

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

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Abstract: This article presents the results of a study of ethnic categories used in everyday categorizations. The study was conducted at the intersection of classical and innovative cognitive science-inspired methods, including video elicitation and walk-along method. During the study, 41 interviews were conducted. Informants differed based on a variety of characteristics, including migration history/length of residence in Moscow, ethnic category of identification, gender, age, etc. The study showed that categorization in everyday Moscow occurs on the basis of two classifications: the official classification by nationality, the roots of which go back to the Soviet national policy, and the vernacular classification, which includes two or three categories: «Slav» and «Southerner», while the latter category includes «Caucasus» and «Asia». The classification by nationalities is, on the one

hand, too detailed for «users», and such specificity has no practical meaning, on the other hand, the categories within it lack indicators for it to be used in everyday life. The binary/ternary classification, in turn, while being based on meaningful categories, is too informal and does not have its own imaginaries to displace the classification by nationalities. As a result, each classificatory act is essentially a compromise between these two classifications and uses them both, prioritizing binary and ternary classification.

Keywords: ethnicity, categorizations, cognitive turn, Moscow, nationalities

В Москве живут славяне и южане? Исследование вернакулярных кате- горизаций с применением элицита- ционных методов

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Резюме: В данной статье представлены результаты исследования этнических категорий, используемых в ходе повседневных категоризаций в Москве. Исследование было проведено на стыке классических и инновационных методов, «вдохновленных» когнитивными науками, к которым относятся видеоэлицитация и совместные прогулки с информантами. В ходе исследования было проведено 41 интервью. Информанты различались по разнообразию характеристик, включая миграционную историю (и срок проживания в Москве), этническую категорию по идентификации, гендер, возраст и прочее. Исследование показало, что категоризация в московской повседневности происходит на основании двух классификаций: официальной классификации по национальностям, корни которой уходят в советскую национальную политику, и вернакулярной классификации, в которую входит две или три категории: «славянин» и «южанин», притом что последняя категория включает в себя разделение на «Кавказ» и «Азию». Классификация по национальностям является, с одной стороны, слишком подробной для «пользователей», и такая подробность

является излишней с практической точки зрения, с другой — категориям внутри нее не хватает индикаторов для того, чтобы она использовалась в повседневности. Бинарная/тернарная классификация, в свою очередь, базируясь на важных с практической точки зрения различиях, является слишком неформальной и не имеет достаточных оснований для того, чтобы вытеснить классификацию по национальностям. В результате каждый акт категоризации является, по сути, компромиссом между двумя этими классификациями и использует их обе, тяготея все же к бинарной/тернарной категоризации.

Ключевые слова: этничность, категоризации, когнитивный поворот, Москва, национальности

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Contemporary constructivist studies of ethnicity, within the framework of the so-called cognitive turn (Brubaker, Loveman, Stamatov 2004), consider ethnicity primarily as a classifying phenomenon. It is regarded as the common denominator for permanent acts of categorization that are carried out by people and different kinds of institutions. Firstly, this approach implied a primary focus on formal, institutionalized classifications carried out by the «big» collective actors, firstly - by states (Appadurai 1993; Kertzer, Arel 2001; Simon, Piche, Gagnon 2015). It stemmed partly from the availability of government statistics and from the recognition of the absolute importance of administrative categorization in societies. This approach implicitly assumed that people identify themselves and others primarily with categories, defined in the course of «bureaucratic» classification of population (Appadurai 1993; Kertzer, Arel 2001) as census, passporting, museum exhibits, cartographic materials, etc.

But is this true, and does the everyday categorization fully coincide with the «official» state optics concerning the ethnic composition of the population? Since the vast majority of categorization actions occur informally, influencing attitudes and behaviors, as opposed to those conducted by formal institutions, vernacular categories and categorizations receive markedly less, and unjustly so, scholarly attention. In Russia, there are numerous studies on ethnicity in everyday life in Russian cities (Sahadeo 2019; Zaionchkovskaya, Poletaev, Florinskaya, Doronina 2014), but none that focus specifically on the ethnic categories that people use to define their surroundings.

The variety of methods generally applied in the social sciences for the study of ethnicity must be broadened and reassessed, since conventional sociological methods primarily focus on linguistic and discursive realities. The logical move in developing such methods for research that is on the verge of cognitive change is to seek inspiration from cognitive sciences that can offer tools to approach the level of spontaneous, common categorizations. In addition to the standard semi-structured deep interviews, this work employs «personified» procedures, which utilize stimuli from the surrounding reality to allude to informants' direct experience of perception of ethnicity.

This article, based on field data collected in Moscow, illustrates how and under which categories the case categorizes persons in ordinary life. So, representatives of various nationalities live in Russia, and Moscow is the country's capital and a city where you can meet representatives of all Russian nationalities — an element of established ideas about ethnic diversity, as well as an unqualified fact for the majority of Moscow residents and various types of experts. At the same time, people's actual view of ethnicity, when linked to the context of socialization, may be significantly different from the officially professed notions of ethnic diversity. Are nationalities ultimately also the framework for spontaneous classifications in the urban space of Moscow? Is not all diversity of nationalities reduced to a limited set of categories? Furthermore, is not this categorization more important and helpful in arranging social life than classification based on «official» nationalities? This study can provide answers to these questions.

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Theoretical framework and literature review

The most established approach to the study of ethnicity as a classificatory phenomena is constructivist research into governmental organizations that carry out this classification. Paradigm work was the book «Imaginary Communities,» published in 1983. In this book, B. Anderson analyzes the crucial role of such state regulatory instruments as census, museums, and cartographic materials in presenting people as members of a cohesive community. (Anderson 2006). This line of thought has been backed by a number of academics, and for example in the 1987 study, W. Petersen tracks the change in the list-based ethnic categories in US censuses, as well as the role of diverse interest

groups claiming to build a new «social reality» in this process (Petersen 1987). The seminal article by A. Appadurai contributed to the study of official classifications by demonstrating how the British colonial regime's categorization logic resulted in the establishment of an imaginary society based on the caste system (Appadurai 1993).

In the collection of articles that was published in 2001 and edited D. Kerzer and D. Arel the authors attempted to address diversity of nation cases in terms of ethnic categorization of the people by the state, as well as summarizing the results of in this field. They proposed the thesis that states are nearly universally engaged in the development and preservation of ethnic reality (Kertzer, Arel 2001).

The collection of articles edited by P. Simone, V. Piché, and A. Gaguena is a sort of logical continuation of this collection (Simon, Piche, Gagnon 2015). It demonstrates the pragmatic change in the state framework of ethnic categorization through country-by-country and quantitative analysis of the ethnic categories used in population censuses. Of particular interest, however, is the work of G. Petruccelli, who on the example of studying ethnic classification in Brazil showed that the ethnic self-identification of people and categorization of other people being associated with a multitude of attributes (for example, religion, human origin, accent etc.), may differ significantly from the official statistical accounting proposed despite the latter's «political power» (Petruccelli 2015).

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However, G. Petruccelli's work is particularly noteworthy. Using the example of studying ethnic classification in Brazil, he demonstrated that, despite the latter's «political power,» ethnic self-identification and categorization of other people being associated with a multitude of attributes (for example, religion, human origin, accent etc.) may differ significantly from the official statistical accounting proposed (Petruccelli 2015). Thus, the state categorizes the population using various statistical accounting procedures, thereby creating ethnic groupings (Kertzer, Arel 2001; Valentine, Valentine 1971); yet, how far which such classification corresponds to everyday categorization remains a contentious subject.

In particular circumstances, sociological and anthropological studies rarely openly address the vernacular measurement of racial categorization. In general, a typical aspect of daily categorization

research is the recognition that people usually have a lot of flexibility in how they use categories, even if there is a list of categories determined by state rhetoric.

One of the first works in this field, a 1970 article by M. Harris, which concludes that the ethnic categorization of the inhabitants of Brazil is characterized by internal diversity, and the participants of the study «agree» with each other for only a few «general» categories (Harris 1970). R. Sanjek reached similar conclusions about the Brazilian context in his article (Sanjek 1971). In other country cases, researchers also find considerable variation in the interpretation of ethnic reality and classification (Sanjek 1977; Starr 1978; Gravlee 2005). Thus, in a study conducted in the context of urbanized Ghana, R. Sanjek confirmed that ethnic patterns, although they may have a common basis in terms of, for example, existing language groups, differ greatly from person to person (Sanjek 1977). Furthermore, when studying the vernacular ethnic structure of Beirut, P. Starr demonstrated that there is no single or complete scheme of categories that would be universally applicable to all residents of Beirut, but what is common is that small ethnic categories are most often excluded from the vernacular ethnic classification (Starr 1978).

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Recent research presented thus far generally demonstrated that the categories that people employ in spontaneous ethnic classification varied substantially between individuals. The question of whether these categorizations are various versions of a single ethnic pattern, or shared by all members of some community ethnic pattern that does not exist at all, remains unresolved. J. Sankoff's work is particularly interesting in this regard (Sankoff 1971). Based on the field data obtained in New Guinea, he found that, while there are differences in how different individuals talk about ethnic categories and interpret social reality, these distinctions can be studied from two perspectives. The first point of view examines variations in everyday categories regarding a variety of situational or contextual circumstances, and is often predicated on the idea that all persons have the same model of ethnic classification but express it differently. The second point of view argues that there are differences in the classification models themselves and that it is not possible to create a universal scheme. Although studies of ethnic classifications tend to focus on one level of study — official or vernacular — the comparison of their relationships may act as a side plot. So, in the work already mentioned by J. Sankoff It is noted that

many people actually use the official classification (Ibid.). However, according to various studies, the ratio of these categorizations varies significantly (Petruccelli 2015; Piekut, Valentine 2016). Most recent work on ethnic categorization in everyday life are jobs associated with the name V. Roth (Roth 2012; Roth 2015). There the author outlines the concept «ethnic scheme», analyzes methodological approaches for identification of those previously used, in particular the method of photo elicitation. The empirical part of the studies was devoted to the study of ethnic patterns used by Dominicans and Puerto Ricans in the United States and Puerto Rico, and its results identified an «American ethnic pattern» shared by migrants in the US and consisting of three categories: «white», «black» and «Latin American», and more complex and multifaceted the scheme used in Puerto Rico's native for informants. V. Roth's analysis of how people categorize contexts, showed that every person can have knowledge of several ethnic patterns that are relevant and useful in different situations. In the Russian context, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no studies on vernacular categorizations, let alone comparisons with categorizations similar to official ones, have been completed. The current work aims to contribute to this thematic and methodological area.

Methodology

So, what categories do people use to classify other people's ethnic belonging in everyday life? To answer this, a study was conducted combining a variety of methods. On the one hand, it was critical to use methods that allowed the researcher to refer to informants' direct experience of perception of ethnicity, known as spontaneous classifications, and, on the other hand, to determine whether this classification differed from how a person talks about ethnicity and what categories he uses, if the immediate task of classifying the surroundings was not worth.

Based on this premise, the primary instruments used in the study were conditionally classified into two types: «elicitation,» which involved the application of rewards, and instruments without incentives. Elicitation instruments, in turn, were divided into «video-elicitation»¹ demonstrations of videos

1 A relatively recent strategy at the intersection of visual and cognitive sociology that employs photoelicitation techniques. Other research has employed

taken previously in different everyday contexts of Moscow, and «classifying walks»¹ with informants, which included a joint stay researcher and informant in the everyday context and discussion of people around, that is, working with «natural» stimuli from surrounding reality. The general question addressed to informants during the «elicitation part» was to decide which «ethnic category» belongs to those portrayed in the video or those passing by, as well as how informants understood it. In addition to «video-elicitation» or «classifying walk,» informants were asked, without the use of visual incentives, to answer the question of which ethnic groups live permanently or temporarily in Moscow. This instrument was employed in the interview as a check against fundamental elicitation methods to determine which categories are employed for spontaneous categorization of people in everyday urban life.

Tools described in each actual interview combined in such a way that it was necessarily present one from the «elicitation» tools (video or walk), a tool without incentives, and in addition, the biographical part. To reduce the impact of each individual instrument the results of the research in the interview they were posted in different order, and proportions of each type of interview (choice between «video-elicitation» and «classificatory walk», order of «elicitation» tools and instruments without incentives) in the overall data set were approximately equal.

The tools outlined in each interview were integrated in such a way that it was necessary to provide one of the «elicitation» tools (video or walk), a tool without incentives, and the biographical component. To reduce the impact of each individual instrument, the research results in the interview were posted in a different order, and the proportions of each type of interview (choice between «video-elicitation» and «classifying walk,» sequence of «elicitation» tools, and instruments without incentives) in the overall data set were roughly equal.

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video-elicitation (Henry, Fetters 2012; Keesman 2022; Karahan 2023). The most popular technique is photo-elicitation, which has been used to explore ethnic phenomena in a number of sociological and anthropological literature (Gold 1991; Roth 2015). As far as the authors know, the video for the ethnicity research has never been utilized before.

- 1 Variation of the walk-along method or go-along interviews, relatively common in the study of both ethnicity and other topics (Warren 2017; Lornic, Kilkey, Ryan, Tawodzera 2022)

Interview informants were recruited in different ways: through the Internet, via the «snowball» method, in shopping malls and through the platform for job vacancies YouDo. The sample included both permanent and temporary residents of Moscow, with residence or regular stay in Moscow of at least two years as a minimum criterion¹. Quotas were used to pick informants based on gender, age group, place of birth (Moscow, another area or country), and ethnic category (self-identification). Quotas were «crossed,» resulting in a specified demand for the number of informants according to certain qualities. A total of 41 interviews were conducted, with an average duration of 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded on tape and later transcribed. Based on the available transcripts, firstly, we identified ethnic categories, which were found in the «elicitation» part of interviews and parts without incentives, and secondly, we proposed indicator - signs by which persons were classified as representatives of certain categories. Third, based on all of the interviews, there were ideas as to why certain categories and indicators occurred in the interview. To the extent that multiple research methods included in a single actual interview allow for the comparison of two levels of ethnic classifications, emphasis will be given first to «meta-categories» — words indicating the sum of ethnic categories, as informants typically use.

Further the categories that informants list while discussing ethnic diversity in Moscow without providing incentives will be discussed, followed by a description of how individuals classify others in everyday life. At the end of the section on the study's findings, the relationship between the two sets of categories — enumerated during the conversation and used in the spontaneous classification — will be traced, and we will answer the question of how ethnic categorization occurs in Moscow everyday life.

Meta-categories: what words do informants use to talk about ethnic diversity?

The response to the inquiry regarding the basis of ethnic

1 We established this threshold because our research focuses on the social nature of perceptions of ethnic diversity, which can be transmitted through socialization into the urban environment. However, a person needs time to internalize and comprehend these perceptions.

categorization in the daily life of Moscow necessitates an understanding of the terminology employed by individuals when discussing ethnicity—such as «peoples,» «nationalities,» «ethnic groups,» or alternative terms? The selected terms can be described as «meta-categories», which are thought to have an impact on and how people imagine ethnic diversity. For the vast majority of informants this key to the understanding of ethnic diversity has become the word «nationality». When the researchers, as it would follow from the methodology, asked about «ethnic groups» whose representatives live in Moscow, informants could not understand this question and clarify — what exactly is meant by an ethnic group? If the term proposed by the researchers was understood by informants, then they reinterpreted it in a familiar way — through «nationalities»:

Interviewer: And in general, did representatives of any other ethnic groups live in Kalmykia?
Informant: Other nationalities?
Interviewer: Yes, you could say that.
(Woman, 55 years old, Elista, kalmyk)

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For certain informants, the conventional terms «nationalities» and the suggested «ethnic groups» were not entirely interchangeable. When prompted to articulate the distinctions, their interpretations varied. For instance, ethnic groups might be linked to nationalities that are larger than typical, categorized as follows:

Informant: Well, like, I thought about what you rather mean, probably some larger group than the individual nationalities <...> North Caucasus, Transcaucasia, if I understood.
(Woman, 61 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Typically, informants would almost instinctively «translate» the inquiry by employing the term «nationality» and subsequently discussed them, or, in the absence of such a translation, utilized the terminology proposed by the researchers.

Categories without incentives: official list of nationalities

The terminology used by informants to describe ethnic diversity was previously described. For contrast and a subsequent focus

on the results of the interview with incentives in this part of the article will show which categories informants use when they talk about ethnic diversity in Moscow hypothetically, without showing incentives. In many instances, informants—irrespective of their background—when asked the question «who resides in Moscow on a permanent or temporary basis,» mentioned what can be characterized as a «list of nationalities.» This type of «list» serves as a means of conceptualizing ethnic diversity by alluding to the prevailing perspective on ethnic diversity within the discourse.

Sources of this nature may include census data or, for instance, a more widely recognized format of their representation: information derived from Wikipedia. Occasionally, informants during discussions asserted that in Moscow, there are numerous categories or groups; for example, «170 that exist, all reside here,» thereby highlighting the intricacy of their enumeration. However, more frequently, they would still «recollect» familiar nationalities. This list was, as expected, never wholly reproduced in the provisional statistical collection that describes the national composition of Moscow; yet, such a list usually indicated a «common denominator» of 10 to 15 nationalities, approximately categorized by the number of their representatives residing in Moscow:

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Interviewer: Then here's my next question. Can you please name, as you think, people of what ethnicity live in Moscow? Permanently or temporarily. You can list it and I'll write it down.

Informant: I think the Uzbeks.

Interviewer: The Uzbeks?

informant: Yes. Belarusians. Ukrainians. Tajiks. Well Russians. Well, I think, These are the most common ones that live here.

Interviewer: That's it?

informant: Well, anyone can live.

(Female, 20 years old, Moscow, Russian)

Although the categories identified by informers frequently showed significant intersections, they could also feature unexpected categories that did not conform to the logical framework of the description organized by the number of representatives in Moscow, arranged in descending order. This modification approach may be linked to the informant's experiences from various contexts, including their life in a national region. Consequently, the common 'list' may contain references to categories that are not mentioned in other interviews, such as Dagestani, Marians,

Kalmyks, among others. Furthermore, commonly included in this list of nationalities is the informant's category of identification. For example:

Informant: Well, very different people live. These are Russians. Who do we have a lot? Tatar, Bashkir. Tatars, Bashkirs, what else. A bit of Belarusians, a bit of Ukrainians... I belong to the category of Buryats, but we also have our diaspora here. (Woman, 53 years old, village Kolotowka, Buryat)

Occasionally, there exist alternative categories that somewhat «dilute» the list, while also establishing a distinct framework for articulating diversity. For instance, informants responding to inquiries regarding ethnic groups in Moscow, which exemplify its diversity, refer to categories that may be classified as «marginal». It defines the widest parameters of diversity. Such categories may encompass «Chinese», «African-Americans», «Arabs», among others:

Informant: Well, in Lublin (market) there are all the nations. Well, in Lublin, Moscow. You can find anyone there. Even these negroes are there. Diaspora of Negroes. Very big in Kuzminki. (Woman, 53 years old, village Kolotowka, Buryat)

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Thus, primarily concerning the issue of which ethnic categories are observable in Moscow, informants reacted to a modified list derived from discourse, which has been compiled in statistical records and their commonly accepted versions of the list of nationalities in Moscow. Yet, is it possible to «detect» these categories in the streets of Moscow, and how did informants resolve the challenge of categorizing «incentives» during spontaneous classification?

Categories with incentives: binary and ternary categorization

When informants were asked to determine the ethnicity of people during a demonstration video or classifier walks, categories that they used, significantly changed. In general, they used only two (binary) or three (ternary) categories. The binary categorization of this kind usually meant to contrast «Slavs», «Russians», «people with Slavic appearance» with such categories as «non-Slavs», «non-Russians», «people with non-Slavic appearance», «Orientals», «foreigners», «migrants»:

Informant: I think it's Russian. So, you need to ask the person to find out. It doesn't really work. If he's pronounced, then you don't need to ask. But where exactly, I think that should be clarified. Because it's pretty unclear.

Interviewer: Check this one out, for instance.

Informant: Well, it's obvious that these are non-Russian. Some from Uzbekistan or Tajikistan, something like that. I'm already struggling to differentiate between them, but it's definitely one of those.

Interviewer: Alright. Woman in the green cap.

Informant: Well, obviously, it's non-Russian. And for some reason, it's tough to specify her nationality.

Within the framework of ternary categorization, the second category from «binary» («non-Russian», «eastern» and so on) was divided into two categories, which unclearly identified a limited number of people from the countries and republics of the Caucasus («from the Caucasus», «people with Caucasian appearance») and from Central Asia («from Asia», «central Asian republics», «people with Asian appearance»):

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Interviewer: So we can have any variation from Kyrgyz before the Vietnamese, in theory.

Informant: Okay, he's... he's kind of Asian. Eyes. Eyes and the shapes of his face are so cheeky. <...> I think it's Russian. Why not a Caucasian girl? Because in the Caucasus, people don't dress like that. Caucasian girls are more reserved. <...> An old Caucasian man dresses more respectably, and here is something for teenagers. (Male, 29 years old, Mahachkala, Avar)

It is important that this binary and ternary categorization were reproduced both by those who in one way or another referred to themselves as «Slavs», and by those who could be classified as «Caucasian» or «Asian» within the same task, which makes it possible to propose the assumption of a single basis for a classifier scheme «working» in Moscow everyday life.

It is this scheme, which assumes the reduction of all categories up to two or three, turns out to be an actual, real alternative list, which is used in case the person does not have the task of determining ethnicity the people he sees¹.

1 This is the task and faced with informants. In accordance with the methodology, they were asked «To which ethnic group does the person filmed on video/passing by belong to?»

Indicators

What aspects do individuals focus on in the aforementioned «decision» regarding tasks related to the spontaneous classification of others? When confronted with this necessity, informants inevitably resorted to indicators—attributes that connect ethnic categories with particular individuals. The primary indicators utilized for categorization were found to be phenotypic in nature: skin color, hair color, eye color, eye shape, facial structure, nose shape, height, and body build. Although the categories used by informants for classification of indicators were not always expressed directly, the results of the analysis highlighted some «typical» indicators for reduced categories. «Slavs»/«Russians»/«People with a Slavic appearance» were usually associated with such phenotypic features as light hair, fair skin, blue eyes, and in the category «non-Slavs»/«Non-Russian»/«Eastern» were registered, respectively, those who did not fit for these indicators (with dark hair, dark skin and other eye color).

Indicators can represent not just individual phenotypic traits of the face, body, or other characteristics, but also aspects of histology and the overall integrity of appearance. Therefore, in relation to the category of ‘Russians’ and its distinction from ‘non-Russian’ individuals, certain indicators are sometimes labeled as ‘standard’ or ‘typical’ appearance, marked by the absence of any notable features. When there are no evident indicators to classify an individual into another category, informants often designate such individuals as ‘Russian’:

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Interviewer: In what way is a Mordvin different from the Russians?

Informant: He has a face that is also a little strange for Russian. It’s a little bit more swarthy, but I think it’s not so Turkic after all; it has some shape of the face too, I think, something like that. <... > I think the Mordvins are similar to the Russians.

Interviewer: Why?

Informant: They look somewhat usual. (Male, 20 years old, Ukhta, Komi, Belarusian, German)

Regarding categorization, due to the absence of indicators like light hair and fair skin (which signify the category of «Slavs») in both groups, it was crucial for the first group («from the Caucasus») to possess a man’s beard, while for the second group («from Asia»), a narrow eye shape was essential.

Indicators such as clothing style, behavior, or the context of the event were less commonly used than phenotypic indicators. Rather, they complemented appearance indicators, and informants employed them in cases where it was challenging to offer a clear response based solely on phenotypic indicators. Within the framework of binary categorization, one can attribute norms like «take off your headwear in public» and «conduct oneself modestly in public settings» to behavior manners. Those who do not comply with these rules, some informants classified as «non-Russian», «migrants», contrasting them with «Russians», «Slavs». It is crucial to highlight that these indicators were often designated first because of the stereotypical expression «wears a headwear in the room» — «therefore, in Moscow, this is only done by migrants» (along with other similar phrases). Nevertheless, this occurred without considering the appearance indicators, which were not open for discussion. As a result, it would be difficult to ascertain the man's ethnicity.

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Actual classifying: between binary/ternary categorization and list

As for categorization, it is important to understand how do the reduced categorization and the «list» categorization by nationality actually work together. Binary/ternary categorization, which seems to be the leading way of categorizing in everyday life, is useful to see as an ideal type to which actual categorizations of informants gravitate. In the current categorization acts, categories derived from the «list», can be utilized for everyday categorization, which is closely related to reduced categories. It is observable how informants, in their efforts to classify individuals, often initially attempt to employ the «list-based» nationality, and when they are unable to identify the «necessary» category, they resort to a more generalized classification:

Interviewer: Okay. The latest video. Cashier. To what ethnic group does she belong?

Informant: Well, I would say she is from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Caucasus. <...> This, you know, this is the Southern and Eastern region. That is, the muslims, the Caucasus... <...>

Interviewer: So Eastern and Caucasian are the same?

Informant: I am putting them in one category. I recognize them at all. I can't. For me everything begins below Stavropol and ends with Tashkent, for me it's all...

Interviewer: And listen, what is the difficulty? What can't it be defined?
informant: They are all the same to me. It's a shame for me to admit. Well, ask a Chinese if he can distinguish Russian from American. He will not do it. For me their appearance, if you divide them up, if you put ten of them in a row, I can say this one is probably southerly, and this one is probably northerly. But if I try to separate from the crowd, I will not distinguish them.

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

There were other cases where informants used «list-based» categories interchangeably with binary categorization categories, or where two «list-based» categories were employed for the same purpose, passing through a conditional slash or a hyphen:

Informant: Oh, my God, Uzbek-Tajik. Clearly the builders. Or these unskilled workers who... Well, don't you see by the look on their faces?
(Female, 62, Moscow, Russian)

However, even those informants for whom the binary/ternary the categorization was basic, described with it not everyone. In particular, «did not fit» into it those categories that previously were described as «marginal», defining the boundaries of diversity, including «Arabs», «Hindus», «Jews», «Gypsies» and «African-Americans». In other words, although the categorization of incentives — in comparison with the interview without incentives — really weighs to the binary/ternary, categorizations carried out by each individual informant combine «reduced» and «list-based» categories in a rather «creative» way. It can be concluded that it is in the context of these two categorizations — both empirical and more discursive, being derived from an officially declared concept of ethnic diversity — that specific classifying acts are carried out, performed on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, even those informants for whom the binary/ternary categorization was fundamental did not describe everyone within it. Specifically, those categories that were previously labeled as «marginal» — which delineate the boundaries of diversity such as «Arabs,» «Hindus,» «Jews,» «Gypsies,» and «African-Americans» — did not conform to this classification. In essence, while the categorization of incentives — when compared to interviews conducted without incentives — leans towards binary/ternary frameworks, the categorizations made by each informant creatively amalgamate both «reduced» and «list-based» categories. Thus, one can conclude that specific classification

actions are systematically performed within the structure of these two categorizations, which are both empirical and more discursive, originating from a formally expressed concept of ethnic diversity.

The relationship between «list-based» categories and those from binary or ternary categorization poses a complex question. The nominal «magnification» of one category relative to another is simply a representation of the relationship between these categories, which is, nonetheless, firmly established among informants. Furthermore, one can evaluate the ratio of categories and ascertain whether informants explicitly «translate» «list-based» categories into binary or ternary categories, or if these categorizations are not equivalent. The first may exist only in discursive contexts, while the second is found in everyday categorization situations, a judgment that can also be made based on the data gathered.

230 In general, the 'list-based' categories and those from binary or ternary categorization are indeed 'translated' into one another, with the latter being more prevalent in private 'list-based' categories. This is clearly illustrated by the way the uncertainty in categorization is 'addressed' — informants first mention the 'list-based' categories, and when they become aware of their insufficient indicators for categorization, they adopt a more inclusive category that covers several 'lists':

Informant: Well, at least, I haven't seen that in the Armenians. I have friends who are Armenians. I haven't seen. Well, maybe a Chechen, maybe from the East. Do you have questions about the East? <... > Well, that too. It's either, well, you have options. Armenian, Azerbaijani, perhaps, and Chechen. So it is clear that the man from the East.
(Woman, 62, Moscow, Russian)

However, this «translation» can be executed in a rather unconventional manner. In particular, «list-based categories» might manifest as unexpectedly «magnified» categories for an observer who is familiar with standard taxonomies. A notable instance of this narrative is the exclusion of the category «Chechens» from the category «Caucasus» on account of their «different» culture, or,

1 Please note that the ratio of categories, in which every «list-based» category is explicitly included within the reduced categories, is not the only feasible arrangement found in the informants' charts. Some list categories might be linearized, and others may not correspond to any of the enumerated categories (such as Jews, African Americans, etc.).

more frequently, the exclusion of the category «Georgians» from the category «Caucasus» due to the connection of the latter with the most prevalent religion — Islam.

Returning to the inquiry regarding the process of categorization (which primarily employs simplified binary or ternary categories), it is crucial to outline and clarify notable exceptions to this «rule». Additionally, an attempt should be made to elucidate these exceptions. Throughout the fieldwork, three instances were encountered where informants utilized categorization based on «list-based» categories for incentives. Two of these informants originated from different countries (a man from Armenia and a woman from Kazakhstan), while the third was a man from Ulyanovsk, possessing extensive experience in engaging with individuals from various ethnic backgrounds based on «list-based» categories and rather atypical indicators (for instance, Armenians are described as «more confident and characterized by a hook nose and small ears», Uzbeks as «will look like a kawaii teddy bear», and «distinguishing a Tajik is quite simple: just observe who is more conversing on the phone»). These informants categorized passers-by without resorting to the binary or ternary categorizations:

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Informant: No, for me they are immediately burning Georgians. An Armenian generally another.

Interviewer: Compared to the Georgians?

Informant: Yes. First of all, they always walk differently, more relaxed, because they... Like the Italians at fiesta. They are more confident and they have this hook-like nose and small ears. <... > Damn, in Odintsovo on the AKOS market I examined more than 600 while working in the guard, more than 600 stalls, all belong to Armenians.

Interviewer: Wow, and they all look more or less like with these ears. <...>

Informant: Well, it's 100%. Even I can't tell the difference. Small height, small ears, big nose, but she walks like a Uzbek. But no, it is Kyrgyz. Probably somewhere closer to Issyk-Kul. Because there are mountains, and the Kyrgyz there are lighter. (Man, 28 years old, Ulyanovsk, Russian)

In all instances, there was a rationale for this situation. Specifically, in the latter case, the informant perceives ethnic categorization as a 'key' to understanding people, which he considers a vital necessity. In the situation involving the man from Armenia, the detailed categorization appears to be significant in the context of his work in construction—he anticipates certain behaviors from contractors and employees based on their ethnicity, and they generally do

not fail to meet his expectations. In the case of the woman from Kazakhstan, the informant is quite bold in front of the interviewer regarding her 'discretion' (she was unable to specify the indicators she uses for categorization). It is crucial to note that all informants had genuine 'experience of diversity,' and such categorizations are essentially projections of that experience onto specific instances. It is important to clarify that the 'reliability' of these classifications is not within the research's scope, and verifying the classifications of informants against the self-identification of individuals on video (which was not addressed) is not the aim. The key point here is the awareness among individuals of the potential 'usefulness' associated with their ability to discern the ethnic group they are facing.

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These three instances, however, represent more of an anomaly, and their significant role in the actual classification varies between «list-based» categories and those derived from binary or ternary categorization. In conclusion, it is crucial to pinpoint a pivotal moment for the research. In Moscow — as perceived by its permanent and temporary inhabitants — two ethnic categories coexist. One is primarily discursive and functions as a «list», seemingly adopting the conceptualization of diversity along with specific classifications from official categorization. Nevertheless, «list-based» categorization can only be applied to a limited degree for the spontaneous categorization of individuals in daily life. The actual categorization, which includes to some extent «list-based» categories, tends to align with a framework of two or three categories where, firstly, the differently labeled Slavs/Muscovites/Russians are contrasted with foreigners/Southerners/Eastern appearance, and secondly, the latter category is further divided into two: the conditional «Caucasus» and «Asia». A distinct aspect of the study involves elucidating the reasons behind this simplification.

Discussion and conclusion

As it follows from the results of the study, the ethnic classification scheme of the inhabitants of Moscow is built simultaneously on two categorical frameworks: one of them is vernacular official classification by nationalities; the second is binary/ternary classification. It is important that informants with different experience of living in Moscow more or less similarly

categorize people¹. This suggests that the categorization regarding categories and indicators is a consistent «social fact». Interviews with foreigners involved in the sample study reveal that this categorization is swiftly «assimilated» during their socialization experiences in Moscow. This observation is somewhat different from V. Roth's observations of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans coming to New York and changing the existing binary ethnic scheme (offering a more generic «Hispanic-American» scheme² (Roth 2012). It is possible that the simplified Moscow construction of ethnicity is, in contrast to the situation outlined by V. Roth, more «rooted» and universally applicable, thus allowing for rapid assimilation by newcomers; however, this necessitates additional comparative research in different contexts.

What is the origin of categories in categorizations? The origins of the first, «official» categorization can be found in the Soviet national policy, which placed nationality at the basis of the state structure and at the expense of the passport system «binding» people to these categories. This process gave nationalities a «new lease of life», and they became firmly established in the collective understanding of the people living in the USSR, and later in Russia, concerning the various categories present in the country. Why is it that this list-based categorization, known to all informants to some extent and evidently sustained by various reputable information sources (including statistical handbooks, textbooks, and Wikipedia), fails to be the primary method of categorization in daily life?

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To answer this question it is important to consider that any categorization scheme, to be in demand and applicable, must

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- 1 It might also be relevant to some degree in other Russian locales; however, considering the innovative aspect of this study in analyzing ethnic patterns within the Russian context, comparisons with other locales have not yet been performed. Moreover, one of the authors of the article conducted a pilot elicitation study in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), which demonstrated, on one hand, a similar operational principle of indicators for identifying individuals and the binary categories of 'local' or 'Russian', while on the other hand, it revealed a distinctly different nomenclature of essential categories, often contrasted with the dichotomy found in Moscow (Varshaver, 2024).
 - 2 In his analysis, V. Roth explores the ethnic configurations of both locals and Latin Americans residing in New York. While the inhabitants of New York are generally familiar with the conventional racial classification of 'black and white', those who have migrated to the nation are more inclined to embrace a classification that encompasses Latin Americans, known as the 'hispanized' US racial pattern.

inevitably meet two requirements. First, it should have a «distinct power», that is to say it should be possible to distinguish between different categories. Second, it must be relevant, that is, the distinction must be needed for some reason.

With regard to «differential power», to the extent that perception of another person's ethnicity is related to visual components (Roth 2015), indicators play an important role in the implementation of categorization. Various indicators are used for categorization: related to features of the face/ body structure, clothes/ style, language/emphasis, context, with the results of research confirming the primary importance of one of these indicators: phenotypic, including skin color, hair color — noted and in foreign studies daily categorizations (Sanjek 1971; Byrne, Forline 1997; Zuijderwijk, Burgers 2015). Other indicators, whether clothing or manner of behavior, rather help a person to determine nationality if any of the phenotypic indicators are insufficient. In this instance, we can contend that the indicators that are articulated and seemingly used for categorization by the interviewer may not represent the indicators that individuals are truly attentive to. Instead, these may be omitted from the discussion on ethnic differences. It is plausible that contextual indicators, when compared to phenotypic indicators, influence considerably how a person aligns with a specific categorization «modality»; in Moscow, such contexts could include markets, construction zones, and other similar settings. To answer this question, however, other research methods are needed. Going back to the question of why people do not use list-based categorization, it can be assumed that a person who has to classify someone lacks different capacity, the ability to «read» indicators when using list, discursively existing categories. And in addition, too many categories exist in the official discourse, making it difficult to assign unique, visible by the attributes of each of the nationalities. This can be seen, for example, when analyzing indicators that used informants to classify a person «Russian»: it was often about some routine, typical and standard of human appearance¹, that is, the impossibility to highlight specific indicators. Concerning relevance, one perspective in contemporary studies is to interpret

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1 The attribution of a «Russian» standard appearance appears to stem from the regular engagement of informants with members of this category in Moscow. Consequently, there is a linkage between the term «Russian» and the idea of «the individual I see regularly and to whom I have grown accustomed».

simplified ethnic patterns in megacities via the interaction of social attributes, which demands a quick and therefore somewhat «common» classification of people in situations involving transient contacts. (Berreman 1972). Although residents of Moscow know the classification by official nationalities, they do not need it very much for everyday use. The classification of individuals as Buryat, Yakut, Avar, Belarusian, or Tatar holds little practical relevance for Moscow residents amidst the context of swift and isolated interactions. In contrast, the distinction between «Russians»/»Slavs» and «non-Russian»/»Southerners» carries significant practical implications, as it pertains to the evolution of human behavior in encounters with unfamiliar individuals. The first group, referred to as conditional «Russians», is perceived by the public as being fluent in the Russian language, their mother tongue. In contrast, the second group, described as «non-Russian», is viewed differently, leading to variations in standard interaction patterns. Furthermore, existing stereotypes suggest that interactions with the broad category of «non-Russian» migrants are associated by «Russians» or locals with various risks, criminal activities, unsanitary conditions, and other adverse phenomena¹. This simplified distinction is relevant, for example, in the context of the importance of understanding whether and how easy (and safe) communication with another person will be.

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For roughly the same reasons, the category of «Non-Slavs» can be divided into «Caucasus» and «Asia». Representatives of the initial category are often regarded as clever and proactive entrepreneurs, but one must exercise caution, as they are depicted as disenfranchised and unresponsive «gastarbeiter» who can be utilized for low-paying jobs². These portrayals are widespread among «Slavs,» who, in this classification, are seen as «all others» or «common people» lacking cultural distinctiveness. Additionally, «non-Russians» interpret and engage with the existing ethnic categorization in Moscow in their unique manner.

1 Do migrants cause a lot of discomfort for local residents? Big question. URL:<https://www.bolshoyvopros.ru/questions/3957258-dejstvitelno-li-migranty-prichinjajut-mnogo-diskomforta-mestnymzhiteljam.html?ysclid=m8zr7iem24572603699>. Do Non-Russian cause troubles for Russia? Izvestia. URL: <https://iz.ru/588378/meshaiut-li-rossii-nerusskie>.

2 The media also follows the categorization. See: Where can we expect dangers from migrants? LiveJournal. URL:<https://bulochnikov.livejournal.com/953317.html?ysclid=m8zr5lxv78984074922>.

It is essential, however, that these categories are associated with «functional» indicators. Thus, there is a set of indicators that permits the assignment of a particular individual to the category of «Slavs» or «Caucasus,» differentiating them from «Asia.» Consequently, this categorization is perpetually «trained» and becomes one of the «functional» interpretations of reality. However, this categorization, despite its circulation in media and certain practices—such as apartment advertisements¹—has not established a simultaneously authoritative and popular descriptive language. As a result, when addressing ethnic differences, a Moscow resident finds themselves caught between this categorization and a more authoritative yet less «functional» classification based on Soviet nations. It is at the convergence of these two that they express and reflect on ethnic differences, interpreting the reality of their environment.

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The main methodological limitations of the study stem from the fact that the methods employed only allow for a closer approximation of informants to the situation of spontaneous categorizations, rather than placing them within it. Moreover, since the interviews began with questions regarding ethnic categories, these techniques are only of limited utility in identifying the actual relevance of ethnic categorizations for informants, as well as the contexts in which they «activate» ethnic categorization, and when such categorization does not take place. In several instances, the informant initially presented a comprehensive classification using a specific set of categories. However, upon further validation, it became clear that this classification was not strictly followed, and instead, after the elicitation, the informant confessed that he had employed alternative, more expansive categories that were more applicable to real-life situations. It is important to highlight that not all informants engaged in such reflection, which meant that in certain cases, researchers were left without this additional insight into the categories that were actually utilized in the classification. Nevertheless, given the limited number of studies addressing similar inquiries, and the rarity of those employing comparable methodologies, the methodology and findings of this study possess both scientific novelty and significance in elucidating the ‘everyday’ realities of ethnicity.

1 Nigerian, Tajik and Korean: how to live in Russia with a non-Slavic appearance? Afisha Daily. URL:<https://daily.afisha.ru/relationship/2645-nigeriectadzhik-i-koreyanka-o-tom-kak-zhit-v-rossii-s-neslavjanskoy-vneshnostyu/>.

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