

**BACHELOR THESIS REVIEW**

**Type of review:** *opponent*

**Author:** Polina Nikolaeva

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

**Supervisor:** Mgr. Barbora Spalová Ph.D.

**Reviewer:** Mgr. Andrea Průchová Hřůzová Ph.D.

Please explain the reasons for your evaluation (especially reservations and criticisms) according to the criteria listed below.

1. Is the aim of the thesis (research question) clearly stated and do the conclusions correspond to it? Is the thesis appropriately structured?

There are several issues with a structure of the thesis. Unfortunately, the author has completely overlooked to write a general introductory part in which readers would get familiar with the main theme of the research, the author's motivation, the sociological relevance of the topic as well as with the overview of the submitted text. The opening paragraphs of 2.1 "Purpose and Objectives of the Research" can be read as the missing introduction. The paragraphs in 2.1 discussing Russian population would better work as an introduction into a theoretical section dealing with individual ethnic communities. The last paragraphs of 2.1 can be again seen as a good part of the general introduction as we finally learn about the aims of this research.

There is also the problem with how the methodology section is organized. The sections on ethics and limitations of research should come before the analytical part of the text. The great part of paragraphs in the section 4.3 "Ethical Considerations" should be deleted due to its irrelevancy (see especially p. 37).

The author asks one research question, but a specific comparative time frame is missing (Soviet and post-Soviet era). It is important to know what age the informants are as they were specifically chosen due to their experience of the Soviet era, the transition period, plus they have the personal experience with parenting. This important aspect is not reflected in the research question, but it is deeply analysed by the author. Even though the thesis title emphasizes the ethnic aspect, it is not present in the research question.

2. Is the thesis based on relevant research and literature and does it accurately summarize and integrate the information?

The author employs a good amount of theoretical literature to support the first part of her thesis. It would be highly recommended to divide a theoretical section into two parts in which two main

theoretical themes will be introduced: (1) gender and its constructive character and (2) individual ethnic communities and their cultures. It is not a good decision to include both into one larger section with no middle part/bridging part. I also consider the theoretical background provided for the issue of gender too brief. The author delivers a very general introduction into the topic and then, surprisingly, starts immediately talking about the geographical regions (p. 12) that were not even mentioned at the beginning of her work. Some of her statements should be supported by reference, e.g., on p. 12: “However, gender is constantly being constructed and reconstructed, ...” On p. 13, the author refers to the intangible cultural heritage, yet no definition is delivered. On p. 13, she writes about the transformation of “the community” in relation to the gender-specific rituals and behaviours, but there is no specification of which community the author talks about.

When author opens the section about individual ethnic communities and their cultures, it would be helpful to find some specific examples when “different ethnic groupings” are mentioned on p. 15. The same can be said about the missing examples when the ideal figures of the Soviet man and woman are presented on p. 16. I am missing some reference for the Soviet female figure. The author discusses here the Soviet past and its division and representation of gender roles, but we are lacking the context why does she do so. Transformative moments related to the 21<sup>st</sup> century era are not mentioned at all.

3. What is the quality of the data or the other sources? Are the sample method, data collection and data analysis appropriate?

The author promises to work with interviews, observation, and document analysis. Yet her interpretation is based on interviews only. There is no mention of which documents were studied and how the observation was performed and later processed. The author emphasizes the multi-ethnic background of her informants, but she does not use any intersectional approach to the theory or the interpretation of gender aspects. I highly recommend considering it, especially if she explicitly articulates her interest in the middle-class individuals and her research revolves around the ethnic communities.

The author describes the criteria set for choosing the informants. She mentions the Jewish ethnic background, but she does not dedicate any theoretical section to it (in comparison to e.g., Tatar ethnicity). Based on author’s description on p. 24, it sounds like the snowball method was used, yet she does not mention it specifically. I am missing the information about the geographical details: where do her informants live (cities, towns, villages) as well as what was the gender balance within the examined group? There is no information about the specifics of interviewing couples.

In section 4.1 “Data Presentation and Interpretation”, I would expect more examples from interviews. Those can be found in the interpretative section and are chosen well. However, no theory is present in the interpretative section, so there is a lack of complexity in the overall research.

4. Are the findings relevant to the research question? Are the conclusions of the thesis based on strong arguments?

The findings are related to the research question. The author deeply reflects on the post- and Soviet era, but this comparative time frame is not part of the research question. There are relevant findings summarised in the conclusive section, but there is no theory involved neither in the interpretation, nor in the conclusion.

5. Are the author’s thoughts distinguished unambiguously from the borrowed ideas?

As stated above, there are some theoretical statements that should be supported by the reference. Overall, the author makes a clear distinction between her and other authors' statements.

6. What is the quality of style and other formal requirements?

The author should be clear about when she refers to pages and when there is a general reference made. If she refers to the same source consecutively, *Ibid.* should be used. On p. 31, the normative statement "Unfortunately" is made, so the author should be more aware of her neutral research position. The section "References" should go before the "Appendices".

7. Are there any other strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, which are not included in the previous questions? Please list them if any.

See my comments above.

8. What topic do you suggest for the discussion in the thesis defence?

- Which theories would you employ to support/discuss your research findings?
- Why there is no use of the methods of observation and study of documents in the analytical section?
- How would you re-articulate your research question to include the comparative time frame as well as the ethnic aspect?
- Can you be more detailed about the group of informants in terms of their geographical location and the number of men and women interviewed? What was your research design for this group in terms of these two aspects?

9. I declare that I have checked the result of the originality check of the thesis:

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Comment on the result of the check:

### **Overall evaluation of the thesis:**

*(Please, state clearly whether the thesis is or is not recommended for a defence and write the main reasons for the recommendation).*

I recommend the thesis for a defence. Due to the above-mentioned critical comments, I must suggest D-E (no introduction, chaotic structure, poorer theoretical section on gender, problematic research question, unclear description of data set, no use of the promised methods, no integration of theory into interpretation).

Proposed grade: (A - F) **D-E based on a defence presentation.**

Date: 15. 6. 2023

Signature: