplistic notions about what is ‘real’ or ‘unreal’ in your perception of ‘another culture’.
- ✓ Appreciate that every society is a complex and culturally varied as your own.
- ✓ Learn to build up thick descriptions¹⁵⁵ of what happens between you and others – to work out how to communicate as you go along.¹⁵⁶

Summing up, culture is a complex and sophisticated phenomenon. There are many diverse broad, abstract or specific definitions of the concept. I have chosen to base the research on the definition of culture by Gullestrup. Understanding of another culture is recognized to be challenging and complicated task. The non-essentialist view on culture and cultural understanding is seen to be corresponding to the complexity of the phenomena and relevant for the study.

Culture encompasses a large variety of components that are not so easy to grasp even within one’s own culture. Later in the paper I will show how Norwegians participated in the Barents Regional Youth Programme have found their own way of understanding of the Russian culture. The discussion above helps to understand that it is a challenging task to understand another culture that requires much effort and time from a person.

¹⁵³ Holliday, Adrian, Martin Hyde and John Kullman (2010) *Intercultural Communication*. Second Edition. Routledge Applied Linguistics: p. 1

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Thick description’ is a term in anthropology. It is a description that explains not just the behavior but its context as well. Geertz describes this term in his book. Geertz, Clifford (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books. New York: pp. 5-6, 9-10

¹⁵⁶ Holliday, Adrian, Martin Hyde and John Kullman (2010) *Intercultural Communication*. Second Edition. Routledge Applied Linguistics: p. 11

4.3. *Theoretical approach*

The main focus of the research is on the reduction of stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway. Allport has elaborated conditions that create fruitful situation for reduction of bias. I want to see how these conditions work in the case of the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I will discuss it in the next chapter based on collected empirical data. In this section I will dwell upon Allport's contact hypothesis, discuss followers of Allport's ideas and critique of his hypothesis.

4.3.1. *Allport's contact hypothesis*

“[W]e appear to be living in the Stone Age so far as our handling of human relationships is concerned”¹⁵⁷ in such way Allport starts his work *The Nature of Prejudice*. He is occupied with the issue of human relations because rivals and hatreds between groups were common in his time. However, Allport has an assumption that human nature prefers “the sight of kindness and friendliness to the sight of cruelty”. He continues that ‘normal’ people reject war and destruction; people prefer peace and friendship in retaliations with each other.¹⁵⁸

The Nature of Prejudice is an attempt to explore the nature of prejudices, to find the roots of hostility in order to find the way to control or overcome destructiveness of hostility. However, Allport realizes that “it is easier ... to smash an atom than a prejudice”.¹⁵⁹

Allport emphasizes that prejudice has existed in all ages and in every country.¹⁶⁰ The issue with prejudice is complicated. Allport gives an example that in reality what people do in relation to groups they dislike is not always directly related to what they think or feel about them. One may keep his feeling to himself. Another one can demonstrate them. What is important is the fact that any negative attitude tends somehow, somewhere, to express itself in action. Only few people keep their antipathies entirely to

¹⁵⁷ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: pp. xiii-xiv

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.: p. xv

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.: p. 12

themselves. Moreover, the more extreme the attitude, the more likely it is result in strongly hostile action.¹⁶¹

Researching the issue Allport has developed an idea that “appropriately structured intergroup contact could effectively decrease bias at the individual level”.¹⁶² Studies have showed that contact can lessen stereotypes and prejudices in some people and in the same study increase them in other people. Allport realizes that “obviously, the effect of contact will depend upon the kind of association that occurs, and upon the kinds of persons who are involved”.¹⁶³ Therefore Allport is cautiously optimistic about the role of contact in reducing prejudice. He has been elaborating and considering different factors that should lead only to reduction of prejudices. Allport adopts a “positive factors” approach.¹⁶⁴

Allport realizes that there are numerous numbers of factors that can influence the intergroup interaction. Thinking about kinds of contact he underlines “in order to predict the effect of contact upon attitudes we should ideally study the consequences of each of the following variables acting both separately and in combination”.¹⁶⁵ Examples of these variables are quantitative aspects of contact (such as frequency, duration, number of persons involved variety); status aspects of contact; role aspects of contact; social atmosphere surrounding the contact; personality of the individual experiencing the contact; areas of contact.¹⁶⁶

Keeping in mind this exhaustive list of variables Allport comes to conclusion that

[p]rejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by *equal status* contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of *common goals*. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by *institutional supports* (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere), and provided it is of sort that leads to

¹⁶¹ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 14

¹⁶² Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (2005) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 8

¹⁶³ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 262

¹⁶⁴ Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp (2005) “Allport’s Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence” in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 264

¹⁶⁵ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 262

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: pp. 262-263

the perception of *common interests* and *common humanity* between members of the two groups.¹⁶⁷

Allport's contact hypothesis consists of four conditions. According to Pettigrew conditions are: equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation and the support of authorities, law or custom.¹⁶⁸ Tal-Or, Boninger and Gleicher interpret these four conditions as: environmental support for intergroup contact, equal status between groups, close contact, and cooperation.¹⁶⁹

Environmental support for intergroup contact/the support of authorities, law or custom. Tal-Or, Boninger and Gleicher argue that "institutional and social support for intergroup contact creates a more fertile environment for development of more positive, intergroup attitudes and behaviors".¹⁷⁰ Field research underlines its importance in military, business and religious institutions.¹⁷¹ Brown demonstrates on the example of the education programs abroad that interaction between foreign students and host nation students often does not occur naturally. Positive outcomes from cross-cultural contact should be fostered by educational institution.¹⁷² Cultural learning, without interaction between foreign and host nation students, develops only through observation of behavior but not through active engaging in it.¹⁷³

Equal status between groups. It is crucial that both groups perceive equal status in the situation. Tal-Or, Boninger and Gleicher explain that "conditions that promote equal status help to create an environment in which other components of commonly held narratives are more vulnerable and thereby more susceptible to change".¹⁷⁴ Equal status is often understood by researchers in different ways. Some researchers consider that the

¹⁶⁷ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 281

¹⁶⁸ Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) "Intergroup Contact Theory" *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.: pp. 66-67

¹⁶⁹ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). "Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice" in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 90

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) "Intergroup Contact Theory" *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.: p. 67

¹⁷² Brown, Lorraine (2009) "International Education: a Force for Peace and Cross-Cultural Understanding?" *Journal of Peace Education*, 6:2: p. 210

¹⁷³ Ibid.: p. 218

¹⁷⁴ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). "Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice" in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 91

groups should be of equal status coming into the contact situation.¹⁷⁵ Some researchers state that intergroup contact will promote positive attitudes even if a situation with equal status is created when the groups initially differ in status.¹⁷⁶

Cooperation. An environment of cooperation and not competition is important. Common goal will maximize benefits from contact because it will foster cooperation between groups. It is very important that the results of the cooperative effort have to be positive in order for intergroup hostilities to diminish.¹⁷⁷

Close contact (one interpretation) Intergroup contact with positive outcome must be close, prolonged, and frequent. First of all, the close contact provokes pleasant and satisfying feelings and feelings can be later generalized to the whole outgroup. Second, when contact is close, prolonged, and frequent, it creates the best opportunity to disconfirm negative beliefs. Finally, close contact has a possibility to increase familiarity between groups and it can help participants to see and realize similarities between groups. Therefore the contact provides a powerful ‘counterweight’ to the way in which outgroups are typically perceived.¹⁷⁸

Common goals (another interpretation) Active and goal-oriented contact leads to reduction of prejudice.¹⁷⁹

I will underline the importance of these conditions. Allport stresses that superficial contact between members of different groups will reinforce prejudice and stereotypes.¹⁸⁰ Superficial contact does not to provide any new information about each group. Every contact of such nature will merely invoke in our mind rumor and

¹⁷⁵ See, for example, Brewer, M.B. and R.M. Kramer (1985) “The psychology of intergroup attitudes and behavior” *Annual Review of Psychology*, 36; Foster, D. and G. Finchilescu (1986) “Contact in a “non-contact” society: The case of South Africa” in M. Hewstone and R. Brown (eds.) *Contact and conflict in intergroup encounters*. Oxford: Blackwell.

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, Patchen, M. (1982) *Black-white contact in schools*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press; Schofield, J.W. and R. Eurich-Fulcer (2001) “When and how school desegregation improves intergroup relations” in R. Brown and S.L. Gaertner (eds.) *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Intergroup processes*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

¹⁷⁷ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). “Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice” in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 91

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*: p. 92

¹⁷⁹ Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) “Intergroup Contact Theory” *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.: p. 66

¹⁸⁰ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 263

stereotypes. Moreover, “we are sensitized to perceive signs that will confirm our stereotypes” and as a result “the casual contact has left matters worse than before”.¹⁸¹ Hønneland also warns against limited contact. People, “who have watched their neighbors from the side,” tend to have negative opinion than those without any experience at all. He continues that “cross-border contact seems to actually worsen mutual perceptions, until a certain point where it starts to improve them beyond the point of departure”.¹⁸²

The Nature of Prejudice is the foundational work for the social psychology of prejudice and it is the most widely cited work on prejudice.¹⁸³ Allport’s ideas have been guiding research on intergroup contact for the past half-century.¹⁸⁴ Interest in this topic is vivid and continues to grow. Contact studies have extended from original focus on racial and ethnic groups to groups that differ in terms of age, sexual orientation, disability, and mental illness.¹⁸⁵

4.3.2. Further development of Allport’s contact hypothesis

Based on Allport’s conditions of intergroup contact other researchers developed and tested different models that can be used to reduce prejudices and stereotypical thinking. Allport has defined a framework for further research as well as attracted attention to the topic.

It is possible to generalize that Allport has focused mainly on the descriptive issue of whether contact can reduce intergroup bias; the following and more recent work has been focusing on such issues as *when* and *how* contact reduces bias. This work has special attention on defining conditions under which contact can lead to improvement of attitudes not only to the outgroup members present during the contact situation but also

¹⁸¹ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 264

¹⁸² Hønneland, Geir (2010) *Borderland Russians. Identity, Narrative and International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan: p. 101

¹⁸³ Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (2005) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 1

¹⁸⁴ Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp (2005) “Allport’s Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence” in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 266

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.: p. 267

to the outgroup as a whole.¹⁸⁶ These models of contact that propose different ideas about how the categorization of “us” and “them” will be optimally effective in reducing prejudice are presented below.

Brewer and Miller¹⁸⁷ have developed the *decategorization model*. According to this model “participants in interaction should be encouraged to make contact between individuals and not between groups and to direct their attention toward information at the individual level and not at the categorical level”.¹⁸⁸

Hewstone and Brown¹⁸⁹ suggest a contrasting approach – *mutual differentiation model (or categorization)*. They propose a model that has focus on the intergroup or category level contact. The purpose of such condition is to encourage “a generalization of the attitudes to the group as a whole”.¹⁹⁰ It is difficult to achieve this model in reality.

Dovidio and Gaertner¹⁹¹ propose a *Common Ingroup Identity Model (or recategorization model)* that “emphasizes processes of recategorization and the acquiring of dual identities (identity with an ingroup and with an inclusive superordinate group)”.¹⁹² For example, for Blacks and Whites in the USA, a superordinate group can be ‘Americans’.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁶ Kenworthy, Jared B., Rhiannon N. Turner, Miles Hewstone, and Alberto Voci (2005) “Intergroup Contact: When Does it Work, and Why?” in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 289

¹⁸⁷ Brewer, M.B. and N. Miller (1984) “Beyond the contact hypothesis: Theoretical perspectives on desegregation” in N. Miller and M.B. Brewer (eds.) *Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation*. New York: Academic

¹⁸⁸ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). “Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice” in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 94

¹⁸⁹ Hewstone, M. and Brown, R.J. (1986) “Contact is not enough: An intergroup perspective on the contact hypothesis” in Hewstone, M. and Brown R.J. (eds.) *Contact and conflict in intergroup encounters*. Oxford: Blackwell

¹⁹⁰ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). “Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice” in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 95

¹⁹¹ Dovidio, J.F. and S.L. Gaertner (1999) “Reducing prejudice: Combating intergroup bias” in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8

¹⁹² Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). “Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice” in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 95

¹⁹³ Ibid.

Brewer¹⁹⁴ developed an alternative possibility of *cross-categorization*. The cross-categorization model relies on parallel membership in different categories at the same level. One person can belong to such categories, for example, as male, teacher, Palestinian.¹⁹⁵

It is also important to take into consideration what participants think about the other group: “in what categories are they placing members of the opposing group, and are they finding common categories between themselves and the others?”¹⁹⁶ It can help to use relevant categories to make the contact fruitful.

Research also shows that *cross-group friendship* can be an effective form of intergroup contact. Even in cases of indirect contact (the mere knowledge that other ingroup members have friends in the outgroup), can lead to more positive intergroup attitudes.¹⁹⁷

It is important to emphasize that different models presented earlier are not incompatible. Findings have demonstrated that if to combine these models they can produce the most effective intergroup contact that truly reaches¹⁹⁸ “below the surface”.¹⁹⁹

For example, Pettigrew suggests such a model-combination in which an optimal contact experience is developed gradually. Decategorization and individualization is a first stage. Sometimes interaction in the beginning can cause anxiety; the effects of decategorization can reduce the negative effect. If this stage is successful, the second stage is categorization. This stage with the focus on group salience will result in generalized positive attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole. The third stage is recategorization. During this stage should occur a perception of a common ingroup.

¹⁹⁴ Brewer, M.B. (2000) “Reducing prejudice through cross-categorization: Effects of multiple social identities” in S. Oskamp (ed.) *Reducing prejudice and discrimination*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

¹⁹⁵ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). “Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice” in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 96

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.: p. 98

¹⁹⁷ Kenworthy, Jared B., Rhiannon N. Turner, Miles Hewstone, and Alberto Voci (2005) “Intergroup Contact: When Does it Work, and Why?” in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 282

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.: p. 283

¹⁹⁹ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 276

Pettigrew adds that mediators and moderators can be involved to create the optimal contact situation.²⁰⁰

Fiske and Neuberg and their colleagues²⁰¹ have conducted a research on *how people form impressions of others*. They have identified several factors that influence the formation of impression. One factor is “the extent to which the individual’s characteristics seem to match the perceiver’s perception of the category (i.e. stereotype)”. The second is “the perceiver’s motivation to arrive at an accurate impression”. Motivation is a very important factor to form an impression. However, to form an impression based on a person’s individual characteristics is more effortful than on category membership. It is also important to notice that an impression based on individual characteristics often becomes more accurate.²⁰² They have reached a conclusion that “superordinate goals and the need to cooperate will certainly maximize one’s motivation to form individuated impressions of members of the opposing group”.²⁰³

It is very difficult to overcome stereotypical thinking. Devine²⁰⁴ has conducted a study measuring individual differences in *level of prejudices* on the example of Blacks in the United States. She comes to the conclusion based on her results that

when people change their beliefs toward an outgroup, it does not lead to the disappearance of the commonly held, cultural stereotype. The stereotype remains in memory as a well-organized and easily activated, cognitive structure.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Kenworthy, Jared B., Rhiannon N. Turner, Miles Hewstone, and Alberto Voci (2005) “Intergroup Contact: When Does it Work, and Why?” in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: pp. 283-284

²⁰¹ Fiske, S.T., S.L. Neuberg, A.E. Beattie and S.J. Milberg (1987) “Category-based and attribute-based reactions to others: Some informational conditions of stereotyping and individual processes” in *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 23

²⁰² Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). “Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice” in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: pp. 98-99

²⁰³ Ibid.: p. 100

²⁰⁴ Devine, Patricia G. (1986) “Stereotypes and prejudice: Their automatic and controlled components” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56

²⁰⁵ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). “Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice” in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 101

Only under conditions that allow to think carefully people are able to ignore the influence of the cultural stereotypes and form more particularized, personal beliefs about others.²⁰⁶

4.3.3. Critique of Allport's contact hypothesis

Allport's work *The Nature of Prejudice* is almost 60 years by now. Allport's discussion has main focus on ethnic and religious prejudice, primarily racism and anti-Semitism. Therefore antipathy toward a group as a whole forms the core of Allport's definition of prejudice.²⁰⁷ Allport's views are limited by restricted empirical base as well as by prevailing social views and values. As a consequence, Allport has missed some important aspects of the very nature of prejudice.²⁰⁸

Allport's definition of prejudice as a "generalized antipathy has proved to be too restrictive when a fuller range of prejudices is considered".²⁰⁹ Since Allport's work social scientists have developed complex view on prejudice. First of all, recent research has revealed that some prejudices are not marked by negative attitudes. Empirical work documented subtle prejudices toward many racial and ethnic minorities, as well as revealed positive attitudes toward women (who are better liked even if less respected than men).²¹⁰ Eagly and Diekmann stress that "these prejudices are ambivalent and not uniformly hostile".²¹¹ Recent research has also revealed that prejudices are not so inflexible. Stereotypes change over time depending on the changes in the society, as well as on changes that occur in the roles that group members typically occupy.²¹²

²⁰⁶ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). "Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice" in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 101

²⁰⁷ Eagly, Alice H. and Amanda B. Diekmann (2005) "What is the Problem? Prejudice as an Attitude-in-Context" in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 20

²⁰⁸ Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (2005) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: pp. 9-10

²⁰⁹ Eagly, Alice H. and Amanda B. Diekmann (2005) "What is the Problem? Prejudice as an Attitude-in-Context" in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: pp. 29-30

²¹⁰ Ibid.: pp. 19-21

²¹¹ Ibid.: p. 21

²¹² Ibid.: p. 31

Among researchers how are interested in intergroup contact also are people who consider that any intergroup contact almost inevitably lead to conflict.²¹³ Forbes analyzing Allport's contact hypothesis sees a practical problem "how to ensure that the situations in which contact naturally occurs will have the desirable characteristics that yield positive effects of contact".²¹⁴ He argues that natural intergroup contact is unlikely to be under all necessary conditions. Allport himself doubts whether contact can generally reduce prejudice. Therefore, he has elaborated positive conditions that are necessary for intergroup contact to diminish prejudice.²¹⁵

One more critical comment concerning Allport's contact hypothesis is that it is "an open-ended theory" and it includes the possibility of adding other situational conditions.²¹⁶ As a result many researchers who have based their ideas on Allport's contact hypothesis have "overburdened the hypothesis with too many facilitating, but not essential, conditions".²¹⁷ Among these additional conditions are common language, voluntary contact and prosperous economy. The main problem, as Pettigrew sees it, is that researchers often confuse facilitating with essential conditions.²¹⁸

Some experts disagree that Allport's conditions are essential for intergroup contact to diminish prejudice. However, they see these conditions as facilitating conditions for positive outcomes to occur. Some studies indicated that, while these conditions are important, they are not necessary for achieving positive effects from intergroup contact.²¹⁹

Another critical comment on Allport's contact hypothesis is that the hypothesis does not explain the process by which contact changes attitudes and behavior. As Pettigrew

²¹³ Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp (2005) "Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence" in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 262

²¹⁴ Forbes, H. D. (2004) "Ethnic Conflict and the Contact Hypothesis" in Lee, Yueh-Ting, Clark McCauley, Fathali Moghaddam and Stephen Worchel (eds.) *The Psychology of Ethnic and Cultural Conflict*. PRAEGER: p. 74

²¹⁵ Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp (2005) "Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence" in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 271

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) "Intergroup Contact Theory" *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.: p. 80

²¹⁸ Ibid.: pp. 69-70

²¹⁹ Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp (2005) "Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence" in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 271

underlines “it predicts only when positive contact effect will occur, not how and why”.²²⁰ The hypothesis does not specify how the effects generalize to other situations. Such generalization is crucial because it should lead to broad and lasting consequences.²²¹ However, this comment is explained by some authors that it is “hypothesis” not a “theory”.²²²

Last critical comment concerns realization of contact hypothesis in practice. Studies suffer from a selection bias because prejudiced people avoid intergroup contact. This fact limits the interpretation of many contact studies. Pettigrew proposes 3 ways to solve this issue: 1) Find intergroup situation where little choice is available to participants. 2) Use of statistical methods. 3) Longitudinal designs are effective. The initial intergroup contact situation can have little effect. However, repeated treatments can cumulate positive results.²²³

Based on the critique presented above, I will outline several essential points that are relevant for this research. The first point is that it is difficult to measure the effect of the cooperation because it does not bring immediate results. The second point is that it is challenging to create Allport’s conditions of contact in real life. I will discuss in the next chapter how this issue is dealt in the Barents Regional Youth Programme. The third point is selection bias. I will show how the selection bias influences on the reduction of stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway in the data analysis chapter.

Allport’s contact hypothesis suggests conditions for contact situation that will lead to reduction of prejudices and stereotypes. Followers of Allport’s ideas have been exploring such issues as when and how contact reduces bias. Special attention researchers give to the problem of generalization of attitude toward group as a whole. Critique of Allport’s contact hypothesis poses questions and relevant issues that followers of Allport have explored and as a result enriched the contact hypothesis.

²²⁰ Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) “Intergroup Contact Theory” *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.: p. 80

²²¹ Ibid.: p. 70

²²² Pettigrew, Thomas F. and Linda R. Tropp (2005) “Allport’s Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its History and Influence” in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 271

²²³ Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) “Intergroup Contact Theory” *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.: pp. 80, 69

4.4. Summary

This chapter was dedicated to the presentation of the conceptual and theoretical orientation of the thesis. Concepts that form premises of the study were discussed in the first section of the chapter. Stereotypes and prejudices as it was shown are interconnected and can seriously influence relations between people. These concepts were given from Allport's and Aronson's points of view. Concept of culture and understanding of another culture are important for the research. The definition of culture by Gullestrup is chosen to be detailed and relevant for the study. Non-essentialist point of view on culture and cross-cultural understanding were also emphasized in the chapter. Second section of the chapter was devoted to Allport's contact hypothesis. Allport's ideas on contact situation and the conditions that lead to reduction of prejudices and stereotypes were presented. Development of Allport's contact hypothesis that have been elaborated by Allport's followers as well as critique of the hypothesis were discussed. It was considered to be crucial in order to form a wide view on the contact hypothesis.

In the next chapter, which is dedicated to the data analysis, these concepts and Allport's contact hypothesis will be discussed in connection to the received data. Stereotypes and the challenging process of stereotypes' overcoming are discussed in connection to the data. Concept of culture and cross-cultural understanding are under the investigation. I present how cross-cultural understanding is experienced by the Norwegian youth participated in the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I discuss Allport's conditions of contact: how and to which extent they are achieved in the Barents Regional Youth Programme. The models of Allport's followers are examined in connection to the stereotypes' reduction among Norwegian youth participants. The essential critique that is relevant for the research is addressed. It is shown how they have influenced and have been overcome in the process of stereotypes' reduction among Norwegian youth through the Barents Regional Youth Programme.

Chapter 5. Data presentation and analysis

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the presentation of empirical data and data analysis. The chapter consists of four sections. In order to get a deep understanding of the data I will start with describing young people involved in the Barents Regional Youth Programme through outlining some common features. The next section is devoted to the presentation of existing stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway and to the tracing of change in views on Russians by participants of the Barents Regional Youth Programme. This change is shown as a process with several stages. The final stage, the achievement of a cross-cultural understanding, is discussed in detail. The third section of the chapter is dedicated to the explanation of this change. I will outline and discuss features of the Barents Regional Youth Programme that have facilitated the change of perceptions. Allport's conditions of contact are discussed in connection to these features. The last section is a discussion of the impact of the Barents Regional Youth Programme on the reduction of stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway.

5.2. Young people involved in the Barents Regional Youth Programme

Before starting the analysis of data there is a need to define the Norwegian youth who have been interviewed. This is done with the aim of seeing what kind of people tend to participate in the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I will outline specific features that are common for the participants.

9 out of 11 respondents participated in more than one cooperation project with Russians and 7 of them were in Russia also for other reasons. 2 participated only in 1 project but it was a 1-year long project. 1 participated in 2 short-term projects, about 4 days each. The length of the projects varied from 3 days to 1 academic year. Some of the participants were in Russia for more than 2 years in total. This information shows that most respondents have participated in several projects and that some of the participants spent a long period of time in Russia.

Youth who are involved in the Barents Regional Youth Programme have different backgrounds. It is possible to divide them into two groups. Those who had already been

connected with Russians through other projects or/and had knowledge about Russia, Russian language, Russians, and those who did not have any connection and specific knowledge about Russians before participating in the program.

However, both groups have several common issues. The first issue is that they have strong motivation for the cooperation. As it was shown in the theory chapter, motivation helps to achieve an accurate impression; and it is a crucial factor. All participants had different but rather strong motivations for taking part in cooperation projects. 10 out of 11 wanted to connect their career with Russians. 10 out of 11 knew Russian language. 8 out of 11 studied Russian language and/or Russian studies at the University. Some people were interested in Russia as a country, some interested in Russia as a neighbor and an important country in world politics. Some participants were interested in personal development, for example, communication skills. Interests can be summarized to career opportunities.

The second issue is that most participants, especially those who took part in several projects did not have strong negative stereotypes about Russians before they participated in their first project. 6 respondents out of 11 said that they had Russians at school where they studied or met them in town before participating in projects. Others did not have any specific picture of Russians. However, all respondents noted that they have gotten some images of Russians from movies, mass media, and also from people talking about Russians.

Respondents were ready to see in Russia something completely different from Norway. Some respondents noted that they knew about these stereotypes but wanted to see what is true and what is not. So it is possible to say that the youth who participated in the cooperation were open for new experiences and did not have any strong negative views about Russians.

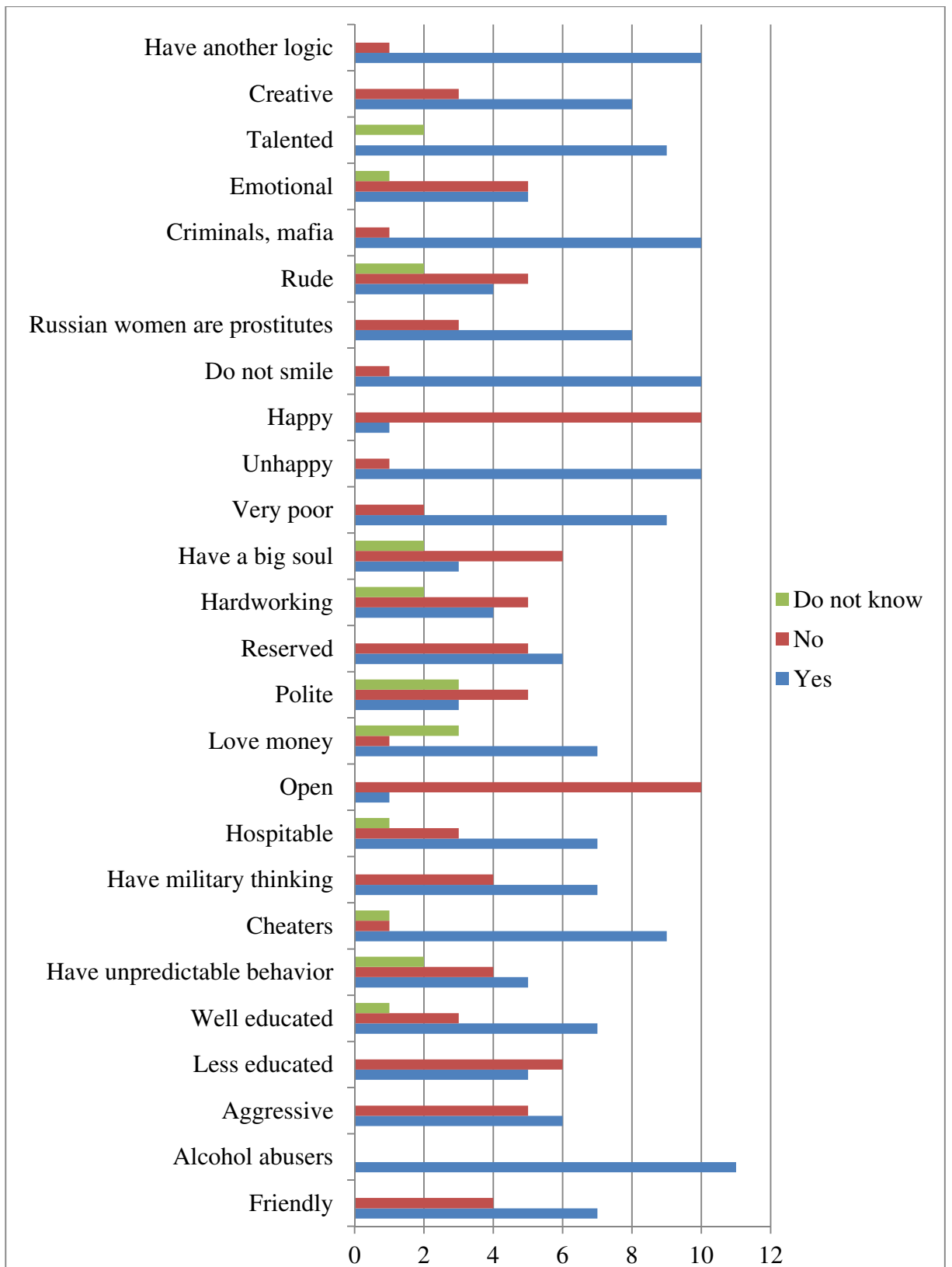
5.3. The existing stereotypes and the change of attitude after participation in the Barents Regional Youth Programme

This section is devoted to the presentation of stereotypes about Russians that exist in Northern Norway today and the view on Russians after participation in the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I will trace the change of attitudes among participants. As it was presented in the theory chapter, stereotypes are judgments about some categories that can shape our thoughts, feelings and actions.²²⁴ All people use stereotypes because it helps us to simplify the world; we start to assign characteristics to other groups at a very young age.²²⁵ Therefore it is difficult to overcome stereotypical thinking. However, it is possible. I will show in this section how participants have changed their views on Russians through the participation in the Barents Regional Youth Programme.

I will start with a table in order to give an overview of the situation concerning stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway. The respondents were asked to think about widespread ideas about Russians in Northern Norway. I will underline that these are not ideas that respondents had or have about Russians, but ideas that they heard from other people about Russians. The points of the table came to be as a result of searching for general ideas about Russians in papers and articles devoted to stereotypes about Russians, internet forums, and from personal experience.

²²⁴ Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (2005) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 4

²²⁵ Aronson, Elliot (2007) *The Social Animal*. 10th Edition. New York: Worth publishers: pp. 311-312



As the table shows affirmative answers to the negative characteristics prevail over positive characteristics. Therefore it is possible to assume that there are prejudgments about Russians in Northern Norway.

It is possible to outline several stages of perceptual change among the participants of the Barents Regional Youth Programme. The first stage consists of ideas about Russians that the respondents heard in Norway. The second stage is impressions after the first trip. The third stage can be achieved by participants only after taking part in several projects; it demands time and effort, as well as interest and a strong motivation to learn more about Russians.

I will start the discussion of the change in perception about Russians with the first stage. These are ideas that the participants got about Russians before their first visit to Russia. When asked to name these images they told: prostitution; mafia; corruption; Russians are cold people; they are reserved; Russians are very poor people; they can withstand hard conditions; women are beautiful, caring, kind, strict and proud; men are the stronger sex; men are sweaty and lazy, dangerous. One can generalize that negative images outweighed positive images.

The second stage is the impressions after the first trip to Russia. First contact is an important phase in every process of change. As Pettigrew mentions, sometimes interaction can cause anxiety in the beginning.²²⁶

General impressions after the first trip were: It was an exciting experience. I did not think that such a large difference between genders exists in the northern part of the world. I saw lots of old cars and buildings. It was like going back in time. I was surprised by the big difference between Moscow and countryside. It was so much poverty on the countryside. Russians were not so poor. It is possible to live in Russia. It was an interesting difference. First trip was scary. First time was negative.

Impressions about people: Students in Russia were not so different from students in Norway. People were friendly. It was surprising that people were warm, hospitable and welcoming. Russian families have close relations, they spent more time together. People are open and hospitable. Russians are nice and curious people. Russians are angry and strict. Russians are strict people with high expectations.

²²⁶ Kenworthy, Jared B., Rhiannon N. Turner, Miles Hewstone, and Alberto Voci (2005) "Intergroup Contact: When Does it Work, and Why?" in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: pp. 283-284

It is possible to say that the first impressions were mostly negative and many participants had mixed emotions after the trips. However, the impressions of the people can be generalized as rather positive. Some respondents noted that in the first contact situation they overreacted and exaggerated the differences.

About half of the respondents had mixed emotions after their first time going to Russia. It is important to note that first contact for 6 out of 11 interviewees was not in the context of the Barents Regional Youth Programme and this contact was lacking 3 conditions out of 4: equal status between groups, close contact/common goal and environment of cooperation. I will remind that according to Allport's contact hypothesis change of attitude from negative to more positive can be achieved with prolonged, close contact/common goal within a supportive and cooperative environment. As it was discussed in the theory chapter people who have limited contact – who have watched their neighbors from the side – tend to have a more negative opinion than those without any experience at all.²²⁷

Most respondents were in the third stage. I will present ideas that the participants now have about Russians after prolonged and repeated contact. They characterize Russians as: hardworking; clever; hospitable; curious; friendly; very open, including people; proud; warm-hearted; social; welcoming. The majority of respondents had only positive associations with people they met in Russia in general. Some respondents mentioned that “positive sides overshadowed negative sides”.

Those who had participated in cooperation projects on a more or less regular basis understand Russians better and seem to have a relatively balanced view. I will stress that achievement of this stage demands time, interest and a strong motivation to learn more about Russians than what is seen at first sight. The respondents started to notice the diversity of people. For example, about the stereotype that all Russians drink a lot, one respondent said that “some Russian boys and girls do not drink at all. That was surprising.” Or another example: “A lot of people know that many Russian girls come to Norway specially to marry a Norwegian. Many of them afterwards get divorced because the girls just wanted to live here. But then again it is not all Russians it is just some.”

²²⁷ Hønneland, Geir (2010) *Borderland Russians. Identity, Narrative and International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan: p. 101

The role of the Barents Secretariat should be mentioned. I will remind that the Barents Secretariat administers the Barents Regional Youth Programme. The Secretariat is a competence center and functions as an advisor in Norwegian-Russian relations. Therefore if participants see the need in consultation the Barents Secretariat is ready to help.

Summing up, I have divided the process of view formation towards Russians into three stages. From the table in the data presentation section and from the respondents' ideas before participation in the cooperation, one can say that the view on Russians is mostly negative. It is important to take into consideration those impressions that respondents got after participation in the first project; they are characterized by mixed emotions and prevalence of negative impressions. Participation in one short-term project without Allport's conditions may not lead to a positive change in perception of Russians, due to the fact that participants can misinterpret facts and exaggerate the differences. Those participants who took part in one long-term or more than one short-term projects, as well as had motivation and interest in learning more about Russians, demonstrated rather balanced points of view. They started to see the diversity of people in Russia. They saw the positive as well as the negative sides of Russians but they do not think stereotypically, they do not make generalizations from one negative experience to other people. It is possible to conclude that a change of the perception did take place.

5.4. How did the Barents Regional Youth Programme facilitate the change?

I will point out features that were present in the Barents Regional Youth Programme and that helped participants realize the diversity of Russians. Allport's contact hypothesis will be examined in connection with the case of the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I will discuss to which extent and how these conditions were achieved. I will also disclose several additional conditions that were present in the Barents Regional Youth Programme and were important for the reduction of stereotypes. I will discuss models that have been developed by Allport's followers as possible strategies for facilitation of change of perception of Russians among Norwegian youth participants.

I will remind that Allport's contact hypothesis suggests contact conditions that lead to the reduction of bias.²²⁸ The first condition for effective contact is *the environmental support* for intergroup contact. First of all the Barents Regional Youth Programme makes the majority of the cooperation projects possible to happen. One of the main reasons is because the Norwegian Barents Secretariat is funding cooperation projects through the Barents Regional Youth Programme. The Barents Regional Youth Programme is not only supporting projects that are developed by different organizations but also creates their own projects. Other displays of environmental support by the Barents Secretariat are its coordination of projects that receive funding, and its consultation of people who want to start a new project. The environmental support is crucial, as it was stated in the theory chapter; cross-cultural interaction does not occur naturally, it should be fostered by some institutions.²²⁹

The second condition is *equal status between groups*. According to the Barents Secretariat it is recognized and underlined that Norwegian and Russian partners have equal status. Though, only the Norwegian side can apply for money and money is controlled by the Norwegian side.²³⁰ However, application to the Barents Secretariat should be developed in cooperation and according to the interests of both partners. Another issue is that both sides of the cooperation learn something from each other. The possibility of getting useful experience from cooperation is valuable. Cooperation occurs when Russians and Norwegians have some common interest; therefore they can explain their own approach to the issues and learn about their partner's approach and methods. One respondent mentioned that "Norwegians and Russians can learn a lot from each other".

Participants mentioned a number of valuable things that they have learned through the cooperation. They saw participation in the Barents Regional Youth Programme as a useful, exiting experience. They got Russian friends, "perspective on life, other culture and also personal things". It was a new experience: "Russia is something exotic, different from the Western world." Some respondents learned to be more curious about

²²⁸ Allport, Gordon W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley Publication Company: p. 281

²²⁹ Brown, Lorraine (2009) "International Education: a Force for Peace and Cross-Cultural Understanding?" in *Journal of Peace Education*, 6:2: p. 218

²³⁰ Alnes, Margrethe (2010) "Connecting Barents People. The Barents Secretariat's Grant Programme in Steady Change" in Staalesen, Alte (ed) *Talking Barents. People, Borders and Regional Cooperation*. The Norwegian Barents Secretariat. Kirkenes: p. 37

the world, to see the value, started to appreciate living in Norway. Everyone found such experiences useful in general; it gave them valuable insight. It was useful “socially, personally, educationally”. For the 10 people who were studying Russian language/studies it was a good way to learn Russian language, about Russian culture and cultures in general. “It helped to understand Russian logic.” “It was a good possibility to see how Russians work.”

The third condition is *cooperation*. It is possible to divide projects into two categories, depending on the focus of the project: education and cooperation. In exchange educational programs the cooperation is not obvious and does not have such intensive form as in purely cooperative programs. Programs that focus on cooperation are usually short-term and intense; they help participants experience how to work with and understand people from another country. Educational programs are usually long-term but interaction is not so intensive, therefore the understanding of life style and values takes more time. Both types of programs provide participants with potential to get a better understanding of each other and reduce stereotypes and prejudice.

The fourth condition is *common goals*.²³¹ Fiske, Neuberg and their colleagues²³² argue that common goals and the need to cooperate maximize motivation to form individual impressions of members of the opposing group. Only programs with a cooperative nature had some common goals. Respondents named such activities as workshops, teambuilding exercises, small projects where common goals were achieved through cooperation of Norwegians and Russians.

The fourth condition in another interpretation of Allport’s contact hypothesis is *close contact*.²³³ As written in the theory chapter, close contact is characterized as prolonged and satisfying. Each cooperation project has had different challenges but each one of them has tried to establish ground for close contact between Russian and Norwegian participants. All interviewed participants made friends across the borders, especially

²³¹ Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) “Intergroup Contact Theory” *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.: pp. 66-67

²³² Fiske, S.T., S.L. Neuberg, A.E. Beattie and S.J. Milberg (1987) “Category-based and attribute-based reactions to others: Some informational conditions of stereotyping and individual processes” in *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 23

²³³ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). “Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice” in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 90

those who were involved in long-term projects or series of projects. 2 participants have Russian girlfriends. 4 out of 11 respondents said that they have Russians among their best friends. One respondent explained it like this: “If you have a Russian friend you have a really good friend. My best friends are Russians because they care; if you need some help they are always ready to help you. You do not need to ask; they want and suggest to help you.” The relations seem to be close and personal. For example, one of the respondents stated: “I am going to take my parents with me to Russia next year to meet my host family”. Personal relations with one representative can help change the view on the group as a whole²³⁴, as it was stated in the theory chapter. Close contact with each other made participants realize that it is possible to communicate, work and have fun together.

Positive experiences are an important part of close contact. The respondents changed their views to more positive ones because they had positive experiences. All participants were satisfied with the projects. All respondents said that they would agree to participate in such cooperation again. Some of the respondents were planning to continue and some would continue if the opportunity occurred.

Prolonged contact is an integral part of close contact. Prolonged contact is more successful. It is important for better understanding of logic and motivation. It provides a possibility to realize the diversity of the partner through different and multiple experiences. Tal-Or, Boninger and Gleicher argue that “it is only through prolonged contact that positive and non-stereotypical associations to the outgroup can become more accessible and more competitive in the face of the commonly held, cultural stereotype”.²³⁵ I found out from my data that participants now have a detailed view on Russians spent from two months up to two years in Russia.

Based on the information from the interviews, I will stress that *firsthand information* plays a crucial role in reducing stereotypes. Cooperation projects give interested people the possibility to get more accurate information about Russians. Participants of the Barents Regional Youth Programme have an opportunity to form their own views on

²³⁴ Tal-Or, Nurit, Boninger, David and Gleicher, Faith (2002). “Understanding the Conditions and Processes Necessary for Intergroup Contact to Reduce Prejudice” in Salomon, Gavriel and Nevo, Baruch (eds.) *Peace Education. The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*. New Jersey: LEA: p. 92

²³⁵ Ibid.: p. 102

Russians. As respondents stated they wanted to see what is true and what is not. Information that they got through the cooperation made them think more about Russians based on their own experience.

When analyzing contact situations within the Barents Regional Youth Programme, it is possible to mark out that not all conditions were present in each situation of contact. However, most conditions were present. Common goals and cooperation were not always present as a main focus in exchange programs. But in the exchange programs Norwegians also socialized with Russians: they cooked traditional food, went to parties together. “We got to know Russian students. We hang out with them a lot. They were really nice.”

As it was presented in the theory chapter I will analyze models of Allport’s followers in connection to my study in order to reveal some other factors that could have facilitated stereotypes’ management and realization of diversity of Russians among Norwegian participants.

I will start with the *deategorization model* that was developed by Brewer and Miller.²³⁶ According to this model interaction should occur on the individual level. I think this was achieved because participants said that they have gotten Russian friends. The situation of cooperation brings together Norwegian and Russian groups which have similar interests. It is easier to get an understanding of outgroup members by ingroup members because they share similar interests.²³⁷

Taking into consideration the *Common Ingroup Identity Model* that was proposed by Dovidio and Gaertner.²³⁸ This model has focus on the processes of recategorization through acquiring of dual identities (identity with an ingroup and with an inclusive superordinate group). The participants could have experienced these dual identities in some cooperation projects. For example, I had interviews with participants who belonged to the same international organizations. Norwegians and Russians cooperate

²³⁶ Brewer, M.B. and N. Miller (1984) “Beyond the contact hypothesis: Theoretical perspectives on desegregation” in N. Miller and M.B. Brewer (eds.) *Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation*. New York: Academic

²³⁷ Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1998) “Intergroup Contact Theory” *Annual Reviews of Psychology*. Volume 49 Annual Reviews Inc.: p. 74

²³⁸ Dovidio, J.F. and S.L. Gaertner (1999) “Reducing prejudice: Combating intergroup bias” in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8

within the same global organization, so they can see each other as partners sharing the same values.

Brewer developed an alternative possibility of *cross-categorization*.²³⁹ The cross-categorization model relies on parallel membership in different categories at the same level. In this context, the categories can be: young participants, interested in the same issues but some are Norwegians and some are Russians. One example can be that some respondents mentioned that “students in Russia were not so different from students in Norway”.

An interesting phenomenon was revealed during the data collection. Most respondents have strong interest in the understanding of the Russian culture and way of life. The practical realization of this interest was to a large extent provided by the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I will discuss the possibilities and barriers of cross-cultural understanding.

As it was discussed in the theory chapter, culture is a complex phenomenon with several layers. However, culture is something that we learn; people do not inherit culture.²⁴⁰ Therefore it is possible to get an understanding of foreign cultures but it requires much work and effort as well as desire and interest in it. As it was discussed above participants do have motivation and interests, however, they lack theoretical knowledge, they did not take special courses with focus on cross-cultural understanding. Nevertheless they managed to form their own way of getting understanding. The Barents Regional Youth Programme provided conditions that made effective cross-cultural contact possible. It is a long and complicated process; each participant has to find his/her own way, depending on motivation, resources, time and personal qualities.

I will start with listing some factors that can pose barriers in communication and understanding. The respondents indicated such factors as language, culture, realities, mentality and different values as the main barriers. All respondents agreed that

²³⁹ Brewer, M.B. (2000) “Reducing prejudice through cross-categorization: Effects of multiple social identities” in S. Oskamp (ed.) *Reducing prejudice and discrimination*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

²⁴⁰ Browaeys, Marie-Joelle, Roger Price (2011) *Understanding Cross-Cultural Management*. Second Edition. Pearson: p. 3

language and culture can be barriers in communication to some extent. Some respondents who were trying to get deeper understanding also added mentality and realities. “The language barrier is possible to overcome and the easiest to exclude; it is the easiest thing to learn.” One respondent noted that “difference in cultures can create excitement for some people and silence for other. So this difference can give rise to curiosity and form a basis for attraction and discussions.” The participants were rather optimistic because through their experience they have found ways to overcome or reduce the influence of these barriers.

Most respondents marked that the understanding of Russians is a process which is progressing slowly. One needs time for observation. For many participants first short-term trips posed more questions than answers. Most experienced participants mentioned that they are still in the process of understanding. “First people see just difference. There is a need to understand Russian background in order to understand these differences and behavior.” “It takes time; there is no simple answer.” “There is always much more to understand.”

One respondent who participated in one 1-year long project noted: “I know how they live and how they behave, but I don’t understand *why*”. Staying and studying in Russia even for one year cannot give full understanding. There should be some other components.

Respondents stated that after 2-3 months of living in Russia you can start realizing some connections and start understanding something. 9 respondents that stayed in Russia for more than 3 months formulated factors based on their own experience that are important for getting an insight in the Russian culture.

Respondents agreed that these components are necessary to get understanding:

1. To understand Russian language. “A lot came with language; you understand more when you understand the language”.
2. To learn about Russian culture and history in order to understand the logic of behavior. To know background information and history in order to understand present realities.

3. To live in Russia. You need to see and to live in order to understand the realities, to understand the logic of behavior. To get knowledge about Russians you need to experience, to live in Russia. “You can get it from books. You will be able to get a general picture but it will be black and white. When you go to Russia you get all colors.”
4. To have personal contact with Russians. Participants who went to Russia and were living with Russian host families without the possibility of meeting other Norwegians, had an opportunity to get a deeper and faster involvement in the Russian way of life.

The Barents Regional Youth Programme offers a variety of possibilities for youth, ranging from short-time workshops to long time educational and cultural exchange programs as well as the providing of grants for projects that are developed and initiated by youth. The Barents Regional Youth Programme brings together these four components presented above. It helps participants get knowledge about the people across the border, and this knowledge becomes a foundation for trust between people in the Northern areas of Norway and Russia.

It is possible to start the process attitude changing in the home country. Studying language and history, as one respondent noted, started to change her attitude towards Russians. She had a Russian teacher who introduced her to the Russian culture. Another respondent said that she knows Russians in Norway. They explained the Russian way of life to her. “I think I have learnt a lot from knowing Russians in Norway because they tell me about the differences in Russian and Norwegian cultures”. “You need to have personal contact and information to start to understand Russians.”

Summing up, I have presented in this section the features of the Barents Regional Youth Programme that have helped participants in forming detailed view on Russians. These were Allport’s conditions of contact: environmental support, equal status, cooperation, common goals and close contact. I also indicated features that disclose in more details Allport’s conditions such as a positive and useful experience, prolonged contact. I stressed also that access to firsthand information and personal experience is crucial for forming accurate view on Russians. I outlined a phenomenon of cross-cultural understanding. It was an interesting phenomenon that was made possible by the Barents Regional Youth Programme. The Barents Regional Programme gives interested people

an opportunity to interact and cooperate with Russians. The participants who were motivated to form an accurate view on Russians focused on getting understanding of the Russian culture and way of life. They were rather successful in it.

5.5. The impact of the Barents Regional Youth Programme on reduction of stereotypes in Northern Norway

This section is dedicated to the discussion of how the Barents Regional Youth Programme influences the reduction of existing stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway.

The Barents Regional Programme provides an opportunity for participants to get firsthand knowledge about Russians. Most participants, who are interested in achieving an accurate impression about Russians, want to connect their career with Russians. Therefore it is possible to suggest that at least some of the respondents started seeing the diversity of Russians and formed individuated impressions of Russians. Some respondents managed also to reach complex and deep knowledge of the Russian culture. These participants became ‘mediators’ between cultures. They help reduce the influence of stereotypes in Northern Norway through sharing their information about Russians to the Northern society.

The majority of respondents consider that Norwegians in Northern Norway are in general not interested in knowing more about Russians. “No, there are many stereotypes about Russians, and just to be honest: most of them are not positive”. “I am not sure. Most people who approach Russian culture and language have some reasons for it not only for knowing but knowing in order to use it for work for example.” Nevertheless, this situation is not the same for all people in Northern Norway. One respondent said “the younger people are interested in learning about Russia. When I say that I study, Russian people always have lots of questions about Russia. People want to confirm or not confirm what they think about Russia.” It is possible to suggest that people who have lived in Russia and have knowledge about Russians are interesting for Norwegian youth. This interest should be taken into account. The same respondent continued “but in another way stereotypes are often so strong in people’s minds at least here in the North about Russians. It is easier to forget one person’s experience about Russia after a while and go back to the stereotypes, may be...” Nevertheless, it is possible to assume

that if there are more people sharing accurate knowledge about Russians; Norwegians who do not participate in cooperation will start to replace stereotypes with new information.

As it was mentioned above mostly people who do not have prejudices and strong stereotypical views on Russians tend to participate in the Barents Regional Youth Programme. I should admit that such a situation does not help much towards changing the minds of people who actually have stereotypes about Russians.

In this connection I will mention selection bias, which was earlier presented in the theory chapter. It is a problematic issue that people who have strong stereotypes are not involved in projects focusing on stereotypes' management. In real life it is often the case that people who are interested in Russia participate in programs. People who have neutral or rather positive view on Russians think about such cooperation. I do not have interviews with people who had lots of stereotypes, and who have participated in the cooperation projects. Only those who are interested in Russia and have personal motivation for this participated and continue to be involved in other projects. There are people who participate only in one project but they rarely change their opinions. Many participants, when thinking of their own experience agreed that the first contact did not entail much positive change.

However, I have found in the data that the Barents Regional Youth Programme has the possibility to influence not only participants of projects. People who participate in the Barents Regional Youth Programme spread their knowledge about Russians to their families, friends and other people. One respondent said that he is encouraging his friends to go to Russia too. Another respondent said that Norwegians are curious about Russians: "Many people ask about Russia and I tell them about my experience. When I say that I study Russian people always have lots of questions about Russia. People want to confirm or not confirm what they think about Russia."

Cross-group friendship can be an effective form of intergroup contact; even in cases of indirect contact when ingroup members know that other ingroup members have friends

in the outgroup it can lead to more positive intergroup attitudes.²⁴¹ When respondents said that they have Russians among their friends and even best friend it is possible to assume that Norwegian friends and family members of participants can also change their views on Russians towards more positive ones. “In my social circle we are so many ‘Norwegian-Russians’ [Norwegians who study Russian] so we have spread our ‘propaganda’ so effectively that most of our friends who does not study Russian are positive toward Russians.”

Therefore it is possible to conclude that not only youth participants change their attitude towards Russians and form detailed views, but they also help spread information to other people. However, we cannot be so enthusiastic about the profoundness of the change in the attitude. As one respondent noted: “but in another way stereotypes are often so strong in people’s minds at least here in the North about Russians. It is easier to forget one person’s experience about Russia after a while and go back to the stereotypes, may be...” Nevertheless, I suggest that a change is taking place. It can be a slow process but it is involving not only participants but even those who do not participate. When more people participate in the Barents Regional Youth Programme, more people will have accurate information about Russians that they can spread to their surroundings; more effective and widespread will be the work on stereotype reduction.

The Barents Regional Youth Programme’s impact has two main trends. First, participants of the Barents Regional Youth Programme with interest in Russia start to form individuated impressions about Russians and get complex and deep knowledge of the Russian culture. These participants become ‘mediators’ between Norwegian and Russian culture. Second, family, friends and surroundings of participants can overcome some stereotypes about Russians because participants of the Barents Regional Youth Programme share information about Russians with them.

²⁴¹ Kenworthy, Jared B., Rhiannon N. Turner, Miles Hewstone, and Alberto Voci (2005) “Intergroup Contact: When Does it Work, and Why?” in Dovidio, John F., Peter Glick, and Laurie A. Rudman (eds.) *On the Nature of Prejudice. Fifty Years after Allport*. Blackwell Publishing: p. 282

5.6. *Summary*

The data gathered from the interviews became a source of analysis. An overview of stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway was given. It has demonstrated the existence of problems with prejudgments about Russians. Special attention in the discussion was given to: Allport's conditions of contact and their influence on the reduction of stereotypical thinking; formulation of personalized views on Russians; realization of diversity of people in Russia; getting insight into the Russian culture and way of life.

It was demonstrated how participants of the Barents Regional Youth Programme have undergone a change of perceptions of Russians, particularly some of the participants formulated their own personal views on Russians and they do not generalize same features to the whole group. Among the resources that helped in creating this change were outlined such conditions provided by the Barents Regional Youth Programme as environmental support, equal status, cooperation, common goals, close contact as well as prolonged contact, and positive and useful experience gained from the cooperation. These conditions have been prioritized in connection to Allport's contact hypothesis. Personal motivation in participants and the possibility to get firsthand information and knowledge about the Russian culture played a crucial role.

The discussion in this chapter also dealt with the issue of how the Barents Regional Youth Programme impacts on the reduction of the stereotypes in Northern Norway. I came to the conclusion that the participants of the Barents Regional Youth Programme, if they were motivated and interested in learning more about Russians, experienced a change in their views towards more personalized impressions, as well as got an insight into the Russian culture and way of life. These participants then spread information to their family, friends and other people. Therefore I suggest that not only participants but also their surroundings can change their views on Russians with the help of institutions like the Barents Regional Programme.

I will outline two levels that the Barents Regional Programme reaches. They are individual level and society level. On the individual level the Barents Regional Youth Programme provides youth with an opportunity to get complex and deep knowledge about and understanding of another culture and people. This level deals with personal

development. The Programme creates ‘mediators’ between cultures. Participants based on their knowledge and experience trust the members of another society. On the society level participants bring correct and nuanced knowledge about Russians back home. These ‘mediators’ and their knowledge form a foundation for trust across the border. People stop seeing their neighbors as a threat. This situation creates peace and facilitates business and cultural cooperation across the border. The Barents Regional Youth Programme does valuable and crucial work for the development and stability of the Barents region. This result is important and relevant to the Barents Secretariat’s goals of creating trust and welfare in the region.

The critique of Allport’s contact hypothesis in connection to the Barents Regional Youth Programme should also be mentioned. In the theory chapter I have outlined three main points that are relevant to the research. I will underline how these points have been addressed by the Barents Regional Youth Programme. The Programme creates Allport’s contact conditions. These are rather difficult to achieve in real life situations without institutional support. The research has revealed the existence of selection bias; however, I have come to the conclusion that the Barents Regional Youth Programme reaches a wider range of people in the region, not only participants. The point that the measurement of the results of stereotypes’ reduction is difficult has been revealed to be a challenge. Cooperation does not bring immediate results, because the process of attitude change requires time and effort from participants; it does not come after participation in one cooperation project.

Chapter 6. Concluding remarks

The main focus of the thesis is management of stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway. The study is devoted to the exploration of how the cooperation between the Russians and the Norwegians in the context of the Barents Regional Youth Programme can help to overcome stereotypes and lead to cross-cultural understanding. Stereotypes' management and cross-cultural understanding have been actively studied during the last decades and the importance of these studies has been acknowledged. This study makes an empirical contribution to the strategies of stereotypes' management and cross-cultural understanding, using as an example the Barents Regional Youth Programme with focus on Norwegian youth. The strategies facilitate building of trust, creation of understanding between people across borders, and improvement of relations between neighboring countries.

Conceptualization of the problem helped me to get deep insight into the complex structure and the processes of the phenomena. I have examined concepts such as 'stereotype' and 'prejudice', 'culture' and 'understanding of another culture', as well as given special attention to Allport's contact hypothesis. The received empirical data and theory helped in answering the following research questions:

- What are the stereotypes about Russians in Northern Norway?
- What is the focus of the Barents Regional Youth Programme?
- Can Norwegian youth change their attitudes towards Russians through participation in the Barents Regional Youth Programme? How can the Youth Programme contribute to management of stereotypes among Norwegian youth?
- How can Norwegian youth start understanding Russian culture through participation in the Barents Regional Youth Programme? How can the Youth Programme facilitate the cross-cultural understanding among participants?

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Barents Regional Youth Programme has helped reducing stereotypes and improving understanding in the Norwegian-Russian relations in the Barents Region. Analysis of the data reveals that stereotypes about Russians exist in Northern Norway; such as mafia, prostitution, that Russians are cheaters and alcohol abusers, to name a few. In the paper I have studied and presented

the nature and the focus of the Barents Regional Youth Programme and its place in the Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation. The overall objective of the cooperation is to secure stability and development in the region. The overall objective of the Norwegian-Russian project funding is to create trust and welfare in the Barents Region. The main aim of the Barents Regional Youth Programme is to increase cross-border cooperation in the Barents Region among youth and develop the region. The Programme provides unique opportunities for young people of the region to cooperate and learn from and about each other.

I have examined the process of attitude change towards Russians among Norwegian youth participants. My study revealed three stages: 1) ideas about Russians before participation in the cooperation projects, 2) ideas and impressions after the first trip, 3) ideas about Russians after participation in several projects. The last stage requires interest, motivation and time from the participants. On this stage participants are able not only to overcome stereotypes and see the diversity of people in Russia but also to get insight into the Russian culture. Cross-cultural understanding was a phenomenon that was revealed during the data collection. Most respondents argued that having an interest in the Russian culture and way of life as well as being able to participate in cooperation projects with Russians provided them with the opportunity to get insight into the Russian culture. The respondents named four components that they saw to be necessary for cross-cultural understanding: 1) To understand Russian language. 2) To learn about Russian culture and history. 3) To live in Russia. 4) To have personal contact with Russians. The participants with such knowledge have become 'mediators' between the two countries.

The study has also revealed that the Barents Regional Youth Programme has stimulated the change of attitudes towards Russians among two groups: 1) participants of cooperation projects; 2) people related to the participants, particularly participants' family and friends.

The research shows that institutional support is crucial for these changes to occur. The Barents Regional Youth Programme has played a vital role in making these changes occur. The Barents Regional Youth Programme has provided possibilities for cooperation: it organizes and funds projects, as well as spreads information about the cooperation; coordinates programs and provides assistance for participants. The Barents

Regional Youth Programme prioritizes several spheres of interest that facilitate the change of attitudes through cooperation and Allport's contact hypothesis has been a tool to outline and prioritize these conditions. They are: environmental support; equal status between groups; environment of cooperation; common goals; close, prolonged and satisfying contact; positive and useful experience from the cooperation; obtaining of firsthand information about the Russian culture. The essential critique of Allport's contact hypothesis that is relevant in connection to the Barents Regional Youth Programme should be mentioned. The main challenging point is that it is difficult to measure the results of cooperation; it does not bring immediate results.

It is my hope that this study has made a contribution to the research area of the stereotypes' management and cross-cultural understanding. I have tried to give an insight into the strategies of how stereotypes can be overcome and cross-cultural understanding achieved. My findings demonstrate that stereotypes' management and cross-cultural understanding contribute to mutual understanding, facilitate the effective cooperation between Norwegians and Russians in the Barents Region, as well as help to create stability and peace in the region. The Barents Regional Youth Programme was proven to be effective and successful in stereotypes' management and facilitation of cross-cultural understanding; therefore this experience can be considered and applied in other regions as well.

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