The Self-Perception of Uyghur Youth in Almaty

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Abstract

For much of recent history the Uyghurs, if mentioned at all, have been portrayed in western media in an orientalising manner as Silk Road traders from a distant land. Since the People's Republic of China issued a so-called 'de-extremification' ordinance in March 2017, the Uyghurs have suddenly found themselves at the centre of global political discourse. Indeed, many western readers have discovered the existence of the Uyghurs precisely within this discourse of 'terrorism', 're-education', surveillance and ethnic oppression. Yet the Uyghurs do not exist merely within the context of interaction with the Chinese state, they are a 'borderlands' people with substantial populations in the Central Asian republics. This paper represents an investigation into the self-identifications and acculturation strategies of the second largest Uyghur community outside of Xinjiang: the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan. It provides a unique perspective on the lifeways of Uyghurs in a society vastly different from the PRC, and acts as a testament to the dynamic manners in which Uyghurs navigate a society which is simultaneously russified, nationalising, and internationalising.

The study is based on sixteen in-depth interviews with young, post-Soviet generation Uyghurs in Almaty — a community which has been largely neglected even in the few existing sociological and anthropological studies of the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan. Led through principles of participant driven research, it aims to give voice to the issues which Uyghurs consider pertinent to their identificatory and acculturative environments, while also drawing on the benefits of the dialogue created through interaction with an outside researcher. Within the framework of ethnographic, interpretivist research, it seeks to contribute holistic insights to Kazakhstani nation building, Central Asian minority politics, China-Central Asia relations, and Uyghur studies. It also serves as a case study in wider discourses of securitised peoples, transborder populations, and acculturative strategies.

Key terms:

Uyghur studies; cross-border populations; stateless peoples; securitized peoples; China-Central Asia relations; Kazakhstani nation building; acculturation and assimilation; post-Soviet studies; minority politics; identity and self-identification; participant driven research; qualitative research; interpretivism; ethnographic research cycle

Author’s declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

Daniel Colm Simpson, 31 Jan 2023

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Contents

Title page 1
Abstract 2
Author's declaration 3
Non-exclusive licence for making the thesis public through the University of Tartu's electronic library 4
Acknowledgements 5

Chapter 1: Introduction 8
1.1 Study relevance and overview 8
1.2 A brief history of Uyghurs in Kazakhstan 9
1.3 Current legal and political status of Uyghurs in Kazakhstan 11
1.4 Note on transliteration and terms 13

Chapter 2: Literature Review 15
2.1 Historical narratives of the Uyghur Nation in Kazakhstan 16
2.2 The Uyghurs and the Global War on Terror 20
2.3 Contemporary cultural and sociological studies 23
2.4 Conclusions and questions raised 26

Chapter 3: Methodology 29
3.1 Philosophical underpinnings 29
3.2 Theories of identity, ethnicity and acculturation 30
Identity 30
Ethnicity 31
Internal divisions and ethnic boundaries 32
Acculturation 33
3.3 Research Design 34
Table 1: Participant Demographics 39
3.4 Research questions & hypotheses 39

Chapter 4: Self-Identifications and Divisions in the Uyghur Community 42
4.1 Identifications, categorisations, and 'homeland' 42
Table 2: Identification rankings 42
Table 3: Homeland 44
4.2 Robert's terms: yerliklär, kegänlär, khitailiklär 45
Table 4: Yerliklär 46
Table 5: Kegänlär 47
Table 6: Khitailiklär 48
4.3 New divisions & imagined 'others' 49
4.4 Questions raised 52

Figure 1: Imagined 'traditional' other 54
Figure 2: Imagined 'modern' self 55
Table 7: 'Typical' Uyghurs? 56
Figure 3: Imagined 'typical' Uyghur 57
Table 8: What makes an Uyghur? 58

Chapter 5: Identity Maintenance Strategies and Risks 59
5.1 The Kazakhstani acculturation context 59
Discriminated and disenfranchised or multicultural and harmonious? 59
Uyghur shame 61
Emigration orientations 62
Table 9: Emigration orientations 63
Table 10: Reasons for staying in Kazakhstan 64
Passing 64
Case studies of ethnic exit 65
5.2 Practices of Uyghur identity maintenance 66
Language choice and education 66
Table 11: Language use 69
Marriage strategies 69
Cultural platforms 70
Community and ceremony 71
5.3 Theorising acculturation setting and strategy 73
Table 12: Acculturation strategies 73
Table 13: Participants' acculturation strategies 74

Chapter 6: Between Ürümchi and Astana: the 'Chinese factor' in Uyghur identity 75
6.1 Uyghur views and understandings of China and Xinjiang 75
6.2 Effects of 'de-extremification' in Xinjiang on Self-Perception of Uyghurs in Almaty 78
We don't really know what's happening there 79
It's regrettable, but there's not much we can do 79
My self-perception has changed 80
A framework for participants responses 83

Chapter 7: Conclusions and limitations 85
Conclusions, questions, and limitations 85
Contributions and suggestions for further study 88

Bibliography 91

Appendixes 108
1: Participant Information Sheet (English & Russian) 109
2: Consent forms (English & Russian) 116
3: Semi-structured interview questions 120
4: Ethical approval 125
5: Declaration of Authorship (KIMEP) 126

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Study relevance and overview

This dissertation represents an in-depth, qualitative study of the self-perception of Uyghur youth in Almaty city, Kazakhstan. Uyghurs constitute the fifth largest ethnic group in the Republic of Kazakhstan with a population of almost 300 000 (Kazakhstan Census, 2021), primarily residing in Almaty and the Kazakhstan-China border areas of the 'Uyghur Region'. Despite having *de jure* autonomy in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the PRC, with a population of roughly 12 million (Chinese Census, 2020), the Uyghurs are *de facto* a stateless people who have undergone significant 'enforced assimilation' (Kamalov, 2021), both historically and in the current political climate. The Uyghurs of Kazakhstan form the largest Uyghur community outside of China, but given the proximity of the PRC, they should not be seen as a 'diaspora', but rather as a 'borderlands' ethnicity (Roberts, 1998): while their daily lives and identities are formed almost exclusively within the context of Kazakhstan, events concerning their co-ethnics across the border in China constantly affect both the Uyghurs' behaviours and self-perceptions and the attitudes of the wider Kazakhstani society toward Uyghurs.

English language sociological scholarship regarding the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan has largely focused on daily cultural practices generational cleavages between three distinct groups: the *yerliklär* ('locals' who have lived in Kazakhstan and the adjacent Ili valley for over a hundred years), *kegänlär* ('newcomers' with roots in refugee flows from China in the 1950s and 1960s), and the *khitailiklär* (the 'Chinese' or Uyghurs who have arrived in Kazakhstan since the dissolution of the Soviet Union) (Roberts, 1998; Kamalov, 2021). For the youths of Almaty these terms sound at best unfamiliar, and, at worst, anachronistic to Uyghur life in an urbanised, Russified and increasingly internationalised milieu. In recent years the identity of Uyghur youth has been shaped by a myriad of factors, including the resurgence of Kazakh nationalism, the increasing activism of the Uyghur diaspora, the cut-off of links with the 'historical homeland' due to Covid-19 border closures, and by the widespread 're-education' of Uyghurs in neighbouring Xinjiang following the region's 'de-extremification ordinance' of 2017. Unfortunately, it is these 'anti-extremism' measures which lend this dissertation applicability to the current political Zeitgeist, one in which the 'Uyghur issue' is of critical to China's foreign policy, international relations with the PRC,

and discourse regarding terrorism, human rights, indigenous issues, and 'cultural genocide' (Anand, 2018; Burkhanov, 2018; Roberts, 2020).

There is a dearth of anthropological and social science works pertaining to the post-Soviet Uyghurs: those who do not remember the Soviet Union and have grown up exclusively within the context of independent Kazakhstan. The most prominent social scientists, historians, and anthropologists, such as Kamalov, Syroezhkin, and Roberts, conducted the largest part of their research in the late 90s and early 2000s with a cohort of Uyghurs who were shaped by the Soviet context. This dissertation seeks to rectify a literature gap regarding the post-Soviet Uyghur in Kazakhstan. Narrowly, it will contribute to the fields of Uyghur studies, Kazakhstani nation building, and Central Asian minority policy. More broadly, insights from this dissertation may be utilised as case studies in theoretical works regarding transborder populations, securitized peoples, stateless peoples, and contemporary acculturation and assimilation processes.

Most importantly, this study offers an opportunity for a minority group to air their voices internationally. While their identities shall remain anonymous, participants' own words are presented in this dissertation. The over 20 hours of interview material will serve as a basis for academic publications, informative reports, and conference papers. While my contribution may be small, I hope it shall act both as a vehicle for greater awareness of the issues facing this community and a testament to Uyghurs' dynamism and resilience.

1.2 A brief history of Uyghurs in Kazakhstan

The 2021 Kazakhstan census estimates the population of Uyghurs in the country as 290, 337, constituting 1.5% of the total population and making them the biggest Uyghur community outside of China. The vast majority of Kazakhstan's Uyghurs reside in Almaty or the Almaty Oblast. There is some dispute as to whether Uyghurs in Almaty Oblast deserve the title of 'autochthonous' to the lands; this debate has only become fiercer with the rise of Kazakh nationalism in recent decades (Kamalov, 2012). In any case, descendants of Uyghur-Taranchi farmers have been present in the Zhetysu/Semirech'e area of south-eastern Kazakhstan since at least imperial times, with the 'first mass migration of Uyghurs' (approx. 45 000) (Kamalov, 2021; Roberts, 1998) resulting from the annexation of the Taranchi

Sultanate and the subsequent Treaty of Saint Petersburg of 1881 which allowed the inhabitants of the transborder Ili Valley territory to choose either Qing or Russian citizenship and move to the side of the border corresponding to their new 'subjecthood' (Brophy, 2016).

Throughout the 18th and 19th century the border between the Qing Dynasty and the Russian Empire was relatively porous (Roberts, 1998) and Uyghurs were often able to travel between the empires unimpeded. During the chaotic upheavals of the early and mid-twentieth century Uyghurs migrated back and forth between the Soviet Union and China in response to political events. In the 1910s to the 1930s Uyghurs fled civil war, collectivisation, dekulakization and anti-religious campaigns in the Soviet Union and found refuge in Republican China. In the 50s and 60s, Uyghurs then fled now communist China, escaping civil war, famine, the Great Leap Forward and the 'anti-rightist' 'campaign against local nationalisms' (1956-57).

A substantial wave of Uyghurs (approximately 200 000) arrived in Kazakhstan between 1953 and 1963, influenced by successful Soviet propaganda (Tagirova, 2018; Nazarova & Imyarova, 2021). In particular, the 1962 'Yi-Ta' incident led to an almost overnight exodus of 60 000 Uyghurs from North-West Xinjiang into the Soviet Union. The Sino-Soviet Split resulted in a closure of the border in 1963. Trade and communication between family members were severed. The border would not re-open until 1985, with the highest freedom of movement falling between the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the early 2000s.

After the 2009 Ürümchi Riots, Almaty Uyghurs remark that the Chinese-Kazakh border became increasingly difficult for Kazakhstani Uyghurs to pass. Between 2008 and 2016 there was a cycle of Chinese state crackdowns and Uyghur-instigated riots, guerrilla warfare, and terrorist attacks (Anand, 2018; Roberts, 2020). The Uyghurs of the Kazakhstan-China borderlands gradually lost their status as valued intermediaries and traders; instead, within the context of the Global War on Terror, Uyghurs fell under suspicion in both states.

Since the arrival of Xinjiang Communist Party Secretary Chen Quanguo in August 2016 and the 'de-extremification ordinance' of March 2017, Beijing has implemented an even more intense securitisation of Uyghurs, alongside the widespread detention and 're-education' of Xinjiang's muslim and Turkic minorities. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute's Xinjiang Data Project has mapped more than 380 'detention network sites' in the province since 2017; with the estimated prisoner count exceeding one million in 2018. 65% of Xinjiang's mosques, and 30% of 'important Islamic sacred sites' may have been destroyed in this period (Ruser et al., 2020). These events once more led to the severance of family ties

between the Uyghurs of Xinjiang and of Kazakhstan. From 2020 to 2023 China enforced strict epidemic border controls resulting in an almost total halt on travel between the Central Asian republics and Xinjiang.

The Soviet Union established an Uyghur District in 1934, encompassing lands on the border with China with a high Uyghur population. Considerable state efforts were undertaken to shape an Uyghur nation within the framework of the Soviet nationalities policy; this eventually created a community of 'Soviet Uyghurs' with a historical narrative, dialect, script and cultural platforms bearing idiosyncratic differences from those of Uyghurs in Xinjiang (Brophy, 2016).

Uyghurs today are one of the minority groups in Kazakhstan with the highest degree of 'compact' settlement in communities known as *mehelle* or *zhurt/yurt* (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017); Uyghur plurality and majority settlements are in the Uyghur, Panfilov, Enbekshi-Kazakh and Talgar regions of Almaty Oblast (Kamalov, 2012), and the Dostyk/Druzhba, Shapagat/Zaria Vostok, Algabas, and Gornyi Gigant districts of Almaty city. The Uyghurs are also commonly characterised as having a high degree of ethnic consolidation or 'cohesion' (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017); the flipside of this 'cohesion' is perception by outsiders of the Uyghur community as 'closed' or 'separated' (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017).

1.3 Current legal and political status of Uyghurs in Kazakhstan

At the fall of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was the only successor state where the titular nationality did not make up a majority: only 39.7% were Kazakh, compared to 33% of Russians (Moscow: Goskomstat SSSR, 1991). Lacking resources, the state was faced with a difficult situation: how to accommodate the interests of the 130 ethnic groups of Kazakhstan while also redressing ethnic Kazakhs' historical grievances? Ó Beacháin & Kevlihan (2013) characterise Kazakhstan's post-Soviet policy as 'strategic ambiguity between civic and ethnic nationalism'. Schatz (2000) characterizes it as 'internationalism with a Kazakh face', wherein, as the 'core nation' (Brubaker, 1996) Kazakhs were understood as the 'legitimate 'owner' of the state', but policies were enacted to appease minorities. In many ways, this resembles the Soviet model which had also teetered between 'an ideology of internationalism' and an 'ethnic titularity' (Schatz, 2000); only now the Russians as the privileged 'older brother' (Sharipova, 2019) in the relationship were replaced with the Kazakhs.

Meanwhile, the internationalist concept of *homo sovieticus* was replaced with the term *Kazakhstani:* a civic identity applicable to all ethnicities which envisaged Kazakhstan as an 'transnational' Eurasian' crossroad 'integrated into world trends' (Laruelle, 2015). Accommodations given to ethnic groups included 'zero option' citizenship for all who had been resident in Kazakhstan at the collapse of the USSR; the designation of Russian as an 'official' language on a par with Kazakh (Law no. 151-1, 1997, Kazakhstan Legal Code), and the establishment of cultural forums for the representation of ethnic minority rights, such as state-funded and supervised ethnocultural centres and the Assembly of the People. The latter institution offers a platform for dialogue addressing the interests of ethnic minorities, while scrutinising laws to align with principles of ethnic harmony (Gov.kz, 2021). Since 2007, the Assembly sends 9 ethnic minority delegates to the lower Kazakh house of parliament, the Mäjilis, including one Uyghur delegate.

A report on ethnic coexistence by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (2017) states that 'Kazakhstan has constantly worked on creating constitutional and institutional foundations for the implementation and protection of the political rights of ethnic groups and their participation the country's socio-political life'; putting the country 'officially on the road to building a polyethnic civic society'. Although ethnic groups are forbidden from creating political organisations along ethnic lines or claiming territorial autonomy (Kazakhstan Constitution, Article 5), they are afforded individual and cultural group rights, such as the right to their own language and culture, and the right to freely choose their language of communication, education, and creativity (Article 19). All ethnicities are protected from discrimination by Article 14 of the same constitution. Further, the instigation of 'social, national, tribal, racial, class or religious discord' is a criminal offence under Law 174 of the Kazakhstan legal code.

The Uyghurs are arguably the ethnic minority which has made the most of their rights to cultural and linguistic autonomy as they are the only group to have a wide network of primary and secondary schools in a language other than Kazakh or Russian. Further, the community has active cultural platforms, such as the Uyghur theatre in Almaty and the monthly Uyghur language newspaper 'Uyghur Avazi', alongside communal gatherings, and structures such as *zhigit béshi, otuz-oghul, meshrep and chai*[1].

[1] These hierarchical organisational structures (*zhigit beshi)* and gatherings of males (*meshrep, otuz oghul*) and females (*chai)* have their own idiosyncratic rules and norms assisting cultural preservation (Kamalov, 2019). A discussion of these practices will take place in Chapter 5.

Despite a feeling of well-being towards fellow Kazakhstanis, many Uyghurs express a feeling of vulnerability. As a stateless people, individuals are concerned about the 'special position' of Kazakhs and a potential rise of ethnic nationalism which could infringe upon their rights (Konrad Adenauer Stiftug, 2017; Kozhirova, 2014).

1.4 Note on transliteration and terms

Most Uyghur terms I encountered were originally in the Uyghur Cyrillic script, but I have chosen to use the Uyghur Latin Yéziqi (ULY) transliteration. I believe this transliteration system to be the most intuitive to speakers of other Latin script languages, in particular Turkic languages. In some instances, for continuity purposes, the original transliterations of authors (such as Roberts, 1998) were kept. Likewise, I have chosen to keep already popularised English-language transliterations, for example when referring to the city of Kashgar.

For the Kazakh language I have used Kazakhstan's official Latin script as per the January 2021 update. Occasionally names or places are given in a Russified transcription that has become reified in western sources, with the Kazakh version noted in footnotes.

For Russian language sources I have used the ALA-LC Latin transliteration system.

For Mandarin sources I have provided the Latinized pinyin, alongside both the simplified Chinese characters and the English language translation.

Unless indicated otherwise all English-language citations of texts originally rendered in foreign languages are my own.

Nowadays some academics (eg. Roberts, 2020) chose to refer to the 'Uyghur homeland' (Uyghur: *weten*) rather than Xinjiang or East Turkestan. 'Xīnjiāng' is deemed to be a Chinese colonial term (Barmin et al, 2016; Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2022): indeed, it translates literally from Mandarin as 'new border' or 'new frontier' 新疆. Meanwhile, 'East Turkestan,' aside from merely emphasising historical ties with Central Asia (West Turkestan), could appear to tacitly endorse independence movements. While I recognize that Xinjiang is a Chinese term, I believe it is the clearest territorial delineation and allows us to distinguish Chinese-controlled land from the territories of Uyghur settlement in Kazakhstan which some Uyghurs may also consider part of their 'homeland'. It is also untrue that all Xinjiang Uyghurs prefer the term 'East Turkestan' as many refer to themselves using the term 'Shinjanglik' (personal communication with Xinjiang research anthropologist Zarina

Mukanova, 2022). I believe that recognizing the reality of Xinjiang's incorporation into China does not equal an endorsement of China's policies toward the Uyghurs. Therefore, I have used this term throughout the dissertation unless otherwise specified.

Finally, it should be noted that the word 'Uyghur' will be given the article 'an' not 'a' representing the preference of respondents to this study for an English language pronunciation[2] which renders the term closer to Uyghur rather than Mandarin.

[2] Ipa: /ujˈguɹ/ rather than /ˈwiːgɚ/. Uyghur pronunciation: /ʔuj.ʁur/:. Mandarin: Wéiwú'ěr 维吾尔

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Uyghurs find themselves at the intersection of various distinct cultural realms: they are a settled Turkic people of Islamic faith inhabiting land which borders on spheres of historical Russian and Chinese influence. Indeed, the Uyghurs are often 'orientalised' (Klimeš, 2015:2) through romantic narratives which describe their transition from Silk Road traders to marginalised inhabitants of a distant and mysterious land. Consequently, the Uyghurs' story is often told through a neo-colonialist lens which tends to treat them as peripheral, 'subaltern' objects rather than as autonomous individuals (Gladney, 2004; Anand, 2018). In historiography Uyghurs and Xinjiang are frequently depicted as 'pawn' in the 'geopolitical manoeuvrings' of the Great Game between China, the British Empire, and Russia (subsequently, the Soviet Union) (Gladney, 1990; Starr, 2004). In the field of International Relations, they are treated similarly, albeit with the British Empire swapped out for the United States, and with the addition of a problematic 'terrorist' discourse (Anand, 2018; Roberts, 2020). In both fields, we may agree with Brophy (2016)'s observation that experts 'tend to approach the region as either a Russian or a Chinese frontier'. Even in the fields of sociology and anthropology, which lend more agency to the Uyghur people, the vast differences between the cultures surrounding the Uyghur homeland often leads to analysis which fails to take into account the 'borderlands' (Roberts, 1998; Kozhirova, 2015) nature of the Uyghur people: post-Soviet and Russian experts often lack sufficient knowledge of China to contextualise the Uyghurs within the history of Xinjiang; China specialists, who dominate the Uyghur studies field (Roberts, 2009:362), lack the knowledge of Russian and the Soviet context to incorporate the importance of the Semirech'e Uyghurs into their studies. In particular, mainland Chinese studies of Uyghurs are generally keen to enhance narratives which distance the Uyghurs from their Central Asians roots and portray them as tied to China proper since *time immemorial* (Litvinskii, 1988; Fuller & Lipman, 2004; Millward, 2006; Bovingdon, 2010; Freeman, 2019) .Only in recent years has there been a trend towards the establishment of 'Inner Asian' or 'Eurasian' academic institutions, generally based in Western countries, which study *both* Xinjiang *and* Central Asia (Bulag, 2005; Millward, 2006:56-57). Nonetheless, due the legacy of the limitations listed above, most literature

regarding the Uyghurs is rather unintegrated across borders and disciplines, with 'Uyghur' studies oft ignoring the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan.

Availability constraints notwithstanding, we observe three main fields of literature published regarding the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan: historical accounts, terrorist discourse, and sociological and anthropological reports. In this review I will provide a brief synopsis of these fields; before addressing the applicability and limitations of these literatures to the dissertation at hand.

2.1 Historical narratives of the Uyghur Nation in Kazakhstan

During the first half of the 20th century Xinjiang found itself increasingly disconnected from the tumultuous Chinese mainland, and conversely, increasingly connected to the Soviet Union. In the 1930s political and economic ties between Xinjiang and the Stalinist state were so strong that historians have characterised the region as 'a Soviet sphere of influence' (Millward, 2007: 207) or even a 'semi-colony' (Kamalov 2009 citing Barmin, 1999). In fact, in January 1941 the region's warlord leader, Shèng Shìcái 盛世才, unsuccessfully petitioned for the incorporation of Xinjiang into the Soviet Union (Barmin et al, 2016:238; Nazarova & Imyarova, 2021:54). Within the field of Uyghur studies, it is thus 20th century historical literature which most frequently references the contribution of Kazakhstan's Uyghurs.

A certain school of western and Soviet scholars (for example, Fletcher, 1968:218; Gladney, 1990; Rudelson, 1997; Syroezhkin, 2003) claim that the Uyghurs had no concept of nation before the influence of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Uyghurs in the 1920s. Expeditions to East Turkestan (Xinjiang) by famous figures such as Kazakh ethnographer, Chopan Valikhanov[3] (1859), Russian orientalist Vasilii Bartold (1911) , and the proto-nationalist Uyghur poet Nazarghoja Abdusemätov (1914) had revealed the difficulty of finding an overarching ethnonym for the Uyghurs. The peoples of East Turkestan referred to themselves by their oasis identity (e.g. from Kashgar *kashgarlik*), by their Turkic identity (*turki),* by their status as settled *'sarts'* (i.e. not nomads), by their religion ('*musulman*'), or

[3] Qazaq: Şoqan Uälixan

by their subjecthood within the Qing Dynasty as '*chantou*'[4] (turban-wearers). In fact, by the 1920s, the term 'Uyghur' had fallen out of use for at least five hundred years (Saguchi, 1978; Gladney, 1990) and was 'long forgotten' (Barmin et al, 2016:223) by the local populace. The ethnonym can be traced back to the Uyghur Khaganate (744-840) and referred to nomadic peoples from the Mongol steppes who gradually became sedentary in the Tarim Basin, transitioning through various faiths such as Buddhism and Manichaeism. As the settled Turks of this area gradually adopted Islam between the 10th and 16th centuries, so too did the 'Uyghurs' disappear (Haneda, 1978; Oda, 1978; Gladney, 1990; 2004:214; Syroezhkin, 2003).

The aforementioned school of historians (Benson, 1990; Gladney, 1990; Rudelson, 1997, Syroezhkin, 2003; Kozhirova, 2004) dates the rebirth of the term 'Uyghur' to the 1921 Tashkent conference where Kashgarian and Taranchi delegates from Xinjiang and Central Asia decided that settled Turks of Xinjiang should not be referred to by their oasis or place of origin, but by the unifying, mythical-sounding anachronism 'Uyghur'. This term had been popularised among Jadidist revolutionaries in the Russian empire (Brophy, 2005; Klimeš, 2015, Freeman, 2020) and Soviet Uyghur cadres, such as Abdulla Rozybaqiev. The adoption of this collective identity was not inevitable. The Uyghurs of north-west Xinjiang and Kazakhstan were referred to as 'Taranchi' in Russian imperial censuses and by Russian ethnographers, distinguishing them from the 'Kashgarians' of Qing-controlled southern Xinjiang (Abashin, 2007; Roberts, 2009; Gladney, 2006). In the early 20th century, there was potential for the establishment of two distinct Uyghur ethnicities from these separate 'proto-nations' (see: Roberts, 2009:364-366 citing the ethnographic studies of Nikolai Pantusov, 1881, 1890, 1906, 1909). Soviet Uyghur linguists played a key role in bringing together the various Uyghur dialects into one national tongue (Roberts, 2009:372), and solidifying the Taranchi/Ili dialect as a main ingredient of standard Uyghur (Hahn, 2006; Freeman, 2020:229). This linguistic standardisation was key in the merging of Kashgari and Taranchi identities into 'Uyghur' by 1937 (Brophy, 2005:229-231).

The unifying term of 'Uyghur' was allowed to spread through the adoption of a Soviet-style nationalities delineation by Xinjiang's warlord leader, Sheng Shi Cai (Klimeš, 2015:179-181). The aforementioned school of historians cite the continuation of this Soviet-style nationalities policy (rather than the Guomindang's 'five races one union' policy) in

[4] The term (Mandarın: chántóu 缠头) literally means 'wrapped head' and was used by the Qing state to refer to settled Muslim Turkic subjects. It is now considered derogatory.

Maoist China as the source for further consolidation of 'Uyghurness'; an identity which would grow stronger as the Muslim oasis-based Turks juxtaposed themselves against the 'Other' in the form of the Chinese state, while simultaneously appropriating and utilising the state's own Maoist-Stalinist ethnic labels (Gladney, 1990; 1998; 2004).

In recent years, a trend has emerged which de-emphasizes the Soviet influence in forming the Uyghur collective identity, arguing that significant Uyghur group solidarity prior to the 1920s, even if it was not expressed in a 'nation state' paradigm (Shahrani,1984:33-35). This view can be seen in the works of Millward (2007), Newby (2007), Ildiko Beller-Han (2008), Roberts (2009), Thum (2014) and Klimeš (2015). A particularly detailed account of 20th century Uyghur ethnogenesis is offered by J.L. Freeman (2019) who gives agency in the solidification of Uyghur ethnic identity to both the Uyghurs of Xinjiang and Kazakhstan, with a particular focus on the key role of the borderlands intellectuals of the Ili valley. A similarly nuanced cross-border approach is offered by David Brophy (2005), who underlines the gradual adoption of the term Uyghur (in some places predating even the Russian revolution) and dispels constructivist myths of the Tashkent conference as the overnight origin of the Uyghur nation. Further, this school of thought tends to agree with Hirsch's (2005) assertion that the Soviet nationalities delineation was not merely a 'top-down' imposition, but rather a nuanced negotiation with local people who were not devoid of agency. Brophy (2006:17-18), Roberts (2009) and Freeman (2019) conclude that the Soviet Union somewhat unwittingly instigated the conditions which resulted in the 'official birth' of the Uyghur nation, but did not create the substrate from which it was formed.

Following the Sino-Soviet split and the increased integration of Xinjiang into China proper, the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan increasingly fall out of the historical and ethnographic literature of the 'Uyghur studies' field. To learn about the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan in this period, we must therefore turn to Kazakhstan's own Uyghur history writers. Seminal works of the Soviet period include 'The revival of the Uyghur people' (Roziev, 1968/1976); 'The flourishing of Uyghur culture' (Khamraev, 1967) and 'Essays on the history of the Uyghurs of Soviet Kazakhstan' (Kabirov, 1975). These texts represent highly propagandised histories which portray the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan as the true inheritors and preservers of a rich culture and language, while underlining how China 'grossly distorts and falsifies' (Kabirov, 1975:6) the history of the Uyghurs. They depict the Uyghurs of China as meek and oppressed, while the Soviet Uyghur flourishes in a society which is 'nationalist in form, but socialist in content':

"The long-suffering fate of the Uyghurs of the XUAR stands out clearly against the fate of the Soviet Uyghurs, whose enormous shifts in life during the years of Soviet rule are a direct rebuke to the Han chauvinist politics of the Peking leaders'.

(Kabirov, 1975:6*)*

A state-endorsed Soviet Uyghur historiography, coupled with the USSR's relatively strong funding of Uyghur institutions and schools, ensured that, for the long years of the Sino-Soviet split, Kazakhstan's Uyghurs could continue to conceptualise themselves as a worthy people in the Soviet family of nations (Kamalov, 2012).

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Uyghur historiography fundamentally changed. Kamalov (2012) highlights the widespread arrival of popular ethnonationalist Uyghur histories from China. These texts counter the PRC's maximalist narrative of Xinjiang as 'inseparable' and Chinese from 'time immemorial', by creating their own maximalist histories which co-opt all the great legacies, empires and cultures which passed through East Turkestan as part of one contiguous Uyghur nation — in so doing, the texts aimed to 'present an independent Uyghur past worthy of collective pride' (Bovingdon, 2004:368). This flow of Uyghur nationalist texts from China to Kazakhstan represented a reversal of a trend wherein nation-building ideas had been exported from Kazakhstan to Xinjiang (Kamalov, 2012). Works such as *'the Uyghurs'* by Turgun Almas inspired the production of equally propagandistic historical works from Kazakhstan's own Uyghurs, for example, by Kasym Masimi (1998, 2000, 2002, 2011) and Khozhamberdiev (2001, 2010) (both authors cited in Kamalov, 2012). Alongside these aggrandising histories of Uyghur glory, Kamalov also underlines an incipient literature based on homegrown histories: representing an 'indigenousness' which remains antithetical to state-endorsed Kazakh historiography.

This review of historical literature has revealed some fundamental contrasts. From the 'Uyghur studies' field, we witness an active interest in Kazakhstan's Uyghurs in the period of the formation of modern Uyghur nationhood in the early 20th century. Experts then neglect the developments of Kazakhstan's Uyghurs in the late 20th century. Meanwhile, local Uyghur scholars give comparatively less attention to these early 20th century processes and rarely include 'constructivist' perspectives on Uyghur ethnogenesis. Soviet literature preoccupies itself more with propagandised ideas of flourishing Uyghur culture in Kazakhstan (Kamalov, 2012; Brophy, 2006:2), while contemporary Uyghur histories have either created great aggrandising narratives of Uyghur culture (Bovingdon, 2004; Kamalov, 2012) or focused on narrow 'indigenous' histories (Kamalov, 2012). In this context, one may

wonder which of these ‘histories’ remain relevant to the Uyghurs of contemporary Kazakhstan.

2.2 The Uyghurs and the Global War on Terror

With the onslaught of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) in 2001, the Uyghur people of both Xinjiang and Kazakhstan became increasingly ‘securitized’ and seen as part of a global ‘existential’ threat (Anand, 2018; Roberts, 2020). The Chinese state began to categorise violent acts involving Uyghurs on its territory as ‘terrorism’ rather than merely ‘separatism’ (Millward, 2009; Anand; 2018; Roberts, 2020). Violence in Xinjiang had been occurring intermittently since the Baren township incident of 1990, with a significant lull between 1998 and 2008 (Klimeš 2015:3; Gladney, 2021). In the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic games, the PRC redoubled efforts to surveil the Uyghurs, casting several ‘sporadic incidents of violence’ (Gladney, 2021) under a global spotlight. Beijing’s crackdowns during this period were legitimised through an international media complex of terrorism experts who cited the jihadist propaganda platforms of small Uyghur communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Roberts, 2020:119-120). A significant uptake in Uyghur-perpetrated violence occurred following the Shaoguan incident and Ürümchi riots of 2009. Until 2017 ever harsher cycles of State suppression of Uyghur dissent were inevitably followed by even more acts of violence (Anand, 2018; Roberts, 2020).

The term ‘terrorism’ is notoriously hard to define. Roberts (2020:33) argues that the term ‘has no universally accepted definition and is primarily a political label used to discredit non-state actors engaged in armed resistance against a state or society’. The famous adage that ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’ (Seymour, 1975; Ganor, 2002) is particularly applicable to the ‘Uyghur question’, as international narratives continue to compete for dominance: are some Uyghurs, as the Chinese state claims, influenced by a contagious Salafist ideology which makes them an ‘irrational’, ‘animalistic’ and unpredictable threat (Roberts, 2020 : 229), or are they simply implementing self-preservational violent resistance against an increasingly assimilationist Chinese state?

Boaz Ganor (2002) proposed a more workable definition for terrorism which would allow for a clearer distinction between guerrilla warfare against state apparatus and acts designed to inspire fear and target civilian populations. According to Ganor, for an act to be terrorist it must fulfil three criteria: it must be **violent,** it must **deliberately target civilians**

who are not directly responsible for the terrorists' perceived grievances, and it must be **politically motivated**. By Ganor's definition many acts which the Chinese government defined as terrorism were in fact examples of local unrest and guerrilla vigilantism against an overbearing Chinese security system. Only in the years following the Beijing Olympics can we observe acts of violence which clearly meet Ganor's definition of 'terrorism': targeted against innocent civilians and politically motivated, such as the 2014 knife murders in Kunming. For Roberts (2020:218-261) the appearance of a genuine Uyghur terrorist threat in China was a 'self-fulfilling' prophecy: having been subject to constant surveillance and suspicion, a certain subsection of rural, male, pious Uyghurs became engaged in warfare in Syria. These Uyghurs were not necessarily Salafist nor concerned with global jihad, but rather intent on honing their skills for a future conflict against China.

Like Roberts, Gladney (2021) the links between Uyghur-Han conflict and international, jihadist terrorism:

'Not a single documented incident has targeted infrastructure (railways, bridges, power stations, airports), which one would expect if there were a well-organized terrorist or secessionist conspiracy. (...) Even those who claim that there is active Taliban and al-Qaida coordination of Uyghur violence in the region, have a hard time pointing to violent incidents that resemble al-Qaida techniques, such as sophisticated weaponry, roadside bombs, or even suicide bombings.'

Russian-language scholars tend to be much less willing to dismiss Uyghur links to global terror, placing 'jihadism', 'radical ideas' and the 'East Turkestan Islamic Movement' (Barmin et al., 2016 :242; Syroezhkin 2003) at the core of their analysis. This securitizing position is best illustrated by the Kazakhstani historian and orientalist, Syroezhkin. In his 800-page work 'the Myth and Reality of Ethnic Separatism in China and Central Asian Security' (2003), Syroezhkin provides an exhaustive list of suspicious Uyghur organisations in China, Kazakhstan and abroad. While he admits the difficulty of directly pinning these organisations to specific acts of terror, his work seeks to legitimise both China and Kazakhstan's Uyghur security concerns. Syroezhkin emphasises the links between Uyghur groups in Xinjiang and Kazakhstan, and underlines the necessity of quashing this terrorist threat in order to preserve stability in the region and ensure mutually beneficial relations between the Central Asian states and the PRC. Syroezhkin includes heavy citation of Chinese sources and speaks of repressions of Uyghur cultural identity and political rights as regrettable, but understandable side-effects of China's striving for 'modernisation' and securing of its western frontier and resource access.

In contrast to Russian-language scholars, certain sections of Kazakhstani society are sympathetic with the Uyghur cause for East Turkestani self-determination (Roberts, 2021; Simpson, personal communication, 2022). This may be partially attributed to generally high levels of sinophobic sentiment and cultural solidarity not just to the Turkic Uyghurs, but to the ethnic Kazakhs in Xinjiang (Roberts, 2021). Nonetheless, Kazakh national identity has been shaped by a long-standing narrative which juxtaposes 'ethnocultural' idiosyncratic Kazakh forms of Islam to 'foreign' Arab 'salafist' and 'wahhabist' forms of Islam (Omelicheva, 2011; Thibault, 2021); ensuring a fertile soil for concerns about radical Islam among Kazakhstanis. Further, several terrorist acts in Central Asia have been officially attributed to Uyghurs, associating the Uyghur nationality with the 'terrorist' paradigm in public consciousness.

Pannier (2020) and Roberts (2021) underline the 'ambiguousness' of Kazakhstan's position on the detainment of Turkic peoples in Xinjiang: the state must walk a 'tightrope' (Roberts, 2021) between its own people's anti-Chinese and pro-Turkic affiliations on the one hand, and economic and security ties with China on the other. Kazakhstan is an active member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, whose focus remains the coordination of initiatives combating the 'Three Evils' in the region: terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism. On several occasions Kazakhstan has refused refuge to Uyghurs and Kazakhs who had been internees in Chinese re-education camps, instead returning them to the Chinese authorities (Pannier, 2020; Roberts, 2021); further, the Atajurt civic organisation, which campaigns for justice for Turkic internees of the camps has been put under significant surveillance and political pressure (Volkan Kaşıkçı, 2020).

I contend that the label of 'terrorist' is equally convenient for both the Kazakh and Chinese states: it creates a 'biopolitical' arena (Roberts 2018:234-235 citing Foucault, 1976/1997) wherein anti-state actors are dehumanised and perceived as an existential threat akin to a virus. Whereas separatists or dissidents 'may be reformed into loyal citizens or engaged to better understand their grievances, the logic of the GWOT assumes that terrorists are virtually unchangeable and have no legitimate grievances' (Roberts, 2018). The philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, (2002) argues that the GWOT has created a modern 'homo sacer', an 'accursed' human who is not subject to the normal protection of the law afforded to prisoners or wars or criminals. If one's enemy is such a 'homo sacer', rather than a dissident, then the state has free rein to deal with perceived threats with 'urgent and exceptional measures' (Buzan & Wæver, 2001) that 'fall outside of typical political processes' (Omelicheva, 2011). It also allows the state to form convenient and cohesive narratives of

‘good’ versus ‘evil’ which may act as persuasive and unifying myths for nation building. In Kazakhstan the implementation of this ‘good’ vs ‘evil’ myth-making can be most recently seen in the events of January 2022 where ‘protesters were tarnished as terrorists’(Qaisar, 2023) in order to form a cohesive narrative of the disruption and violence of *Qantar*.

It seems that the term ‘terrorist’ is here to stay, and its application will continue to impact Uyghurs’ daily realities and self-perception on both sides of the Sino-Kazakh frontier. Regardless of whether acts of violence in Xinjiang are truly ‘terrorist’, the damage for Uyghurs has already been done. In China state surveillance has created a ‘panopticon’, while ‘re-education’ has meant that the Uyghur people are at risk of succumbing to ‘cultural genocide’ (Roberts, 2020) and ‘social death’ (Tobin, 2021). Meanwhile, in Kazakhstan Uyghurs avoid cultural or political action which could gain them the dehumanising label of terrorist (personal communication with Uyghurs in Almaty, 2022).

2.3 Contemporary cultural and sociological studies

The work with the most direct overlap with the themes of this dissertation is a 2017 Konrad Adenauer Foundation report concerning the theme of ethnic co-existence in Kazakhstan, based on a series of qualitative interviews with members of seven ethnic minorities. The Uyghur portion of the report recruited 12 respondents, 7 men and 5 women aged 27 to 68 from Almaty and the Almaty region, and asked questions concerning Uyghurs’ social status within Kazakhstani society, their relationship to their ‘historical homeland’ (Xinjiang), and their attitude toward government institutions. The report concluded that, despite concerns about the rise of Kazakh nationalism, most Uyghurs feel ‘fully protected’ within their society and report living in ‘harmony’ with their ethnic neighbours. Instances of discrimination were limited to minor offences during childhood and adolescence. The respondents seamlessly combined their Kazakhstani and Uyghur identities and had no desire to move to ‘Uyghurstan’ (Xinjiang), unless under duress:

“We don’t want to move, we’ll only move if they start to repress us, and send us back ‘home’”

Respondent Khadisma from Koshmambet

Grievances within Kazakhstani society were listed as 'worry' concerning a tendency to favour ethnic Kazakhs, and restrictions in the work sphere, based on nepotism and, particularly in the civil service realm, Kazakh language requirements.

Despite no participants expressing a desire to return to Xinjiang/Uyghurstan, sentiments of frustration at Chinese policy toward Uyghurs were common. Likewise, some respondents expressed the view that the creation of Uyghurstan was necessary in order to protect the rights of Uyghurs globally:

'Every people has the right to create its own state. Only the creation of a separate state can solve all problems.'

Bakhitzhan, Talgar

Interestingly, the results of this survey regarding Kazakhstani Uyghurs' attitude towards their historical homeland tallies up with the results of interviews conducted by Sean Roberts in the 1990s which revealed that Uyghurs at that time in Kazakhstan would not move to Xinjiang, even if an Uyghur nation state were established. These same respondents, however, did stress the importance of establishing a Uyghur nation state for the protection of Uyghur rights in general:

'If I had a state in Uighurstan, my wishes would be fulfilled here (in Kazakhstan). Now I am a person without a state. Nobody pays attention to me; nobody listens to me. I am not saying that we are treated badly in Kazakhstan, but if we had a state elsewhere, we'd live better here in Kazakhstan.'

Uighur trader in 1997 *in* Roberts, 1998

Roberts' works of this time (1996, 1998, 2007) gave textured insights into the cultural preservation mechanisms, cross-border trade practices, and worldviews of the Uyghurs of the Soviet-Kazakhstan transition period. Indeed, '*the Uighurs of the Kazakhstan borderlands'* (1998) is the most widely cited English language source on the post-Soviet Uyghur community. The article convincingly argued that Kazakhstan's Uyghurs should be considered a 'borderlands' community, rather than a diaspora, while also investigating the negotiations of correct cultural practice among different generations of Uyghurs. Roberts created a three-fold designation of Uyghur generations which has been mentioned in many English-language (and indeed many foreign language) anthropological and historical texts regarding Kazakhstan's Uyghurs until current times[5]: the three groups were the 'yerliklär'or local

[5]In English we see, for example, Tagirova (2018); in Russian Kozhirova (2014:4), Syroezhkin (2003:482) Nazarova & Imyarova (2021:52); in German: La Mela (2019).

Uyghurs who could trace their roots to the Semirech'e/Zhetysu area of modern Kazakhstan; *'kegänlär'* or 'newcomers' who arrived in the 1950s and 60s; and *'khitailiklär',* recent arrivals from Xinjiang. Only recently has Uyghur-Kazakhstani historian and sociologist, Ablet Kamalov (2021), provided a robust counter argument based on interviews with Uyghur community members which questions the applicability of these terms not just in the current day, but from their very inception. Kamalov (2021) instead outlines the contrast between 'yerliklär' (locals) and oasis identities of newcomers, such as *kashgarlik*.

The bulk of Kamalov's recent sociological work (2019, 2021, Harris & Kamalov 2021) has dealt with the practices of *meshrep* and *otuz oghul:* lively male gatherings which act as social opportunities and spaces where the 'rules' of Uyghur culture are enforced and negotiated. These include religious vs. secular conceptions of community, food and alcohol customs, and the preservation of songs, dances, and traditions. Kamalov's work (2019, 2021) also investigates the self-administration of Uyghur neighbourhoods (*mehelle)* and Uyghur community power structures, namely the *zhigit-béshi:* a term which can refer both to the head of the *meshrep* and elected Uyghur community leaders. Kamalov is able to access almost exclusively male and Uyghur community structures from the inside and offer nuanced reports on evolving cultural practices and attitudes to neighbourhood authority.

Verena La Mela, a doctoral student at the Max Planck Institute for Ethnological Studies, has recently conducted fieldwork in the Kazakh-Chinese border town of Zharkent. She implements participant observation and interviews to investigate cross-border trade, social networks and processes of societal transformation in Kazakhstan. Where Kamalov has gained access to male practices of societal preservation (*meshrep* and *otuz oghul),* La Mela has been able to investigate *chai:* a female equivalent which represents a combination of *tea* gatherings and a 'rotating savings and credit groups' (La Mela, 2019). Like Roberts, La Mela's work characterises the Uyghurs as suffering from their statelessness, with regards to 'access to material and immaterial state resources' (La Mela, 2019). La Mela claims that the Uyghurs are 'de facto excluded from political office and government positions', and that they are increasingly concerned that 'their rights and freedoms in Kazakhstan are gradually decreasing.' Her most recent published work describes the Uyghurs' strong involvement in 'shuttle trade' with China as an emancipating economic opportunity, but also a 'political and economic field of tension'.

In 2014 Svetlana Kozhirova conducted a survey of sociological issues among the Uyghur community of Kazakhstan. Kozhirova presents the results of two questions regarding cultural loss and cultural preservation. The most frequently reported losses of culture were

cited as ‘traditions and rituations’, ‘marriage traditions’, *mehelle*, and national clothing. The ‘best preserved’ traditions were cited by Uyghurs as ‘culinary traditions’, ‘everything’, ‘dances’, festivals, religion, and music. Kozhirova offers no demographic break-down for her two survey questions, which are plagued by a high proportion of non-responses. Nonetheless, her interview interpretations remain insightful: Kozhirova agrees with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung’s characterisation of the Uyghur community as ‘closed’, with Kamalov’s view of *zhigit béshi* and *meshrep* as institutions contributing to ‘the preservation of ethnic identity’ and La Mela’s (2019) view that Uyghurs are politically disenfranchised and disengaged.’

Like many Kazakhstani scholars, and, indeed, the Kazakh state[6], Kozhirova has concerns regarding the Uyghur community. She finds it ‘worrying’ that 73.8% of the Uyghurs she surveyed are ‘willing to defend the interests of their historical homeland’, thus creating a ‘hidden conflict-triggering field’ (*skrytoe konfliktogennoe pole)* for Kazakhstan-Chinese relations. Like Syroezhkin (2003), Kozhirova suspects certain Uyghur cultural institutions as ‘propagandising a war of nation liberation’.

2.4 Conclusions and questions raised

The three literatures at hand have all given useful insights into the positionality of Kazakhstan’s Uyghurs.

The historical literature has revealed the central place that the Uyghurs of Kazakhstan have played in the formation of worldwide Uyghur national consciousness. It has demonstrated that for a large part of the 20th century Uyghur identities in Kazakhstan were influenced by a propagandised narrative of Soviet flourishing and Chinese repression. These narratives have likely left an indelible mark, filtering down to younger generations, and have affected Kazakhstan’s Uyghurs’ understandings of and interactions with Xinjiang.

The analysis of Uyghurs and ‘terrorist’ discourse has unveiled a problematic and potentially dehumanising prism which Uyghurs may strive to avoid. This prism undoubtedly affects concerns of security and personal vulnerability among contemporary Uyghurs.

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[6] See Oka (2007) for a detailed treatise on how Uighurs have been considered a ‘transnationalist’ threat in Kazakhstan, and, as an example of this phenomenon, Harris & Kamalov (2021:19)’s account of the Kazakh’s state censorship of religious Uyghur *meshrep*

The synopsis of sociological and anthropological texts has displayed the social structures through which some Uyghurs preserve their ethnic identities, whilst also bringing to light certain perceptions of China, Xinjiang, and Kazakhstani society.

Each of these literatures also has its limitations. The historical and 'terrorist' discourse literatures contextualise our understandings of present behaviours and self-perceptions of Kazakhstani Uyghurs, but do not in themselves uncover these behaviours and self-perceptions. Meanwhile, the bulk of the sociological and anthropological literature either does not disclose demographic data (Kozhirova, 2014; La Mela, 2019) or has a bias towards older Uyghurs who have lived considerable amounts of their lives in the Soviet Union (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017; Kamalov, 2019, 2021; Roberts, 1996, 1998, 2007, 2009). Despite post-Soviet Uyghurs (those aged under 40) constituting 65.7% of the total population of Kazakhstan (Kozhirova, 2014), none of the texts exclusively deal with this generation and thus fail to represent trends in Uyghur self-understanding within the new Kazakhstan context. Further, most of these texts do not mention the radical changes and 're-education' witnessed in Xinjiang in the last five years and their potential effects on Kazakhstani Uyghurs' self-perception. Moreover, the results of the most recent surveys are either based on a wide-spread of Uyghur settlements (Kozhirova, 2014; Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2017) or focused on a non-city context (La Mela, 2019). There is thus a lack of research on the more specific urban environment of Almaty city, which represents a major (and quickly expanding) seat of Uyghur population in Kazakhstan[7].

Considering the historical literature, we may ask ourselves, have these narratives continued to the current day and entered the consciousness of young people, or have there been fundamental shifts in Uyghurs' relationships to Kazakhstani society and the Chinese 'other'? In view of security and terrorist discourse, we may wonder if young Uyghurs have been radicalised toward an anti-China stance or instead have become keen to play down their historical roots to avoid securitisation in their own state? In the light of the sociological and anthropological literatures, we may wonder if the divisions in Uyghur society, particularly between those of different generations of migrants, have remained the same. We may also ask whether the cultural preservation processes for young Uyghurs are the same as those for an older cohort, and if their degree and manner of acculturation into Kazakhstani society has changed.

[7] Almaty city represents approximately a third of the Uyghur population in Kazakhstan (Kozhirova, 2014 :4). In 2022 alone the city's population grew by 2.6% (vlast.kz, 2023).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Philosophical underpinnings

This dissertation represents a phenomenological approach to ethnographic research which seeks to produce 'rich, idiosyncratic, insightful, and yet data-based interpretations and accounts of lived experience' (Trent & Cho, 2020: 965). I believe that the 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973) in this project are inherently meaningful and conform to an honourable tradition of humanistic anthropological research which renders its subjects as complex story-telling beings rather than merely statistical ciphers and abstractions.

This work is grounded in the belief that all human perceptions and knowledge are funnelled through the restricted capacities of the human mind and human senses. As a result, I lean toward 'interpretivist' schools of thought which argue that reality is not out there 'waiting to be discovered' (Pascale, 2010:78), it is of the mind. While the natural sciences have uncovered rules of physics which are ostensibly the same regardless of the observer, this is not true of social reality which is not only filtered through human consciousness, but also constantly negotiated with others. I agree with the assertion that 'human interpretation' is the 'the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world' (Prasad, 2005:13). From this follows this dissertation's focus not on what *is* real, but on what the study's participants *think* is real. These realities may be either subjective or 'intersubjective' (Prasad, 2005:18) i.e. representing socially-influenced shared beliefs among members of a certain group, society or culture.

While I do not concern myself with grand theorising and do not adhere to the 'positivist' schools of sociological research, I wish to make my 'data' as usable as possible to other researchers of all schools. I also wish to avoid the pitfalls of certain anthropological research which 'provides little direction for generating coherent conclusions about human experience outside of the context of full considerations of culture' (Thorne, 2020:147). As a result, throughout this dissertation I will offer interpretations of behavioural patterns and potential causal relationships which can be tested or expanded upon in the theoretical works of future researchers. Transferability of findings is achieved through the transparent approach

to my data collection methods, participant demographics, and philosophy of data creation outlined in the section **3:3 Research Design**.

3.2 Theories of identity, ethnicity, and acculturation

Identity

Brubaker (2006:33) argues that in social science the term 'identity' is overused, 'hopelessly ambiguous' and analytically overburdened. It can be used for 'weak' conceptions, which emphasise the transitory, malleable, and fluid nature of the self, and 'strong' conceptions which portray an inherent, relatively unchangeable *sameness*, about which an individual can be mistaken (Brubaker, 2006:37-41). In other words, identity can seemingly be so diffuse as to mean nothing at all, or so concrete as to have no breakable points for analysis.

A compromise can be found in Hale (2004:463)'s definition of identity as a 'social radar' made up of various 'points of personal reference'. The total sum of an individual's identity is comparatively stable or, at the very least, appears to be an 'integrated whole' from the insider's perspective due to continuity of experience (as seen in the ability to form a narrative of one's life from birth to present). The individual reference points in this constellation, however, may change, and their changes ultimately impact the whole. I find these 'reference points' run parallel with Brubaker's (2004) concept of 'identifications': a verbal noun which emphasises the processual and temporal aspects of identity. I contend that the study of self-identifications (acts or processes) rather than identity (an internal state of sameness) is more accessible to sociologists and anthropologists who are limited to data collection techniques such as participant observation, surveys, or interviews. These techniques can record the dialogue of a moment but cannot represent a whole constellation of identity. Indeed, debate remains as to whether *individuals* themselves can even accurately portray their own identities: whether they are informed experts on their own life world capable of transmitting their experiences and views to others, or rather 'defended subjects' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000:169) who do not grasp the depths of their own inner worlds. As a result, this dissertation gives preference to the terms *self-identifications, (self-)perceptions,* and *(self-)understandings* over *identity.* I treat *self-identifications* as self-referential utterances in a certain moment of time which generally reflect an inner state, *perceptions* and

understandings as views stated by individuals on how they *see* and *interpret* the world, and *identity* as the whole of these identifications, understandings, and perceptions. The first three terms are comparatively unproblematic and will be reported on extensively in the subsequent chapters. *Identity*, on the other hand, will be mentioned tentatively, and hypothetically as part of my own holistic interpretations.

Ethnicity

In everyday parlance, ethnicity is often treated in a 'groupist', reifying manner as if a 'real, substantial category' in the world (Brubaker, 2004). Yet the actual content of ethnicity is ambiguous and differs across cultures and situations (Okamura, 1981; Wimmer, 2008). Various behaviours and physical attributes may be readily categorised as *ethnic* in some instances and not in others. This insight leads me to an understanding of ethnicity as a 'schema' used for purposes of 'cognitive economy' (Brubaker, 2004:64-87). This schema allows us to categorise individuals and simplify our predictions and interpretations of others. Although an abstraction, ethnicity's everyday application means it has tangible consequences in the real world, and thus the study of *how* and *when* behaviours and appearances are *ethnicised* is of great significance.

The *constructivist-primordialist* dichotomy has been the source of vigorous debate in the study of ethnicity. Many scholars ostensibly disagree about whether ethnic identities are relatively modern and created by society, or whether they have deeper primordial roots. Hale (2004:461) argues that this dichotomy is a mischaracterisation, and that most scholars already share common understandings regarding ethnicity:

'Primordialists and constructivists agree that identities are constructed (i.e., that beliefs about primordiality are formed) during some identifiable period in history, that their symbolic content can vary to some degree over time, and that there is at least some variation in the intensity or nature of group identification across members.'

In terms of ethnicity, Hale elaborates that so-called '*primordialists'* and '*constructivists'* disagree about a finer matter: whether individuals can change their identities 'relatively easily' as they situationally apply ethnic identifications and behaviours as *instruments* to achieve certain goals, or whether people are restricted by society's habit of viewing ethnicity in primordialist terms and thus ethnic identities tend to endure once formed. Hale encourages us to reframe the debate in clearer terms as either *instrumentalist* and *perdurabilist*.

I have adopted a middle-way perspective between instrumentalism and perdurability. I acknowledge certain restrictions to identity change among my study participants: these limitations are caused both by 'hard' (or 'easily accessible') ethnic markers such as language and physical appearance, and 'softer' factors such as acts of community or symbolic content and myths of common origin (Smith, 1999). Nonetheless, I acknowledge the uniquely malleable environment of multi-ethnic Kazakhstan where it is common to have identities with dynamic mixes of ethnic markers: one may be a Kazakh, monolingual Russian-speaker of Asian appearance; a Kazakh monolingual Kazakh speaker of more European appearance; a trilingual Uzbek-Tatar '*metis'* of mixed appearance, or any variation of countless ethnic and linguistic configurations. These ambiguities complicate cognitive schemas and might increase the fluidity and instrumentalization of ethnic identities as compared to certain other countries and cultures.

Internal divisions and ethnic boundaries

In this dissertation I will investigate both *external* and *internal* divisions: external divisions will refer to the fault lines in Kazakhstani society, while internal divisions will indicate the lines along which Uyghurs perceive substantive differences within their own ethnic community. Internal divisions may lead to 'othering' (Powell & Menendian, 2018) whereby certain other community members are seen as less valid in their ethnic identity or threats to ethnic cohesion**.** When divisions are perceived as unbridgeable, they may also encourage the exit of certain individuals from the ethnic community. The study of these divisions is pertinent as it allows us insights into how a perception of an ethnic whole is maintained, policed, and negotiated.

Ethnic *negotiation* and *policing* are part of a wider discourse of *ethnic boundaries* and *boundary maintenance.* Boundaries between ethnicities are defined by Wimmer (2008:975), as having both a *categorical* (or cognitive) and *behavioural* (or social) dimension. A boundary is formed when one first categorises oneself and others as belonging to a distinct group, and then when one acts upon this categorisation through acts of connection and distancing which establish social networks. Boundaries are the core of ethnicity:

'The first fact of ethnicity is the application of systematic distinctions between insiders and outsiders; between Us and Them. If no such principle exists there can be no

ethnicity, since ethnicity presupposes an institutionalised relationship between delineated categories whose members consider each other to be culturally distinctive'

(T.H. Eriksen 2010:23)

Further, Barth argued that ethnic groups are defined not by the content of ethnicity itself, but by the active maintenance of a boundary (1969:14).

Acculturation

Having accepted that identity as a social radar made up of various reference points (expressed as 'identifications') (Hale, 2004; Brubaker, 2004), some of which may be perceived as 'ethnic', and that these identifications help individuals and communities form ethnic boundaries, we may turn our attention to *processes* of ethnic maintenance or loss. This can best be understood through the framework of 'acculturation'.

Acculturation has often been conflated with assimilation and a great degree of blurriness still exists regarding the distinction of these two terms (Sam, 2006:11-14). For the purposes of this dissertation, I define assimilation in the manner most familiar to a 'layman': a unidirectional process whereby an individual adopts more and more elements of a host culture and loses elements of their 'native' culture (Teske & Nelson, 1974). This term has negative connotations regarding the forced nature of change and linear directionality (Sam, 2006:13). Acculturation, on the other hand, is the 'potentially bidirectional and reciprocal' (Sam, 2006:12; Teske & Nelson, 1974) process whereby two cultures interact. Change can occur along two distinct axes: preservation or erasure of the previous culture, and participation in or acceptance of the new culture's elements **(**Sam, 2006:81**)**. This conceptualisation helps us avoid zero-sum fallacies.

Preference for the term *acculturation* over *assimilation* does not mean that this dissertation abandons analysis of power imbalances and forced processes of increasing sameness. I believe the term simply better acknowledges the *agency* of all parties involved. Indeed, in subsequent analysis and interpretation this dissertation will draw upon this agency by engaging with Berry's theories of acculturation *strategies* and *settings* (Berry, 2006). An analysis of the applicability of these frameworks can be found in Chapter 5.3: Theorising acculturation strategies.

3.3 Research Design

This project is based on an emergent research paradigm: it did not follow a linear line from research questions and hypotheses to data collection and solutions. Instead, it adheres to the 'ethnographic research cycle' (Spradley, 1980/2016) where each stage of research begs and refines new research questions. This cycle is characterised by Harrison (2020:339) as '*iterative', 'inductive'* and '*inscriptive'*: iterative meaning that the researcher constantly re-engages with theory, data, and analysis; *inductive* indicating that the researcher approaches their topic and participants with an 'open mind', and *inscriptive* in that it uses writing as the preferred manner of recording, processing and communicating social realities. An ethnographic approach allows benefits of both an outsider's and insider's perspective, aligning with the anthropological maxim of seeking to make 'the strange familiar and the familiar strange'. It is based on an agreement with Wengle (1998)'s observation that members of a certain 'cultural group are at times blind to many of the most salient aspects of their lifeways (Harrison, 2020:345 citing Wengle, 1988). By combining perspectives, within the paradigm of participant driven research, these ethnic blind spots can be exposed, debated, analysed, and interpreted.

In summer 2022 I embarked upon a semi-structured qualitative interview project with the Uyghurs of Almaty. I viewed respondents as informed experts on their own lives, communities, and beliefs who had offered me the privilege to 'co-create' (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) knowledge. The choice of interviews was motivated by the principle of participant driven research: I wanted Uyghurs themselves to tell me the matters which they found relevant. Among the qualitative methods, interviews have the strongest power to convey 'first-order' understandings i.e. how we *experience* life, using language to explain this lived experience to ourselves and others (Brinkmann, 2020:438, citing Merleau-Ponty, 1945). They are thus the most powerful tools for transferring *insight* about how it feels to *be* another person. Interviews allow us to 'obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015:6)'. Through interviews we can combine the benefits of both an insider's and outsider's perspective: the community can *describe* and analyse phenomena in their own words to further emic understanding, while the researcher contributes etic insights in his interpretation.

Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful when we only have the opportunity to interview a subject on one occasion (as in this project): we can stick to themes of relevance without waiting for them to be brought up unprompted, yet we still allow respondents to deviate and elaborate on points of interest (Bernard, 2006:212; Brinkmann, 2020:438). When done right, interviews are also a beneficial process for the respondents themselves as they lead to interesting self-insights and reflections (Bernard, 2006).

As mentioned in my **conclusions to the literature review,** most prominent English-language sociological and anthropological research concerning Kazakhstani Uyghurs had been carried out in the nineties and early 2000s, largely dealing with an age demographic that had spent most of their life in the Soviet Union. Consequently, I set the age parameters of my interview respondents to fall between 18 and 35, thus ensuring that I would not overlap with a community that had been thoroughly studied. Instead, I would seek to collect and analyse the narratives of those who had no memory of the Soviet Union and negotiated their identities exclusively within independent Kazakhstan.

The choice of 'average' young people rather than cultural 'curators' or 'experts' was motivated by the understanding that Kazakhstan's political environment requires self-censorship. Namely, Uyghurs who work within the organs of power may have an intrinsic motivation to preserve those structures and avoid 'rocking the boat'. Further, my attempts to contact Uyghur academics and experts have led to many non-responses. Moreover, I disagree that status as a community, political or artistic leader automatically guarantees a more objective insight into the Uyghur community at large.

The choice not to interview Uyghurs who had spent extended periods of time in Xinjiang was motivated by concerns about participants' safety. In the words of one prominent cultural figure: 'I can tell you a lot informally, one to one, but you know the situation, I can't give interviews about these topics. I don't want things to happen to me or to people over there… A lot of western journalists portray things in a certain light.' (Personal communication, December 2022).

The choice to interview urban Almaty Uyghurs was mainly grounded in practical concerns due to my lack of Uyghur networks outside of the city. Even so, Almaty is the home of a third of Kazakhstan's Uyghurs (Kozhirova, 2014). It is also a rapidly expanding city, drawing in citizens from across Kazakhstan and the surrounding Almaty Oblast. Indeed, many of the respondents had immigrated to Almaty from other Uyghur settlements. This means that although insights from Almaty have their own urban specificities, they are insightful on a larger Kazakhstani scale.

I began my approach to the local community through attending Uyghur classes for adult learners at a language school in the 'Druzhba/Dostyk' Uyghur-majority region of Almaty. Participant observation before, during and after the classes among local Uyghurs provided the 5 preliminary topics for interviews:

1) **Homeland and history**
2) **Language and education**
3) **The local Uyghur community**
4) **The preservation of Uyghur culture in Kazakhstan**
5) **Cross-border relations with China and Xinjiang Uyghurs**

I collected demographic data, noting the participants' gender, profession, level of education, age, and whether they had grown up or continue to live in an Uyghur majority region or city district. Further, I inquired about the participants' understanding of three generational terms underlined by Sean Roberts (1998). The choice of such a wide range of topics was motivated not only by the desire to give the participants the agency to choose what they considered crucial for my understanding; but by the knowledge that some questions, such as those regarding 're-education' camps in Xinjiang, are highly sensitive. I found it critical to build trust and rapport with my interview subjects through showing genuine and open-minded curiosity towards their daily life and cultural practices. Perhaps for this reason, all participants displayed a willingness to discuss sensitive issues during their interviews; such topics included the disappearance of relatives in Xinjiang, bridal kidnapping, interrogations by Chinese border guards, bullying, and discrimination.

The final research questions emerged gradually over the process of the first few interviews, as I combined insights from literature with the participants' guidance.

I used the snow-ball approach to introduce research subjects based on trusted contacts. All interviews gave explicit consent both orally and in written form for their transcripts to be used in the dissertation and in any journalistic or academic works or conferences pertaining to the dissertation. Consent and procedural issues were scrutinised and approved by the ethics committee of the University of Glasgow. I conducted all interviews in Russian, over an encrypted zoom call or in a safe public space such as a café. Participants were informed that all their data and insights would be anonymised, that the audio recordings of their interviews would be stored only on a secure data server at the University of Glasgow, and that all recordings would be destroyed after the completion of the project.

I conducted 16 interviews over summer 2022, each lasting 45 to 90 minutes. Having noticed significant repetition in the kinds of answers given to certain questions, I concluded that saturation had been reached within this demographic.

The demographic breakdown of the participants can be seen in Table 1: Demographics.

The respondents represent a reasonably wide section of Almaty society with various professions, levels of education, and origins from different areas of Almaty and Almaty Oblast. 7 participants currently resided in an Uyghur-majority area, while a further 5 had spent substantial life periods in an Uyghur majority area. The snow-balling method of participant qualification has well-known limitations, such as privileging participants with extensive social connections and perhaps leading to a study of only a thin social stratum. Nonetheless, it is suitable for communities that are 'hard to reach' by other means (Bryman, 2012:203, 424), in this case a 'borderlands' (Roberts, 1998) community with a contentious status both in Kazakhstan and in Xinjiang. Further, as this project is carried out with a qualitative lens in the field of social anthropology, it does not aim to offer big data, generalised breakdowns for the whole of Uyghur society in Kazakhstan, but rather to provide nuanced 'thick' insights into a specific community. Nonetheless, I acknowledge an over-representation of males (10 of 16 participants) and a bias towards well-educated and middle-class participants.

I presented myself to respondents as an Irish researcher in the field of anthropology and sociology who is studying the Uyghur language and has an active interest in learning about Uyghur culture. As far as possible, I did not mention my personal views, beliefs, identifications, and values. These precautions notwithstanding, I acknowledge the role of my own status as a 'western' researcher may have afforded me privileged access to certain 'higher status' respondents and inadvertently prompted certain responses.

I ask future researchers to consider these and other limitations of my positionality when interpreting the results of this study. Nonetheless, it is my view that rather than 'regarding uniformity and standardization as the summum bonum' (Eisner, 1991:35) of research, we should view researcher subjectivity as the very source of the richness and nuance of anthropological research (Trent & Cho, 2020:965) as without subjectivity we cannot form the narratives that lie at the core of qualitative research.

While not viewing my respondents as 'defended subjects', I agree with Hollyway & Jefferson's (2000:169) assertion that sometimes humans are 'motivated not to know certain aspects of themselves (…) and produce biographical accounts which avoid such knowledge.'

As a result, I also ask readers to peruse the demographic data and situational information provided in this dissertation to form their own understanding of the positionality of the research subjects and which factors may have influenced the way they opened up during interviews.

I transcribed, translated, and thematised all the interviews manually, with consultation from a licensed proof-reader and philologist. As I have professional training in Russian to English translation, advanced knowledge of Mandarin and intermediate Uyghur, I am confident that the quotations and translations are faithful renderings. Due to the strict word limit of this dissertation certain quotations have been lightly edited and condensed, while keeping the original meaning and tone intact. I took a manual analytical approach to enable a more thorough immersion in my participants' words and experiences. I believed this approach would allow my work to benefit from both *holistic* and *atomistic* perspectives toward quantitative research (Willis, 2007). While the findings presented in subsequent chapters aim to preserve the 'wholeness and meaningfulness of the data' (Willis, 2007:298), the manual transcription and thematization allow for some of the advantages of fine-grained immersion in *atomistic* detail (Trent & Cho, 2020:963).This middle way allows instances of nuanced storytelling, while also providing evidence-based insights within the space limitations of this dissertation. I view the understandings gained from interviews not as permanent 'nuggets' of data which I have 'mined' (Brinkmann, 2020:432), but reflections of a certain co-creation in a moment of time (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Respondent	Age	Gender	Profession	Education	Residing in an Uyghur majority area?
A	30	M	Marketing	Master's Degree	Yes
B	27	F	Marketing	Bachelor's Degree	No
D	30	M	Programmer	Secondary	No
S	35	F	Florist	Secondary	No*
K	28	M	Researcher	Master's Degree	No
G	26	F	Entrepreneur	Master's Degree	No*
N	33	M	Travel industry	Bachelor's Degree	Yes
I	33	M	Engineer	Master's Degree	No*
L	24	F	Teacher	Master's Degree	Yes
M	23	M	Designer	Bachelor's Degree	Yes
P	23	M	Hairdresser	Secondary	Yes
U	29	M	Project manager	Bachelor's Degree	No
C	23	M	Human Resources	Bachelor's Degree	No*
E	18	F	Student	Secondary	Yes
F	22	M	Programmer	Bachelor's Degree	Yes
Y	21	F	Student	Secondary	No*

*Participant grew up or spent a substantial portion of their life in an Uyghur majority environment.

3.4 Research questions & hypotheses

Through a combination of participant observation, interviews with Uyghur subjects and consultation with literature, I determined the following questions as pertinent to the study of urban Almatian youth. Each question will be developed at least one chapter of analysis in this dissertation, with final conclusions and interpretations arising from the content of each chapter addressed in Chapter 7: Conclusions and limitations.

Question 1: Self-identification

Which ethnic markers and self-identifications do young Uyghurs apply to themselves, both in the Kazakhstani context and the Uyghur community context? Which divisions are prominent in the self-categorizations of Uyghurs?

Question 2: Identity maintenance

What are the strategies of acculturation and identity maintenance employed by young Uyghurs?

Question 3: External factors affecting Uyghur identity
What role do ‘external’ factors play in the shaping of Uyghur identity?
3a) What role does the Kazakhstani state and society play in shaping Uyghur identity?
3b) What role does China play in shaping Uyghur identity?

Insights into question 1 can be found in Chapter 4: Self-Identification and Division in the Uyghur Community. Analysis of question 2 follows in Chapter 5: Identity Maintenance Strategies and Risks. As processes of acculturation are inherently tied to acculturative settings, question 3a will be largely addressed in Chapter 5, while question 3b regarding the role of China will be addressed in Chapter 6: Between Ürümchi and Astana**.** For the purposes of this dissertation ‘internal’ factors refer to elements within the Kazakhstani Uyghur community itself; while ‘external’ factors refer to extracommunal factors i.e. elements of culture or behaviour which are not created by the Kazakhstani Uyghurs themselves. As the name of chapter 6 suggests, the two main external protagonists in this dissertation will be Kazakhstani society and the Chinese state.

I believe these three chapters of analysis will help us answer a greater overarching question: **how do young Urbans perceive themselves and their ethnic community?**

Although this dissertation is neither positivist nor hypothesis-oriented; I formed two tentative hypotheses at the beginning of my study to help conceptualise a general direction to my research:

Hypothesis 1: Dynamics of Identification

Many young Uyghurs are likely to identify more strongly with Kazakhstani society and their Russified urban Almatian milieu than their ethnic identity; as such, **the more young Uyghurs identify with Kazakhstani society, the less they will identify with their ethnicity.**

Hypothesis 2: Transborder identifications

Events in China and Xinjiang are likely to continually shape and redefine the acculturative processes of young Uyghurs; as such, **the more that young Uyghurs are exposed to people or events originating in China and Xinjiang, the more salient their Uyghur identity may become.**

Unlike traditional positivist research, the researcher will stray away from reducing research participants to data points and operationalizations. I will instead engage with these hypotheses within a holistic paradigm of interpretivist, ethnographic research (as previously described in Section 3.1 of this chapter).

Chapter 4: Self-Identifications and Divisions in the Uyghur Community

4.1 Identifications, categorisations, and 'homeland'

All respondents were asked to rank 'Uyghur', 'Kazakhstani' and 'Almatian' on a list of priorities. While the researcher understood that a ranking of these terms would be problematic as they are not necessarily perceived as competing or mutually exclusive, it was still deemed useful as a provocative push-off point for discussions of ethnic and civic self-identifications and classifications:

Table 2: Identification rankings

Uyghur first	Kazakhstani first	Equally Uyghur & Kazakhstani	Almatian first	Situational identities	Transnational identity
F, G, L, M, N, U	A, B, S, C	Y	D	E, I, K, G	A, D, G, K, N, P
6 participants	4 participants	1 participant	1 participant	4 participants	6 participants

Four participants ranked Kazakhstani as 'higher' than 'Uyghur'. Of these, two participants (**S** and **C)** were keen to distance themselves from the Uyghur community. **S** stressed her status as a 'patriot of Kazakhstan' and the low levels of ethnic salience in her life, stating that she rarely used the Uyghur language or thought of her heritage. Participant **C** mentioned that even expulsion from Uyghur society would not have a major impact:

'Even if they say that I can't live or speak with Uyghurs, it probably won't have any effect on me. Of course, there'll be some sadness. Why did they single me out? But it wouldn't affect my life at all.'

The other participants who ranked Kazakhstani first justified this as a logical movement from wider society to ethnicity. **A** emphasised that, as he aged, his priorities had shifted from the 'micro' to the 'macro', stating that he increasingly thought of himself as a 'citizien of the world'.

Indeed, 'transnational' identifications were rather common among respondents i.e. references were made to a compound set of identities which transcended borders. Examples include 'citizen of the world' (Respondent **A** & **N**), a 'post-Soviet person' (**D** & **G**), and a 'combination of the languages I speak: I'm Uyghur, Kazakh, American and Russian' (Participant **P**)' .

A plurality of participants avoided ranking identities, with four (**E, G, I** & **K**) stating that the choice of first identification was highly context-specific. This aligns with 'situational' ethnic identification theory (Okamura, 1981) which states that participants may intentionally or unintentionally adjust the saliency of ethnic identities and behaviours depending on contextual factors. Participant **K** offered a particularly rich description of the situationality of his self-identification:

'Right now because we're sitting in a cafe and discussing my Uyghurness, maybe I would first call myself an Uyghur and then an Almatian. So I guess Uyghur, Almatian, then Kazakhstani. But on a regular day I might start with Almatian, and Kazakhstani and Uyghur might compete. Abroad I'd say I'm from Kazakhstan first. But within Kazakhstan these terms don't compete with each other.'

Six participants placed the term 'Uyghur' before Almatian or Kazakhstani. Of these, only participant **F** showed a reluctance to cite a Kazakhstani identity:

"My people, my nationality does not have its own country. Not many people know about us. If…No, *when* I achieve success in the future, I'll introduce myself as Uyghur. Because I'm proud of it. Last of all I'll say I'm Kazakhstani. My success doesn't depend on the fact that I'm Kazakhstani, but on who I am."

It was clear from all respondents' interviews that their everyday preoccupations, identities, and memories were firmly tied to Kazakhstan, not Xinjiang. Indeed, all participants emphasised the depth of their engagement in Kazakhstani society, with many referring to high levels of integration and the harmonious state of interethnic relations in Kazakhstan. An explanation for the 'commonality' of all Kazakhstanis was offered by Participant **A**:

'All Kazakhstanis have something in common, which unites us all. It's our citizenship, identity and shared history. All the peoples of Kazakhstan were deported or

forced to come here. And, thanks to Turkic hospitality, other peoples could survive on the steppe.'

Discussions of ethnic and civic identification often transitioned into the theme of homeland. As a result, I asked participants to tell me their understandings of the terms 'homeland' (*rodina)* and 'historical homeland' (*istoricheskaiia rodina)*:

Table 3: Homeland

Respondent	Homeland	'Historical' homeland
A	Kazakhstan, specifically Almaty	Ürümchi, XUAR
B	Kazakhstan	East Turkestan
D	First Almaty then Kazakhstan	Taranchi lands; Ghulja, XUAR
S	Kazakhstan	No feelings of attachment to a 'historical homeland'
K	Unsure between Kazakhstan and *weten*	East Turkestan
G	Kazakhstan	Uyghurstan; East Turkestan
N	Kazakhstan	Weten
I	First my village, then my country (Kazakhstan)	Taranchi lands; East Turkestan
L	Kazakhstan	Weten
M	Kazakhstan	East Turkestan
P	'I don't belong to any country'	No response
U	Kazakhstan	XUAR
C	Kazakhstan	Uyghurstan
E	'We don't have a homeland'	Uyghurstan
F	Kazakhstan	Uyghurstan; East Turkestan
Y	Kazakhstan	Uyghurstan

Regardless of self-identification, a strong majority (14/16) participants stated that they viewed Kazakhstan as their full or partial homeland. In terms of historical homeland, participants generally referred to Xinjiang, but used a variety of terms. These ranged from the administrative-sounding XUAR[8] (3 participants), the localised concept of the Taranchi lands of the Ili valley and Ghulja region (2 participants); the Uyghur for 'homeland' (*weten)* (2 participants); East Turkestan (6 participants) and Uyghurstan (5 participants). The use of a variety of terms for one and the same region was a common theme throughout the interviews, as respondents switched seemingly unconsciously between *Uyghurstan, East Turkestan, Xinjiang, weten* and *XUAR*.

[8] Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

The term ‘East Turkestan’ is often preferred by Uyghurs for extra-communal communication (Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2022), with ‘weten’ (homeland) a common parlance between Uyghurs themselves. The term Xīnjiāng 新疆 is rejected as either a historical anachronism or a Chinese imperial imposition which was only solidified with the establishment of Xinjiang province in 1884 (Uyghur Human Rights Project, 2022). In Uyghur studies, the term ‘Uyghurstan’ is increasingly falling out of use as it is perceived as implying a preference for the Uyghur majority; many instead the term ‘East Turkestan’ believing it better encapsulates the idea of a state which incorporates all non-Han ethnicities (e.g. Tajiks, Dungans, Kazakhs and Uzbeks) whilst also harking back to the two independent East Turkestani Republics (1933-1934, 1944-1949). The use of ‘Uyghurstan’ by this study’s respondents is likely unaffected by this diasporic and academic discourse and instead may indicate a linguistic habit (with the host country Kazakhstan and neighbouring countries all ending in -stan) or perhaps a perception of Xinjiang as a potential homeland for the Uyghur people along Kazakhstani lines i.e. one which may be multicultural, but guided by the titular nation (Schatz, 2000; Sharipova, 2019) .

Only one participant, **Y**, expressed the hope to one day emigrate to a free Uyghurstan stating that she ‘wouldn’t even have to think twice about it’. The rest of the participants demonstrated future orientations not to the ‘historical’ homeland, but to their civic homeland or an international milieu[9].

4.2 Robert’s terms: yerliklär, kegänlär, khitailiklär

As mentioned in the literature review, Roberts (1992) underlined a division in the Uyghur community of Almaty based upon respondents’ historical roots. He spoke of ‘yerliklär’or local Uyghurs who could trace their roots to the Semirech’e/Zhetysu area of modern Kazakhstan before the mass immigrations of Uyghurs from Xinjiang to the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 1960s; *‘kegänlär’* or ‘newcomers’ who traced their origins to this wave; and *‘khitailiklär’,* recent arrivals from Xinjiang.

These generational terms had recently been rejected by Kamalov (2021). As a result, I asked respondents to explain the three terms. I believed this would not only prove or disprove the relevancy of these terms in the present day, but also serve as a

[9] See: Emigration orientations.

spring-board for discussions of generational or other divisions within the Uyghur community.

"I'm going to show you three terms. Without thinking too much, I'd like you to briefly describe what they mean to you."

The framing of this question was designed to avoid prompting respondents to apply the terms to generations and instead start from a 'clean slate'. The terms were written in the Uyghur version of the Cyrillic alphabet most familiar to participants.

Table 4 represents participants' understanding of the word 'Yerliklär'[10]. Definitions which somewhat align to Robert's ('local' Uyghurs who have not migrated in living memory) are marked in bold and green. We can see that 8 participants listed Yerliklär as meaning either 'locals' or 'compatriots', 1 participant gave a related meaning as 'people from a certain place', 3 participants were unable to give an answer, 3 participants experienced semantic confusion and believed the term to refer to a gravesite, and one participant produced an unrelated meaning.

Table 4: Yerliklär

Respondent*	Definition of yerliklär
A	**Compatriots (*zemliaki земляки*) or people from the same area**
B	People from a certain place
K	**Locals; people who haven't come from China**
G	**It's an antonym to people who have arrived (*prishedshye пришедшие*); locals, who lived in the Soviet Union.**
N	**Locals**
I	**Locals**
L	A place where people are buried
M	**Locals**
P	**Compatriots (*zemliaki земляки*); family; from my land**
U	A place where people are buried
C	I can't translate it. Maybe a grave?
E	Maybe a place for a celebration or somewhere with a large amount of people
F	**Compatriots (zemliaki земляки)**

***3 respondents (D, S & Y) did not give a response to this question.**

Table 5 represents the understanding of the word 'Kegänlär'[11]. None of the terms exactly aligned with Robert's definitions (Uyghurs arriving in Almaty in the

[10] Cyrillic: йәрликләр
[11] Cyrillic: кәлгәнләр

1950s and 1960s). 12 respondents used a variation of 'people who have arrived from elsewhere' or who are not local and 2 respondents (marked in bold and blue) cited a definition somewhat closer to what Roberts had intended, i.e. Uyghurs who had arrived from China.

Table 5: Kegänlär

Respondent*	Definition of kegänlär
A	People who have arrived *(prishedshie, priezzhie, пришедшие, приезжие)*
B	People who have arrived from elsewhere (*priezzhie приезжие)*
K	Immigrants or people who have arrived, but I've never used this word for Oralmans or Uyghurs from China
G	**People who have come from China**
N	People who have arrived from elsewhere *(priezzhie, приезжие)*
I	**People who arrived in Kazakhstan from China**
L	People who have arrived from elsewhere *(priezzhie приезжие)*
M	People who have arrived from elsewhere *(priezzhie приезжие)*
P	People who aren't local
U	People who have arrived from elsewhere *(priezzhie приезжие)*
C	People who have arrived from elsewhere or come in to visit *(priezzhie, prishedshie, zashedshie приезжие, пришедшие, зашедшие*)
E	People who have arrived or are arriving from elsewhere (*prishedshie prikhodiashchie пришедшие, приходящие)*
F	People who have arrived from elsewhere (*prishedshie пришедшие)*
Y	People who have arrived

***2 respondents (D & S) did not give a response to this question.**

Table 6 shows the understanding of the term 'Khitailiklär'[12]. In orange and bold we see 7 respondents who offered a similar definition to Roberts: Uyghurs in China/Xinjiang or arriving from China/Xinjiang. 3 respondents stated that it might refer to Uyghurs who were like the Chinese. 7 respondents claimed it may refer to the Han Chinese themselves or people from China.

[12] Cyrillic: хитайликлəр

Table 6: Khitailiklär

Respondent*	Definition of khitailiklär
A	Uyghurs from China or Uyghurs similar to the Chinese
B	Wetentsy. Uyghurs from China
K	We don't use this word, but probably Uyghurs from China. Wetentsy
G	Wetentsy. Uyghurs from China
N	People from China
I	The same as kelgänlär (people who arrived in Kazakhstan from China)
L	Chinese people
M	Wetentsy, Uyghurs in China
P	It could be refugees from the old times or the Chinese
U	Chinese people
C	Chinese Uyghurs
E	Probably the Chinese themselves, or people who are like the Chinese
F	Uyghurs who are like the Chinese
Y	Chinese people

***2 respondents (D & S) did not give a response to this question.**

Only one respondent claimed that he had used these terms to refer to different generations of Uyghurs. When asked what terms they used to refer to Uyghurs originating in China, a very popular response was 'wetentsy' (*вәтәнцы)*. This hybridisation combines the Uyghur word 'weten' (homeland) and adds the Russian plural personifying affix 'tsy'. Participant **I** elaborated that the demonyms *Kashgarlik* or *Kashlik* were commonly used to refer to any Uyghur from China regardless of whether they originated in Kashgar.

Respondents stated that, while Robert's terms may have been relevant for their grandparents, they viewed other generational divisions as important. **G** divided society into three brackets, according to 'the Soviet', 'post-Soviet' (born after 1990) and 'New Kazakhstan' (born after 2000) generations, placing herself in the middle bracket. Other participants used more vague delineations between the 'youth' (*molodëzh', yashlar, kichik uyghurlar*[13]) and 'older people' (*starshee pokolenie, vzroslye, nashi roditeli, nashi babushki i dedushki, chong uyghurlar*)[14].

Respondent **A**, cited intergenerational differences in language of media consumption, claiming that the elders relied on Russian-language sources and thus

[13] Russian for 'youth'; Uyghur for 'the young' and 'little Uyghurs'
[14] Russian for 'older generation', 'grown-ups/elders', 'our parents and grandparents'; Uyghur for 'big Uyghurs'

leaned towards a pro-Russian geopolitical view, while younger people are increasingly able to consult sources in English. Four participants (**K, L, M, P**) stated that their elders were more nationalistic and less cosmopolitan. **P** argued that young Uyghurs were 'willing to develop in all spheres, not just their diaspora'. While the older generation was still caught up in 'showing off and idealising their nation', the youth 'only remember in their soul that they are Uyghur'.

A, B, K & **U** highlighted a tendency away from community consolidation (*splochënnost'*) towards individualism:

'Our generation has fewer fears. We've become more egotistical, and we think first and foremost of ourselves. Our parents always think about their elders, or someone else, and only afterwards themselves. All our relatives are like that.'

Respondent **B**

According to participant **U,** this manifested itself in everyday political conflicts, as the elder generation was less likely to support civic movements:

'During protests or any sort of public comments, the elders in our diaspora try to prevent us young people from making harsh statements, because in their understanding this country has taken us in and allowed us to live here. Why should we aggravate the situation?"

Indeed, the idea of an older generation of parents and grandparents as sources of uncertainty avoidance and communal continuity was mentioned by a plurality of participants, who cited their role in preserving and policing language, customs, traditions and endogamy. A more detailed account of this policing can be found in **Chapter 5: Identity Maintenance Strategies & Risks**. It should be noted, however, that a plurality of participants stated that the divisions between Uyghur generations reflected 'general Kazakhstani' trends rather than particularistic trends to the Uyghur community.

4.3 New divisions & imagined 'others'

It became clear that most participants perceived divisions in the Uyghur community along lines other than generation. The most cited rift (present in 14/16 interviews) was along lines of urbanisation: between 'city Uyghurs', Uyghurs from Uyghur-majority suburbs/enclaves such as Druzhba & Algabas, and Uyghurs from the 'villages' (such as Shelek and Zharkent). The second most cited division was one of modernity between

‘contemporary/modern Uyghurs’ and ‘traditional Uyghurs’. The words ‘modern’, ‘urban’, ‘tolerant’ and ‘liberal’ tended to cluster together, as did ‘village’, ‘traditional’, ‘religious’ and ‘conservative’. While most participants mentioned these divides naturally as part of a wider discussion; **U**, **C**, **K**, **P,** and **M**, described in depth a divide between these two sub-communities, placing themselves on the ‘modern’ side of the perceived rift. **Figure 1: Imagined ‘traditional’ other** displays the overlap between location (in purple on the left); descriptive adjectives (in blue on the top) and certain cultural practices and values which participants readily associate with these locations or adjectives (in pink on the right). The numbers in brackets indicate the quantity of participants who used a certain word when indicating a divide in the Uyghur community or juxtaposing themselves against perceived ‘different’ Uyghurs. Terms which only received one response are not shown. Meanwhile, **Figure 2: Imagined ‘Modern’ Uyghur** represents a mirror-image of these terms.

When reflecting on the divide between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ Uyghurs, participants **U, C, K** and **M** elaborated that they had more in common with ‘modern’ or ‘liberal’ Kazakhstanis of other ethnicities than ‘traditional’ Uyghurs:

‘If you take the progressive and inclusive section of Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Russians, we’re all made of the same dough (*vse iz odnogo testa)*. We’re influenced not by traditions and laws imposed on us by our families, but more by western culture. We all have the same mentality. We’re different, but there are no differences between us (*my raznye, no mezhdu nami otlichii net*).’

Participant M

‘I feel closer to an educated person from my environment with the same values than to some random Uyghur.’

Participant K

The emerging concept of a ‘traditional’ vs. a ‘modern Uyghur’ led me to ask participants whether they considered themselves a ‘typical’ Uyghur, and whether they could describe their understanding of a ‘typical’ Uyghur. I wished to gain insights into stereotypes of Uyghurness and to test whether this would align with participants’ conceptions of a ‘traditional’ other. The responses to the theme of self-identification as a ‘typical Uyghur’ can be seen in **Table 7: ‘Typical’ Uyghurs?**. We see that only 2 participants call themselves ‘typical’, of which one uses the qualifier ‘to some extent’; 2 participants state that they’re unable to answer the question; and 4 participants reply that they are ‘modern Uyghurs’ (thus implying a juxtaposition between ‘typical/traditional’ and ‘Uyghur’). The rest state directly or indirectly a feeling of separation from ‘typical’ Uyghurs.

Figure 3: Imagined 'typical' Uyghur follows the same format as figures 1 & 2, showing respectively associated locations, adjectives and cultural behaviours/values associated with this 'typical' Uyghur. The answers gave insight into the perceived 'cultural content' of stereotypical Uyghurness, with the three most common responses being trade (7), Uyghur language (4), and eating traditional Uyghur food (4) such as lagman, manti or jiucai. This may suggest that for most participants 'typical Uyghurness' is expressed more in cultural behaviours (*acts of Uyghurness)*, while 'traditional Uyghurness' is expressed in identificatory terms as a perceived 'other'. Nonetheless, there are some overlaps between 'traditionalness' and 'typicalness', particularly in the responses of participants **C, P, S,** and **M**. These overlaps are underlined and italicised in **Figure 3**. Where perceptions of traditional Uyghurness and typical Uyghurness coincide and form a perceived 'other', we may wonder what ethnic content forms Uyghurness? Further, if this content varies from the participants' identities, does it put their Uyghurness at risk?

Consequently, I asked the questions 'what makes someone an Uyghur?' and 'which factors are most important for determining that someone is Uyghur?'. The responses are listed in **Table 8: What makes an Uyghur?.** 'Overtly primordialist' answers referencing blood as the sole determining factor for ethnicity were given by 2 participants; 'mixed' responses mentioning both cultural and biological factors were provided by 3 participants, 'constructivist' responses emphasising cultural factors such as language, traditions and food were offered by 6 respondents, and 'overtly constructivist' answers, stressing ethnic identity as an individual choice were provided by 5 participants. In order of frequency, the factors most cited for 'Uyghurness' were language or manner of speaking (8), self-identification (6), traditions (4), upbringing or childhood (4), blood (3), appearance (2), food (2), and culture (2).

Two 'overtly constructivist' participants (**F** and **P)** justified their decision through references to people of other nationalities who had crossed the ethnic divide towards Uyghur: in **F**'s case these were children of other nationalities adopted into Uyghur families who can 'pass down the ethnicity in their passport to the next generation'; for **P** this was a Russian friend who spoke Uyghur, followed 'Uyghur traditions' and had accepted islam. **S** and **L** also mentioned examples of Russians who had learnt Uyghur and integrated into Uyghur communities, yet they did not view them as Uyghurs. For **P**, however, Uyghurness was not a matter of physical, but spiritual blood:

'If you grew up on Uyghur traditions, Uyghur blood doesn't flow in you, but it flows in your soul.'

A contrasting view was expressed by **M** who argued that religion and sex could be changed, but ethnicity would always remain the same as 'a person can never change their blood'.

Two participants noted that their perceptions of what makes an individual Uyghur differ from those of the community at large. **D** referenced his relatives' prioritisation of the Uyghur language; while **P** argued that Uyghurs in his hometown of Zharkent believe in 'purity':

'(They think) you should have pure, unmixed Uyghur blood. You should speak Uyghur perfectly. And you should be Muslim.'

The *perceptions* of what an imagined 'other' might consider important for Uyghurness undoubtedly influenced respondents' own self-perception. Participant **Y**, for example, referred to herself as a 'broken Uyghur' (*buzuq uyghur)* in the eyes of some in her community due to her unwillingness to follow traditional gender roles or conform to norms of obedience toward elders; meanwhile **M** identified himself as 'a bad Uyghur' due to his insufficient knowledge of Uyghur language. Indeed, several participants (**M, K,** & **D)** mentioned that they had hesitated before giving interviews as they viewed themselves as non-representative of the Uyghur community at large.

4.4 Questions raised

From this chapter, several questions arise:

Firstly, do participants view their own Uyghurness as less valid than an imagined 'traditional' or 'typical' other?

Secondly, does the juxtaposition between the 'modern' self and the 'traditional' other put participants' ethnic identity at risk of assimilation?

Thirdly, does the fact that a large majority of participants adhere to constructivist or semi-constructivist views of ethnicity increase their risk of assimilation or identity loss?

Finally, are the 'modern' Uyghurs of this study representative of the urban Almatian community at large? And if they are not unrepresentative, are they unworthy of study?

Analysis pertinent to the first three questions can be found in the following chapter Chapter 5: Identity Maintenance Strategies and Risks; while grounded, interpretative answers to all the questions cited above can be found in Chapter 7: Conclusions and Limitations.

Figure 1: Imagined ‘traditional’ other

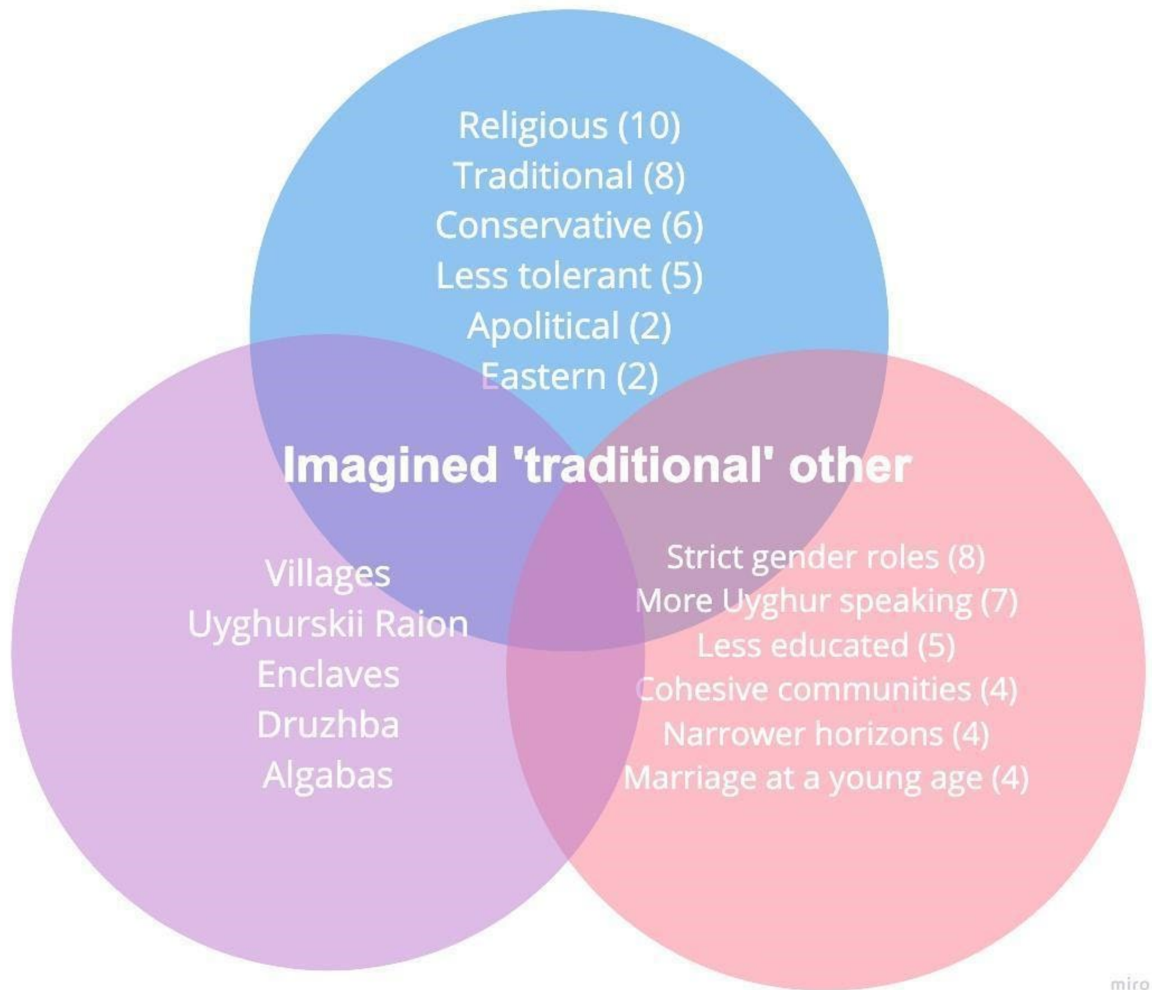

Figure 2: Imagined ‘modern’ self

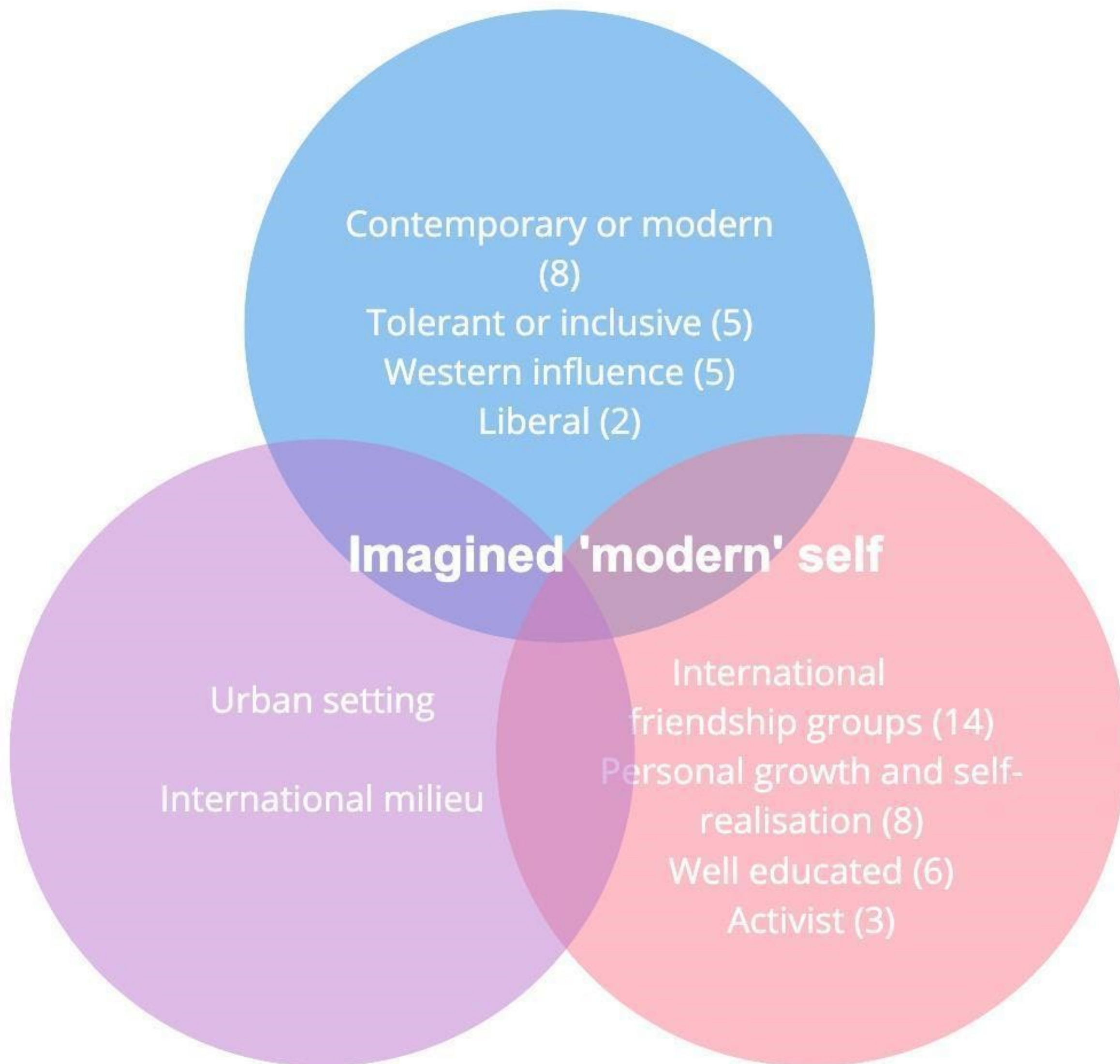

Table 7: ‘Typical’ Uyghurs?

Respondent*	Are you a typical Uyghur?
A	I totally identify as an Uyghur, but I’m not traditional. In many ways I’m not like a typical Uyghur.
B	I’m a modern Uyghur.
D	I didn’t grow up in the uygurskii raion and I almost don’t know Uyghur. I’m not typical.
S	I don’t even think about it (my ethnicity). There are no Uyghurs around me.
K	I’ve always felt like a not typical Uyghur. I’ve always stood on my own.
G	Some Kazakhs have any idea about who an Uyghur should be. And I don’t fit that mold.
N	**To a certain extent, yes.**
I	It’s hard to say.
L	**Yes, I’m typical, but I’m more modern.**
M	It’s not important to me, and I can’t say. Someone from the outside would know better.
P	*Implied self as untypical:* I love my people, but I can’t live with them.
U	I consider myself a modern Uyghur.
C	*Respondent referenced only descriptions of typical Uyghurs but strongly implied he did not belong in this group*
E	I’d probably consider myself a modern Uyghur.
F	If I’d gone to Uyghur school, I’d be a typical Uyghur.
Y	I’m a modern Uyghur.

Figure 3: Imagined 'typical' Uyghur

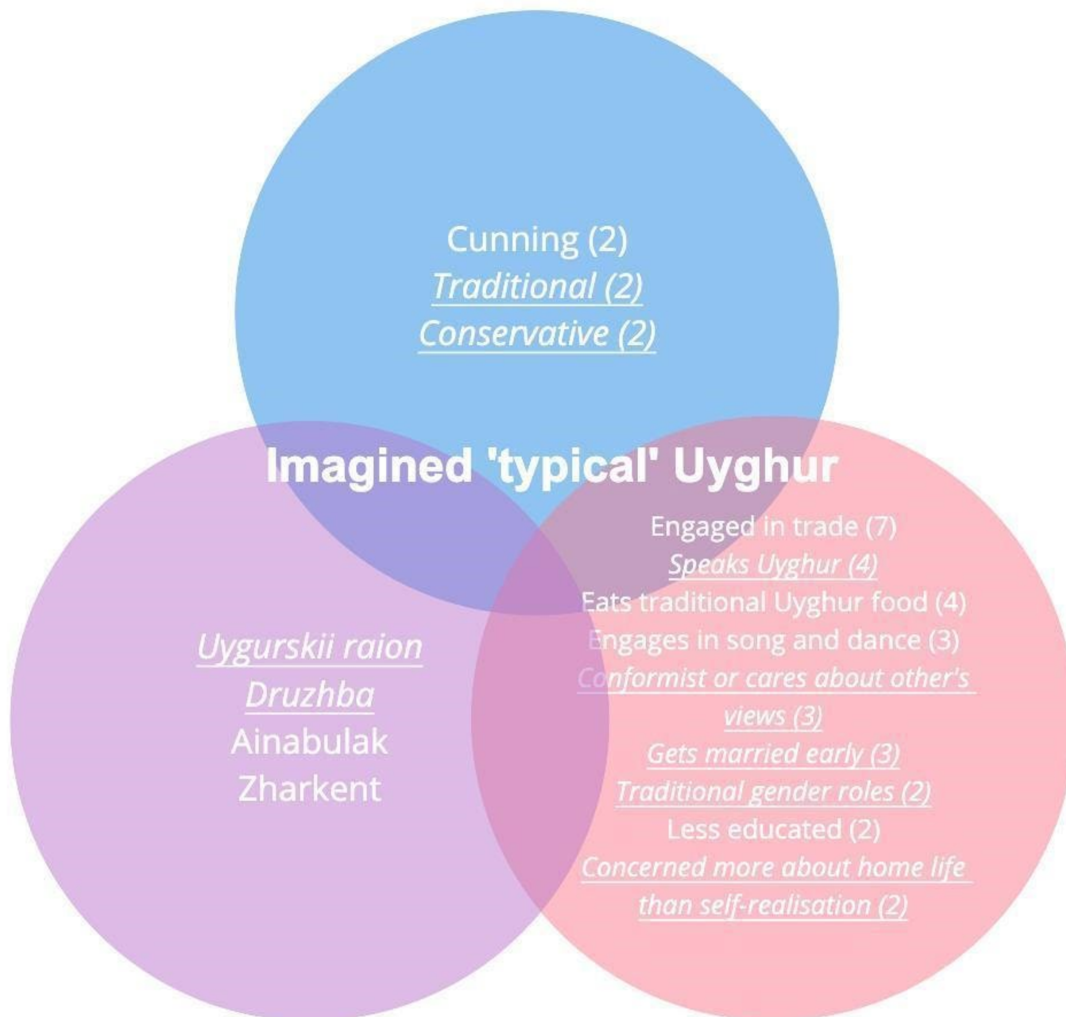

Table 8: What makes an Uyghur?

Overtly primordialist (2)	Mixed (3)	Constructivist (6)	Overtly constructivist (3)
B: Strange question. It's blood. Many Kazakhs know Uyghur, but they're not Uyghur.	K: Appearance. And language, first of all. But if a person says they're Uyghur, that's enough for me.	E: I don't know. Maybe how you speak or the food you eat.	P: Blood doesn't matter; language, upbringing and traditions matter.
S: Strange question. For us it's blood. I'm a 100% pure Uyghur, even though I'm Russified and far from traditions.	M: A combination of blood and how you were raised.	A: Language and accent. Nothing else.	F: it's a choice. Blood doesn't matter. Upbringing matters more.
	N: Accents, how a person speaks, traditions, sometimes appearance.	D: Purely cultural things: music, food, certain words. My childhood.	U: If a person self-identifies as an Uyghur, I'll accept them as such.
		C: Language, traditions, upbringing.	
		Y: Language, traditions, cultural nuances.	
		L: An Uyghur should know their language dies. When a language dies, a nation dies.	

Chapter 5: Identity Maintenance Strategies and Risks

5.1 The Kazakhstani acculturation context

Discriminated and disenfranchised or multicultural and harmonious?

'I tried to reply to the taxi driver in Kazakh, but he noticed my mistakes. I said I was Uyghur. He told me 'if you live in Kazakhstan, then you're Kazakh'. I didn't understand. Then I realised he meant that if you're boiling in this porridge, you're part of the porridge (*esli varish'sia v etoi kashe, ty i est' sostav etoi kashi)*.'

Participant **C**

When asked to elaborate on the ethnic composition of their friend groups, 15 out of 16 study participants stated that these were multi-ethnic and largely Russian-speaking. Only **L** claimed that her friends were mostly Uyghur, with only a handful of Kazakh acquaintances. Most participants reported harmonious relations with fellow Kazakhstanis and no major ethnic incidents. Common minor incidents were childhood name-calling from other ethnicities — often regarding the Uyghurs' 'slyness' (*khitrost')* or lack of homeland (reported by **B**, **Y, M) —** and tense interactions with Kazakhs (**D, L, C, E**), who demand an explanation for respondents' imperfect mastering of Kazakh. **F** and **K** reported that some Kazakhs argue that Uyghurs should not make a political 'fuss' and instead be 'grateful' for the land that Kazakhs had 'given them'. More serious altercations were reported by three respondents. Participant **B** reported ethnicities forming 'castes' in her school and stated an instance where she couldn't take a leading position due to being Uyghur. Participant **S** reported that her daughter was intensely bullied by a classmate for her Uyghur identity — **S** was shocked as her family were 'Russified', held high positions in Almaty society and had never met discrimination before. Following the 2006 interethnic conflict between Kazakhs and Uyghurs in Shelek, one participant reported a threatening situation which resulted in the loss of Kazakh friends who viewed Uyghurs as complicit in the violence.

Regardless of scale, for some participants incidents of perceived discrimination seemed to have poignant and traumatising effects. **Y** reports actively trying to befriend and date Uyghurs, having grown tired of interethnic slights. Participants **L, P,** and **M** referenced the alleged rape of a young girl

in the village of Sholakai by an Uyghur[15]. According to **L**, this incident had made 'all Uyghurs live in fear':

'When things like this happen, all the Kazakhs start to feel very negatively about all the Uyghurs. Now I don't risk telling people I'm Uyghur. It's dangerous.'

While incidents of violence between Uyghurs and Kazakhs are rare and generally not initially provoked by ethnic hatred, it seems their potential to be 'ethnically coded' (Brubaker, 2004) may lead to periodic feelings of vulnerability among Kazakhstan's Uyghurs. This vulnerability was cited by several participants as a source of 'apoliticalness'; many Uyghurs, particularly those of the 'older generation', show demonstrative loyalty to the Kazakhstan government. Indeed, one participant underlined that both 'censorship' and 'self-censorship' were constantly practised in Uyghur-language media and cultural platforms:

'The Uyghur outlets self-censor, so that the 'national question', China and our homeland are never mentioned. It even extends to banal things. Some kids filmed a documentary about drug addicts in an Uyghur family in Zharkent. It was authentic material in the Uyghur language, and it was informative about people who have had a hard lot (*pobitye sud'boi)*, but it couldn't be shown.'

K and **N** stressed that, in addition to concerns of societal stability, this apoliticalness was motivated by perceptions of some Uyghurs that their homeland was not within Kazakhstan, but 'somewhere over there' (*gde-to tam)* in Xinjiang; starved off connection with this homeland some Uyghurs had chosen to create micro-homelands in ethnic enclaves and concern themselves with events within their *mehelle* (neighbourhood) and *yurt* (clan). Participant **I** stressed that the ethnic make-up of rural communities was changing in favour of a Kazakh majority, particularly with regards to an influx of *kandas*: ethnic Kazakh migrants from Xinjiang and Mongolia who are given state subsidies to resettle in Kazakhstan. He emphasised that the emigration of Russian-speaking ethnic minorities in the 1990s and 2000s combined with the arrival of *kandas* had contributed to higher usage of Kazakh.

G, Y and **B**, reported perceptions of Uyghurs having an opportunity ceiling (*'potolok vozmozhnostei')*, with the latter stating that, for this reason, she had hidden her ethnicity from job applications. Nonetheless, they were keen to stress that Uyghurs had agency in fighting these restrictions. Indeed, **M** and **K,** expressed that this perception of a 'ceiling' was a self-defence mechanism of the older generation, and, to some extent, a self-fulfilling prophecy. **M** concluded that there existed a general Kazakhstani ceiling for all those who do not come from a 'privileged class', regardless of ethnicity.

[15] This shock could be the recency effect as the incident occurred several weeks before the interview. See: Radio Azattyk, 2022.

Uyghur shame

'I realised that I carry the rich history of my ancestors within me, and I want them to be preserved in me. I used to be ashamed. Now I'm proud to be Uyghur'.

Participant **Y**

The theme of shame regarding one's Uyghur identity was expressed by 7 of the study's participants (**B, C, K, M, F, Y,** & **I**): all of whom consider themselves 'non-typical' Uyghurs. This shame occurred during the respondents' adolescent years and manifested itself in the downplaying of their ethnic markers and behaviours, such as speaking less Uyghur or associating less frequently with the Uyghur community. All respondents claim to have overcome this shame. Indeed, most of these participants characterised this shame as an adolescent phase. Perhaps in the multi-ethnic environments in which participants were raised, the teenage processes of distancing from the family and increasing identification with one's peers resulted in a temporary decoupling of ethnicity and identity.

Participant **C'**s account gives insight into some of the perceptions of other Uyghurs which could cause such a decoupling, citing the pressures of his Uyghur enclave:

'I grew up around relatives who were constantly saying that something's not allowed. '*What will people say, what will the neighbours say?'* I'm related to everyone on my street and the next street. Wherever you look, wherever you go, wherever you might hide, there will be relatives everywhere, they'll notice you everywhere, and they'll tell you how to live.'

An additional factor to this adolescent distancing from the ethnic community, at least for **B, F, C** and **Y,** is a fear of discrimination or exclusion from the wider multinational yet Kazakh-dominated society:

'I grew up in [*Uyghur majority district]* until 4th grade. All my classmates were Uyghur. Then we suddenly moved to [*non-Uyghur majority district]* and I was the only Uyghur. I grew unfamiliar with (*otvykla)* with my own nationality and I mainly used Russian. I thought being an Uyghur was shameful. I wanted to be Kazakh. I asked my mum to change my nationality on my passport.'

Participant Y

Participant **I**'s account is representative of general trends of 'gradual' re-identification with one's Uyghurness. Despite being raised in Uyghur, he notes a period between third

grade and adulthood when he 'spoke Russian to everyone'. Only aged 25 did he re-integrate into an Uyghur community, speaking Uyghur, attending *meshrep* and choosing his own community (*yurt):*

"I had an identity crisis from18 to 25, just like any child. I was trying to realise who I was, and I was very fixated on the fact that I was Uyghur. And the psychological traumas that flow from that: the most obvious historical one is that there is no land, no homeland, no flag, right? Well, there is a flag and there is land, they're just not recognized. At the age of 25 I realised that mentally I am free from this identification. **I am not Uyghur, I am a human being.** Everything else is just part of my history. Then it became easier for me to take it all in. I started speaking Uyghur with my friends. Since then, it's been easier and easier. **Freedom of identification gave me just that identification.**"

Participant **L**

Aside from general trends of growing up, other reasons cited for a transition away from shame included the news of re-education camps in Xinjiang (**M**), difficulties in dating Kazakhs (**Y**), rapprochement with the Uyghur community through mutual support in difficult times (**L, C),** positive interactions with Kazakhs (**F**) and periods abroad (**K).**

Emigration orientations

Emigration can provide an opportunity for individuals to escape a maladaptive acculturation environment (Sam & Berry, 2016). I therefore found it pertinent to ask respondents whether they were currently considering this pathway. The results for the orientations and cited reasons for emigration are cited in **table 9**, while **table 10** offers the justifications of those who intend to stay in Kazakhstan. 9 participants had thoughts of emigrating, while **G** had already moved to Korea. Of those 9 potential emigres, I categorised 4 as having a 'strong intention' to leave Kazakhstan, 2 as having weak intentions, and 3 as having only hypothetical intentions. Five participants cited North America as a potential destination, three Europe, two East Asia, two Turkey and one respondent mentioned a hypothetical Uyghurstan.

4 participants cited education, personal or professional development as motivations for emigration and 2 cited 'freedom' and liberal values abroad; the remaining participants cited reports about positive treatment of Uyghurs in Turkey (2 participants), political persecution (1 participant) and a desire to be among Uyghurs (1 participant). Regardless of

emigration intention and orientation, Turkey emerged as the country with the easiest migration conditions for Uyghurs due to established Uyghur diaspora communities, a positive attitude of Turks toward Uyghurs, a similar language and culture, and government subsidies and actions defending Uyghurs in China.

In general, the motivations for emigration appear to be similar to those noted by Kazakhstani society at large, with concerns of improving one's education, lifestyle, or level of 'freedom'. Nonetheless, a total of two participants (**Y, L**) mentioned hypothetical future ethnic persecution in Kazakhstan. Participant **B,** also stated that emigrating used to be her dream:

'I can't say that they directly bullied me in school, but given that I had the desire to leave, probably something happened. I might have blocked off that trauma. I used to think that people treated Uyghurs unfairly here, and I wanted to emigrate to a free country.'

In adulthood, **B** viewed Almaty as a conducive environment for professional development. This view was echoed by participants **P** and **C,** with the former succinctly remarking that certain difficulties in Kazakhstan gave him something 'to push off toward growth' (*est' ot chvego ottalkivat'sia, chtoby rasti)*. The remainder of participants with an intention to stay cited close connections to their family and roots.

Table 9: Emigration orientations

Participants considering emigration

Participant	Desired emigration destination	Level of certainty	Reason for emigration
A	Short term emigration to the US	If opportunity arises.	Personal and professional development
K	Europe or Canada	Strong intention.	Education and professional development
G	Currently residing in Korea	Unsure whether to stay long-term.	Education and professional development
L	Undecided. 'I don't really get to choose.'	Strong intention.	Political persecution
M	France or Canada	Strong intention.	'Freedom' and liberal values
N	Europe or North America	If opportunity arises.	'Freedom' and liberal values
F	Turkey	Strong intention.	Positive reports about the treatment of Uyghurs in Turkey
L	Turkey	Hypothetical intention, only if conditions for Uyghurs in Kazakhstan deteriorate	Positive reports about the treatment of Uyghurs in Turkey
Y	'Uyghurstan'	Hypothetical	Desire to be among Uyghurs
E	America, Japan, Korea	Hypothetical future plan	Personal development; experience other cultures

Table 10: Reasons for staying in Kazakhstan

Participants inclined to stay in Kazakhstan

Participant	Reason for staying in Kazakhstan
S	'Patriotism' and love of homeland
B	Personal and professional development
C	Personal and professional development; attachment to family
D	Love of home city, Almaty
U	Attachment to family and friends
P	Professional development

Passing

Most participants stated that they frequently 'passed' as Kazakhs. This was attributed to the wide variety of European and Asian appearances in both Kazakhs and Uyghurs, as well as the fact that both urban Uyghurs and urban Kazakhs speak Russian and have varying levels of Kazakh. Participants stated that in multi-ethnic environments their ethnicity could go for long periods of time without being addressed. Participant **M** stated that his friend only

realised he was Uyghur in the second year of his friendship, while it took his Uyghur co-worker two months to discover their shared ethnicity. Participants such as **S, D** and **C** stated that sometimes they went long periods of time without remembering their ethnicity.

Case studies of ethnic exit

Two respondents, **S** and **C** stood out as having an assimilative strategy of 'ethnic exit' i.e. downplaying their ethnic markers and expressing an intention not to pass these down to the next generation.

Participant **S** had grown up in the city in an almost exclusively Russian-speaking environment, yet in her early adulthood she was kidnapped and taken as a forced bride to an Uyghur village:

'Even though I was from the city, and walked around with manicures, he still stole me. I spent 5 years there. We didn't even have a wedding because his grandmother was seriously ill when he took me. According to Uyghur traditions you can't have a celebration if your elders are ill. It's a sign of respect, and respect is very important for them.'

On her father's side, **S**'s family consisted of 'russified' Uyghurs who had achieved success in relatively high-status professions, yet her mother's side were Uyghur speakers from a rural area:

'Bride kidnapping is one of the Uyghur traditions. My mother didn't really try to get me. She grew up in a very strict Uyghur family where they say 'if they've stolen you, you can't be taken back'.'

During her time in the village **S** was subject to emotional and physical abuse; she attributed her mistreatment to the extremely low social status of women in her Uyghur settlement. **S** categorised her experience in the village as a 'useful life lesson' and expressed gratitude for her daughters. She now has a child with her husband of a different ethnicity, and states that a harmonious relationship because they are both 'russified' (*obrussevshie)* and 'city people'. She rarely uses Uyghur or thinks of her ethnicity. While it is impossible to reduce acculturative decisions down to only one factor, it is difficult not to conclude that **S**'s assimilationist tendencies derived in large part from her trauma in the Uyghur village.

Participant **C**'s 'ethnic exit' seems also to be partially rooted in the trauma of being part of the LGBT community in a ethnic enclave environment which constantly checks up on the relations of its members. He expressed a view that the 'typical' Uyghurs around him

cared little about professional and personal development, encouraged early marriage and 'medium levels of comfort' (*dovol'stvovat'sia srednim dostatkom)*, and were constrained by the mentality of 'what will the *yurt* say?' Rather than constantly answer this question, he chose to move to Almaty where he found more tolerant surroundings.

5.2 Practices of Uyghur identity maintenance

Language choice and education

The Republic of Kazakhstan affords Kazakh the status as a 'state language', while Russian serves as an 'official language' used for purposes of interethnic communication. Nonetheless, Kazakhstan's language policy remains ambiguous. Ó Beacháin & Kevlihan (2013) note a discrepancy between the 'State Language' status afforded to Kazakh by the law and its practical implementation in government agencies. Article 4 of the Law of Languages in the Republic of Kazakhstan of 1997 states that it is the 'duty of every citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan to master the state language', yet many ethnic Kazakhs and other minorities do not yet master Kazakh. Consequently, I found it pertinent to situate the study's participants with regards to their ethnic community language (Uyghur), their 'state' language (Kazakh) and their language of inter-ethnic communication (Russian). The results are displayed in **table 11: language use**. All sixteen participants listed Russian as their best spoken language; yet 9 respondents listed only Uyghur as their native language. A further four participants listed both Uyghur and Russian, while three participants listed only Russian. Three of the nine participants who listed Uyghur as their native language cited minimal knowledge of the language, while only 3 participants indicated they had 'advanced' knowledge of Uyghur. This situation may be connected to the semantic connotations of the Russian term '*rodnoi iazyk'* as the root '*rod'* is associated with birth, clan and family. Post-soviet subjects therefore frequently list not their 'first language' in terms of the language they speak the best, but the language which they consider belongs to their ethnicity or family (Kulyk, 2011).

6 participants reported minimal knowledge of Kazakh while 7 claimed they could converse in Kazakh. The three participants who reported advanced knowledge of Uyghur also claimed advanced knowledge of Kazakh. As the two languages are from the Turkic language

family and have reasonable degrees of mutual intelligibility (Hahn, 2006) this is not surprising, but potentially allows these advanced Uyghur-speaking respondents better access to Kazakh-dominated or monolingual Kazakh linguistic spheres. Only participant **C** reported better knowledge of Kazakh than Uyghur, although participants **P** and **K** stated that they now used Kazakh more frequently than Uyghur. The participants who spoke Kazakh claimed they had acquired it not through active study, but 'on the street' and 'in the courtyard' (*vo dvore)*.

Five participants (**B, G, L, I, F)** stated that they spoke predominantly Uyghur to their parents. Seven participants **(A, S, C, D, K, M, N)** stated that they mainly spoke to their parents in Russian, two (**U, E)** a mix of Russian and Uyghur, or two (**P, Y)** spoke Uyghur to one parent and Russian to another. Participants frequently cited Uyghur as the language of communication with their grandparents and the 'older generation'. Indeed, **A** & **M** expressed that their Uyghur had declined due to the death of their grandparents. Others stated that their parents continued to speak to them in Uyghur, but due to the environment of school and work, they increasingly replied in Russian. While participants from Uyghur-language schools attributed their superior knowledge of Russian solely to the society surrounding them, participants from Russian language schools emphasised that their education meant that their literary and technical vocabulary was in Russian rather than Uyghur.

Participants stated that passing Uyghur down to the next generation was desirable and frequently expressed that they were 'afraid' they would not be able to transfer the language to the next generation. Nonetheless, many respondents also emphasised that passing down knowledge of other aspects of Uyghur culture may be sufficient: these elements included an understanding of their parents' 'story' (**F, B**), knowledge of Uyghur culture (**E, M, U**), and historical memories of the origins of Uyghurs (**P**).

Only two respondents believed the Uyghur language to be endangered, while the others tended to cite rural Uyghur-majority environments as stable reservoirs for the language.

Most participants stated that they were comfortable with their current primary language of communication and hadn't considered shifting to another language. Five participants claimed that ideally they would like to improve their Uyghur, but were not currently taking steps to do so. Three participants claimed they would like to use more Kazakh, with participant **G** citing a national awakening after the Kazakhstan protests of January 2022. Finally, 5 participants stressed an intention to improve their English.

The vast majority of respondents (13/16) received their primary and secondary education exclusively in Russian. Respondents **G** and **L** studied in Uyghur, while participant

U began his education in Uyghur, but changed to a Russian-language class in fourth grade due to insufficient knowledge of the Uyghur language which impacted his academic performance. Indeed, participants often justified their parents' choice to send them to Russian-language schools as they believed it would give them 'an international language' with access to more books, speakers, and communities, while learning materials and opportunities in Uyghur were limited. Further, participant **L,** a teacher in an Uyghur language school, stated that parents feared learning four languages (Uyghur, Kazakh, Russian and English) would overburden their children.

This study's former pupils of Uyghur language schools cited problems with the availability and quality of Uyghur language textbooks. Further, the graduates stated that preparation for university entry exams was more complex as they can only be taken in Kazakh or Russian. While the lessons were in Uyghur, students mainly communicated in Russian during the breaks, and, to the chagrin of **L,** many of her students 'by the end of highschool never managed to speak Uyghur (*tak i ne zagovorili po-uigurski)*'.

L was also the most sceptical participant about the potential for Uyghur cultural preservation:

'Every year fewer and fewer children are in the first grade at Uyghur schools. The teachers have to go round Uyghur houses and practically beg students to put their children in Uyghur schools.'

Further, **L** expressed a fear that Uyghur schools would be forced to include Kazakh-language class streams, and eventually assimilate as Kazakh schools.

Table 11: Language use

Respondent	'Native' language	Best spoken language	Level of Uyghur	Level of Kazakh	Language of school education
A	Uyghur & Russian	Russian	Minimal	Minimal	Russian
B	Uyghur	Russian	Conversational	Conversational	Russian
D	Russian	Russian	Minimal	Minimal	Russian
S	Russian	Russian	Minimal	Minimal	Russian
K	Uyghur & Russian	Russian	Conversational	Conversational	Russian
G	Uyghur & Russian	Russian	Advanced	Advanced	Uyghur
N	Uyghur	Russian	Minimal	Minimal	Russian
I	Uyghur & Russian	Russian	Advanced	Advanced	Russian
L	Uyghur	Russian	Advanced	Advanced	Uyghur
M	Uyghur	Russian	Minimal	Minimal	Russian
P	Uyghur	Russian	Conversational	Conversational	Russian
U	Uyghur	Russian	Conversational	Minimal	Uyghur & Russian
C	Russian	Russian	Minimal	Conversational	Russian
E	Uyghur	Russian	Conversational	Conversational	Russian
F	Uyghur	Russian	Conversational	Conversational	Russian
Y	Uyghur	Russian	Conversational	Conversational	Russian

Marriage strategies

Endogamy is frequently cited as a mechanism contributing to ethnic boundary preservation, while interethnic exogamy may contribute to the dissolution of such boundaries (Sam & Berry, 2006). Consequently, I asked all study participants to indicate whether they had an ethnic preference when choosing a partner. The vast majority (14 of 16 participants) claimed that ethnicity is not a factor when selecting a romantic or marital partner. Indeed, two participants were part of interethnic marriages. Of the two participants who preferred Uyghur partners, one claimed that it was a light preference, and she would consider other ethnicities, while the second was already married to an Uyghur. Participant **Y** justified her preference for an Uyghur partner as an attempt to avoid interethnic conflict in child-rearing and the loss of the Uyghur language, while **L** echoed these sentiments, while also stating that she had never spoken with non-Uyghurs before university and her current social sphere consisted almost exclusively of Uyghurs. **I**, however, claimed that the women of other ethnicities he had dated learnt Uyghur of their own volition and were keen to pass the culture down to their children. Indeed, he was currently speaking the Uyghur language down to his child of such a mixed marriage.

Three participants expressed a moderate preference for not dating Uyghurs. **U** and **C** claimed that in their view Uyghurs were too conservative, while **G** stressed that an interethnic marriage would allow her children to have a more diverse linguistic and cultural background.

B, G, N and **L** expressed that they faced pressure from their parents or relatives to marry within the Uyghur community. **L** claimed that her mother might have disowned her had she married a non-Uyghur, while **B** cited the need for Uyghur survival:

'They say things like: '*you need to marry an Uyghur to continue our lineage. They're killing us in China!*''

Nonetheless, these same participants emphasised that they would follow their own desires, not those of their relatives. For the majority of the study's participants endogamy is not a chosen mechanism for ethnic cultural preservation, even while they retain the desire, at least ideally, to pass the Uyghur language and culture to the next generation.

Cultural platforms

The unique cultural freedom of Uyghurs among ethnic minorities in Kazakhstan was frequently justified by respondents through reference to two elements: firstly, Uyghur-language schools, and secondly, Uyghurs' access to cultural platforms such as the Uyghur theatre and Uyghur language media. Yet none of the study's participants claimed frequent attendance of the Uyghur theatre or engagement with Uyghur newspapers or television. Indeed, some were keen to criticise these institutions as out-of-date, censored, or uninteresting for young people. This did not translate into a lack of newspaper subscriptions, however, as **L** and **U** reported that community leaders frequently made the rounds of Uyghur houses and 'forced' families to buy a subscription. Further, even participants such as **E** who praised the Uyghur theatre as a source of pride and entertainment, had no plans to visit regularly. Perhaps, therefore, for study participants the institutions of media and theatre carry symbolic weight but are not actively integrated into their lifeways.

Respondents instead stated that they considered Uyghur dance, song and traditional clothing as outstanding elements worthy of cultural preservation. The institutions of *chai* and *meshrep* were also commonly cited: cultural gatherings of Uyghur women and men respectively, which may follow informal or highly regulated structures, such as comical 'punishments' for rule breaking and musical or dance performances. Nonetheless, only participant **I** reported frequent attendance of traditional *meshrep* and deep integration into his *yurt*. **A,** meanwhile, reported monthly attendance of informal *meshrep* due to his family's

active involvement in the Uyghur community, but expressed that this 'was already enough' and that if he attended more 'he would become 100% Uyghur' — evoking *meshrep* as part of his conceptualisation of an imagined 'typical' or 'traditional' Uyghur. Others who distanced themselves from these gatherings included participants **U, F** and **K**:

'I've never been to a *meshrep* and I wouldn't like to go. Even though my feeling of Uyghurness has become a lot stronger, it's not enough to make me want to talk to all Uyghurs. I'm already very comfortable in my current friend circle. It would be unnatural if I tried to force myself in.'

Participant K

Y, P, E, and **B** expressed a desire to attend these gatherings, but were limited either by their lack of Uyghur contacts of their age cohort, or the busy nature of their lifestyles. **D** also expressed that he could only attend as an observer due to his limited knowledge of Uyghur, while participant **G** found contemporary *chai* unattractive due to its inauthenticity.

Community and ceremony

Журт ним дәйду?
Zhurt nim deidu?
Taranchi Uyghur dialect for 'what will the community say?'

Roberts (2007) cites that 'the foundations of collective identity are in the daily behaviour of those who ascribe to that identity', underlining that our sense of group consciousness is constantly re-enforced through the 'symbolic capital' of ceremonies and the maintenance practices of members and member hierarchies. Uyghur enclaves are famous for the roles of elders and *zhigit béshi* who aid in communal events, solve disputes, present an outward image to state and society, and enforce the boundaries of the ethnic community.

Despite 12 out of 16 participants living or having grown up in Uyghur majority areas, most claimed that they had little interaction with community elders, stating that their parents or grandparents engaged with elders on a case-by-case basis. Nonetheless, these elders were frequently referenced as making the 'rounds' of homes encouraging Uyghurs to support Uyghur cultural institutions, to send their children to Uyghur schools, or to contribute to charitable initiatives. Participants' narratives of elder engagement were often part of a broader dialogue regarding Uyghur group cohesiveness. This 'cohesiveness' created 'claustrophobic' reactions among certain participants, such as **C, P** and **A**, who sometimes

felt overwhelmed by the surveillance of community members, unwelcome intrusive advice, and the sheer quantity of community events such as *chai* or *meshrep*. Nonetheless, the same participants who criticised this cohesive environment viewed it as a net positive. One commonly cited benefit was diasporic support:

'Uyghurs always help each other. You can arrive in any country and find the Uyghur diaspora there, they'll support you, find you a job and housing'

Participant **N**

Another frequently mentioned benefit was communally sourced funds for the poor and vulnerable. Finally, respondents mentioned the community's aid in the major ceremonies and life events of Uyghurs. Participants stated that even those Uyghurs who had distanced themselves from the community would often find their funerals attended by hundreds of compatriots, with unknown Uyghurs offering practical aid such as food preparation, emotional support, and advice about the 'correct' carrying out of Uyghur traditions:

'The Uyghur community never just arrives. They will always help you out, whether it's a marriage, the birth of a child or a funeral. Any event is the result of collective labour. Even if you don't know these people, they will help you and teach you how to do things in an Uyghur way.'

Participant **I**

In terms of ceremony, the most cited source of joy and pride was the Uyghur wedding. Portrayed as bright and ethnically distinctive, many participants viewed it as an instance where they could be proud of their heritage, in particular dance, dress, and song. Many emphasised that their Kazakh friends were keen to attend Uyghur weddings. However, in terms of the reinforcement of group identity, funerals were the most cited ceremony. For participants **L, C** and **K** the Uyghur community's assistance in times of death provided great comfort, while the solemnity and ritualistic nature of the funeral made them feel part of something 'bigger' and 'profound'. Nonetheless, even this ceremony could be a double-edged sword. Participant **U**, for example, expressed a sense of pressure at being exposed to hundreds of strangers in the time of his own intense, personal grief, while **C** cited a degree of resentment at being forced to slaughter a lamb and perform other rituals in the hour of his vulnerability. These perceptions of Uyghur imposition had led **U** and **C** to find alternative platforms for communal support.

5.3 Theorising acculturation setting and strategy

The settings of Almaty and Kazakhstan can be defined as ‘a culturally plural society’ wherein various ethnic groups live together ‘within a shared social and political framework’ (Berry, 2006:27). Within culturally plural societies, Berry (2006) underlines a delineation between ‘melting pot’ and ‘cultural pluralist’ societies; the former contains a core culture with minority ethnic cultures existing in the outlines who are expected to gradually ‘melt’ into the centre of the pot; while a multicultural model views the larger society as intrinsically whole with various ethnic cultures as component parts. In this regard, Almaty appears closer to the environment of a ‘multicultural society’, although in the eyes of some participants the society faces increasing *kazakhification* and assimilative trends. As per Berry (2006), a multicultural society is one in which ethnicities are allowed to develop their ethnic identities along two non-exclusive acculturative axes: one of integration into the wider society, and another of preservation of their cultural identities.

In response to the ethnic setting, respondents may adopt several strategies: **integration** through high participation in society while preserving one’s ethnic markers and identities, **assimilation** with the loss of ethnic distinction and high levels of participation, **marginalisation** with low cultural participation and low participation, and **separation** with high preservation of ethnic distinctness and low participation. These distinctions are visualised below:

Table 12: Acculturation strategies

Assimilation Low cultural preservation, high participation	**Integration** High cultural preservation, high participation
Marginalisation Low cultural preservation, low participation	**Separation** High cultural preservation, low participation

Any definition of an individual's acculturation strategies is inherently problematic due to the impossibility of transforming the totality of an individual's experience into permanent or sharply defined categories. In this dissertation, the matter is even more challenging as participants' statements during 45-to-90-minute interviews cannot convey the entire complexity of life experience. The table below offers an approximate conceptualisation of the acculturation strategies implemented by the research participants. I have categorised 2 respondents as assimilative, 8 participants as integrationist with moderate levels of ethnic preservation, 3 respondents as having high integration and high ethnic preservation, and 2 respondents as having lower levels of integration and high levels of ethnic preservation (*i.e.* with latent separatist tendencies). The horizontal placement of each participant's name does not correspond to an exact scale from assimilation to separation or integration, but rather integrates that the participants' responses may somewhat straddle into the adjacent category.

Table 13: Participants' acculturation strategies

Assimilation		High integration with moderate levels of ethnic preservation			High integration with high levels of ethnic preservation		Lower integration with high levels of ethnic preservation	
S	C	D	A	B	K	G	Y	L
		E	N	F		I		
		P	M					
		U						

It appears that the most adopted acculturation strategy is one of integration with moderate levels of ethnic preservation. This strategy is undoubtedly informed by external factors such as Kazakhstan's own strategic ambiguity between civic and ethnic nationalisms (Schatz, 2000; Sharipova, 2019) and Kazakhs' and Kazakhstanis' policing or enabling of ethnic distinctness, alongside the mechanisms of internal Uyghur community ethnic boundary policing and ceremony. Integration is generally considered the most desirable outcome in culturally plural societies and corresponds to high levels of psychological well-being (Oppedal, 2006). It is also correlated with 'cultural competence' (efficient navigation of intercultural situations) which entails certain benefits such as cognitive flexibility and situational adaptability (Oppedal, 2006).

Chapter 6: Between Ürümchi and Astana: the 'Chinese factor' in Uyghur identity

6.1 Uyghur views and understandings of China and Xinjiang

When questioned on their relations with Uyghurs from Xinjiang, almost all participants reported no or little contact. This even extended to the three participants who had travelled to Xinjiang and to the many respondents with relatives in China. It became clear that the only significant relational ties with China were held by an older generation who had arrived in Kazakhstan in the 1950s and 1960s, what Roberts would have described as *kegänlär*: the parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents of this study's respondents. Despite a slight majority of participants reporting lost contact with relatives in Xinjiang, this was portrayed as an issue for elderly family members rather than a personal concern. All respondents who reported visits of relatives from Xinjiang stated that they did not attach much importance to these events.

Illustratively, Respondent **E** initially answered that she had no relatives in Xinjiang before later recalling the visits of some 'grown up' *('vzroslye')* relatives:

'I just remembered that we **do** have relatives in China. The mother of my mother's mother, the great-grandmother on my mother's side… her sister lives in China. She used to visit. Now I don't know anything. I don't know how they are or what's happening to them.'

Participant **G** regretted her lack of interest:

"I didn't talk much to my relatives from China. They were older; the cousins of my grandparents. I thought okay, a relative's come from China, that's cool. If it was now, I would interview them. I regret I didn't pay attention back then. We didn't know that it was precious. I should have asked more questions."

When discussing the cut off in relations with Xinjiang circa 2017, participant **A** drew a parallel between his grandfather and his cousin who studied in Germany, citing the profound meaning of seemingly mundane messages. When the cousin was told by his mother to 'study well' he knew it meant 'stay in Germany and don't come back to Xinjiang'. During

the Soviet period, the 'same thing' had happened to his grandfather: *"Many years ago, after he had escaped, he wanted to go back, but he received a letter which said 'the weather is bad here'. 'The weather is bad' meant 'They'll kill you. Don't come back.'"*

When asked to elaborate on perceived differences between Kazakhstani and Xinjiang Uyghurs, most participants limited themselves to superficial comments regarding dialectical differences, emphasising how Xinjiang Uyghurs 'sound Chinese' and use 'Chinese words' such as '*Wei'*[16] or '*Joza'*[17].

Others attributed personality attributes. Respondent **L** stated that, from memories of *weten* visitors to her Uyghur school, they were 'kinder'; while Respondent **Y** speculated that they were 'closed' people because of collective trauma. Three respondents reported one-on-one contact with Uyghurs from Xinjiang. Having spent 24 years of her life in Kazakhstan, **G** first encountered Xinjiang Uyghurs not in her homeland, but in diaspora communities in Japan and Korea. Recounting an unwanted flirtatious interaction with a conservative Uyghur man, she underlined her greater affinity for Kazakhs over *weten* Uyghurs:

'He asked whether I had a boyfriend and I understood that he was hinting at something. I told him I was dating a Korean. And he started judging me and said 'oh, you're with a Korean! He's not Muslim.' I was disappointed. I understood that yeah, he's an Uyghur, but a Kazakh is much closer to me. Because we grew up in the same environment, we watched similar cartoons, we ate similar food, and we spoke the same language."

She later commented that the *weten* Uyghurs she had met in East Asia were more conservative, more religious, and more commonly 'veiled' than Kazakhstani Uyghurs. Through online interactions **G** also encountered a narrative from Uyghur diaspora in Europe and the West that she and other Central Asian Uyghurs were not 'completely Uyghur':

'They think we are yärliklär. I was baffled. I have considered myself Uyghur all my life and now some Uyghur from weten doesn't think we're Uyghurs. Apparently, we don't understand all their pain. They escaped; their family suffered while we lived our entire lives in Kazakhstan. I can see their point. On the other hand, there's already so few of us, are we really going to divide ourselves based on who's yärlik and who's not yärlik?'

A sentiment that Uyghurs in Xinjiang were overly religious and stuck to traditions was repeated by several participants:

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[16] Mandarin: 喂 (wéi)
[17] Mandarin: 桌子 （zhuōzi）

"The Uyghurs over there are too religious. They practise marriage between cousins. In the history of Uyghurstan there were moments where Uyghurs lost the name Uyghur and just called themselves Muslims. For me it led to a certain feeling of animosity. My Taranchi Uyghur relatives are not Islamicized. For us Islam is like Christianity for Russians. Something light, informal. Or like Islam for Kazakhs. We didn't take on Islam fully, it didn't become our cultural identity."

Participant **D**

Perhaps a result of his dislike of 'strong religiosity', he initially reported believing Chinese government narratives:

"When the first news came out around 2016, I had a biased view against Uyghurstan. I thought that the re-education camps were for people who were too strongly influenced by Islam. But around 2018 or 2019 I found out that absolutely everyone ends up in these camps, without exception, just because of their ethnicity. I listened to interviews with Uyghurs who study in the West and one guy said: 'I'm atheist, but if I go back to the XUAR, I've been promised I'll end up in a re-education camp'. Even if at the beginning China had some criteria, now it doesn't work. It's re-education for everyone."

D was only able to fully believe in the repressions of Uyghurs in Xinjiang when he saw a person like himself – secular and educated – in such a situation. It is commonly stated that there is a 'natural' variation in the saliency of attachment to ascribed ethnic identity (Hale, 2004). If we classify **D** as a participant with low ethnic saliency in his self-identifications, it is perhaps unsurprising that several shared classifiers (Uyghur, secular, educated) – the 'imagined modern self' — required activation before the respondent was able to cognitively self-identify with the members of the re-education camps.

When asked to report their perceptions of China, almost all respondents expressed either a neutral stance (often accompanied with statements that ordinary Chinese were not responsible for politics) or one of disinterest. **S** and **N** claimed that they had rarely thought of China. Only two respondents, **I** and **F**, expressed strong interest in Chinese culture, with the former having worked in China and developed a strong appreciation for Han high culture. Several respondents (**B, E, L** & **Y**) expressed a fear that they would face arrest if they travelled to China simply for being Uyghur; others, such as **G** and **K,** stated that they would like to one day travel to China, but felt, due to social media posts, they were likely to be in Chinese government blacklists.

Two respondents **K** and **Y** travelled to Xinjiang as children. For **K** it was a strange dissonance of the familiar and unfamiliar:

'It was after the 2009 protests. I remember soldiers walking in columns down the street. It was very unusual for me to hear so much Uyghur spoken. It was nice. There was a slight feeling that I was home. It was a deceptive feeling, of course.'

For **Y** Xinjiang was not China:

'The architecture, the culture, the ethnicity — it was all like us Uyghurs. I didn't feel like I was in China, but that I was in an Uyghur world. The people are very warm over there.'

L travelled to Xinjiang on a brief business trip in 2013 (4 years before the 'de-extremification' ordinance was issued) and experienced warm hospitality from unknown Uyghurs his age who had originated in Ghulja; he expressed that there were no linguistic and cultural boundaries as they shared the same Taranchi culture and dialect. Nonetheless, he described his feelings as 'mixed' due to the omnipresence of security and 'sidelong stares' (*smotreli izkosa)* of Han Chinese residents: one which he perceived as 'spiteful, unpleasant, and heavy'. This was contrasted to **I**'s longer stints in 'mainland China' where he was treated warmly and with interest 'just like any other foreigner'.

For most participants, it seems Xinjiang is a kind of liminal space, incorporating potentially 'deceptive' or contradictory feelings of familiarity and foreignness, with the scale of this 'foreignness' perhaps depending on the intensity of respondents' self-identification with their own Uyghurness.

6.2 Effects of 'de-extremification' in Xinjiang on Self-Perception of Uyghurs in Almaty

Regarding feelings about the 're-education' policy in Xinjiang and its impact on self-identification, the participants' responses fell into three categories:

a) A denial of knowledge about events in Xinjiang including doubts about the veracity of reports regarding repressions. This position was represented by Respondents **S** and **N**.
b) An acknowledgement that the situation was regrettable but that the participants were powerless to help: This position was represented by Respondents **E, L, P** and **U** (4 participants).
c) A re-evaluation of one's Uyghur identity which led to a change in self-perception and/or behaviours. Moderate changes were experienced by participants **B, G, D,**

F, M, and **C** (6 respondents), significant changes were reported by participants **A, K, I,** and **Y** (4 respondents).

We don't really know what's happening there

Participants **N** and **S** both stated that they did not actively follow the news about events in Xinjiang, but that, due to social media, it was impossible not to be informed about the re-education camps. Both participants cast doubt on both the veracity of information and the ability of Uyghurs in Almaty to do anything about the repressions:

"I don't really get involved in these things. Because it's big politics. And I can't change anything anyway, even if it's the truth. It might be fake. The media tend to exaggerate."

Participant **N**

"If I had seen it with my own eyes, or if my mother or grandmother had seen it, then I would have believed it 100%. And I would have got involved. But we don't know anything for sure."

Participant **S**

Both participants further denied having ever had any contact with Xinjiang Uyghurs, or any opinion on how they might differ from Kazakhstani Uyghurs.

It's regrettable, but there's not much we can do

Three participants (**E, L** & **U**) expressed the opinion that events in Xinjiang were unfortunate and painful to witness, but that they were powerless to help. As a result, they claimed that they had no change in self-perception:

"I've seen videos and heard stories about people who fled. It makes me sad and sometimes I cry. Probably it affected me in the sense that sometimes I'm sad. I want the people there to be happy."

Participant **E**

“Of course, it’s sad. But it hasn’t affected my everyday life. In Turkey there were protests, and the Turks supported the Uyghur people. But it wasn’t like that here. It affected us less, or maybe we are afraid to get involved in politics. There were just conversations and that’s all. We have a very passive attitude.”

Participant **L**

“I don’t know whether it affected me. I never really thought about it. It was painful to realise that I’m not doing anything and I’m not looking for ways to help: but I had busied myself with other things. I had my excuses. I didn’t have time.”

Participant **U**

Within this group Participant **P** was an outlier. He too expressed that events did not have any effect on his self-perception, but unlike respondents **E, L** and **U**, **P** did not claim to have had a negative emotional reaction. Of these participants, **P** had the closest regular contact with China. Having grown up in the border town of Zharkent, he was, until recently, surrounded by people whose livelihoods depended on trade with China at the nearby Khorgos Immigration and Customs Control Zone. He travelled there on several occasions and reported an incident where he was ‘almost taken away’ by Chinese border guards for not matching the appearance on his passport photos. He also reported the detainment of a former neighbour in a re-education camp in China. He attributed his lack of emotional response or change in self-perception to the idiosyncrasies of his character:

“I’m not a person who makes a big deal of things. Even during the protests in January, I wasn’t particularly worried. We can’t help everyone who is in a concentration camp now. If you have the chance, save your people. If you can’t, then at least save yourself and your family.’

P’s testimony reminds us that changes to self-perception are highly personal and based not on the intensity of events themselves, but on our internal sense-making of these events.

My self-perception has changed

Most respondents reported a change in self-perception linked to events in Xinjiang. For some of these participants a change in behaviour also ensued.

Participant **Y** reported the most dramatic effect on her life path, changing her career after hearing of events in Xinjiang. She had originally trained as a Chinese and English translator, but now refused to speak Chinese or interact with Chinese people. She admitted that she had become a 'sinophobe' and felt feelings of disgust when seeing Chinese traders at the bazaar. While acknowledging that not all Chinese people were guilty, she found it hard to control her emotions:

"I know that maybe they have nothing to do with it, but they're living in a country which is killing people and they just don't care. It's as if Kazakhstan were killing and humiliating the Chinese and we did nothing. When you understand that they don't care, you can feel however you want about them."

Other respondents also reported an increase of an almost subconscious anti-Chinese sentiment. **G** stated that a 'rational' part of her mind understood that each Chinese citizen was an individual and not directly involved in politics, but she had to resist an emotional urge to negatively generalise Han Chinese.

A and **K** stated that the repression in Xinjiang led to a realisation of the vulnerability of their ethnic group and the importance of 'visibility'. Interestingly, the most 'intense' period of reporting on Xinjiang human rights abuses (circa 2018) coincided with their stays abroad. **A** found himself in Dubai, while **K** was in Canada. Both chose to wear the *dopa* (Uyghur headwear) in public:

"It was almost like a citizen's initiative: to draw attention to yourself. If someone notices they'll ask 'what's that?' and they'll at least google the Uyghurs."

Respondent A

On returning to Kazakhstan, both participants reported wearing the *dopa* less often. **A** said that it was seen as 'strange' in Kazakhstan, while **K** was not sure of the reason. Participant **A** stated that he had to also reduce his online engagement as his mother expressed concern that posts defending Uyghurs in Xinjiang would be seen as 'oppositional' and thus damage his job prospects in Kazakhstan.

Participants **K, A** and **M** reported witnessing awakenings in their self-identification as Uyghurs (albeit of differing intensities) which corresponded with the timing of events in Xinjiang:

'I understood that there was a real threat to Uyghur identity. I began to reflect strongly on who I am. Because of the injustices over there I began to pay more attention to news about Uyghurs and therefore I remember that I'm Uyghur more

often. It formed a cycle. Because I'm Uyghur I'm more interested in the news, and that, in turn, re-enforces my Uyghurness.'

Participant **K**

As a result of this 'cycle', **K** now offers free English lessons to Uyghur youth: a rapprochement with a community which he had previously neglected, preferring a cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic circle.

Participants **A, K** and **B** reported social media activism. **B** became more committed to continually informing others about her ethnicity and Xinjiang. She hesitated when asked about changes in self-perception, concluding in the end that it only strengthened her previously existing self-reliance, something which she believed was a trait shared by all Uyghurs:

'In Kazakhstan they don't particularly like Uyghurs, they think we're cunning and sly. I tried to understand why people thought that way about us and I realised that when your people live their whole life without a country and their whole life literally struggle to survive, a survival instinct becomes part of your genes."

C also reported a strengthening of self-reliance. He had followed news stories of ethnic conflicts in Kazakhstan, including the Dungan-Kazakh riots of 2020 and summer 2022 tensions between Kazakhs and Uyghurs in Zharkent. He drew parallels between what had happened in Xinjiang and the potential for Kazakh 'nazism':

"Yes. (Events in Xinjiang) affected me. It motivated me. I didn't think that it was my people and that I had to save them. But I realised that if, God forbid, the same thing happens here, I can't let it happen to me or my family… I need to get an education and have an 'airbag'." If it's already happened somewhere else, it's probable that it will happen here too."

As mentioned previously, participants **A, B, K, M, U, C, F, I** and **Y** all reported a period of their lives where they either felt 'ashamed' about being Uyghur or reluctant to show their Uyghur identities. Of these, only **A, F** and **K** could be certain that this loss of shame was directly tied to events in Xinjiang, with participant **M** vacillating between Xinjiang events and 'general growing up' as the contributing factor.

Participants **F, E, B, G** and **Y** all described being moved to tears by events in Xinjiang. For some this was accompanied by a feeling of guilt that they were able to 'go to Starbucks' (**B**) and 'live happily, smiling and dancing, while your people are culture are being tortured in another country' (**Y**). Nonetheless, with time feelings of

hurt and guilt faded. The period of interviews coincided with a relatively stagnant phase in the Russia-Ukraine war. Perhaps for this reason 2 participants (**B** and **F**) chose to draw the same parallel about the fading effect of news in Xinjiang:

'When Russia started its policies towards Ukraine, the whole world was talking about it. Every day, every minute, every second. Now 7-8 months have passed and people keep quiet. The same thing happened with me and the Uyghur situation. You get used to it.'

Participant **F**

Among those who reported a change in self-perception but not a change in action, explanations for a lack of action were generally attributed to a combination of busy-ness and powerlessness. Further, for a certain subset of Uyghurs who feel first and foremost Kazakhstani, Xinjiang can seem a rather distant place and therefore political events in Kazakhstan are more formidable:

"I made a campaign for the people who suffered during the January events in Kazakhstan. We sold merchandise with the date of the bloodiest day of the protests (January 5th). We sent the money that came from those sales to the wives and families of those who suffered. It's obvious that Kazakhstan is a bigger part of my identity. After all… It seems that China is somewhere over there."

Participant **G**

A framework for participants responses

The psychological literature on 'coping' mechanisms can be applied to explain or categorize respondents' reaction to a source of outside stress (learning about the repressions of your titular ethnicity abroad). 'Coping' has been divided into three categories (Berry, 2006):

1) Problem-focused coping: an attempt to solve the problem at hand;
2) Emotion-focused coping: an attempt to regulate or change emotions;
3) Avoidance-oriented coping: an attempt to distance oneself from the issue and its emotional triggers;

Of these, 'problem-focused' coping corresponds to Diaz Guerrero (1979)'s view of 'active' coping, in which a situation is altered, while emotional coping can be categorised as 'patience' and 'self-modification' (Berry, 2006).

The *'we don't really know what's happening'* response given by participants **N** and **S** perhaps represents an avoidance strategy. Participants may have sought to avoid emotional distress and cognitive uncertainty by claiming a lack of knowledge or inability to know the truth. This coping strategy is a common response when one is faced with events of incredulous scale or horror.

The '*it's regrettable, but there's not much we can do'* response by participants **E, L, U** and **P** perhaps represents a combination of a 'avoidant' and 'emotion-focused' coping strategies. Participants both 'avoid' actively engaging with information regarding Xinjiang oppressions and regulate their emotions when involuntarily exposed to this news source, distancing it from their self-identification and clearing themselves from potential cognitive dissonance or obligation to inconvenient action.

Participants who claim a change in 'self-perception' but no corresponding change in action likely employed emotional coping mechanisms to ease their distress, while those who took action adopted a 'problem-focused' or 'active' approach, this was likely also accompanied with emotional self-regulation.

The fact that so few participants felt comfortable taking a 'problem-focused' or 'active' approach may indicate that action may be both politically risky in the larger Kazakhstani framework: perhaps due to factors such as Kazakhstan's autocratic government style, its close relations with China or the fear that activism could lead to discrimination. Active responses may also have simply been inconvenient to their daily lives. It is important to note, however, that the lack of saliency of 'problem-focused' responses to the repressions in Xinjiang applies not only to Uyghurs, but also ethnic Kazakhs in Kazakhstan who generally display a certain sentiment 'powerlessness', if not 'apathy' (personal correspondence with Xinjiang-focused social anthropologist Zarina Mukanova, 2022). Political or practical obstacles to action are shared by all ethnic groups in Kazakhstan.

Aside from applying the 'coping mechanism' framework to categorise abilities, it may also be possible to theorise a 'splitting' or 'sub-categorization' of Uyghur ethnic identification trends among many Kazakhstani Uyghurs. For certain Uyghurs in Almaty the 'hybrid'-category of Kazakhstani Uyghur has become their prominent identifying motif or 'main' category of their ethnic self-identification, while Uyghurs of other lands belong to somewhat a close, but ultimately distinct relational ethnic category.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and limitations

Conclusions, questions, and limitations

In **Chapter 4** I sought to analyse the ethnic markers and self-identifications which young Uyghurs applied to themselves and their perception of divisions within the Uyghur community. While most participants prioritised their ethnic identification (Uyghur) over their civic identification (Kazakhstani), it became clear that the terms Uyghur and Kazakhstani were equally applicable and did not represent mutually exclusive or competing categories. Indeed, participants generally felt highly integrated into Kazakhstani society.

It emerged that Robert's (1998) Uyghur community divides were anachronistic, and that new Kazakhstani-wide generational divides could be observed: between the Soviet generation, the post-Soviet generation, and the new Kazakhstan generation. The most cited non-generational divides were along axes of 'modernity' and settlement. Indeed, for many participants there existed a contrast between 'modern' and urban Uyghurs, to which they belonged, and an 'imagined other' of 'traditional', 'typical', rural Uyghurs.

Finally, I analysed the factors which contribute to the content of Uyghur identity, revealing that most participants had constructivist perceptions of ethnicity, attributing factors such as upbringing, language, and personal choice to the 'making' of an Uyghur.

Certain questions and limitations did, however, become evident from this chapter. Firstly, I wondered whether the participants might view their own Uyghurness as less valid than the 'typical' or 'traditional', whether their juxtaposition to the 'traditional other' might place their own ethnic identities at risk of assimilation, and whether constructivist and semi-constructivist views of ethnicity could contribute to the loss of their ethnic identities. I also wondered whether the 'non-typical' or 'non-traditional' self-perception of respondents meant that this study is unrepresentative of the Kazakhstani Uyghur community at large.

I contend that most participants are not at risk of losing their Uyghur self-identification, and, indeed, find novel ways to implement their Uyghurness, sometimes outside of the paradigms of 'traditional' ethnic content: examples included the incorporation of Uyghurness into their work or art, learning about and informing others of their ethnicity's culture and history, and social media or in-personal activism regarding Uyghur visibility. Thus, it emerges that for most participants their self-perception as non-traditional Uyghurs is

not a pusher toward ethnic exit (assimilation), but rather simply means that their Uyghurness is manifested in alternative avenues. Constructivist or semi-constructivist conceptualisations of ethnicity did not translate into the abandonment of one's ethnic identity. To paraphrase participant **L**, the realisation that ethnicity is somewhat a choice allows participants the freedom and perspective not to rebel against Uyghurness, but to embrace it on their own terms.

In **Chapter 5** I analysed the acculturative setting in which participants found themselves and the effects of this setting on participants' strategies of acculturation. In general, Kazakhstan, and Almaty emerged as a diverse, 'culturally plural society' (Berry, 2006) which conceives civic and ethnic identity not as competitors in a zero-sum game, but rather as two independent axes in a multi-ethnic environment. I concluded that most participants possessed high 'cultural competence' (Oppedal, 2006) leading to an integrating acculturative strategy which is likely to result in positive psychological and personal outcomes. Nonetheless, several risks to Uyghur identity maintenance were determined, namely *external risks* such as perceptions of discrimination, fears that the Kazakhstani state could take a nationalising turn and close Uyghur cultural platforms, and deficiencies in Uyghur language education; and, *internal risks* such as the overbearing influence of the Uyghur community and the perception of Uyghurs as too 'traditional' to accommodate liberal values. There were also *mixed internal-external risks* such as Uyghurs' frequent choice to study and work in the Russian language, to enter into an international milieu, and even emigrate in search of opportunity and tolerance. In terms of the preservation of ethnic distinctness most participants did **not** choose 'traditional' strategies such as endogamy, attendance of cultural platforms, or promotion of their native language. Participants did however view rural and Uyghur-majority communities as stable reservoirs of 'traditional Uyghurness'.

In **Chapter 6** I explored the additional 'external' factor of China and Xinjiang. It emerged that for most participants Xinjiang was a kind of 'liminal' space with elements of familiarity and strangeness which did not form a regular part of participants' daily concerns or a critical element of their self-identifications. All participants had heard of the re-education camps in Xinjiang, but only 10 reported a change in their self-perception in light of this issue. Further, only an even smaller subset of participants adopted a coping strategy which transformed concerns about Xinjiang repressions into concrete action. I theorise that preference for 'avoidant' or 'emotional' coping strategies is due to the difficulties of the Kazakhstan's ethnic and societal setting, where grass-roots political action (especially with

regards to China and ethnic minorities) is not welcome. Further, I contend that for many participants the concept of 'Uyghur' has become largely a Kazakhstan-based cognitive schema: Xinjiang Uyghurs are related, but metaphorically they are now less like brothers, and more like the distant aunts and uncles and cousins who once visited the participants in childhood. We thus observe a trend toward increasing sub-ethnic distinctness in the self-perception of young Kazakhstani Uyghurs.

Returning to the overarching question of this study – *how do Uyghurs perceive themselves and their ethnic community?* – I contend that there is no monolithic, homogeneous answer. Self-identifications and perceptions vary over time and between participants. Nonetheless, I conclude that the participants of this study form a dynamic, tolerant, future-oriented community who have agency in choosing their own ethnic markers and identities alongside their levels of participation in Kazakhstani society. They are far from the 'pawn' or 'victim' narratives often seen in western media concerning Uyghurs. Further, while the current geopolitical relevance and recency of re-education camps in Xinjiang may tempt researchers to focus only on this issue, this study has offered a holistic account of Uyghur identity which analytically engages with this factor, but does not overplay its relevance.

In terms of the tentative hypotheses offered in the research design, I contend that stronger identifications and integrations with Kazakhstani society only resulted in a **partial** reduction in Uyghur ethnic salience. Instead, it led to re-calibrations away from traditional ethnic markers in favour of the mechanisms of cultural expressivity mentioned above. Further, I found that all participants were heavily (often 'involuntarily') exposed to news of Xinjiang repressions; their reactions to events in Xinjiang were determined not by the *frequency* or *intensity* of exposure, but by their own personality traits and coping mechanisms.

With regards to the representativeness of this study, I contend that the 'non-traditional' self-identification of many respondents may form a limitation to understanding Kazakhstan's Uyghurs and perhaps even Almatian Uyghurs. Nonetheless, I believe that insights provided by respondents are nuanced, valid, and take into consideration many layers of Uyghur society. Indeed, the non-traditional Uyghur can only emerge after having been dialectically engaged with these same contexts of 'traditionalness'. Further, I believe there is enough diversity in responses for future researchers to form prototypes of manifestations of Uyghurness. Indeed, this study has provided highly contextualised and detailed material which may be directly cited or used as an informative springboard for further study. A high

degree of transferability is ensured by my wholly transparent and detailed approach to **methodology, methods** and **participants' demographic data** . 'Representative' or not, the participants' stories are inherently meaningful and complex, and, given that they are members of an understudied and internationally marginalised ethnic community, I am glad to provide them with this modest academic platform.

There were several practical limitations to this project. The tight word-limit of this dissertation does not lend itself perfectly to the 'thick' insights required by qualitative and ethnographic research. I regret that I was not able to convey the fullness of some participants' experience. Nonetheless, I intend to use this as motivation for participation in conferences, work groups, and academic papers. Indeed, I will also consider embarking on a more extensive ethnographic project among young Uyghurs at the PhD level.

Other practical limitations were linked to my financial, time and personal resources. I was not able to travel outside of the city of Almaty; I did not have the time to interview participants more than once or to use alternative data gathering techniques; and, although the opportunity arose to anonymously interview Uyghurs who had been in the re-education camps in Xinjiang, I did not have the emotional capacity or ethical approval to do so.

Finally, there existed access limitations. My personal positionality and connections meant it was much easier to find Russian speaking, educated, male participants. Although non-Russian speaking Uyghurs are a very small demographic, I was not able to enter this community as my Uyghur had not yet reached the necessary level. I also did not have access to highly religious individuals and the Uyghur enclaves. Further, I was not able to reach local Uyghur academics, cultural proprietors, and experts.

Contributions and suggestions for further study

Limitations notwithstanding, I believe this project has offered meaningful contributions to several academic discourses. **Chapter 4** can be used as a case study of the dynamic nature of self-identifications and divides in borderlands, securitised, and transnational communities. **Chapter 5** offers insides pertinent to Kazakhstan's nationalities policy and a building block within larger discourses of acculturation and assimilation. **Chapter 6** is informative to understandings of Kazakhstan-China relations, China's ethnic policy, and the coping strategies of individuals faced with unsettling or incomprehensible news. Overall, the narrative nature of this project has made insights more directly

communicable, similar to human language, affect-transmissible, and holistic. This means that the case study could be used to influence the decisions of Kazakhstani policy makers, institutes, and individual Uyghur actors.

Finally, this dissertation provides crucial updates to previous findings. It confirms Kamalov (2021's) assertion that Robert's (1998) generation divisions are no longer applicable; it concurs with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung's (2017) assertion that Uyghurs form cohesive communities and yet interact harmoniously with Kazakhstani society, while still giving due nuance to issues of discrimination and political disenfranchisement cited by La Mela (2019); further, it echoes and contextualises the Uyghur community concerns noted by Kozhirova (2014) and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (2017).

I concede that the self-representations of individuals vary greatly depending on researcher and research setting. 45-to-90-minute interviews inevitably cannot convey the fullness of experience, nor can we assume that one's reports of one's attitudes and behaviours always accurately reflect a consistent inner state. Consequently, I suggest that future studies of Kazakhstan's Uyghurs implement combined methods: participant observation, surveying, community interviews, and cultural leader, expert, and curator interviews.

I recommend that studies incorporate new avenues of investigation among this young Uyghur cohort. More attention could be given to the interaction between Uyghur family oral history and the self-perceptions of post-Soviet Uyghurs. A comparative study between the push and pull factors for Uyghur emigration and the emigration of other Kazakhstani ethnicities who lack such a robust world-wide diaspora could also be enlightening. Indeed, studies of the interactions between Kazakhstani Uyghurs and their international diaspora are quite scarce. Finally, I believe that this dissertation was not able to give due attention to intersections between ethnic identity and other identificatory dimensions, such as gender, queerness, or class. Nor could it give due attention to the developing decolonial approaches among Kazakhstani activists and intellectuals: should this trend continue, it would be pertinent to study the complex coloniality of Kazakhstan's Uyghurs within this discourse. This project is inherently time-bound, and therefore has not been able to incorporate the effects of the war in Ukraine on language use and self-perception among Kazakhs and Kazakhstani minorities; it also has not been able to engage with the Ürümchi fire of November 2022, the subsequent lifting of covid restrictions, and recent adaptations in China's policy toward Uyghurs.

It is my strong desire to collaborate with this complex, dynamic and fascinating community of young Uyghurs in the future, and I thank my participants once more for their openness and hospitality.

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Appendixes

1: Participant Information Sheet (English & Russian)

College of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title and Researcher Details

Research Title	Youth study of Uyghur self-perception in Almaty
University	University of Glasgow, Scotland; KIMEP, Kazakhstan
Degree	International Master in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies
Researcher	Daniel Colm Simpson daniel.simpson@kime:kz
Supervisors	Marcin Kaczmarsky, University of Glasgow Marcin.Kaczmarski@glasgow.ac.uk; Didar Kassymova, KIMEP didar@kime:kz

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before giving your consent, it is important to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. You may discuss it with others if you wish. If you find something unclear or would like more information, please feel free to ask me.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is exploring the ethnic identity of the Uyghur minority in Almaty. It seeks to understand which elements are most important to the ethnic self-perception as a Uyghur. I will ask questions regarding your demographic status, your view of the Uyghur homeland, the Uyghur community in Almaty, and your attitude towards Uyghur language and culture. With your consent, I may also ask questions regarding cross-border relations with China. You can choose not to answer some questions, and to answer in as much detail as you deem fit.

Why have I been chosen?
You are invited as we have previously spoken and you expressed interest in contributing to the study, or because another participant has indicated you might be willing to contribute to the study.

Do I have to take part?

You can decide if you want to take part. You can withdraw your participation at any time and without giving a reason even after the interview. You do not need to answer all the questions. You can answer in as much detail as you see fit.

What will happen to me if I take part?
You will be invited to take part in an interview. You can choose to be interviewed in person, by zoom, by email or over a secure messaging platform such as Telegram or Whatsap: You can decide which format is best for you.

We can speak in Russian, German, English or Chinese (Putonghua).

The interview will take between 30 to 50 minutes. It will focus on your experience as a Uyghur living in Almaty. As stated above, the interview will investigate which elements of your national culture you find most relevant to your personal identity.

I will make a secure audio recording of the interview. If the interview takes place by email or messaging, a written record will be taken.

After the interview, the content will be transcribed. Anything which could identify you will be removed. Your comments and thoughts from the interview will be used in my master's thesis to form research findings of Uyghur self-perception in Almaty.

If you decide to be interviewed in person, you can choose which COVID-19 prevention measures are within your comfort level. This may include the wearing of masks (I can provide one for you), a spacing of 2m, ventilation, surface cleaning, a meeting in an outdoor setting or other reasonable measures at your request.

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 we will postpone the interview or use Zoom instead.

You can find information about how to protect yourself and others from COVID, how to get tested and what to do if you feel unwell at www.coronavirus2020.kz

If you feel distressed during or after the interview, you can receive free psychological help from the following resources:

Красный Полумесяц Казахстана (https://redcrescent.kz/contact-us/)
Online Health.KZ (https://onlinehealth.kz/ru/index.htm)

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about you will be kept confidential.

What you say in your interview will be written down and may be used in my thesis, but I will remove your name, age, location,, and any other information from which you could be identified. If your words are quoted in the thesis, I will use an anonymising number (eg. ´Participant 2´) instead of your name.

All documents and recordings will be encrypted and transferred to the University of Glasgow's servers securely. At the end of the project (expected August 2022) interview recordings and any identifying data will be destroyed.

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as possible, unless during our conversation I hear information indicating someone might be in danger of imminent harm. Should this be the case, I may have to inform relevant authorities.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The study will be the basis of my master's thesis. All identifying data collected during this research will be destroyed at the end of the project. This is expected to be in August 2022.

You can contact me to ask for a copy of the final thesis or a shorter summary report. It might be published in a journal or presented at a conference. Participants will **not** be identified by name in the thesis and all identifying information will be removed.

Who is organising and funding the research?
I am a student at both the University of Glasgow in Scotland, and KIMEP University in Kazakhstan. I receive an Erasmus Mundus scholarship from the European Commission to fund my studies.

Who has approved the study?
This project has been reviewed by the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Forum at the University of Glasgow. This project has also been approved by my supervisor at KIMEP University.

Contact for Further Information
If you have any questions, if there is something you do not understand or if you need more information, please contact me at daniel.simpson@kime:kz
If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Officer at socpol-pgt-ethicsglasgow.ac.uk

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences

Информационный лист для участника исследования

Название исследования и сведения об исследователе

Исследование	Уйгурская идентичность среди молодежи в городе Алматы
Университет	Университет Глазго, Шотландия; КИМЭП Казахстан
Программа	Международный магистр по исследованиям Центральной и Восточной Европы, России и Евразии
Исследователь	Даниэль Кольм Симпсон daniel.simpson@kime:kz
Научные руководители	Профессор Марчин Качмарский Marcin.Kaczmarski@glasgow.ac.uk; Университет Глазго; Дидар Касымова, КИМЭП didar@kime:kz

Вам предлагается принять участие в научном исследовании. Прежде чем вы дадите своё согласие, важно понять, зачем проводится исследование и что оно будет включать в себя. Пожалуйста, внимательно прочитайте следующую информацию. При желании вы можете обсудить ее с третьими лицами. Если вам что-то непонятно или нужна дополнительная информация, обращайтесь ко мне.

Какова цель исследования?

Данное исследование изучает этническую идентичность уйгурского меньшинства в городе Алматы. Автор исследования стремится определить, какие элементы являются наиболее важными для этнического самовосприятия местных уйгуров. Исследователь задаст вопросы, касающиеся вашего демографического статуса, ваших представлений о родине, уйгурской общины в Алматы, а также вашего отношения к уйгурскому языку и культуре. С вашего согласия я также могу задать вопросы, касающиеся трансграничных отношений с Китаем. Вы можете отказаться отвечать на некоторые вопросы, а также определить уровень подробностей.

Почему меня пригласили?

Вас пригласили, поскольку мы ранее общались и вы выразили интерес к участию в исследовании, или потому, что кто-то из других участников счел, что вы хотели бы внести свой вклад в исследование.

Обязательно ли мне принимать участие?

Вы можете решить сами, хотите ли вы участвовать в исследовании. Вы можете отказаться от участия в исследовании в любое время и без объяснения причин, даже после интервью. Вы не обязаны отвечать на все вопросы. Вы можете отвечать на вопросы настолько подробно, насколько считаете нужным.

Что будет со мной, если я приму участие?

Вам предлагается принять участие в интервью. Оно может проводиться по Zoom, по электронной почте или при помощи защищенных сообщений, на таких платформах как Telegram или WhatsAp: Я также могу предложить вам провести интервью лично. Вы можете решить, какой формат вам лучше подходит.

Мы можем проводить интервью на русском, немецком, английском или китайском (путунхуа) языках.

Интервью займет от 30 до 50 минут. Как указано выше, интервью будет посвящено вашему опыту как представителя уйгурского этноса, проживающего в городе Алматы. В ходе интервью мы обсудим, какие элементы вашей национальной культуры вы считаете наиболее значимыми для вашей идентичности.

Я сделаю защищенную аудиозапись интервью. Если интервью будет проводиться по электронной почте или посредством обмена сообщениями, сделаю письменный протокол.

После интервью я запишу все, что было сказано, и удалю все данные, которые могут вас идентифицировать. Ваши комментарии и мысли из интервью будут использованы в моей магистерской диссертации для формирования исследовательских выводов о самовосприятии уйгуров в Алматы.

Если вы решите пройти интервью лично, вы можете выбрать, какие меры профилактики COVID-19 соответствуют вашему уровню комфорта. Это может включать ношение масок (я могу предоставить вам маску), социальное дистанцирование, проветривание, очистку поверхностей, встречу на открытом воздухе или любые другие разумные меры.

Если у вас есть симптомы COVID-19, мы отложим интервью или вместо него воспользуемся программой Zoom.

Информацию о том, как защитить себя и других от COVID, как пройти тестирование и что делать, если вы себя плохо чувствуете, вы можете найти на сайте www.coronavirus2020.kz.

Если во время или после интервью вы нуждаетесь в бесплатной психологической поддержки, вы можете воспользоваться следующими услугами:

Красный Полумесяц Казахстана (https://redcrescent.kz/contact-us/)
Online Health.KZ (https://onlinehealth.kz/ru/index.htm)

Будет ли конфиденциальным мое участие в данном исследовании?

Вся собранная о вас информация будет сохранена в тайне.

Все сказанное вами в интервью будет записано и может быть использовано в моей диссертации, но я удалю ваше имя, возраст, место проживания и любую другую информацию, по которой вас можно идентифицировать. Если ваши слова будут процитированы в диссертации, вместо вашего имени я использую анонимиризующий номер (например, ´Участник 2´).

Все документы и записи будут зашифрованы и надежно переданы на серверы Университета Глазго. По окончании проекта (предположительно, в августе 2022 года) записи интервью и любые идентифицирующие вас данные будут уничтожены.

Ваша конфиденциальность будет максимально сохранена. Однако если во время нашего интервью вы предоставите информацию о человеке, которому грозит неминуемая опасность, возможно, мне придется проинформировать соответствующие органы.

Что будет с результатами исследования?
Исследование станет основой моей магистерской диссертации. Все идентифицирующие данные, собранные в ходе исследования, будут уничтожены по окончании проекта. Ожидается, что это будет в августе 2022 года.

Вы можете связаться со мной и попросить копию диссертации или краткий отчет. Результаты исследования могут быть опубликованы в журнале или представлены на конференции. Участники **не** будут названы в диссертации по имени, и вся идентифицирующая их информация будет удалена.

Кто организует и финансирует исследование?
Я студент Университета Глазго в Шотландии и Университета КИМЭП в Казахстане. Я получаю финансирование от Европейской комиссии в рамках стипендии Erasmus Mundus.

Кем одобрено данное исследование?

Данный проект был одобрен этическим комитетом Школы социальных и политических наук Университета Глазго. Исследование было также согласовано с моим научным руководителем в Университете КИМЭП.

Контакт для получения дополнительной информации
Если у вас возникли вопросы,-вам что-то непонятно или нужна дополнительная информация, пожалуйста, свяжитесь со мной по адресу daniel.simpson@kime:kz

Если у вас есть какие-либо сомнения относительно проведения исследовательского проекта, вы можете обратиться к специалисту по этике Школы социальных и политических наук по адресу socpol-pgt-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

2: Consent Forms (English & Russian)

College of Social Sciences

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE
AGREEMENT TO THE USE OF DATA

I understand that Daniel Colm Simpson is collecting data in the form of recorded interviews for use in an academic research project at the University of Glasgow.

I have read the information sheet outlining the project and its methods and had the opportunity to ask any questions arising from that.

I consent to participate in the interviews on the following terms:
1. I can leave any question unanswered.
2. The interview can be stopped at any point.

I agree to the processing of data for this project on the following terms:
1. Use and storage of research data in the University of Glasgow reflects the institution's educational/ research mission and its legal responsibilities in relation to both information security and scrutiny of researcher conduct.
    a. As part of this, under UK legislation (UK General Data Protection Regulation [UK GDPR]), I understand and accept that the 'lawful basis' for the processing of personal data is that the project constitutes 'a task in the public interest', and that any processing of special category data is 'necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, or scientific and historical research'.
    b. I understand that I have the right to **access** data relating to me or that I have provided and to **object** where I have reason to believe it has been misused or used for purposes other than those stated.
    c. Project materials in will be kept in electronic form, treated as confidential and kept in secure storage (appropriately encrypted, password-protected devices and University user accounts) at all times.
2. Interviews will be transcribed and the recordings deleted one the dissertation has been submitted.
3. I will not be identified by name in the study. All other names and information likely to identify individuals will be removed or redacted.
4. I have the choice to leave any question unanswered.
5. Project materials may be used in future research and be cited and discussed in future publications, both print and online.

ALL PARTICIPANTS:

☐ I agree to the terms for data processing as outlined above.
☐ I confirm I have been given information on how to exercise my rights of access and objection.

Name of Participant: ____________________________ Date: _________

Signature: ____

Researcher's name and email:	Daniel Colm Simpson (daniel.simpson@kime:kz)
Course organiser's name and email:	Ammon Cheskin Ammon.Cheskin@glasgow.ac.uk
Department address:	College of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, United Kingdom

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences

СОГЛАСИЕ НА УЧАСТИЕ
СОГЛАСИЕ НА ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ДАННЫХ

Я осведомлен(а), что Даниэль Колм Симпсон собирает данные в формате записанных интервью для использования в академическом исследовательском проекте в Университете Глазго.

Я прочитал(а) информационный лист, ознакомился(ась) с описанием проекта и его методов и имел(а) возможность задать вопросы.

Я даю согласие на участие в интервью на следующих условиях:

1. Я могу оставить любой вопрос без ответа.
2. Интервью может быть прекращено в любой момент.

Я даю согласие на обработку данных для этого проекта на следующих условиях:

1. Использование и хранение исследовательских данных в Университете Глазго отражает образовательную/исследовательскую миссию учреждения и его юридические обязательства в отношении информационной безопасности и контроля поведения исследователей.

a. В соответствии с законодательством Великобритании (UK General Data Protection Regulation [UK GDPR]) я понимаю и принимаю, что "законным основанием" для обработки персональных данных является то, что проект представляет собой "задачу в интересах общества " и что любая обработка данных специальной категории "необходима для архивных целей в общественных интересах или для научных и исторических исследований".

b. Я понимаю, что у меня есть право доступа к данным, касающимся меня или предоставленным мной, а также право возражения, если у меня есть основания полагать, что эти данные были неправильно использованы или используются в других целях.

c. Материалы проекта будут храниться в электронных форматах, считаться конфиденциальными и оставаться всегда в безопасном месте (соответствующим образом зашифрованные, защищенные паролем устройства и учетных записей пользователей университета).

2. Интервью будут расшифрованы, а записи удалены после защиты диссертации.
3. В исследовании я не буду назван(а) по имени. Все другие имена и информация, которые могут идентифицировать меня, будут удалены или отредактированы.
4. У меня есть право оставить любой вопрос без ответа.
5. Материалы проекта могут быть использованы в будущих исследованиях, процитированы и обсуждены в будущих публикациях, как печатных, так и в Интернете.

ВСЕ УЧАСТНИКИ:

☐ Я согласен (на) с вышеизложенными условиями обработки данных.

☐ Я подтверждаю, что получил(а) информацию о том, как реализовать свои права на доступ к данным и возражение.

ФИО участника: ______________________________ Дата: __________

Подпись: ____

ФИО исследователя	Даниел Колм Симпсон (daniel.simpson@kime:kz)
ФИО организатора программы	Аммон Ческин Ammon.Cheskin@glasgow.ac.uk
Адрес кафедры:	Колледж социальных наук, Университет Глазго, Глазго, Великобритания

3: Semi-Structured Interview Guide Questions

The following questions were used as a general guide. Not all questions were asked in all interviews, nor were they phrased exactly as listed below. Most interviews developed naturally and the participants elaborated on the themes below umprompted or in response to original follow-up questions.

Demographic Questions
Демографические вопросы

What age are you?	Сколько вам лет?
What is your profession?	Какая у вас профессия?
Please state your level of education: - Primary - Secondary - BA - MA or above	Укажите ваш уровень образования: -Начальное -Среднее специальное / -Высшее -Магистратура, аспирантура или выше
What is your gender?	Укажите пол
Do you live in a district or region with a Uyghur majority?	Живёте ли вы в районе или местности, где уйгуры являются большинством?

1. **Questions regarding homeland and history**
Вопросы, касающиеся родины и истории

What does the word 'homeland' mean to you? Where is it located?	Что для вас означает «родина»? Где она находится?
What is your relationship to the term 'historical homeland'? Where is it located?	Как вы относитесь к термину «историческая родина»? Где, по-вашему, она находится?
Do you plan to emigrate from Kazakhstan in the future? Where to? Why?	Собираетесь ли вы в будущем эмигрировать из Казахстана? Куда? Почему?

2. Questions regarding language and education
Вопросы, касающиеся языка и образования

Which language is the easiest for you to communicate in? a) Russian b) Uyghur c) Kazakh	На каком языке вам легче всего общаться? а) на русском б) на уйгурском в) на казахском
Which language do you consider your 'native tongue'?	Какой язык вы считаете своим "родным"?
Which language do your parents communicate most in? a) Russian b) Uyghur c) Kazakh	На каком языке чаще всего общаются ваши родители? а) на русском б) на уйгурском в) на казахском
Would you like to change the language you communicate in? Why/why not?	Хотели бы вы сменить язык, на котором вы общаетесь? Почему?
Do you think Uyghurs are more likely to switch to Russian or Kazakh?	Как вы думаете, уйгуры чаще переходят на русский или на казахский?
Did you attend a Uyghur language school? How does the education in an Uyghur school differ from a Russian or Kazakh school?	Учились ли вы в уйгурской школе? Чем, на ваш взгляд, отличается обучение в уйгурской школе от русских и казахских школ?

3. Questions regarding the local Uyghur community
Вопросы, касающиеся уйгурской общины

Have you heard of any of these terms – how would you define them? a) Kelgänlär (‘newcomers’) b) Khitailiklär (‘recent immigrants from China’) c) Yerliklär ('locals’)	Знакомы ли вам следующие термины, если да, как бы вы их определили? а) Келгәнләр («новые переселенцы») б) Хитайликләр (“современные переселенцы из Китая») в) Йәрликләр («местные»)
Would you say Uyghurs in Almaty are different from Uyghurs outside of the city, in the Uyghur District? If so, how?	Отличаются ли уйгуры в Алматы и за пределами города, например в Уйгурском районе? Если да, то чем?
What is the most important element for defining someone as Uyghur? Blood, religion, language, culture? Please elaborate.	Что является наиболее важным элементом для определения человека как уйгура? Кровь, религия, язык, культура? Пожалуйста, расскажите подробнее.
Do you think there is a divide in Uyghur identity between those under 35 and those over? How is this divide manifested?	Как вы думаете, отличаются ли уйгуры моложе 35 лет от представителей старших поколений? Если да, в чем это проявляется?
Who do you generally make friends with? a) Other Uyghurs b) Kazakhs c) Russians d) Foreigners e) Other ethnicities	С кем вы обычно дружите? а) С другими уйгурами б) С казахами в) С русскими г) С иностранцами д) С другими национальностями

f) All of the above	f) Со всеми вышеперечисленными группами
Would you prefer to marry another Uyghur? Why?	Вы бы предпочли заключить брак с представителем уйгурской национальности? Почему?

4. Questions regarding cultural preservation
Вопросы, касающиеся сохранения культуры

Are you concerned with preserving Uyghur culture? If so, what practices do you have in your daily life which contribute to this?	Важно ли вам сохранение уйгурской культуры? Если да, какие практики в вашей повседневной жизни способствуют ее сохранению?
Do you have any connection to the following Uyghur cultural platforms? a) Mäshräp b) Uyghur Theatre c) Uyghur newspapers d) Other	Имеете ли вы отношение к следующим уйгурским культурным платформам? а) Мәшрәп б) Уйгурский театр в) Уйгурские газеты d) Другое obrazovanie/ klass/ nationalnost *
Have you attended a Uyghur marriage or funeral? How would you characterise your experience?	Присутствовали ли вы на уйгурской свадьбе или на уйгурских похоронах? Как бы вы охарактеризовали свой опыт?

5. Questions regarding Relations with China
Вопросы, касающиеся отношений с Китаем

Do you keep up with news about events in Xinjiang? If so, which platform do you use?	Следите ли вы за новостями о событиях в Синьцзяне? Если да, какую платформу вы используете?

Have events in China since 2016 affected your Uyghur identity? How?	Влияют ли события, происходящие в Китае с 2016 года, на вашу уйгурскую идентичность? Каким образом?
Do you feel that connections with China have grown weaker or stronger in the last 5 years?	Считаете ли вы, что за последние 6 лет контакт с Китаем стал слабее или теснее?
Would you say Uyghurs in Kazakhstan are different from Uyghurs in China? If so, how?	Отличаются ли уйгуры в Казахстане от уйгуров в Китае? Если да, то чем?
Do you have relatives in China? Do you keep in contact with them? If so, how?	Есть ли у вас родственники в Китае? Поддерживаете ли вы с ними контакт? Если да, то как?
Have you visited China? Have you visited Xinjiang?	Бывали ли вы в Китае? А в Синьцзяне?

4: Ethical Approval

College of Social Sciences

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Notification of Ethics Application Outcome – UG and PGT Student Applications

Application Details

Undergraduate Student Research Ethics Application ☐ Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application ☐

Application Number: PGT/SPS/2022/279/CEERES

Applicant's Name: Daniel Colm Simpson

Project Title: Self-Perception of Uyghur Youth in Almaty

Application Status: Fully Approved

Date of Review: 12/07/2022

Start Date of Approval 05/08/2022 End Date of Approval 31/01/2023

NB: Only if the applicant has been given approval can they proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval.

5: Declaration of Authorship (KIMEP)

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or a substantial proportion of material which have been submitted for the award of any other degree at KIMEP University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the thesis. This thesis is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated, and the views expressed here are my own.

Signed:

Daniel Colm Simpson

Date: 31 January 2023