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Bachelor's Thesis 2023 Polina Nikolaeva

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**Cultural Gender Constructions Through Bodily
Experiences in the Udmurt Republic of the
Russian Federation: Embodiment of Masculinity
and Femininity in Various Ethnicities**

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Abstract

Gender studies have been a topic of interest in research since its emergence in the 1970s. This thesis investigates how people living in the Udmurt Republic of Russia from different ethnic backgrounds perceive their masculinity and femininity in terms of embodiment. To ensure a comprehensive understanding of how each ethnic group embodied cultural gender constructions, a distinctive analysis of chosen groups' traditional masculine and feminine experiences was conducted. Using a qualitative research design, data was collected using semi-structured interviews with individuals from various ethnic groups. The discussions were divided into significant sub-themes and began with the participants' socio-demographic information. The analysis of the data revealed that the cultural gender constructions of each individual depend solely on how they were raised as children and what traditions they have kept in their adult lives. The results indicate that each individual has a unique understanding of gender constructions. However, they still carry elements of their ethnic culture and adapt to newly formed societal norms. Based on this thesis, future research should consider taking a broader scope of participants and ethnic backgrounds when exploring more detailed differences in gender construction and gender roles.

Abstrakt

Genderová studia jsou tématem zájmu výzkumu od jeho vzniku v 70. letech 20. století. Tato práce zkoumá, jak lidé žijící v Ruské Udmurtské republice z různých etnických skupin vnímají svou mužnost a ženskost z hlediska ztělesnění. Aby bylo zajištěno komplexní pochopení toho, jak každá etnická skupina ztělesňuje kulturní genderové konstrukce, byla provedena odlišná analýza tradičních mužských a ženských zkušeností vybraných skupin. Pomocí kvalitativního výzkumu byla data sbírána pomocí polostrukturovaných rozhovorů s jednotlivci z různých etnických skupin. Rozhovory byly rozděleny do významných podtémat a začínaly sociodemografickými informacemi účastníků. Analýza dat odhalila, že kulturní genderové konstrukce každého jednotlivce závisí pouze na tom, jak byl v dětství vychováván a jaké tradice si zachoval v dospělosti. Výsledky ukazují, že každý jedinec má jedinečné chápání genderových konstrukcí. Stále si však nesou prvky své etnické kultury a přizpůsobují se nově vzniklým společenským normám. Na základě této teze by budoucí výzkum měl zvážit širší záběr účastníků a etnického původu při zkoumání podrobnějších rozdílů v konstrukci pohlaví a genderových rolích.

Keywords

Embodiment, Gender Constructions, Ethnic Backgrounds, Russia, Udmurt Republic, Femininity, Masculinity

Klíčová Slova

Ztělesnění, Genderové Konstrukce, Etnické Pozadí, Rusko, Udmurtská Republika, Ženskost, Maskulinita

The Extent of the Thesis: 59 952 Characters

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been appropriately cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, May 3rd, 2023

Polina Nikolaeva

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PN' with a stylized flourish.

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I would like to thank Mgr. Barbora Spalová, Ph.D., for her guidance and priceless advice that helped me to write this thesis. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their support.

**Institute of Sociological Studies
Bachelor's thesis proposal**

1. The Topic of the Research

This paper will investigate the cultural construction of gender, specifically in the regions that differ significantly from a European mentality. The cultural construction of gender emphasizes that different cultures have unique ideas about males and females and use these ideas to define manhood/masculinity and womanhood/femininity. Many cultures have different understandings of what each gender should be responsible for or how each individual is perceived.

For this reason, I want to investigate how people from my country, specifically my region and social circle, perceive this idea of gender construction. It is not a secret how Russian culture is very straightforward regarding designated roles of males and females, how each gender is perceived, and what qualities attribute to each. I find it fascinating to compare responses from people who grew up in the same country (Russia), considering the various subcultures these individuals attribute to.

2. Literature Review

This research is focused on the construction of gender, primarily in Russia, and how it differs from a European mentality. First, it is essential to define the term ‘gender’ to understand its different features. Gender, according to *Segal (2003)*, is referred to as a “culturally based complex of norms, values, and behaviors that a particular culture assigns to one biological sex or another” (*Segal, 2003*). Gender is a very versatile topic, as many cultures have different appropriations. For example, Western cultures have deconstructed gender from a broader perspective, not only including two gender poles but going beyond that, including “morphological characteristics of men and those with morphological characteristics of women,” creating more than one gender pole (*Segal, 2003*). However, this research primarily focuses on gender differentiation within Russia, considering multiple subcultures of the middle class and ethnic cultures.

Russia is a very complex country; it has undergone many political, economic, social, and cultural changes. The perception of gender has changed over many years; however, considering how many ethnicities there are in Russia, everyone has a different perception. What is also important to consider is the age groups and the subcultures that have formed over time in the Russian population. Russia differs in its perception of gender construction in a way that both men and women have specific roles to fulfill. Whereas men are primarily focused on building

their careers and putting work as their primary objective, women were usually perceived as the careers of the family responsible for emotional support rather than financial stability (Yurchak, 2003). However, in the 21st Century, the situation is beginning to change. The end of the Soviet regime has sparked society to change its norms, and now females have more opportunities in career fields, sexual topics can be discussed in public without any punishment, and glamorous images of females can be shared over media, which comes to an argument that old conventions are being challenged (White, 2005).

Whereas gender roles are being redefined all across the country, it is essential to consider what gender is in terms of somatic experiences. According to Csordas (1993), “the body is a biological, material entity, while embodiment can be understood as an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and the mode of presence and engagement in the world” (Csordas, 1993). This model is mainly used in anthropological studies, where cultures can also be interpreted in terms of text, therefore meaning that “cultures have the same structure as bodily experience, but that embodied experience is the starting point for analyzing human participation in a cultural world” (Csordas, 1993). Many researchers have come up with two approaches to these bodily experiences, first is primarily focused on the “lived body” and the second divides the body into three parts: “the individual body, the social body, and the body politic” (Douglas, 1973). These bodies are referred to as domains guided by emotion. Emotions and culture are both immaterial entities that correlate with each other; anthropological research suggests that culture has a significant influence on individuals regulating their emotions in one way or another. Moreover, it underlines how a person culturally reacts to certain aspects, how his individuality is expressed, or how these emotions could “disrupt social harmony” (Ford & Mauss, 2015).

3. Research Question

“How do middle-class Russian men and women reflect on their gendered embodied experience to be brought up as a man or woman in the Udmurt Republic, considering various ethnic backgrounds?”

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Type of Research

The type of research for this study will be qualitative research, as my research will be based on people’s opinions collected through interviews. I will need people’s honest answers and their personal experiences to collect relevant, reliable data.

4.2 Data Collection

As mentioned previously, the data collection method I will use is interviews. More specifically, it will be semi-structured interviews as this method of data collection will make the participants feel more at ease and more open-minded, as it is a less formal environment, which allows the interviewer to get to know the participants in a more relaxed setting and the interviewees can feel more at ease in that case as well.

4.3 Sampling Methods

The sampling method used in this research is purposive sampling. This method will be used specifically for this research since this research requires specific individuals to participate. This method is a part of qualitative research, which is convenient as I will be conducting interviews, which will require specifically chosen participants to share their opinions and experiences on the matters I will be researching.

5. Ethical Considerations of Research:

First of all, before starting my research, I will make sure to ask my potential participants to sign an 'informed consent form.' This form will indicate the study's purpose, benefits, and risks so that the participants are fully informed before agreeing to participate in the research.

Furthermore, another critical aspect of ethicality is keeping my participants' anonymity in check. Therefore, it will also be included in the informed consent so that the interviewees know their rights and how the collected data will be used further in the research. Additionally, the participants will be informed that if they feel uncomfortable at any point in the study, they have every right to withdraw from the research and not have any consequences.

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PART 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Topic

The ongoing discourse on the perception of gender has been a widely discussed topic for an extended period. It is crucial to note that the concept of 'gender' is intricate and adaptable. Nonetheless, as the world progresses and more investigations are conducted on the subject, 'gender' is being proposed to be categorized into four components: physical/bodily aspects, gender identity or self-identified gender, legal gender, and social gender concerning normative behaviors and gender expressions (*Reisner et al., 2015*).

The literature claims that many gender-related ethnographic data were produced in the 19th century. Margaret Mead, Franz Boas, and Bronisaw Malinowski were among the anthropologists who gathered information on gender roles and interactions in many countries. These statistics were the foundation for modern gender study and continue influencing how people think about gender in modern culture (*Malinowski, 1922; Boas, 1896; Mead, 1928*). However, the acknowledgment of the typical extent of patterns and diversity as a part of human behavior did not occur until the mid-1970s. It is challenging to determine when the term 'gender' was initially incorporated into the social science language concerning human sexuality. Even today, the social sciences maintain a definite differentiation between several concepts related to the topic, including sex, gender, and sexuality, with each term representing a distinct conceptualization. According to Segal (2003), "sex" primarily refers to comprehending an individual's biological characteristics, which are usually binary. "Gender," on the other hand, is described as a culturally-based collection of values, behaviors, and norms. At the same time, "sexuality" is employed to characterize an individual's personalized preferences related to the structure of their sexual desires. Based on Drury and Bukowski's research (2013), gender roles

refer to the behaviors typically expected of individuals based on their gender identity, whether in private or public settings. These beliefs are based on sociocultural patterns and may change because a specific individual is portrayed as male or female based on sex.

Even though gender accounts for a sizable portion of the research, it is essential to remember that the fluidity of the terms makes it even more attractive to be investigated. People are used to referring to the term as a natural aspect of their lives and that gender is deeply included in our society. Many assume it is a genetic component. However, gender is constantly being constructed and reconstructed through human interaction and social life, shaping the texture and order of society. Gender is produced through the actions of everyone, and gender roles have evolved. Today, fathers are seen as being more intimate with their children, clothes are being promoted for both genders simultaneously, as well as the educational systems allow this gender transparency, and both genders can fulfill the same positions at workplaces. Although gender perception is still very benign in some regions, especially the smaller cities, including the North Caucasus and rural areas, there has been a shift toward gender equality and acceptance of non-traditional gender roles in urban areas such as Moscow and St. Petersburg (*Rebrey, 2023*). While some social groups are strict about maintaining gender differences, others are moving towards a more blurred definition of gender (*Lorber & Farrell, 1991b*).

1.2 Background Information

1.2.1 Gender Roles and Embodiment

As was previously said, the study of "gender roles" has long sparked interest, with feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s playing a crucial part in their rise to popularity (*Zosuls et al., 2011, pp. 563-573*). As knowledge of gender roles increased, so did people's interest in understanding "gender" as an abstract concept. Gender-related beliefs, practices, and laws vary

from culture to society and from group to group. A given community's gender roles and interactions between gender groupings are passed down via all types of intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, intangible cultural heritage offers a distinctive setting for emerging gender identities and their spread. As a result, there is a fundamental link between intangible cultural heritage and the development of one's gender identity (*UNESCO, 2016*). Gender roles are often learned and adopted during childhood, although not set in stone. Gender roles are part of an intangible cultural legacy continually changing and adapting to new circumstances. Over time, communities negotiate to establish their gender roles and norms. The community has now opened up several gender-specific rituals and behaviors previously only available to one gender group to other gender groups.

As already established, each group attributes its ideas and notions to specific "gender roles" in society. Connell (2002) asserts that gender is a concept that transcends physical distinctions in the body and is a result of social, cultural, and historical events. An emphasis on embodiment is necessary to comprehend gender roles as social constructions. Particularly practices that involve performing gender enact gender roles. Body language, verbal intonation, and mannerisms are some techniques that people acquire and internalize through socialization (*Butler, 1990*). In this way, gender may be seen as a construct created via social and cultural practices and manifested in daily activities. Additionally, distinct gender roles are ingrained in each ethnic culture's beliefs and customs. According to Chiang and Kung (2014), in many cultures, women are typically viewed as the primary caregivers for their children, while men are typically viewed as the head of the household monetarily.

Contrarily, gender roles may be less rigid in some other cultures, and both sexes may exercise greater flexibility (*Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2002*). These cultural differences in gender roles suggest that gender is a socially and culturally produced term rather than a universal or

unchanging idea expressed differently across different groups. Additionally, the embodiment of gender includes how gendered bodies are positioned in social and cultural contexts in addition to physical practices and performances. How bodies are controlled and disciplined by institutions like schools, jails, and the health care system may be seen as the embodiment of gender (*Foucault, 1977*). Gender is a social construct embodied via cultural practices and institutions, as seen by the management of bodies through these institutions.

1.2.2 Russian culture

An essential part of ‘being Russian’ for most people residing within the country is the value of family and close friendships. As a result of the Soviet administration, a deep sense of unease and mistrust toward anyone outside of one's immediate family, extended family, and other closely-knit familial bonds has been established in the population. The Communist Party ruled the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) for over 70 years, up to its breakup in 1991. The communist rule posed several difficulties for families, which led to individuals heavily relying on the support of their families. This reliance often necessitated pooling resources to survive. Consequently, a culture emerged that greatly values extended family and maintaining close friendships (*Bradford, 2017*).

Due to its long history among Russians—more than a millennium—the Russian Orthodox Church plays a significant influence in determining their identity. The Church provides honest advice and upholds customs essential to Russian culture (*Davis, 2002*). According to research done in the twenty-first century's second decade, most Russians describe their spiritual connection, with the Russian Orthodox Church being the most prevalent tradition (*Kaz'mina, 2019*). Additionally, religion played a significant role in forming the Russian national identity by emphasizing traits such as friendliness, companionship, and passivity in Russians (*Chernyshova &*

Soboleva, 2020). Despite the challenges religion faced during the Soviet era, it remained a fundamental component of Russian identity and a social and cultural connection source.

The Russian language, literature, and religion are essential to Russian identity. Since fluency in Russian is regarded as a symbol of racial harmony, it is crucial to identify as a Russian person (*Davis, 2002*). While 1.39 million people speak it as their mother tongue, 1.5 million speak it as a second language. People from non-Russian ethnic groups also speak Russian as their first or secondary language. This is partly because of efforts made by the Soviet and Tsarist administrations to obliterate minority languages. Movements to revive languages have been made possible by the collapse of the Soviet Union in many different ethnic groupings.

Regarding its embodiment, Russian identity is often linked to physical traits such as light complexion, blonde hair, and blue eyes, frequently depicted in popular media and culture. Moreover, traditional Russian attire such as ‘kokoshnik’ and ‘sarafan’ is considered a sign of Russian identity and is still worn at special events. Similarly, traditional Russian music and dance, such as ‘troika’ and ‘balalaika,’ are viewed as representations of Russian culture (*“The Study of Russian Folklore,” 1975*). Russia's history, Orthodox Christian heritage, geography, climate, and cultural achievements all play a crucial role in shaping the Russian identity, embodied through physical features, traditional clothing, music, and dance. A thorough understanding of these factors is essential to comprehend how Russians perceive themselves and their position in the world (*“The Study of Russian Folklore,” 1975*). Of course, it is also important to note that Russia, as a country, has been through many stages and has suffered economically, politically, culturally, and socially. The numerous causes covered above have contributed to the essential Russian identity's persistence despite the development of social standards and the substantial changes that have taken place in Russian society, notably during the Soviet Union era.

Russian culture has depicted men differently, and historical and cultural factors have influenced these shifts. Russian men have always been seen as strong, domineering, and authorities who protect their families and communities. Russian society's perception of men has evolved significantly after the end of the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union sparked widespread unrest, increasing unemployment rates, and financial instability, all of which exacerbated Russia's masculinity issue (*Randall, 2012*). Throughout the Soviet era, men were seen as being in charge, disciplined, and dedicated to the cause of communism. The "new Soviet man," promoted by the Soviet Union as the ideal, was considered unselfish, hardworking, and dedicated to the common good. In Soviet propaganda, literature, and art, male figures represented this ideal as brave workers, warriors, and party leaders. For example, the iconic image of a Soviet soldier raising the hammer and sickle flag over the Reichstag in Berlin in 1945 symbolizes Soviet military power and heroic masculinity (*Sakwa, 2015*).

Additionally, males are expected to make the majority of family decisions and protect the family's reputation. They are also expected to be their spouses and children's primary moral and emotional support sources. Furthermore, male friendships and camaraderie are highly valued in Russian society since they are necessary for upholding social ties and supporting one another in difficult circumstances (*Kolossov, 1999*). The intricate interaction of historical, cultural, and political variables has influenced how women are portrayed in Russian culture. Russian women historically were supposed to be submissive, selfless, and caring, and their primary responsibility was to conceive and rear children. During the Soviet era, women were portrayed as socialist project participants who were equally dedicated to and helpful to the group as men. The "new Soviet woman," promoted by the Soviet government as the ideal, was said to be educated, independent, and politically engaged. Women were portrayed as workers, soldiers, and party members in Soviet propaganda, literature, and art, reflecting this ideal. For instance, the renowned

"Motherland Calls" monument in Volgograd, which depicts a female warrior lifting a sword in the air, honors the bravery and sacrifice of women during World War II (*Tlostanova, 2015*).

In the post-Soviet era, women's roles in Russian society have also significantly shifted. Women now have greater access to school and the workforce because of an increased focus on gender equality and female empowerment. Nonetheless, predisposition and typical gender stereotypes still exist in Russian societies, specifically in politics and some workplaces. Women still struggle to gain promotions and are repeatedly forced into lower-paying positions. The traditional duties of being a caretaker and a housewife are still expected of women, which might restrict their prospects for personal and professional growth (*Zdravomyslova, 2015*).

1.2.3 Tatar culture

Throughout Russian history, Islam has held significant importance. With an estimated minimum of 19 million members, Islam is Russia's second most practiced religion after Russian Orthodoxy. The Republic of Tatarstan in Russia has inhabited most ethnic groups known as Tatars. However, they also migrated and lived in other nearby regions. The historical and cultural backgrounds of distinct sorts of Tatars may be used to distinguish them. For instance, the most significant subgroup, the Volga Tatars, have long resided in the area along the Volga River. They converse in the Tatar language, a member of the Turkic language family, and practice Sunni Islam, the most prevalent religion among Tatars (*Wertheim, 2005*).

The Siberian Tatars, in contrast, are a distinct subgroup that resides in Siberia and have a distinct cultural tradition and history. Despite being mentioned as Volga Tatar's ancestors, they have adopted their traditions and customs (*Rorlich, 1999*). Tatars who live outside of Russia join these groupings. For instance, the Crimean Tatars are a subgroup with a distinct history and culture that live in Ukraine. They were forcefully removed from Crimea by the Soviet government

in 1944; they were not allowed to return until the 1980s (*Williams, 2015*). The Kazan Tatars are a different ethnic group inhabiting Kazakhstan with a unique cultural identity. They are descended from Tatars who migrated from Tatarstan to Kazakhstan during the Soviet era (*Kadyraliyeva, 2019*).

Several factors, including historical occurrences, cultural practices, and the political climate, influence Tatar's identity in Russia. Tatar culture and their shared identity are substantially formed by Sunni Islam, one of the essential components of Tatar identity (*Sabirzyanov, 2017*). Utilizing the Tatar language for everyday communication and cultural expression is another essential component. Since the 1990s, the Tatar language has been acknowledged as the official tongue of the Republic of Tatarstan (*Yemelianova, 1999*). Tatars have used cultural practices, including music, dance, and gastronomy, to express their cultural identity in Russia and internationally. These customs support the development of Tatar identity. In Russia, the identity of Tatars has also been shaped by historical experiences of discrimination and persecution. Due to forced assimilation schemes and cultural persecution during the Soviet era, Tatars felt excluded and estranged from the greater Russian society (*Yemelianova, 1999*). Tatar identity has lately been shaped by political conflicts between the Tatar community and the Russian government on issues like language rights and autonomy (*Gelman et al., 2011*).

Tatar males are typically seen as the defenders and providers of their families. The patriarchal aspect of Tatar culture, where males are expected to be the significant breadwinners and leaders within their families, is linked to this focus on male roles (*Akhmetgaraeva et al., 2022*). Along with engaging in religious rites and upholding the Tatar language and customs, men must also sustain traditional cultural practices (*Rorlich, 1999*). These include adhering strictly to Islamic doctrines and customs, such as offering daily prayers and fasting throughout Ramadan (*Rorlich, 1999*). As shown by the prevalence of wrestling and other physical sports among Tatar

men, males are also expected to be physically fit and capable (*Akhmetgaraeva et al., 2022*). Tatar males are believed to be the head of the home and make significant decisions affecting their family's well-being (*Wertheim, 2005*).

They must also stay dedicated to and respectful of their wives while prioritizing the needs of their families (*Rorlich, 1999*). Conversely, women have traditionally been seen as their families' and communities' defenders and nurturers. While caring for the home, they must put their husbands' and children's needs first (*Rorlich, 1999*). The authoritarian aspect of Tatar culture, where males are viewed as the primary providers and decision-makers within the family, is linked to the conventional notion of femininity (*Akhmetgaraeva et al., 2022*). Women are expected to wear modestly and cover their hair, sometimes with kerchiefs or headscarves, per traditional gender norms (*Rorlich, 1999*). Conventional gender norms still impact Tatar culture, but more and more men and women are realizing how vital gender equality and empowerment are.

1.2.4 Udmurt culture

The Volga-Ural area of Russia is home to the indigenous Udmurts, who have a distinct culture and identity. Shamanism has a long history among the Udmurt people and is well-ingrained in their culture (*Vladykina et al., 2021*). A key component of Udmurt's identity is their language, which is a member of the Finno-Ugric family and is closely linked to Komi and Finnish (*Edygarova, 2014*). Maintaining their language is believed to help them keep their cultural traditions alive. As the outward reflection of Udmurt culture, embodiment plays a significant role in forming Udmurt's identity. The traditional Udmurt attire is vital to the expression of Udmurt culture and is an integral part of Udmurt's embodiment. The outfit comprises embroidered tunics, skirts, and blouses with various geometric shapes, hues, and motifs (*Ganzeboom, 2014*). Every festival, holiday, and special event calls for wearing the dress, symbolizing Udmurt's identity.

Traditional Udmurt music, dance, and attire are essential to the Udmurt embodiment. The gusli, a form of zither, is a traditional instrument frequently employed in Udmurt music with distinctive rhythms and melodies (*Khorkina, 2018*). Folk dances from the Udmurt region, such as the hopak, feature intricate footwork, hops, and motions exclusive to the Udmurt people (*Khorkina, 2018*). These outward displays of culture represent the Udmurts' ties to their homeland and past and help to shape their sense of self. Many Udmurts still live in rural regions and preserve their traditional way of life since agriculture and animal husbandry have long played a significant role in their culture.

Religion also plays a vital role in shaping Udmurt's identity. While many Udmurts have converted to Orthodox Christianity, their traditional shamanistic beliefs and practices continue influence their culture and identity (*Edygarova, 2014*). Over the centuries, the Udmurts have faced challenges to their cultural and linguistic identity, such as the Soviet-era Russification policies. Despite these obstacles, the Udmurts have managed to maintain their distinct culture and identity, which is deeply intertwined with their language, history, traditional dress, music, dance, and religious beliefs (*Bowers, 2015*). In conclusion, embodiment plays a significant role in shaping Udmurt's identity, encompassing traditional clothing, music, dance, and spiritual practices. These physical expressions of culture reflect Udmurt's history, language, and relationship with the land and contribute to the formation and maintenance of Udmurt's identity.

Men are portrayed as the family's protectors and providers in the Udmurt culture, one of Russia's indigenous traditions. According to Kulyasova (2016), Udmurt men are usually tasked with hunting, building, and similar physically demanding duties, whereas women generally care for the house and the children. Men must be robust, courageous, and physically fit to carry out their responsibilities as guardians of their families and communities. The Udmurt culture also expects women to possess traditional crafts, including weaving, embroidery, and ceramics

(*Soosaar, n.d.*). In Udmurt folklore, women are typically considered knowledgeable and compassionate people who morally support their families and communities. There are famous stories about both men and women that capture their uniqueness. For instance, Kudymkar, a famous Udmurt folk hero, is presented as a brave warrior who struggles against terrible forces to protect his people (*Toulouze & Anisimov, 2020*). In contrast, Mother Earth is viewed as a symbol of fertility and nurturing for women (*Toulouze & Anisimov, 2020*).

To conclude, women are portrayed in Udmurt culture as providing for and nurturing their families and communities, with a focus on their responsibilities of tending to the house and rearing children. Women in Udmurt society have actively promoted women's rights and gender equality despite their traditional responsibilities. Conversely, males are portrayed in Udmurt culture as their families' and communities' providers, guardians, and spiritual leaders. They have been a vital component of Udmurt culture for many years, helping to ensure their people's longevity.

PART 2

2.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Research

The primary objective of this research is to explore the topic of gender construction, with a specific focus on various ethnic cultures in the Russian Federation, such as the Udmurt, Russian, and Tatar cultures. The research aims to investigate how individuals residing in the Udmurt Republic perceive the concept of gender construction. Each culture has its own beliefs and established norms regarding gender roles. This study examines how these cultures comprehend and evolve their gender constructions, particularly from the Soviet era.

The Russian Federation, spanning across 11 time zones and various geographical regions, is considered the largest country in the world. The diversity of people, beliefs, values, and

lifestyles is notable, particularly between regions and ethnic groups. The majority of the Russian population, estimated at 74%, resides in urban areas or cities that are developed and industrialized. Despite this, many people in rural areas remain, including towns and villages scattered across the countryside (*Russian Culture - Core Concepts, 2017*). There are more than 160 ethnic groups in the Russian Federation, each with its language and culture. Some groups have relatively small populations and are only found in specific areas. Seven ethnicities are regarded as nationalities and have over one million people each. These larger groups are the Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Bashkirs, Chuvashes, Chechens, and Armenians (*People of Russia - Structure of Russian Population and Nationalities, n.d.*).

How gender is embodied in different cultures is shaped by cultural practices and institutions. For instance, research has found that gender roles in Russia are reinforced through the media, which portrays traditional gender roles and stereotypes (*Lipovetskaya & Govorova, 2019*). Similarly, gender roles in Tatar culture are reinforced through religious institutions, reinforcing gender roles and norms through traditional interpretations of religious texts (*Kasymova, 2018*). These examples illustrate how gender roles are constructed and performed within different cultural contexts. In conclusion, this research aims to contribute to understanding how gender is constructed and perceived in different ethnic groups within Russia and how gender roles are embodied and performed within these communities. The study recognizes that gender is a social construct composed of cultural norms, values, and institutions and crosses different communities. The findings of this study can inform the development of policies and programs that promote gender equity and address gender-based disparities in different cultural contexts within the Russian Federation, specifically in the Udmurt Republic.

2.2 Research Question

The main research question of this study is: *“How do middle-class Russian men and women reflect on their gendered embodied experience of being brought up as a man or woman in the Udmurt Republic, considering their cultural upbringing?”* By proceeding with the questionnaire, you consent to these purposes.

PART 3

3.1 Methodology

This research investigates how gender is constructed culturally in the Udmurt Republic of the Russian Federation, emphasizing how masculinity and femininity are expressed in different ethnic groups. A qualitative research approach was applied, integrating semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. It was fascinating to study how cultural gender constructs are embodied in people's everyday lives and acquire a thorough grasp of the experiences and viewpoints of people from various ethnic groups living in the Udmurt Republic, thanks to this research.

In further detail, the research was conducted in several stages: (1) A drafted questionnaire of semi-constructed questions to ask during the interviews, (2) In-depth interviews to examine participants' gender and ethnicity-related individual experiences, and (3) Thoroughly researched chosen ethnicities, as well as their specific characteristics in terms of history, origin, and traditions.

3.2 Sampling Techniques

This research was focused on investigating the cultural construction of gender, specifically in the regions that differentiate a lot from a European mentality. In order to define manhood/masculinity and womanhood/femininity, various cultures have developed their conceptions of males and females. The cultural construction of gender emphasizes this. Different cultures have different ideas about what each gender should be in charge of or how each person should be viewed. For this reason, I wanted to investigate how people from my country, specifically my region and social circle, perceive this idea of gender construction.

In order to gain participants for my research, the purposive sampling method was used. Purposive sampling is a standard method many researchers use when they rely on their judgment when choosing members to participate in his/her study. Because the participants were expected to meet specific criteria, this particular method was employed in my study. The essential requirements are: (1) Participants must be older than 35 years old to compare their lives now with those they led during the Soviet Union; (2) Participants must identify as members of one of the following ethnic groups: Russian, Jewish, Tatar, or Udmurt; (3) Participants must have completed secondary and higher education; and (4) Participants must be parents of at least one child. Participants were enlisted for this study using a combination of personal connections and recommendations. In particular, people the researcher knows were asked to recommend possible participants who would be ready to talk about their experiences with cultural gender constructs via physical experiences in the Russian Federation's Udmurt Republic.

3.3 Research Design

This research explores cultural gender constructions through bodily experiences in the Udmurt Republic of the Russian Federation, explicitly focusing on embodying masculinity and

femininity in various ethnic groups. This study is significant because it aims to give a more excellent knowledge of gender construction and experience in various cultural contexts and how this affects people's day-to-day lives. A qualitative research approach has been adopted to accomplish this goal since it would thoroughly examine the lived experiences of gender constructs and body practices.

The interviews are divided into multiple parts with sub-themes, which are discussed with the interviewees before starting. These sub-themes include: “socio-demographic data,” “childhood experiences,” “gender roles,” and “comparison.” It is essential to mention that the interviews are recorded using the recording software ‘Voice Memos’ on Apple iPhone. Since the interviews are initially recorded in Russian, they will then be transcribed into English word by word. After the data from the interviewees is collected, a thorough analysis will be carried out. In order to analyze the data, a specific type of coding will be used. In the case of this research, it would be ‘thematic coding,’ which is a form of qualitative evaluation that entails jotting down or marking passages of text or images that are connected by a common theme or idea, allowing the researcher to index the text into categories and thereby create a "framework of thematic ideas about it" (*Gibbs, 2007*).

After the transcription of the interviews, the free software ‘Taguette’ will be used to carry out the coding part (<https://www.taguette.org/fr/>). The results from the previously set codes by the researcher will further be analyzed with the objective of a) understanding the similarities and the differences between interviewees’ thoughts and opinions on the subject, b) Comparing participants’ personal experiences on the matter, c) Recognize any common patterns or themes between the participants and their experiences. After the thematic coding, the raw data will be uncovered and used for further analysis, and the characteristics used for coding will be used to interpret the results.

PART 4

4.1 Data Presentation and Interpretation

4.1.2 Takeaways from the First Interview

The 53-year-old woman lived through both the contemporary and Soviet eras. She was raised in an ordinary Russian household. She currently resides in Europe, which indicates a shift from a more Russian-centric attitude toward more liberal thinking. She is also passing this on to her children. Some Russian customs are still present in their upbringing, however. The respondent said individuals did not have gender-specific roles from an early age from the previously discussed tasks, such as providing financial assistance and cooking. However, aside from that, there was no clear distinction between the sexes, and everyone always appeared to have an equal role in their households and career opportunities. The interviewee refers to notable distinctions in gender upbringing between Christianity and other religions, such as Muslims, who were discussed above, while comparing the two. In contrast to Muslim culture, where women are more likely to be modest, Christian culture allows women to be modest while still taking on leadership roles in the home.

4.1.3 Takeaways from the Second Interview

A 45-year-old woman and her 50-year-old husband are already married. The man is Tatar Russian, and the female is Udmurt Russian. They spent their formative years in Izhevsk, the Udmurt Republic's capital, which they still call home today. It is important to remember that there was a division of work in the home and during the interviewees' childhoods when discussing specific gender roles that were brought up. Many aspects of their lives have remained constant over time, such as the fact that a man is still the head of

the family in Tatar households and that girls are still taught how to cook, clean, and embroider from an early age. However, some traditions have changed when raising their son (who is in his 20s), such as teaching him how to be gentle, showing him more love, and giving him more attention, as these things were not typically done during the Soviet era. Men were once thought of as solid and authoritative characters. However, today, as the respondent said, many dads are perceived to show much affection to their children in public and become more active in domestic duties.

4.1.4 Takeaways from the Third Interview

A 50-year-old woman and her 52-year-old husband are married. Her spouse is half Tatar, and half Russian, while her family is a mix of Belorussian, Ukrainian, Jewish, and Udmurt ancestry. Given their diverse ethnic backgrounds, the two participants experienced significantly different childhoods. The woman described a more inclusive allocation of duties in her family and upbringing. The fact that everyone in the family performed the same tasks and learned the same lessons regardless of gender was one of the examples. However, it also showed that there were still some roles that girls were taught by their mothers since they were young to become wonderful wives to their husbands further down the road.

Men, on the other hand, learned physical work, particularly around the house. Her husband was in a more traditional Tatar household, and their customs and expectations around gender roles differed significantly from hers. For instance, it was customary for the entire family, including extended family members, to work together physically on the weekends to assist someone in building a house. In addition, women had to make sure lunch and dinner were ready whenever their husbands wanted to relax and stay in the kitchen to ensure they were nourished throughout

the day. When raising their children, neither interviewee mentioned imparting any particular Tatar traditions on their offspring. On the husband's side of the family, however, his mother would take the kids away for the weekend or traditional holidays and always teach the girls certain foods from their culture, as well as prayers, rituals, and customs, in order to preserve a piece of their culture and pass it on to the next generation.

4.1.5 Takeaways from the Fourth Interview

A 45-year-old woman and her 50-year-old husband are already married. He is half Udmurt and half Russian, whereas she is Russian with distant Georgian ancestry. The couple's upbringings were not remarkably dissimilar. Nevertheless, some distinctions were still made. Examples of such contrasts include Udmurt and Russian customs, such as creating "pelmenis" for every other holiday with the entire family solely. According to Russian custom, only the women of the household cook on New Year's Eve when "pelmenis" is made. The pair noted that growing up during the Soviet era, "everyone was seen as equal no matter their gender" since everyone was a pioneer. Other commonalities were also brought up. The pioneer camp did, however, have distinct entrances and floors for each gender and two different physical education teachers—one for each gender—during instruction. As the interviewee mentioned, "The physics teacher would not like to grade girls on a 5-grade scale more than a three because, in the teacher's opinion, a girl could not know the such subject as physics." Similarly, chemistry and physics teachers treat women differently because they believe they are less knowledgeable in these subjects.

4.1.6 Takeaways from the Fifth Interview

a 52-year-old guy of Russian and Ukrainian ancestry. He has three kids and was an Izhesk native. As a child, their responsibilities in the family were shared because he grew up without any

sisters and only had a younger brother. He added that they performed all the cooking, cleaning, and laundry. This man has talked about several interesting aspects, including how his parents chose to adopt a different parenting style and taught both of their kids how to be vulnerable. However, the most significant things were working and going to school. A man is married, and he mentioned that one of the customs in Russian culture is that, in order to prove to the parents of your future spouse that you are capable of providing for them financially and caring for them, you must pay a ransom, also known as "pickup necessity" or "ransom for the bride," when you get married. The father said there were no separate responsibilities in the home; everyone learned how to care for themselves by seeing their parents and modeling their behavior after them. His daughter works for an IT firm, but his oldest son recently graduated from culinary school, demonstrating how his children were primarily taught to set and attain objectives and put in the necessary effort. The only thing that matters regarding a family's ethnic background is that the girl, in her father's eyes, must be thin, look beautiful, take care of herself, and dress appropriately; every family child is its representation. The family does not participate in any religious rituals or celebrations. Therefore, it is essential to maintain the family's reputation in public.

4.1.7 Takeaways From the Sixth Interview

A 44-year-old woman and her 46-year-old husband are married. They both proudly acknowledged their Udmurt ancestry and that they were both Izhesk natives. Regarding the division of gender roles in their early years, they also mentioned a distinct separation of roles in the educational setting, such as the separate "labor" lessons for girls and boys. They also mentioned how important it was to have different uniforms for each gender while they were in school. Boys were only required to wear white shirts and trousers, while ladies were barred from wearing skirts that were lower than their knees, had open cleavage, or exposed shoulders. While

discussing their early memories, the girl stated that their parenting was strict and relatively traditional. For instance, she was not permitted to leave the house alone and was required to dress modestly. Hair length was crucial to female appearance, particularly in Udmurt and Russian cultures. The greater the social standing of a woman's family, the longer her hair was. Her spouse also mentioned a somewhat rigid upbringing. He said that it was customary for his father and the male members of the family to expect their wives to take care of all the housekeeping, have supper ready, and bring him his tea when they got home from work.

According to the husband, his father was quite tough with him growing up and had spanked him several times for misbehaving. Men were also expected to display little emotion and should always be viewed as powerful, authoritative individuals. The couple is also the parents of two girls. They said they are raising their kids differently than they were raised, teaching them how to be kind, express emotion, and be capable of reaching their objectives regardless of gender.

4.2 Data Analysis

4.2.1 Childhood Experiences

It is, of course, no secret that each individual has their own unique experiences growing up, and it is difficult to compare them with each other; however, in the case of this research, some similarities were found between the participants, as well as some distinct differences, which will be discussed further. Many interviewees' experiences growing up in the Udmurt Republic were quite similar. Many indicated particular roles they had to fulfill as family members. It was primarily physical labor around the house for boys, whereas the girls were taught how to clean and cook. Participant 4, female, age 50 years old, of Russian descent, mentioned, "*In our house, my mother taught girls how to cook, clean, wash dishes, and there was a clear division of*

responsibilities.” Regarding the men's roles in the household, participant 2, male, of age 50, of Tatar descent, mentioned, “*My dad taught me how to do household chores, such as fixing something or chopping wood.*” These are the most fundamental roles that every interviewee has agreed to and indicated in each interview, referring to them as “duties” not depending on their cultural backgrounds but rather family traditions.

Another similarity each participant mentioned is the division of ‘labor’ lessons in schools. Participant 1, 53 years old, of Russian descent has made a distinction that “*girls were taught how to cook and do embroidery, whereas boys were usually off to fixing stools and making hammers from scratch,*” indicating that at home, there was a distinct division of roles for each gender, this perception was also reinforced in the educational school system. Moreover, some interviewees, both from a Udmurt background and of Russian descent, have pointed out how girls were perceived in the educational school system. A strong example was that some jobs, such as physics, mathematics, or physical education, were unsuitable for women. In some cases, as female participant 6 (45 years old) of Russian descent indicated, “*In our school, according to the physics teacher, girls could not know physics at a high grade, simply because we were girls.*” Unfortunately, this kind of discrimination was not uncommon in many establishments, and this became some sort of societal norm.

Another subject of childhood experiences that some participants referred to is the display of affection and intimacy. During the Soviet times, showing affection publicly and privately was not customary. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union was still a socialist state, and the Communist Party held extreme power over the ways of life, including people’s behaviors (*Yurchak, 2005*). One of the interviewees, participant 2, a female of Udmurt-Russian descent (50 years old), mentioned that growing up, she had a figure of what a woman should be as her mother. However, she lacked the

attention paid to her as a daughter, especially in the transitional age, when she mentioned, *“My mother paid attention to me as her child, yes, but as a girl, I did not have enough.”*

4.2.2 Gender Roles in Each Ethnic Group

The fact that most interviews were conducted with couples from various ethnic origins gave them an intriguing viewpoint on gender roles. For instance, a Tatar lady married to a Udmurt man described how their upbringing differed, with religion having a more prominent part in Tatar culture than in Russian communities. The Tatar participants generally saw men as the head of the family, in charge of guarding and caring for it. Boys believe a man should be influential on the inside and outside. Tatar men are frequently considered to embody conventional masculinity because they act emotionally and appear physically.

Men are characterized as authoritative, influential, and family leaders in all three cultures, whose primary duty is to provide for and defend the family financially. Participant 9, a male of Udmurt heritage (46 years old), indicated an example of a ‘tough’ upbringing and parenting *“In my family, it was customary for a man to act as the man of the house and expect his wife to do everything for him, her purpose was to please him and make him feel at ease when he gets home from work.”* On the other hand, women are portrayed as frail people who must take care of the home's cooking, cleaning, and laundry while maintaining emotional stability for the entire family.

One other fascinating finding from the interviews is that there was no differentiation in gender roles in homes with just boys or just girls. In contrast, among families with one or two children of different genders, there was a clear separation of duties according to their gender. For example, participant 7, a male 47 years old has a younger brother and no sisters, indicated that their ‘duties’ did not vary depending on gender *“I do not remember a clear division of roles at*

home, I washed floors all my life, cooked pasta, and in our family, even my father would do the cooking, because my mother did not like it.”

It is widely known that cultures and countries worldwide often hold stereotypes of individuals from other ethnic backgrounds. Similarly, in Russia, there exists a perception of an ‘ideal’ woman and a man as a ‘true careerist.’ The male interviewee of Jewish and Ukrainian descent, aged 53, described this idea of a perfect woman as being *“beautiful, slim, taking care of herself, always looking her best.”* This fits the general idea that Russian women are models emphasizing physical attractiveness. On the other hand, the ideal guy is anticipated to be prosperous, committed to his career, and focused on reaching financial security to support his family (Yurchak, 2003). This perception has faded in recent years, and now there is much more fluidity on such concepts as distinct roles, appearance, and education. A female interviewee of Udmurt Russian descent has given an example of such fluidity, indicating, *“Nowadays, there is equality not only in traditional fields, such as work and education, but also in clothing; there is a new trend now that even clothes have become ‘unisex.’”*

4.2.3 Ethnic Similarities and Differences

The study investigated how people of various ethnic backgrounds who reside in the Udmurt Republic perceive gender construction. Many interviewees came from multi-ethnic backgrounds, which gave researchers a rare chance to examine how shared values and practices affect gender roles. One Russian respondent who married a Tatar man emphasized the value of understanding Tatar customs to fit in with the family. Participant 4, a female of Russian and Belorussian descent (age 50 years old), remarked on how the customs of the Tatars were distinct from those of her own culture *“When I came to the family, I have been taught particular customs in Tatar culture, for example, when a Tatar family member dies, women are not allowed to attend*

the funeral, only men close to the deceased are allowed to go.” She also underlined the value of family in Tatar communities and the necessity for newlyweds to participate in these traditions, *“I knew nothing of Tatar culture when I came to the family, so I had to learn how to make all the traditional foods, and also be ready to host the entire families on major celebrations, which is something in my family we did not get accustomed to.”*

Another respondent mentioned a particular tradition that was then very popular. It is a tradition regarding the ransom when a couple is getting married. The groom would have to pay ‘ransom for the bride’ or, in other words, ‘vikyp nevesty’ to ensure that her family knows he will be able to take care of her financially and support her throughout their lives. Participant 9, a male of Udmurt descent, participated in such tradition when he married a Russian woman, *“Early on the morning of our wedding, I had to go to my bride’s parent’s house and declare before her entire family how much I am paying this ransom and promise that I would take care of my future wife.”* There is a similar tradition in Udmurt culture, called ‘kyläk,’ not to ensure the groom’s financial stability but as a symbol of appreciation and respect for the bride’s family.

Participants in the research with Russian and Udmurt ancestry made apparent similarities to other cultures, particularly the Bashkir and Chechen. The predominant Orthodox religion in Russian and Udmurt society is very distinct from the Islamic traditions followed by both people. The majority of participants, when asked to compare their own culture to others, underlined the significance of women showing respect to their husbands. The importance of clothes was also emphasized when women were obliged to cover themselves in Islamic cultures by wearing traditional clothing. Participant 9 of Udmurt descent, a female of 51 years old, indicated that *“Muslims and Chechen females are very humble. They dress humbly and do not show their character. Their traditions are significant to them, whereas, in Christianity, we do not take them that close to heart. Their women are seen to manage their husbands, whereas, in Russia, women*

seem to take control whenever they wish these days.” The female participants voiced displeasure at adhering to such constrictive gender standards. They stressed how much they preferred the modern, liberating principles that are increasingly common in the twenty-first century.

4.2.4 Comparisons Between Participants’ Upbringings and The 21st Century

It has become customary in Russia for males to treat women with chivalry, such as by paying for their meals and offering to accompany them home after a date. However, there has been a change in these conventional procedures as society advances and gender roles become more ambiguous. Participant 10, a female of Udmurt descent (50 years old), stated their discontent with the conventional gender roles. She indicated one example: *“Before, a boy should take the girl to a cafe, and without question, the boy would pay, whereas now, I see it more in public places that boys and girls tend to split the bill, and I find it absurd.”* Because the times are quickly changing, societal norms are also adapting to new ideals. In contrast, before, the boy’s duty was to care for a girl. Now it has become more prevalent to indicate the equality of genders in all spheres of life.

Another interesting comparison was how during the Soviet Times, the fathers and males were considered leaders. Authoritative figures mainly focused on work and financially supporting the family. In contrast, now, fathers are seen taking leave of absence at work to spend time with their children as Participant 9, a female of Udmurt descent, indicated, *“When my daughter’s son was born, her husband took a leave of absence and stayed with their child, whereas she just went back to work”* This was not customary in Soviet times. In contrast, now, husbands may leave their jobs to care for their families.

As was previously said, each participant has expressed unique responsibilities that were related to their gender both in school settings and at home environments since a very young age.

However, one interviewee couple shared their personal experience with the matter. Their views on gender roles are still fairly traditional, indicating that they believe in dividing activities for each gender. An example explained by the couple was by Participant 5, a male of Tatar descent (52 years old), *I was shocked when I was picking my son up from afterschool activities, and boys with girls together were taught how to cook, to do embroidery, and at the same time build mini constructions without any gender-separated roles.*” In his father’s opinion, as indicated further on, it was not something he would want his son to inherit, as in their culture, boys should only take part in ‘boy activities.’ This incident demonstrates how the individuals' childhood traditions and customs have stuck with them and been handed down to their offspring.

4.2.5 Raising the Family and the Alterations in Mentality

The idea of family has been engrained and passed down from generation to generation in Russian society. The study's participants stressed strong family ties. One respondent, participant 6 of Russian ancestry (45 years old), said, *"Children tend to follow in their parent's footsteps, and we do not need to pressure them into learning from us."* Another couple has mentioned how they were raised and how they raised their son were utterly different experiences. For example, a mother of Udmurt descent mentioned that because she did not get as much affection and attention from her parents as a child, she would smother her child to teach him that it is normal to show intimacy and display affection even though it is not customary for boys to show their emotional vulnerability.

When it comes to raising children, every family has its customs and traditions, which some of the interviewees also shared. One such tradition in the Udmurt culture is making ‘pelmenis’ at any grand celebration with the entire family, whether man or woman. One of the interviewees, participant 5, a male of Udmurt descent (47 years old), referred to the fact that *“In my hometown,*

we have a statue dedicated to 'pelmeni' because it is a traditional dish in the Udmurt culture, and the Udmurt people feel a sense of pride. We even have a celebration called 'Pelmeni day.'” This tradition has been passed on to their children as this has become customary in their culture. It is also important to mention that some of the participants have also talked about how the world is changing very rapidly nowadays, participant 6, a female 45 years old of Russian origin, has indicated that *“The world is changing very fast, especially with the help of social networks, where children inherit behaviors from other people and take them as an example instead of having a parent as their main figure.”* It is not necessarily an ethnic aspect that children are becoming more independent and more isolated from their families, but rather a known fact that with the available resources and technology that is used in our everyday lives, it is easier to be influenced by people other than your family members and even set them as primary examples.

4.3 Ethical Considerations

The most typical definition of "ethics" involves behavior standards differentiating between acceptable and unacceptable. These standards can take many forms, such as the Golden Rule, which suggests treating others as one would like to be treated; professional codes of conduct, such as the Hippocratic Oath, which states "First, not harm"; religious doctrines, such as the Ten Commandments which prohibits killing; or wise proverbs, such as those from Confucius (*B. Resnik, 2020, pp. 1-7*). Ethics are used in all fields of people's lives. However, in this case, ethics are regarded as guiding principles for better and more valid research.

Ethical considerations are essential to any research because they encourage research goals that involve the pursuit of truth, knowledge, and the avoidance of errors. Additionally, ethical considerations forbid distorting the facts or presenting misleading interpretations when concluding the research. Furthermore, because research depends upon partnership and coordination across

distinct disciplines and institutions, ethical standards foster the values crucial to successful teamwork, such as fairness, mutual respect, trust, and accountability.

In this research, there was the use of numerous ethical guidelines followed throughout the entire analysis. They are foremost, starting with the interviewees' most critical 'informed consent' from the interviewees before the interview. The participants should always be aware of what the study is about, how the collected data will further be utilized, and, of course, if there are any, then the potential risks and benefits of their participation. The second aspect of ethical guidelines is confidentiality and anonymity, as it is vital to keep all the information provided by the interviewees confidential and not shared without anyone's permission. This also protects interviewees' identities throughout the research and any sensitive information they may share during the interview. Since the research is conducted on interviewees' upbringing and ethnicities, the interviewer must show respect to the participants of their cultural backgrounds. Prior to the interviews, the researcher should be familiar with the aspects and details of every culture of each interviewee in order to avoid asking insensitive questions. After the interview is complete, the researcher should debrief the interviewees and provide them with any support they may need. Finally, the participants should be informed of the results when the study is complete and how they will be used in further research. Overall, it is crucial to approach interviews on ethnicity and upbringing with sensitivity, respect, and a thorough commitment to ethical principles.

4.4 Limitations of the Research

Any features, traits, behaviors, or influences that could impact the research process and, consequently, the study's conclusions are referred to as the study's limits. Limitations can take many forms, from internal factors, including errors in technique and design, to external factors that a researcher has no control over. Research may have several restrictions that affect how well

its results hold up to validity checks, how broadly applicable its conclusions are, or how well the study's design fits a particular situation. It is essential to acknowledge that no research is without its imperfections. The limitations section is crucial for any kind of research. It is an opportunity to show awareness of the limitations in a particular study and think critically about how they can be addressed in further research.

This research will examine several limitations on gender construction in different ethnic subcultures in the Russian Federation and their upbringing. First and foremost, when researching the topic of various ethnic subcultures, one limitation of this research is the sample size. The research's sample size may not allow generalizations about the Russian Federation's total population. The research might focus on paying attention to a few distinct ethnic groups, which may not be enough to represent the variety of gender constructions in the area adequately. The second limitation that is important to note has limited data. In order to make meaningful judgments regarding gender constructions in the Russian Federation, the research may not have access to enough data. For instance, specific individuals could be more secretive and unwilling to provide information, or as a matter of fact, not remember some of the details from their childhoods, which could, in turn, impact the research findings.

PART 5

5.1 Conclusion

The thesis aimed to understand and explore people's ethnic backgrounds and perceptions of gender construction through bodily experiences in the Udmurt Republic in Russia. By studying the embodiment of masculinity and femininity in various ethnicities, this bachelor thesis has

uncovered how specific cultural compositions shaped and determined particular gender roles and expectations within the Udmurt society.

The main research question of this thesis was *“How do middle-class Russian men and women reflect on their gendered embodied experience to be brought up as a man or woman in the Udmurt Republic considering their cultural upbringing?”* It may be inferred from the results of the interviews that each participant had a distinct viewpoint on gender formation and its relevance. It is significant to highlight that many of the respondents had mixed racial and ethnic heritages, which has led to the inheritance of several traditional practices. However, in their academic and professional settings, most participants had comparable experiences. The findings imply that those who experienced a more conservative childhood have developed a more conservative attitude. In contrast, those who experienced a more liberal upbringing have passed on those ideals to their offspring. This suggests the Udmurt Republic is moving toward a more equitable view of gender roles. The interviews revealed that an individual's concept of femininity and masculinity within their ethnic group is shaped by a complex interaction between their beliefs, education, cultural background, and social influences. These results show that regardless of their socioeconomic standing or cultural history, individuals in the Udmurt Republic are adjusting to the changing world and its growing standards. Nevertheless, people adhere to their cherished, deeply established traditions and practices while trying to fit in with society's norms. To better understand the implications of these findings, future studies could consider taking a broader scope of ethnicities and studying more cultural backgrounds, and performing research in nearby villages where traditional and cultural identities are respected and preserved even more.

5.2 Appendices

5.2.1 Informed Consent

Title of Study: Cultural Gender Constructions Through Bodily Experiences in the Udmurt Republic of the Russian Federation: Embodiment of Masculinity and Femininity in Various Ethnicities

Researcher: *[Polina Nikolaeva]*

Introduction: This study aims to investigate the cultural constructions of gender and how they are perceived in terms of masculinity and femininity among various ethnic groups residing in the Udmurt Republic of the Russian Federation. Detailed interviews will be conducted as part of the research and then transcribed on audio.

Procedure: You will be invited to participate in an interview that will last from 10 to about 30 minutes if you choose to participate. The casual conversation will take place and audio-recorded with your knowledge. Your answers to the questions about your individual experiences with gender construction and embodiment will be incorporated into the study.

Benefits and risks: There are no known risks related to this study. However, if you decide not to share any information about your experiences with gender and embodiment, you are free to withhold it. Moreover, the study has no indicated benefits other than helping the research grow.

Confidentiality: All information gathered will be treated with confidentiality. No publications or presentations about this study will utilize your name. Only the researcher will access the audio recordings and transcripts, which will be maintained safely.

Participation: Participation is voluntary, and you can leave the research anytime. Any information gathered until you decide to leave the study will be erased.

Contact Information: You may contact the researcher at *[+33767292618 or polinanikolaeva3@gmail.com]* if you have any questions or issues regarding this study.

5.2.2 Structure of the Interview

The interviews were primarily semi-structured and grouped by the main themes of the researcher. The interviews started with ‘sociodemographic data’ of the participants, such as their age, ethnic roots, occupation, and level of education. Then, the interviews were structured according to the coding topic to differentiate between the themes for future analysis easily. The main groups included: ‘Childhood experiences,’ ‘Gender roles,’ ‘Comparison between participants’ childhoods and now,’ and ‘Raising their families.’

There were a total number of six interviews conducted, four of which were in couples and two separate individuals coming from various ethnic backgrounds, such as Russian, Tatar, and Udmurt. Considering that most of the participants also had roots from elsewhere, it is essential to mention that there were also Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Georgian roots. As previously mentioned, the questions were semi-constructed prior to the interviews. They were only open-ended, allowing the participants to discuss their opinions, memories, and beliefs regarding each theme.

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