

University of Gothenburg
Department of Social Work



“Always been an Alien”

*A qualitative study on how multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity
and belonging in Skopje, North Macedonia.*

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SW2227, Scientific work in Social Work, 30hp

Master Thesis

Spring term 2022

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Words:

27616

Abstract

Title:

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This study offers empirical arguments for how multilingual young adults navigate and experience identity and belonging in Skopje. A city reported to be, one of the most multicultural cities in South-East Europe, where ethnic exclusion and interethnic segregation is outmost present (Veron, 2016:1448; Stojanov, 2020:74). Raising awareness of multilingual youth can contribute to more inspiration and research being conducted in the field of social work. As a result, social workers can provide relevant expertise to assist multilingual service users, so oppression of their multilingual identity can be reduced. Using a thematic analysis method in conjunction with a life course theory, qualitative methods were selected to carry out semi-structured interviews that allowed for open answers and good analytics. Information letters and snowball sampling were used to attract the attention of 14 respondents. Results imply that prior history, politics, geographical location and ethnic affiliation affects how the multilingual youths experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje. When respondents are in minority groups or are perceived to transgress ethnic lines, they clearly experience misrecognition. Language seems to be an important indicator of affiliation, identification, and alliance among ethnic groups, and ethnic groupings appear to enforce ethnic boundaries. Certain ethnicities are more susceptible to being negatively impacted by stereotypes, while other ethnicities are presumably more likely to get recognition for their identity. Study revealed that multilingualism appears to work in the respondents favor as an enabling mechanism to navigate through the difficulties and exhibit indicators of excellent mental health and belonging.

Keywords:

Ethnicity, Social Work, Identity, Belonging, Multilingual, Young Adults, North Macedonia

Sammanfattning

Titel:

“Alltid varit en Alien”

Författare:

Milan Wall Kovacevski

Studien ger empiriska argument för hur flerspråkiga unga vuxna navigerar och upplever identitet och tillhörighet i Skopje. En stad som rapporteras vara en av de mest mångkulturella städerna i sydöstra Europa, där etniskt utanförskap och interetnisk segregation är ytterst närvarande (Veron, 2016:1448; Stojanov, 2020:74). Genom att öka medvetenheten om flerspråkiga unga vuxna kan studien bidra till att mer inspiration och forskning bedrivs inom området för socialt arbete. Som ett resultat kan socialarbetare tillhandahålla relevant expertis för att assistera flerspråkiga klienter, så att förtryck av deras flerspråkiga identitet kan minskas. Genom en tematisk analysmetod i kombination med en livsloppsteori valdes kvalitativa metoder för att genomföra semistrukturerade intervjuer som möjliggjorde öppna svar och goda analyser. Informationsbrev och snöbollsurval användes för att rekrytera 14 respondenter. Resultaten visar att historia, politisk situation, geografiskt läge och etnisk tillhörighet påverkar hur de flerspråkiga unga vuxna upplever och navigerar sin identitet och tillhörighet i Skopje. När respondenterna befinner sig i minoritetsgrupper eller uppfattas bryta etniska gränser upplever de en ej accepterad identitet. Språket framstår som en viktig indikator på tillhörighet, identifiering och allians mellan etniska grupper, där etniska grupperingar verkar uppmana till etniska skiljelinjer. Vissa etniciteter är mer utsatta för att bli negativt påverkade av stereotyper, där andra etniciteter är mer benägna att få erkännande för sin identitet. Studien visade att flerspråkighet verkar fungera i respondenternas fördel som en möjliggörande mekanism för att navigera genom svårigheterna och uppvisa indikatorer på god mental hälsa och tillhörighet.

Nyckelord:

Etnicitet, Socialt Arbete, Identitet, Tillhörighet, Flerspråkig, Unga Vuxna, Nordmakedonien

Foreword

I would like to thank all the respondents that participated in this study. I greatly valued your participation and willingness to share about your experiences. I would also like to thank my supervisor, Lena Sawyer, who always helped and motivated me to conduct the study forward.

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1. Background

The purpose of this study is to explore how multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje, North Macedonia. What makes Skopje extra interesting for conducting research about its citizens identity and belonging in these regions, is its long history of crossroads for different populations. Sukarova et al (2018:10) & Apostolovska Toševska et al (2018:49) highlight how North Macedonia has been a crossroad between the Eastern and Western cultures for centuries, creating a population diversity which dates back to the early 6th century. Former empires such as the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian empire dominated the region from the mid-14th century to 1912 (Kaytchev, 2014:127). North Macedonia was also a part of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFR) that consisted of over 40 nationalities. The most common ethnicities in the Macedonian region were the Macedonians, Turks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Croats, Bosnians, Montenegrins and Albanians (Kaytchev, 2014:127). Statistics furthermore showed that an estimated third of the population was in a mixed marriage, a marriage often defined as between two people of a different race, ethnicity or religion (Keel & Drew, 2004:97).

The complex history of this country and the large differences between the populations regarding ethnicity, language, culture and religion, resulted in the creation of an area influenced by political events therefore affecting the identity and nationality of the population living in North Macedonia for generations (Piacentini, 2019:464).

Many of these influences still remain evident in North Macedonia today, as Skopje has maintained its Ottoman characteristics of ethnic diversity and cultural mixing (Veron, 2016:1448). According to the national population census, two thirds are ethnic Macedonians while the other prominent ethnic groups are Turks, Serbs, Bosnians, Albanians, Vlachs, Egyptians and Romani. Most of the population is Christian (Macedonians, Serbs and Vlachs) and the second most dominating group is Muslim (Bosnians, Turks, Egyptians and Albanians) (Sukarova et al, 2018:12; Babić, 2014:388). The linguistic diversity in North Macedonia is as well evident, as it represents its ethnic structure (Rizankoska & Trajkoska, 2020:10). The Macedonian language is the official language and mother tongue to approximately 65%;

Albanian is the second biggest official language and mother tongue to approximately 25% of the population. Remaining languages are Turkish, Roma, Serbian, Bosnian, Vlach and some other languages that constitute the remaining 10% (Treneska-Deskoska, 2017:62).

Due to North Macedonia's long history of different populations and influences, multiculturalism and multilingualism have been present for a long time. When North Macedonia gained its independence from SFY in 1991, it recognised the existence of different ethnic communities living within its borders far more than any other former Yugoslav republics (Engström, 2002:7; Veron, 2016:1448). North Macedonia has constitutionally guaranteed all its citizens freedom of association and protection of their political, economic, social, cultural rights and beliefs, and free expression of national belonging (Andeva, 2015:14). Despite these inclusive measures, ethnic frictions still remained since the period of obtaining independence. Piacentini (2019:465) & Vangelov (2019:207) reported that the independent identity was still in question as the Macedonian language was considered a dialect from the Bulgarians. However, this was not the only obstacle in the way. The Serbian Orthodox church didn't recognise the Macedonian Orthodox church and Greece did not recognise North Macedonia as an independent nation. The independence of North Macedonia was in addition interpreted by the Albanians and other ethnic groups in the region as a diminution and a denial of their constitutional status (Veron, 2016:1448). Albanian citizens wanted more political recognition, something that sparked further ethnic tensions between the ethnic communities (Banarjee et al, 2021:368). These ethnic tensions later facilitated an armed conflict in 2001 between Albanian rebels and Macedonian security forces, pushing the country into implementing constitutional changes in order to end the conflict (Treneska-Deskoska, 2017:63).

Constitutional changes advocated for more inclusion and linguistic diversity; the law contained an obligation for Macedonian Radio Television and National TV to broadcast in Albanian and other minority languages, not only in Macedonian. Minority languages became used in different types of infrastructures in addition to the official language. The education in primary, secondary and university level became available in both Macedonian and Albanian language. Primary and secondary education provided Serbian, Bosnian and Turkish language options (Treneska-Deskoska, 2017:65). The new constitution further stated that languages other than Macedonian that are used by at least 20% of the citizens in the municipality will pass as an official language and can be used in accordance with the law (Andeva, 2015:19). Serbian, Turkish, Bosnian, Vlach and Romani are therefore used as official languages in a smaller number of municipalities and Albanian is an official language in 30 out of 85 municipalities. Albanians are the majority

population in 16 municipalities; Turks are the majority in two municipalities and more than 20% in two other municipalities; Serbs are over 20% in one municipality; Romani are the majority in one municipality (Rizankoska & Trajkoska, 2020:10). According to the national census, the national population parallels Skopje in its population diversity (Veron, 2016:1449).

Regarding North Macedonia's long history of migration flow, it can be stated that North Macedonia has always been a dynamic zone for migrants due to its geographical position (Apostolovska Toševska et al, 2018:65), something that has influenced significantly on the present demographic composition of the population in North Macedonia, making Skopje one of the last remaining multicultural cities in South-East Europe. After the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1990, Skopje remained the only capital out of all the former Yugoslav countries that did not pursue an "ethnic cleansing" ideology (Veron, 2016:1449). Even with these inclusive positions North Macedonia became, as a result of democratization and becoming an independent nation, a divided society with major tensions concerning the creation of a new political identity and political institutions (Koppa, 2001:45). This was in opposition with the interests of the Albanian population, according to Banarjee et al (2021:371), which indicates that these tensions were a result of the country's history of Albanian nationalism as well as the process by which the Macedonians built their independent ethnicity and nation.

2. Introduction

Tensions still constitute today's population as social problems are expressed as interethnic and citizens are prone to identify with ethnic identity titles rather than as citizens of North Macedonia (Koppa, 2001:40). Mistrust towards each other's ethnic groups have been established into societal ways, which is fuelled by ethnic politics that obstruct inter-ethnic peace in order to control their electorate (Treneska-Deskoska, 2017:67; Daskalovski, 2013:376). Skopje's different populations are also unevenly distributed throughout the urban space where the Vardar River serves as a border between the different communities facilitating distinct ethnic zones (Veron, 2016:1450). That being the case, Skopje's demographic situation contributes to a fragmented society for its young citizens. Probability is that the young multilingual adults who live in Skopje are affected by such significant demographics in their everyday life and lifespan. This being stated, the study's goal is to investigate how respondents experience and navigate identity and belonging in such conditions. Social inequities and other issues may be brought to light by looking at the experiences of multilingual young adults. We, as social workers, can then gain understanding from different viewpoints and expand our acceptance for different people. Thus, critical thinking will be inspired and perhaps dominant narratives that are of disadvantage for multilingual individuals can be questioned. Multilingual young adults are not only prominent in Skopje, but a growing population worldwide, therefore it's important for social workers to understand the challenges associated with being multilingual and become equipped with resources to meet the needs of a growing multilingual young population.

Childs et al (2021:783) reports that young adults are in a phase of identity exploration and the majority have life changing life situations. Young multi-ethnic and multilingual individuals as well show higher levels of struggling to adapt to the society, as they can experience encouragement or discouragement on aspects of their identity and language (Keel & Drew, 2004:108). Occurrence of such matter can be especially evident in Skopje as the environment between ethnic groups is dominated by mistrust towards each-other (Bloodworth (2020:324; Piacentini, 2019:462). Frisén & Hwang (2020:60) describe that identity creation is dependent on contextual factors where identity is formed in the meeting between the individual and society. Thus, an environment like Skopje's can, depending on a person's ethnicity, influence or impose specific language on multilingual individuals which possibly contribute to exclusion of their own language and no clear affiliation (Dobrushina & Moroz, 2021:935). Such an intermediate state for multilingual young adults can potentially develop into mental illness and categorization (Wong & Chau, 2021:30). In order to work against these negative outcomes, the goal of this study is the

creation of knowledge, which will contribute to multilingual young adults being normalized and noticed as their own group that promotes inclusion. The study's aim can therefore contribute to knowledge that can counteract categorization and mental illnesses that multilingual young adults can experience in a city reportedly dominated by interethnic mistrust (Stojanov, 2020:75). Social work as a profession consists of meeting service users from different backgrounds which therefore requires understanding of different ethnicities, cultures, affiliations, identities, mental health and languages. By conducting this study, I wish to highlight the need for social workers to gain knowledge, diversity and understanding of the complexities that multilingual service users face. Research on this subject contributes to creating deeper knowledge on the complexities of identities in the people that social workers encounter in their line of work. Taking into account the elements stated above, the chosen age spectrum between participants is 18-30 years old, as it is the most dynamic age group. During these years, people encounter complex changes on a personal, social and emotional level (Wood et al, 2017:126). This research paper interviews 14 respondents. Its purpose is to examine how multilingual young adults negotiate and experience their sense of identity and belonging in Skopje. The respondents of this research paper will be equally divided between genders, as socio-cultural aspects differ depending on gender. In this manner, the outcome can accurately reflect the respondents who reside in Skopje. The life cycle theory, which aims to identify social events that have had an impact on people's sense of belonging and identity formation, will be used to emphasize these various life circumstances and experiences (Elder et al, 2003:56).

3. Purpose and Research Goal

The purpose of this study is to explore how multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje, North Macedonia.

3.1 Research Questions:

What life course moments are lifted as significant in their experiences of being multilingual?

How do societies and social groups' attitudes affect the respondents' understanding of themselves and their descriptions of identity development?

How do experiences affect their understanding of themselves and their identity development?

How does their multilingualism in Skopje affect their belonging and mental health?

4. How the Topic is related and Beneficial to Social Work

In their journal regarding the Code of Ethics, Akademikerförbundet (2022:7) states that social workers need to be educated on the diversity of service users. They must be aware of how their own values and views may influence their interactions with these possible multilingual service users, due to the diverse groups and cultures that they come from. Additionally, service users may range in age from 20 to 30, which is the age range during which young people experience the greatest changes on a personal, social and emotional level (Wood et al, 2017:126). By drawing attention to this multilingual age group, we may raise social workers' awareness of these formative years that young people experience. This will result in a better relationship and understanding of the different ways young people navigate their identity and belonging, in relation to their setting. Gaining a better understanding for young multilinguals can as well motivate further research and education about this target group that in current state lack evidence-based data for professional practice in social work according to Keel & Drew (2004:99). Similar findings are reported by Wong & Chau (2021:27) who point out that multilinguals of mixed ethnicities aren't established as a recognized group in data collection and statistics outside of the US. Something that is similar and reported by the Swedish statistics institute is that data and statistics about Swedish citizens with mixed ethnicity is a poorly developed and reported topic (Törngren, 2020:69). This thesis can encourage and support an obtained intersectional approach, and awareness of oppression or exclusion regarding ethnicity, origin, religion, or language, in order to better interpret social work by performing research on multilingual young adults. In this way, oppression of their multilingual identity can be avoided, and their multilingual position can be understood by professionals. By not seeing service users as a singular ethnic identity or as monolingual, we as social workers can be more aware of the different experiences multilingual people navigate in life. Research suggests that mixed race people often, as interpreted by Dewaele & McCloskey (2015:224), are multilingual, which are at a higher level of risk to suffer from discrimination and mental unwellness in some contexts (Wong & Chau, 2021:27), and if social work is to truly be able, in particular with clients to support people, social workers need to have an understanding of the complex position's people navigate. Besides the fact that social workers should support people, it's an ethical obligation for social workers to be able to provide good cultural competence. Törngren (2020:75) describes cultural competence as attributes consisting of knowledge, awareness, and skills to being able to help and understand all different service users. This developed professionalism will contribute to the service users being more understood and normalized, which creates a better relationship between the social worker and service user.

This way social workers can counteract the service users feeling of negative categorization and instead promote more inclusion and feel accepted in social contexts. This results in a better perception of the social worker, whose professionalism should consist of culturally comprehensible behavior, thus leading to good practice for service users. By exploring the theme of multilingualism, teachers, students and other readers may broaden their perspective on how multilingualism is perceived and practiced by young people, while also being able to distinguish who identifies as multilingual. This may promote new ideas on how multilingualism can be conceptualized and used as a resource (Haukås et al, 2021:4019).

Creating more knowledge about multilingual young adults promotes inclusion, health and well-being which benefits the sustainable and social development for multilingual young adults and therefore is relevant for North Macedonia and its citizens. These benefits line up with the global goals for 2030, which call on all nations to act and create prosperity, while safeguarding the environment. This study can contribute to three specific goals of 2030: 1) Good health and well-being. 4) Good education, and 10) Reduced inequality (United Nations, 2022). The subject of multilingual young adults can also grow and does not only have to stay at the national level, as multilingual people are everywhere and can therefore be used as further inspiration for research.

5. Literature Review

Finding suitable and relevant literature was made through google scholar and the database of Gothenburg University Library. Through these databases every scientific literature was found and examined which served as foundation for the conducted research. Prior to sorting by relevance, the literature search was narrowed to include only scientific journals. The publication year was then selected to be between 1980 and 2022. First search of keywords for finding articles and literature were “young”, “identity”, “ethnicity”, “nationality”, “Skopje”, “population” and “citizens” which gave 108 hits and two useful articles. Search for articles and literature was then complemented with separate searches using the keywords “multilinguality”, “multilingualism”, “multilingual”, “young adults”, “religion”, “Macedonia”, “North Macedonia”, “belonging”, “lifespan”, “Yugo”, “youth”, “experience”, “language”, “theory”, “code-switching”, “recognition”, “new ethnicity”, “life course”, “lifeline”, “adolescents”, “language” and “third space”. Another way of searching for literature was by reading through the reference lists of previously chosen works. The literature chosen were selected based on their relevance to the study objective and goal. The literatures listed below will be presented in separate themes and parts. The subjects of *Ethnicity in North Macedonia*, *Identity in North Macedonia*, and *Nationality in North Macedonia* were chosen because they produce literature that reflects North Macedonian realities. The themes: *Multilingualism*, *Identity*, and *Youth* represent the research intention and consist of literature that provides significant findings that may be related to the goal of the study.

5.1 Ethnicity in North Macedonia:

As the current political climate in North Macedonia is perceived as polarized, Arianna Piacentini (2019:273) discusses how political parties in the country in question are attempting to forge connections with cross-ethnic support in order to represent non-ethnic communities. North Macedonia’s political situation consists of ethnically divided parties that are correlated to their supporting voters, who also share similar ethnicity. Ethnic political parties struggle to find support from other ethnic communities and therefore fail to find consensus or wider electoral support. Something that contributes to a divided society. Piacentini (2019:280) investigates North Macedonia’s institutional and political functioning and provides a comprehensive overview of the different power-sharing structures and state-level politics, this is supplemented with semi-structured interviews with members from civic parties. Findings show that the major obstacle that the country faces is the ethnically divided parties, which make up the entire political arena and

consolidation of ethno-clientelistic alliances. The findings also demonstrate that ethnic-nationalist parties attempt to win over supporters who lack intellectual conviction by enticing voters to support political parties based solely on their ethnicity and discourage them from doing otherwise. Consociationalism, which is based on rival collaboration and encourages power sharing between ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian parties, was named as North Macedonia's democratic system by Piacentini (2019:285). The political system in North Macedonia is diverging ethnic groups rather than merging them, according to the results. These elements may be visible and significant in how respondents negotiate their sense of identity and belonging.

Aryn Bloodworth (2020:310) highlights similar issues about a divided society in North Macedonia. She explores how educational policies, institutions, and practices perpetuate ethnic segregation in North Macedonia. Bloodworth dwells on how growing up in this society shapes the students' conception of themselves and other ethnic groups. Moreover she (2020:317) uses a qualitative approach and incorporates interviews and focus groups data from 30 participants of ethnic Albanians and Macedonians. In order to address the connections between policies, schools, and individuals, she has looked at education policies from 18 years ago. Using contact theory and critical policy analysis her results show that students' conceptions of themselves and other ethnic groups are constituted by experiences of segregation. Since most students attend schools with similar ethnic make-ups, they interact with other ethnic groups less frequently, which only adds up to these experiences. Students therefore become more susceptible to obtaining negative stereotypes and ethnocentric thinking. This contributes to negative patterns with long lasting effects on the relationships between ethnic groups (Bloodworth, 2020:311). To counteract these segregated communities, the former prime minister of North Macedonia, Zoran Zaev, implemented the Albanian language as an official language. Likewise, he added education policies that supported additional standards for integrated education, which have not yet been effectively put into practice. Bloodworth (2020:324) contends that in order for this to be successful, there must be a reconceptualization of ethnic differences in addition to a shared understanding of national identity. These young citizens embody segregation in their daily lives by selectively embracing stereotypes and generalizations about others, which very likely becomes intertwined with the way they experience belonging and identity in this segregated setting.

5.2 Identity in North Macedonia:

Alexandr Svetlicnii (2021:840) studies the cultural identity in North Macedonia and how it is divided and defined by international law as he examines the political approaches of Greece and

Bulgaria. This is based on examining legislative standards that influence cultural heritage, historical interpretations, as well as designations and features of the Macedonian language. Examinations show that international law is embedded in mutual agreements with Bulgaria and Greece as this shapes the past, present and the future identity of North Macedonia. Since its independence from Yugoslavia, any attempts that North Macedonia might make to distinguish its cultural heritage from others, Bulgaria and Greece view as attacks. Greece states that Macedonian identity is an artificial political creation by the former president of Yugoslavia, Tito. Both Bulgaria and Greece have expressed skepticism towards North Macedonia as an ownership state and with the Prespa agreement it separated all identifications with the former Hellenic civilization that today is Greece (Alexandr Svetlicnii, 2021:855). Bulgaria on the other hand recognises North Macedonia as an independent state but doesn't recognise the Macedonian language as an official language. Instead, it sees it as an old Yugoslavian dialect that developed from the Bulgarian language. The political agreements regarding cultural heritage in North Macedonia and Greece also brings the historical narratives closer to Bulgaria (Svetlicnii, 2021:857). Following the conclusion of the Prespa agreement, the constitutional amendment promotes a broader inclusion for its citizens regardless of ethnicity. The agreement states:

“The Republic shall provide for the diaspora of the Macedonian people and of part of the Albanian people, Turkish people, Vlach people, Serbian people, Romani people, Bosnian people and others and shall foster and promote the ties with the fatherland” (Svetlicnii, 2021:860).

North Macedonia's different ethnicities and questioned cultural heritage are shaping factors that possibly influence the identity for its citizens in this multicultural capital of North Macedonia, Skopje.

Identity in North Macedonia is as well explored by Evangelos Kofos (1989:229) who describes North Macedonia as having one of the most heated and stimulated heritages in Europe regarding political developments. Since the Ottoman empire's collapse in 1870, he examines the historical legacies and the various ethnic groups that have inhabited North Macedonia. As the Muslim population grew and identified with the Ottoman empire throughout this time, Islamic ideas came to be associated with authority and social benefits. The common historical legacies between linguistic relatives and neighbors faded away slowly as the teachings of Koran prevailed. During this time an estimated 30 percent of the population were a mix of ethnic Muslims from Turkey, Asia, Albania, Greece and Muslim minorities of Slav, Vlach and Jewish origin (Kofos, 1989:230). This contributed to the emergence of multiple national identities during North Macedonia's

nation-building process. This was followed by different perceptions of the cultural heritage when North Macedonia became independent from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. North Macedonia, which is located between Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and Serbia, was on the convergent point between four conflicting national ideologies (Kofos, 1989:235). Greece, Albania, Bulgaria and Serbia all claimed independent land and national ideologies which converged on regions with different ethnicities and overlapping historical claims. These conditions contributed to antagonistic national ideologies and hardened attitudes between the affected countries. Kofos (1989:262) findings revealed that historical legacies became tools for creating new national ideologies for national agendas that promoted citizens' real or imagined identities. This would shield governments against outside attempts to forge or appropriate titles, which are at the heart of current discussions about North Macedonia (Kofos, 1989:265). As presented, North Macedonia has a long history of historical legacies and a diverse ethnic population with different backgrounds. These factors may be evident in the respondents' experiences of identity and belonging.

Aktürk & Lika (2022:5) highlight the Turkish community, the politics regarding their recognition and the nationhood split about national identity in North Macedonia. Through process tracing, based on primary and secondary sources, Aktürk & Lika (2022:10) used the method of congruence as their qualitative method for analyzing the constitutional recognition of Turkish language and ethnicity. They demonstrated gradually why and how the Turkish minority gained constitutional recognition of its ethnicity and language by examining the interactions between political representatives from the Turkish minorities and the largest political parties in North Macedonia.

Results show that North Macedonia has demographically the largest and politically the most significant recognised Turkish minority in South-East Europe. This recognition was made possible by North Macedonia's political instability and varied views on what constitutes its national identity, or what Aktürk and Lika (2022:25) call to as the nationhood cleft. The two largest North Macedonian political parties with ethnic majority, Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) and VMRO-DPMNE, can't agree on the definition and origins of Macedonian identity. These political disagreements further facilitated the alliances between the Turkish and Albanian community to work along with the major political parties regarding Macedonian identity politics, so both the Turkish and Albanian community could successfully advance their own ethnolinguistic rights.

5.3 Nationality in North Macedonia:

Piacentini (2019:462) conducts a study about North Macedonia's context from a nationality perspective as she discusses the role of collective identities and the sociopolitical cleavage between Macedonians and Albanians. She describes North Macedonia as a young state which is characterized by religious, linguistic, ethnic heterogeneity and a divided society regarding ethnicity and nationality. Piacentini (2019:460) analyzes the socio-political cleavage existing from a historical and institutional perspective by examining both Macedonian and Albanian allegations, standpoints and dissatisfactions. Her analyses showed deeply rooted political and social disagreements between the Macedonian and Albanian population. Piacentini (2019:463) refers to North Macedonia's political cleavage as a result of each party's political purposes and the disparity between ethnic groups is associated with state ownership and the official status the groups occupy and wishes to occupy. The ethnic Macedonian nation-building process is described as turbulent and obtaining recognition is difficult while the Albanian community is growing and gaining more recognition and political rights. The ethnic diversity for North Macedonia was first institutionally managed by the former SRY until the constitutional changes that followed after the Ohrid Framework agreement in 2001 (Piacentini, 2019:460). This agreement institutionalized Albanian ethnicity which contributed to a calmer relationship between the ethnic groups, and the existing differences between the ethnic groups was used as a proxy for state and power sharing. Piacentini (2019:460) reports that the current political system constitutes a manageable state system that is socio-political and ethnically divided and one that has been institutionally legitimized and exploited by different ethnic representatives. This divided system has been accepted and manageable to avoid disputes and maintain steadiness in the political atmosphere for North Macedonia. However, the political and social context is highly divided, which may be related to how the respondents living there experience and navigate their belonging. Disagreements about the Macedonian nationality still exist, and interethnic relations are characterized by mistrust at both the political and social level.

5.4 Multilingualism:

Marącz & Adamos (2017:2) study analyzes the relationship between multilingualism and social inclusion. The empirical materials are based on ten different studies that link the relationship between multilingualism and social inclusion in different societies. Included groups in the study are Roma people and Albanians in North Macedonia, pensioners and students from around Europe. The findings of Marącz & Adamo (2017:3) show that the evolving globalization and

Europeanization contribute to the transnational linguistic diversity and rising multilingualism. Linguistic diversity is becoming more recognised at the national level and multilingual states are developing more towards a multilingual society so languages can be used for governance and legal framework that includes all multilingual citizens. According to Marácz & Adamo (2017:5) analysis, the traditional nation state regime that cultivates one language ideology is weakening while multilingual societies are growing worldwide. Laws to protect linguistic and cultural identity are becoming globalized and multilingualism has become a transnational phenomenon that's supported by physical migration and digital networks. Marácz & Adamo (2017:3) results furthermore show that traditional territorial languages are in a stronger position than mobile languages, which don't receive the same recognition in the European linguistic space. These established hegemonic languages are the languages that dominate the political arena and can affect nationality, something that is apparent in the Macedonian context and discussed by Alexandr Svetlicnii (2021:850), as both Greece and Bulgaria are officially recognized languages and member states of the European Union that both oppose Macedonian independence. This situation translates to the North Macedonian population as their identity is questioned for the respondents living there.

Kroll & Dussias (2017:250) examine many facets of multilingualism research development and discuss its implications with regard to multilingualism. The emphasis is on American citizens whose possibilities and protection are made possible by multilingualism, as well as suggestions for dispelling untrue multilingual misconceptions. The analysis shows that old stereotypes can be linked to negative effects about multilingualism. It further explains that attitudes towards languages that are not hegemonic have resulted in confounded impressions about migration and cultural diversity. Instead, findings show that people benefit from multilingualism as it opens up new languages and learnings across the lifespan, similar to how the use of two or more languages at an old age shows increased protection against cognitive decline. Multilingualism therefore contributes to healthy aging and this protection compensates for the symptoms of pathology in the people affected by dementia or recovering from a stroke. Language mixing additionally reflects a cognitive strategy that is called code-switching which can utilize the features of different languages, for example creating access to new social opportunities (Kroll & Dussias, 2017:253). Evidence shows that if two or more languages coexist in the same brain networks they stimulate each other, while contributing to easier learning for other languages. The author's display that multilingualism enhances the ability to switch tasks efficiently, resolve conflict through language dynamics, increase intercultural understanding and contribute to significant economic advancement for individuals as it can help their workforce and academic success

(Kroll & Dussias, 2017:255). Maybe this is also the case for multilingual young adults in Skopje who then benefit from their language skills as it can promote positive experiences and enhance belonging.

Sultana & Dovchin (2017:67) studies how multilingual young adults in Bangladesh and Mongolia obtain cultural influences in their daily life. Their study is based on how the respondents' expressions changed in meaning as they were used in various circumstances. The results indicate that young adults investigate the transcendence of meaning using various linguistic and cultural resources. The authors introduce the term diverse translanguage which they define as language not only attached to context but something transnational without cultural boundaries. Results indicate they obtain influences from different cultural settings and contexts they engage in and through this, young adults enrich their languages with various meanings and intentions. Analyses furthermore reveal they have the capability by manipulation to engage in desired affiliation and distance themselves from unwanted identity attributes. These results promote a diverse translanguage and identity understanding as the young adults' linguistic repertoire is always influenced and used in transnational spaces. Sultana & Dovchin (2017:70) explains that language gains a transtextual meaning and becomes enriched with new ideological, local, historical and discursive integration which allows for new linguistic possibilities. Young adults can transcend their particular region and culture due to the unbounded nature of linguistics and culture, which is what makes language international (Sultana & Dovchin, 2017:71). Transnational language is present in Skopje, where many linguistic environments influence the respondents' linguistics and potentially even how they see their identities in transnational contexts.

Haukås et al's (2021:408) study presents the development and validation of teenagers' multilingualism and multilingual identity in a Norwegian school context. The goal is to determine whether practicing languages and being accepting of multilingualism are related to having a multilingual identity. This is accomplished by conducting pilot studies through school visits and quantitative and qualitative analysis of a questionnaire designed to look into the multilingualism and multilingual identity of teenagers. Findings confirm that, depending on the context, linguistic practices are related to feelings, self-efficacy, and self-perception. This later correlates to identity creation through language which is dependent on parents, friends and other social networks. Haukås et al (2021:4015) presents that language is not fixed by a particular context but instead dependent on a range of different factors that can affect the development and validation of the multilingual youth. The educational system at the national and institutional

levels affects how languages are taught, valued, and what is expected of the participants. Results indicate that, outside of the framework of schools, language is influenced by societal multilingualism, linguistic status, and linguistic practices, which can either encourage or discourage particular linguistic practices (Hauks et al., 2021:4018). These results are useful for the study of multilinguals in Skopje as their environment may be a huge influence on their language habits, which translates to their identity and feeling of belonging.

Kramersch (2006:97) explores multilingualism in different environments through the experience of adolescents and young adults who use more than one language in their daily life. The analysis of language memoirs and testimonials from multilingual young adults in the US shows how multilingual subjects inhabit an embodied, socially and culturally complex environment based on their multilingualism. Findings show that language enables expression and interaction with others, thus social networks can be established. People traverse forms and meanings in many social situations through language, which builds social identities and creates subjectivities that multilingual speakers can identify with. Kramersch (2006:99) highlights that the analysis shows that there is an infinitive link between language and cultural identity as linguistics is used as a marker for subjectivity in socializing. This makes language a way of getting in touch with oneself and finding personal significance through identification and meaning with preferred groups. According to Kramersch (2006:105), language use and identity development are both influenced by the present, past, and imagined groups to which identification and meaning are tied. Analysis supports the idea that forming identities tied to permanent places is no longer as important as identifying through transnational belonging. Skopje is a city with a long history of culture and language influences which makes these results interesting as both the past and present shapes the respondent's identity and belonging.

5.5 Identity:

Duff (2015:57) investigates identity in transnational spaces through the lenses of socialization and migration in North American and Asian Pacific contexts. He conducts linguistic research on the intersections and interdependence of identity, language, and transnationalism. The goal of transnationalism is to highlight the crossing of cultures and geopolitical borders by various social actors. Duff (2015:58) identifies common themes and factors that have shaped transnationalism in the past and in the present. Findings show that mobility can lead to increased varieties of already known languages, and expansion by learning new languages. These language processes can alternatively result in multifaceted and multilingual hybrid identities, perhaps more

assimilated identities within the society (Duff, 2015:60). Different processes can naturally affect identity questions like who they are, how they are viewed and which languages they are able to use, as experiences and histories often reflect the identity and language use. Duff (2015:65) reports that through identity people imagine themselves, relate to the social world, feel a sense of belonging and obtain legitimacy among different social groups. Speaking a certain language connects one with those linguistic communities, because shared linguistics creates a sense of affiliation. The respondents in Skopje are exposed to situations that support various linguistics and ideologies, on a daily basis. This could result in a global identity considering that they speak many languages that cater to various communities.

In his research, Erdmann (2015:476) looked at how first-generation immigrants in Norway used pronouns to express their identity in language and academic writing. He investigates how nine first-generation immigrants in high school negotiate their identities through language and academic writing utilizing research-based analysis. Micro features in language and pronouns in written texts are also examined to discuss how immigrant students position themselves in their context. Erdmanns (2015:488) reveals that language and pronouns are important for the individual's self-perception and their place in the world, as it becomes part of their identity and subject position. After analyzing English texts from the participants about language and immigration, study supports that citizens with diverse backgrounds have a higher chance of identification with the host country. Findings furthermore show a tendency for students to identify with other individuals who possess similar diverse heritage, without ties to any certain culture. This affiliation gives first-generation immigrant pupils a sense of familiarity with their neighborhood and a sense of group belonging in their social environment. According to further research, young people's ethnic language enhances their identity when it is accepted by their social context. Each language represents a context and an opportunity to redefine oneself in relation to others and to society, which is correlated to transnationality. Erdmanns (2015:490) states that language pronouns can reveal subject positions like identity for the individual, this correlates to the respondents in Skopje who are equally divided from areas that promote different languages.

Boeschoten (2006:348) examines identity through cultural language based practices such as code-switching and expression of jokes. His analyses aim to decode the implicit social and cultural meanings of these practices, along with to what extent these data can improve understanding for relationships between language, power and identity. The presented study explores the tensions and symbolic resistance to cultural hegemony among the use of vernacular

and standard Greek language, and under what circumstances the resistance can be understood for constructing ethnic identity. Linguistic practices analyzed are within historical, political and economic contexts to see how domination and resistance takes place. Besides language, Boeschoten furthermore examines the discourse on nation, power, solidarity and how this transcends to ethnic identity by highlighting their interaction and fusion. Results indicate that cultural hegemony of a dominant language can get challenged by alternative linguistic practices, which are forms of resistance to symbolic domination. Boeschoten (2006:356) declares this as code-switching and describes how it functions as a hidden political resistance towards linguistic policies that impose the daily lives for multilingual citizens. When a dominant language is imposed, tendencies show that alien speakers can't always incorporate it easily. This contributes to the native language remaining as the main communication tool. This instance of imposed language demonstrates that it is only employed when interacting with state authorities or when the state is intervening. The research of Boeschoten (2006:359) shows that language assimilation cannot be forced; rather, linguistic ideologies are molded through collective memory and experiences. As a result, societal pressure within the ethnic group increases for members to maintain their ethnic identity and forge strong ties between language and identity. According to Boeschoten (2006:371), this is the product of outside power, and as a result, groups create their own identities through symbolic resistance inside their local communities. The population of North Macedonia is ethnically and politically divided, which is consistent with the findings that collective experiences shape social communities' sense of identity.

5.6 Youth:

Lam & Warriner (2012:191) examines youth development and analyzes research studies that address issues of languages, literacy practices and learning for youths in transnational contexts of migration. Their research incorporates theoretical ideas like capital, habit, and sociolinguistic studies of language as well as international social fields. These ideas are used in relation to one another as interpretive frames for talking about new ideas that deal with language's connections to relationships and mobility. Lam & Warriner (2012:195) furthermore study communities and practices among youth within educational settings and transnational media. Findings reveal that language ideologies influence youth practices and institutional structures affect linguistic resources in adolescents. Language also serves to facilitate social exchanges and help position people in transnational fields. The background and discourses that are in place shape language, which is used as cultural capital to advance in the social hierarchy. Families are establishing cross-border connections through verbal and technological exchanges, which molds the language and

identity of the young people. Lam & Warriner (2012:109) report that multiple influences affect language as youth respond to normative values and language ideologies that operate from different sociolinguistic contexts. Young people get affected by these different frames and reconstitute these linguistic behaviors associated with contextual norms as they navigate multiple spheres of their lives. Through local and trans local networks they construct their identifications and develop linguistic and different social resources, which results in their identity development. Education contexts can recognise and leverage existing language abilities together with promoting multilingualism, as this helps students navigate their lives and their multilingual abilities. This translates to the education system in Skopje where certain areas teach certain languages.

Schoonen & Appel (2005:85) as well discuss youth and identity development through language influences while conducting an empirical study on street language that is used by 300 multilingual youth students in the Netherlands. Street language is defined as a register made up of words or expressions that speakers of other languages have adopted and incorporated into their own speech. Along with a questionnaire about their familiarity with street language, students were interviewed. Results show that the use of street language is generally widespread and boys tend to use vocabulary street language more frequently than girls. According to Schoonen & Appel (2005:87) street language can be interpreted as a marker and positioning for identity when social groups distinguish themselves from others, which especially applies to young people. Through language, young people develop a certain register that's associated with different social groups, situations, relationships, meanings and environments. Schoonen & Appel (2005:90) state that street language for young people is changing faster than in any other social group, since they are in a growing phase and the most exposed to different impressions and languages that influence each-other. Hegemonic language is, in most cases, the most dominant and influential towards the subordinate language, however for young people the dominant language is connected to group identity and what's valued in the youth culture (Schoonen & Appel, 2005:95). These findings are interesting as there are similarities with the context in Skopje where the multilingual youth speak different languages depending on the area that they live in. Divided ethnic politics within the government affect the society and its citizens, whose identity affiliations are supported in respective contexts.

Han (2021:27) examines 20 empirical studies. The researcher focuses on the youth up to age 29 and their digital literacy beyond the classroom. His study's goal is to examine how ideological constructions for young people are created in social contexts using translanguaging and multimodality views, which can be used to recognise literacy practices.

Findings show that cultural and linguistic diversity allows students to explore languages and other

social attributes while obtaining agency over their own language. Through online networks youths additionally construct and explore multifaceted identities, which allows them to explore and negotiate who they are and their relationship with the world, avoiding possible exclusion. By gaining social support and developing global citizenship the youth can develop the feeling of belonging through connecting and communicating with other people who share similarities. Through these different social practices, the multilingual youth develop meaning and social roles in different audiences, communities and other contexts (Han, 2021:29). The facilitation of intercultural conversation that multilingualism further fosters results in increased linguistic and cultural awareness. Consequently, translanguaging helps young people develop complex identities since it liberates them from the restriction of identity to a single language or cultural context. Multilingual and diverse cultural contexts allow multilingual users to practice language, attain agency over learning, explore multiple identities and perhaps develop global citizenship and affiliation. Multilingual young adults in Skopje are constructing their multifaceted identities as they engage every day in diverse contexts. These different cultural contexts in Skopje makes the multilingual youth negotiate their belongings, as some environments promote different cultural affiliations.

6. Theories

The purpose of this study is to explore through a qualitative analysis how multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje, North Macedonia. Key theoretical terms for this study's purpose are life course, recognition, identity, new ethnicities, third space, code-switching and language. These theoretical terms are understood by theory, which offers a framework to analyze social phenomena and gain knowledge from the findings. Fuhse (2022:105) emphasizes that theories assist in revealing the data and patterns they encompass while furthermore making social factors obvious. The meaning and experiences that the respondents have expressed in this context, which have later been interpreted by using a social construct belief as the theoretical terminology, are intended to encourage introspection and reveal the respondents' perspectives on and perceptions of reality.

6.1 Social Constructionism:

Social constructionism is a theoretical perspective that understands social actors as producers of social phenomena within society, while providing understanding and explanation of their positions (Hall, 2003:25). Social events or other happenings created by the respondents are intended to be displayed via the language of social constructivist perspectives, in order to mold the respondents' feelings of identity and belonging. Through these concepts, their sense of identity and belonging is understood to be shifting, making their circumstances and environment important contributing variables. According to a social constructivist's perspective, the respondents receive meaning through their interactions and accomplishments of being social actors, whereas their view of the outside world is based on their personal experiences. According to Stage (2015:84), it is via these encounters that people shape the reality of society, which is influenced by historical and cultural contexts.

6.2 Interactionist Theory:

Another theory that is used from a social constructionist perspective is interactionist theory, which emphasizes people's interactions and experiences from society by communication between participants. This theory states that individuals acquire knowledge from society through interactions with other people, and the combined individual interactions create societies entirety. Collins (2011:160) describes that interactionist perspective emphasizes that society and individuals are constituted by the participants' interactions as essential members of the social

context. Since the aim of the research is to explain how the respondents experience and navigate identity and belonging, the acquired knowledge is dependent on its participants for generating these social processes that shape the respondents' identity and belonging. Charmaz et al (2019:77) shows how people's interactions, traits and circumstances can be highlighted using a social constructivist and interactionist approach. This is in line with the theoretical terms and favors the themes of the interview guide.

7. Theoretical Terms

By using theoretical terms, the data collected will be more dynamically highlighted and gain valuable meaning and insights that may not have emerged otherwise. These theoretical terms aid in a deeper analysis in alignment with the study purpose. They may aid in a better comprehension of the perspectives, experiences and narratives of the respondents. The definition of these terms will be explained in detail below.

7.1 Life Course:

Life course theory was developed by sociologist Glen Elder and aims to show how events in people's life influence the development of identity and belonging (Elder et al, 2003:60). Life course will be used as a methodology in this research as it helps understand and identify social events and roles that the respondents understood to be influential to their experiences of identity construction and belonging. This approach lets the respondents describe moments where different parts of their ethnic identity have been recognized, invisible or repressed (Elder et al, 2003:66).

The life course theory is based on highlighting life span development after childhood, time and place of certain events, timing of events and agency, which is one individual's own decision making. According to Elder et al (2003:57) an individual's own identity is formed by events and conditions occurring during the duration and geographical location in which the person exists. Location of an event is also decisive in affecting the people's history and circumstances while events are considered to shape the individual's perception and decisions which influence identity development over time. Events constitute the total of the person's experience and not only certain sequences, events range from transitional, geopolitical, macro-level, individual, timing of event etc. Roles individuals occupy also change over time and are influenced by events and different periods of life (ibid).

7.2 Recognition:

Philosopher Charles Taylor's (1995:72) theoretical term of recognition focuses on how identity develops and is dependent on the feedback from others. He discusses how humans in general reproduce already embedded values and norms, which can lead to certain negative focus on the individual's identity who is affected by this. Recognition term offers a way of understanding social contexts and how our identity is shaped by our interactions with others; recognition or absence by other people. Taylor argues that mutual awareness and understanding lead to a more ethical way

of living. The idea of recognition presupposes that recognition will occur in a social setting between a recognizer and the recognized. Charles Taylor et al (1995:74) discusses three forms of recognition; 1) equal recognition between people in their common context, 2) recognition for uniqueness of different features, both culturally and ethnically, and lastly 3) recognition of love and care between people. Taylor et al (1995:69) explains that recognition is both psychological and something normative in everyday life when people meet each other in social environments. The term recognition is useful for this study because it helps us understand how the respondents interact with others and what role society plays in helping us to recognize people's ethnicity and multilingualism. According to Taylor et al (1995:68), individuals can either have their identity or ethnicity recognized or misrecognized, which can hinder or promote a healthy relationship to oneself. This can inflict harm, oppression and a limited position, which affects health and well-being. Taylor et al (1995:80) writes that those who become misrecognized can have a harder time embracing themselves and their everyday life. Taylor's different forms of recognition and the concepts are useful as they point out the role of the social environment and interaction aspects of identity formation.

7.3 Language:

Vygotsky (2012:37) describes language as necessary for learning as it enables interactions between people and therefore different environments. Language is considered the necessary basics for learning and supports the development of writing, reading, thinking, reasoning, logic and reflection. Vygotsky (2012:52) describes language as a basic need for every human being as language works as a mechanism for communication, it enables cognitive growth and contributes to the development of society and culture. Language makes communication easier, allowing attitudes and norms to grow into social roles and become associated with cultural understanding, fostering a sense of community and bolstering ethnic identity (Vygotsky, 2012:40). This approach to language was as well supported by fellow linguist Chomsky et al (2002:32), who argues that all languages contain similar components and therefore the acquired languages are determined by the individual's circumstances as different environments promote different linguistics and languages. Language theory is useful for analyzing the respondents' experiences as multilingual because they speak different languages. It will help us understand where language comes from, agency role of their language, social construction of language and how it helps the multilingual respondents in their lifespan to navigate identity and belonging.

7.4 Code-switching:

To comprehend how words are transferred between people, linguist Uriel Weinrich established the theory of code-switching in the realm of education in 1953 (Kachru, 1980:6). This concept can be defined as a tool for better understanding the different cultural lives people live, which is in accordance with the research purpose, as it highlights the abilities to communicate and share meaning through language. Code-switching aims to understand and acknowledge transnational lives and how this affects language usage. Code-switching helps reveal how the identity is connected and shaped by intersectional factors such as language, age, religion, gender and social context. According to Bullock & Toribio (2009:98), code-switching is a resource that is constantly used in social interactions and is made up of interconnected social, grammatical, and cognitive elements (Gardner-Chloros, 2009:11). The code-switching phenomenon, in which the identity can express or mimic intentional components of the identity, is caused by a number of different factors. Gardner-Chloros (2009:45) mentions that the code-switching phenomena is dependent on the individual's relative competence on how good the navigation between the languages is exercised. Code-switching is influenced by how well-accepted their expressive identity is in their social environment. Since language is one way that an identity may be expressed, it might be encouraged in certain settings. Environments can neglect the identity and its displayed language. Code-switching will help understand and acknowledge the hybrid lives of the respondents. Thus, their communication can be highlighted to understand how this may shape the respondents' identity and belonging.

7.5 Identity:

Identity is described as a set of meanings that define the individual's occupancy in a particular role in society or setting, as well as certain characteristics that identify the individual as unique. The concept of identity aids in our comprehension of how people define their identities, how those identities interact and impact one another, and how those identities relate to society. According to Hall (1996:10) identity can be understood differently depending on what perspective one uses. One perspective holds that certain characteristics are something you are born with; this essentialistic perspective contends that our identities give us characteristics that do not alter. According to this essentialist perspective, an individual's identity is formed at birth and consists of a constant core that endures throughout their whole existence. Social constructivist understandings of identity, on the other hand, understands identity as ever-changing. Young adulthood and adolescence can be such periods when people try out different identities and are

curious in understanding who they are earlier in life. According to Stets & Burke (2009:20), identity transformation is a process of negotiation in space and time where individuals and other variables collide and relate to one another, producing the identity over the course of a person's lifetime.

The concept of multiple identities, which argues that persons can hold several roles and exhibit multiple personal traits while being a member of various organizations, is supported by this constructivist approach (Stets & Burke, 2009:7). People within a social structure produce actions that are recognized and influenced, which elaborates mutual influences between the characteristics from the individual and characteristics from society shaping one's identity. Life experiences also play an important role influencing the identity development which correlates with the usage of life course approach (Elder et al, 2003:62). The term "identity" acknowledges how respondents shape society and the context in which respondents act (Stets & Burke, 2009:12). Language has a function in communication, which is linked to a variety of roles, surroundings, and other positions that people identify with (Giles & Johnson, 1987:81). This way language becomes a significant element for the individual's identity and will help recognize how respondents experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje.

7.6 New Ethnicities:

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall introduces the concept of "new ethnicity" which is related to more essentialistic understandings of ethnicity. Hall (1996:443) meant the old ethnicity term was centered from a western discourse and correlated with negative and limited meanings which caused oppression for affected individuals. The old term failed to describe the different experiences and racial categories from a transnational perspective which made it harder for mixed ethnicity people to harmonize with society. Based on his studies of various minorities in England and their challenges in adapting their identities to their new host country, Stuart Hall (1996:446) proposed a new ethnicity to offset these struggles. According to Hall (1996:465), different minorities and certain ethnicities were fetishized and objectified by the public creating a disadvantage for the affected. These minorities described their ethnic identity as not being accepted and thus adapted in order to be accepted in a "war of position", this was described as a permissive behavior resulting in sub-groups without belonging and further exclusion from society. Hall's (1996:445) new ethnicity term proposed a much more diverse conception of ethnicity compared to the older ideas. New ethnicity aims to recognize the individual's subjective identity without constructed categorization, as individuals come from different cultures and experiences. The new ethnicity concept will therefore help recognize the respondents' social experiences,

diversity of subjective positions and different cultural identities, which is in accordance with the study's aim.

7.7 Third Space:

Third space, by cultural theorist Homi Bhabha (1994:143), highlights the hybrid identity that emerges from being in between cultures, as well as the liminal space of something new and unrecognizable. Bhabha created the third space theory after he recognized that colonial authority described certain identities with a singular framework, which resemble the essentialistic ideas described earlier. He understood, in similarity to Stuart Hall's understanding, that the old identity framework conceived "identity" as something static. Bhabha (1994:151) argues that this framework misses the full complex spectrum of identities as this "binary" colonial categorization contributes to fixity from already set identity categorizations. It means that "mixed identities" are understood as pathological and problematic. Instead, Bhabha (1994:145) argued that because new cultures are always colliding and being generated through a never-ending process, identity is more complicated.

Through the concept of third space, Bhabha (1994:155) emphasizes the in-between space that is created in meetings by individuals, where new cultural identities are formed and positioned. Bhabha (1994:146) described those who are affected by "in-betweenness" as positive, because of their additional cultural intelligence. According to Bhabha, individuals with more than one culture have the ability to negotiate between the differences and therefore should not be reduced to a singular identity. The third space is generated and new subject positions emerge when people find themselves in this "in-between" area and must negotiate their identities between cultures and conventions (Bhabha, 1994:149). The third space is a productive space that entails new possibilities for different identity positions that bring new forms of cultural meaning and production. Third space contests the older essentialistic and established categorizations of culture and identity and moreover promotes an ambivalent categorization without fixity (Bhabha, 1994:154). This term will help analyze the transgressions of dualistic identity positions. By doing so, it will help discover new findings on how multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity and belonging.

8. Methodology

The target group of the study will be multilingual young adults in Skopje, North Macedonia. Multilingual means that the respondents speak more than two languages fluently; this can, for example, come as a result of parents from different ethnicities or because of the social environment that promotes multilingualism. Access to this target group will be made through a snowball sampling of established networks of contacts in North Macedonia, who possess multilingual skills. This selection of established networks will as well be asked to suggest other suitable candidates for the study. According to Naderifar et al. (2017:2), this snowball sampling is a useful technique for gathering data on hard-to-reach target groups and can be used to examine particular groups. Each respondent was carefully chosen to minimize the drawbacks of snowball sampling, which could include people with similar ideas to themselves who provide unrepresentative answers. Naderifar et al (2017:2) mentions that it is common that research studies are insufficient in presenting clear explanations about snowball sampling implementation. Snijders (1992:60) highlights lack of explanation regarding the exact sampling method which contributes to assumption of randomness of the different snowball samples. To avoid these negative outcomes the suggested respondents were evaluated by me to see if they are suitable or not for participation in the study. Suitable candidate would be a multilingual young adult between 18-30 years of age who holds a North Macedonian citizenship. Examples of not suitable candidates would be close friends, colleagues or other relatable social networks. Focus will in addition be put in accurately explaining and presenting the snowball implementation. Besides the already established networks from snowball sampling, respondents were also found through Youth Cultural Center in Skopje (MKC), where the information letter was attached onto the notice board. Participants from MKC were also asked to share the information letter and contact information to any other suitable respondents. Respondents were also found from handing out the information letter in Cafes on both sides of the Vardar River.

The respondents are young individuals between the ages of 20 and 30 made up equally of men and women are the responders. Based on qualitative research techniques, the study sought to understand the respondents' personal experiences. The data is collected from qualitative interviews that will be semi-structured to address certain themes and topics that are relevant to the purpose of the study (Bryman & Nilsson, 2018:157). The predefined but open-ended nature of the questions will encourage conversation and other inquiries, allowing for the appearance of fresh perspectives and possibly even significant themes.

This opens for a life course inspired methodology, as the interviewees may reproduce events of special significance. As a method this means offering the interviewed a written lifeline on paper when the interview takes place. The lifeline goes from the age of birth, up to 30 years of age, where they can highlight memorable events that stand out to them with a marker pen and talk freely. The lifeline will be implemented in the middle of the interview. The life course will be different for each respondent based on what they say as some time periods will be more significant than others. Participants will be asked to tell their feeling of belonging, if it was strengthened or questioned based on cultural affiliation or physical expression in different social contexts and how this changed over time. Events can be related to social events or other contexts. The events that occur on the lifeline from the participants' stories will then be analyzed. Using a life course theory, we will see how identity creation takes place in relation to how the interviewees are treated and recognised over their life cycle.

The interviews will be held in the local language Macedonian or English. It can also be a combination of both if that strategy favors the interview. The qualitative data will then be transcribed and analyzed for potential findings for the results section.

8.1 Collection Method and Selection:

The method of recruiting respondents aimed to include a variety of experiences and be as representable as possible. Variables that were considered were firstly the respondents must hold a North Macedonian citizenship, which serves as an indicator that the respondents lived in North Macedonia a longer period of time in order to have relevant experiences linked to the purpose and aim of the study. Secondly, diversity among the chosen respondents based on their age, gender, type of multilinguality and where they live in the city of Skopje. Recruitment of respondents was determined by the studies purpose and research study aim. As the purpose of study is to explore how multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje, a qualitative method was chosen. The qualitative approach was chosen for the study's aim and purpose because it enables deeper understandings of the respondents' experiences to emerge. By speaking with the respondents, qualitative methods are encouraged to elicit more responses than they may have otherwise through quantitative methods. Individual interviews that are semi-structured are one of the qualitative methodologies used in this study. These face-to-face interviews were conducted to help get a nuanced picture of the aimed phenomena. Because they are more engaging, qualitative interviews are helpful for eliciting the subjective experiences and opinions of the respondents (Bryman & Nilsson, 2018:257). Interviews that are semi-structured

allow for follow-up questions on responses that seem to be pertinent information and don't need to follow a set interview guide in a particular sequence.

There are 7 men and 7 women among the 14 participants in this study. The respondents' ages range from 20 to 30. The different types of multilingualism and language among the respondents consists of: Macedonian/Serbian/English; Macedonian/Bosnian/English; Macedonian/Montenegrin/English; Macedonian/Russian/Ukrainian/English; Macedonian/Albanian/Serbian/English; Macedonian/Portuguese/English; Macedonian/Spanish/English; Macedonian/Arabic/English; Macedonian/Turkish, Macedonian/French, Macedonian/Thai/English; Macedonian/Turkish/English; Macedonian/Albanian and Macedonian/Croatian/English.

The respondents are from different areas in Skopje, which is closely associated with religion and ethnicity; 7 respondents come from the Muslim part of Skopje, consisting of mostly ethnic Turks, Albanians and Bosnians. The Christian side of Skopje consists mainly of ethnic Macedonians and other Christian ethnicities.

After 14 interviews, similar themes recurred and no new information was revealed, a phenomenon known as saturation, according to Justesen et al. (2011:42). When saturation happens, no new information is discovered since the collected data just keeps repeating itself and no new themes appear. 14 interviews were performed as a result; 12 were conducted in English and 2 were conducted in Macedonian, along with a Macedonian interview guide, per the respondents' desire.

I, the researcher, am a 28-year-old male who speaks Macedonian and Swedish well and has a solid understanding of Serbo-Croatian-Bosnian, Bulgarian, and English, which makes me multilingual. Throughout my teen years, I traveled frequently to Skopje, where I had the opportunity to witness the city's diverse milieu firsthand. Experiences that served as inspiration for the study's objectives and questions. I was not born or raised in Skopje, thus I believe my research stance to be neutral enough not to be influenced by particular viewpoints. Although it may be argued that my connection to Skopje brings pre-made topics or notions into the interview guide, reducing the possibility of seeing fresh discoveries. The introduction of a lifeline lowers this disadvantage for the interview guide; the sketching of events eliminates preconceived assumptions and provides an advantage since it is independent from predetermined questions and allows respondents to think and discuss freely. The respondents were made aware of my language ability and connection to Skopje prior to the interviews. I can only assume if these circumstances impacted the informant's

readiness or unwillingness to discuss their own identity. However, in my opinion, the informants may perceive my multilingual position as similar to their own, but not too familiar because I do not reside there, which may make them more comfortable in sharing their stories and experiences, rather than someone who might have exploited the shared information.

8.2 Interview and Interview Guide:

The interview guide used was created and formulated to answer the purpose and aim of the study, how multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje, North Macedonia. A life course perspective that includes major life stage occasions will be used to help emphasize these experiences and impacts (Elder et al, 2003:60). The life path theory can be used to identify socially defined roles and events that shape respondents' sense of belonging and provide information that is pertinent to the study being done. Therefore, the questions asked from the interview guide will be relatable questions to lifespan that includes social contexts and enables reflective observations, ideas and answers.

The opening questions in the first section of the interview guide are meant to establish the interview, help the process run smoothly, and make the respondent comfortable. The topic of multilingualism and the city came next, covering Skopje's multilingual language and how it might affect identity and belonging. The second segment of the interview focuses on belonging and lifelines and discusses the results of upbringing, the connection between multilingualism and social situations, and the drawing of a lifeline to signify important occurrences. The interview's final segment, on the theme of identity, focused on how nationality, multilingualism, social context, and societal benefits as well as disadvantages relate to identity. The interviews were semi structured with a pre-established interview guide to better catch and understand the respondents' different experiences and answers. The interview guide was adjusted to follow the flow of the conversation, but mostly every theme was followed according to the interview guide. Bryman & Nilsson (2018:127) emphasize that semi-structured interviews are useful when doing qualitative research because its focus is on capturing the respondents' diverse experiences.

The interview location was chosen by the respondents' preferences so the environment could be relaxed and familiar, the respondents chose a place they felt most comfortable. This meant that interviews took place at my home, the respondent's home and calm cafés. The interviews, with the permission of the respondents, were recorded with an iPhone 13 Pro, which allowed for easier transcripts and better attention to the respondent instead of using notes. The interviews varied

between 15 to 40 minutes. The life cycle was used for the second part of the interview guide under the “Belonging and lifeline” theme. When the questions “Certain events that stand out in your mind?” as well as “What specific moments have been important in relation to your feeling of belonging and multilingualism?”, the respondents could answer verbally and mark certain moments that have been important to them during certain years. During the second half of the interview, participants were given paper and pens and asked to annotate specific locations, dates, and events. The lifeline had trajectory transitions noted with the headlines: Family; Social; Educational; Occupational and Health Settings to perhaps stimulate memorable events for the respondents within these environments. The purpose of the lifeline was to get the respondents to, perhaps, think a little harder and highlight events that before weren't certain or provoke thoughts as events related to belonging, identity or multilingualism.

The recordings of the interviews were transcribed in English. There were 14 transcripts of interviews translating to 65 pages of transcripts. According to Powers (2005:20), transcribing broadens our experience of speeches, allowing for deeper analyses and the development of certain patterns, theories, and ideas. Interviews were transcribed immediately before the next scheduled interview to allow for reflection on each interview separately. The interviews followed a consistent transcription of speech and context and the same specificity for transcriptions was used for all the interviews. Both naturalized and denaturalized techniques were used for transcribing the interviews, as according to (Powers, 2005:21), the techniques complement each-other. Bucholtz (2000:1461) discusses how the two methods are congruent for transcribing and therefore can be used together in a fluent way. Naturalized transcription aims to present the data in a natural and objective manner, where the written text is prioritized over the speech. Bucholtz (2000:1462) means that this kind of written language has commas and stops incorporated in the transcription that does not essentially occur in speeches. Changes according to the naturalized transcription were made for a better understanding as everything relevant to the research goals was transcribed. Pauses and irrelevant material were left out of the transcriptions for easier understanding and smooth reading. Broken sentences were replaced with “(…)” for easier interpretation. Words or sentences that were cut short or were not able to be heard completely were edited out of the transcription. Denaturalized transcriptions maintain the language in its original state, which promotes different details to occur. This way new meanings can be discovered (Oliver et al, 2005:1275). As this approach emphasizes that meanings within speeches construct reality, respondents that emphasized different meanings that appeared during the interview were highlighted with the symbols “!” or “?”. To avoid unclear transcripts, unnecessary oral languages such as pauses and mumbles were not recorded. All names used are fictional.

8.3 Empirical Data Analyses:

The data from this study was analyzed using a thematic analysis method in conjunction with a life course theory. According to Bryman and Nilsson (2018:453), thematic analysis is a popular method for coding data in qualitative research because it allows for a flexible and in-depth approach to data. It is also simple to conduct and divide data analysis into different data themes (Bryman & Nilsson, 2018:700). Thematic analysis was chosen for my research study because the analysis fits well with the purpose of the study; useful for understanding larger data as well as provides good analytics regarding experiences, identity and belonging. I could better identify and analyze how respondents experience and navigate belonging and identity by using a thematic analysis, which is the purpose of thematic analysis to analyze and hopefully reveal certain patterns that then turn into suitable themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006:85).

Thematic analysis starts with the coding process of getting familiar with the collected empirical data. I pre-read the data I collected myself, so the transcribed interviews were already familiar, allowing for easier coding later on. The goal of coding is to gain deeper meaning and discover patterns, which aids in the creation of themes relevant to understanding the study's research goal. Thematic analysis facilitates these findings and patterns based on the collected empirical data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:89).

After becoming acquainted with the data by reading it several times, the next step was to create the coding process, which consisted of compiling texts that were thought to be relevant and displayed recurrences. The compilation of relevant sentences was highlighted with a colored pen and then put into categories and identified by code. Some new codes developed as I was going through the transcripts. The assembled codes were then marked to identify patterns. These highlighted patterns were in accordance with the research questions to gain relevant data. Codes that were relevant were then distinguished into themes. Some of these themes were followed by implementing the life course theory so the themes translated to identify events of significance, shaping the respondents' identity and belonging. The established themes were later compiled and reviewed for relevance, some themes were split up for their usefulness in conformity with the research purpose.

Braun & Clarke (2006:92) illustrate that this is a very important part of the thematization process, as assurances must be made by looking at the collected data to see if the topics fit the themes, and that sentences and words are correct. After all the themes were reviewed, they were given more accurate names to help understand the chosen data and represent each theme. The established themes turned into suitable headlines in accordance to understanding the research questions and purpose that the study seeks to achieve (Bryman & Nilsson (2018:709). Emerging themes that developed and helped in completing the analysis were; *Effects of Multilingualism; Impact of Moments on Belonging and Identity; Politics of Ethnic Identity Borders; and Opportunities of Being Multilingual.*

8.4 Schedule:

The study's data collection in the Balkans is considered to take at least 8 weeks. Planning, conducting interviews, and transcribing will all be part of the fieldwork. Planning for any unplanned problems, such as possible replacements if the planned respondents are unable to participate for whatever reason, will also be important. The interviews will take place at regular intervals to leave room for further reflection and notes, for example, results from an interview can contribute to an in-depth study of a theme in follow-up interviews. All interviews will be transcribed within the time frame of 8 weeks.

8.5 Risk-Assessment:

The research will be carried out in Skopje, North Macedonia, where the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers the security situation to be safe. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has removed the dissuasion requirements for the corona pandemic with unnecessary travel outside the EU, indicating that the region is now open for business. To avoid similar opinions, the research seeks respondents from diverse social backgrounds. Snowball sampling participants will be anonymous, preventing identification. These respondents' backgrounds and relationships with each-other will be evaluated to avoid any bias or data that has not been generalized. The principles of confidentiality and anonymity will be considered, reducing the risk that future readers will identify the respondents. This approach minimizes the risk that a respondent with a possibly minority affiliation may run a risk to their health or well-being through their participation in the study.

8.6 Ethical considerations:

The study aims to adhere to good ethical research practices, with me conducting the study and taking on a research role based on ethical principles. A research role in which I should set a good example by respecting the respondents' wishes, values, and confidentiality. Great consideration and reflection must be placed in following the codes of ethics. The code of ethics according to Vetenskapsrådet (2017:12) will be presented in the following sections below;

Key principles in this code are voluntary participation for all respondents. The participating respondents have their free will to, at any moment, break their consent and withdraw from the study without any consequence. Furthermore, even after receiving the information, the interviewees can decide to revoke participation during an interview without repercussions, which should contribute to the respondents feeling safer and not pressured. At the end of the interview, respondents were asked if the interview felt good and if their participation is still approved.

Next key principle is informed consent where the participants know the purpose and potential risks before agreement to join. The respondents are informed that they have the opportunity throughout the study to give their consent, inputs, or opinions about their participation in the study. This allows for a better and safer relationship with the respondents as they can perhaps feel like they are contributing and involved in the outcome of the research. Mail and phone number contact was established before the interviews took place, so the respondents always felt they had input to their participation.

The following ethical guiding principles are anonymity and confidentiality, which emphasize the value of anonymity for the participating respondents. As a result, personally identifiable information won't be released, ensuring the respondents' anonymity. The identity or other personal information about the respondents will not be collected or reported and identifiable data will be anonymized. Names and languages could be identifiable features, which therefore were fictitious and not correlated in the analysis and result section.

Results and communication is also a vital ethical principle that must be followed as it states that the conducted research aims to provide the respondents with true facts about the research and its agenda without fabricating any information or data. Respondents had full access to their interviews and their own transcribed data, and could withdraw their participation at any time.

The basic premises of the research will continually be reported and reviewed to avoid any misunderstanding. Throughout the survey, the respondents were free to voice their opinions whenever they felt they needed to contribute or respond. Additionally, the respondents must give their consent before the research is undertaken, and it may not be utilized for any other interests or objectives, which has not been the case in this research. Documentation and filing through the research process should be organized, this was carried out by having separate documents in folders with organized headlines.

Minimal harm is the last ethical principle that strives for minimal harm to the respondents or others that are affected by the research (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017:10). I as the interviewer and researcher must be aware and reflect on any possible harm. Identifiable data was left out of the study to prevent loss of privacy. The respondents decided on a good date and time for the interview, which saved them from worrying about the potential loss of money and time. Physical comfort for the respondents was also a priority, therefore they decided the location for the interview. I as a researcher must be fair in my judgment of others and always have a reflecting approach throughout the research process about ethics and any other upcoming dilemmas.

Participants in the study must be over 18 years old, able to consent on their own, and willing to engage freely. Additionally, they will be told orally and in writing, in both the local language and English, about the interview questions in advance. Potential risks of the conducted research were discussed beforehand where I, as the researcher and the participants could lift anything that came to mind. Solutions to avoid such risks were highlighted and implemented.

The respondents were aware that I, the researcher, had some prior knowledge about the topic regarding multilinguality in Skopje as I have visited multiple times. The fact that the interviewees were made aware of this in advance and showed no signs of worry about various responses and reactions as a result of my knowledge demonstrates their awareness. None of the respondents mentioned any instances of excessive rapport or mistrust. I believe the respondents recognise that I am conducting this research with purely good intentions because they perceive my multilingual situation as being comparable to their own. Could my multilingual status thus be a factor in the informants' perception that I am too close to their experience? Such matters could be if they perhaps thought I was biased and framed narratives because of my association with Macedonian language. I'd like to think that my informed position as multilingual and association with Skopje instead contributed to the respondents' feeling of trust and openness.

Formal consent will be obtained after the participants have read the information letter and want to participate in the study. This consent will be a signature on the receiving information letter and will be kept in a secure closed area, only accessible to me and destroyed after the thesis is graded. The respondents will remain anonymous during the study and identifiable data will be anonymized with the purpose of not leading to recognition, so no participants will be able to be identified after publication. The interviews took place at homes and quiet cafés, far away from the respondents' home and local environments. This measure was implemented to avoid any relatable persons identifying the respondents.

The study will be published in English, and afterwards translated by a certified translator in Skopje in order to make the study available in the Macedonian language. The purpose of the study should not contribute to any disadvantage for the respondents, but instead something positive that promotes more knowledge and reflections within the local context for multilingual young adults. The study's desire and aim is to add to the body of research regarding the multicultural society in Skopje, its multilingual young residents, and how multilingualism affects sense of identity and belonging.

To carry out the study, no permit from the state was required and ethical considerations were present. Ethical considerations include extensive consideration for the respondents and their multilingualism which may appear to be a sensitive topic, as it can uncover possible traumas or other negative related effects. To counteract this, considerations were taken in asking well-written questions that aimed to be easily understandable for the respondents, without room for interpretations which can cause any emotional burden (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017:11). Being a researcher required me to pay attention to how they expressed their emotions as I gave them the option to halt the interview or end it if necessary.

The respondents' identities were protected by omitting any personal data that would reveal identification. As soon as their data was no longer required, it was planned to erase all personally identifiable information from the study records, which was accomplished. I, as a researcher, thought to provide necessary actions that provided benefits to avoid any harm or recognition for the respondents throughout the study. Benefits include always being available to participants in order to address their concerns and not sharing any information about other participants to others during the course of the research.

During the interviews some of the respondents expressed moments they haven't thought about for

a long time or that were “nearly” forgotten. Interview questions and the implementation of lifeline methods gave some of them the feeling of reflection from their multilingual position in Skopje. Some of these moments and reflections appeared to inflict re-traumatization, which was handled by focusing on their listening, accepting their feelings, giving the respondents time to talk at their own pace and not criticizing or dismissing their experiences.

Multilingual young adults can, depending on the context, be at risk for harm and vulnerability as some environments either promote or demote certain attributes. Therefore, anonymity will lead interviewers to respond in a freer and less censored way. As a result, their responses will be more accurate, allowing the interview to move forward for better material research. In comparison to non-anonymous interviews, anonymous interviews promote a higher level of disclosure for sensitive or stigmatizing information (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017:13). Their privacy will be a priority to maintain anonymity and their participation in the study must not cause any harm to their well-being and health. Their names, identities, other information, and backgrounds will not be published or identifiable; instead, sub names will be used. The interviews will be recorded with a locked iPhone 13 Pro and then transferred and deleted from the phone to MacBook Air to protect the interviews from getting lost or stolen. I will be the only person to have access to the MacBook Air and transcripts and records will only be accessible to me and my academic supervisor. When the study is finished and approved, all interviews will be deleted.

9. Analysis and Results

The following section will present the study's findings, analysis, and results. These findings aimed to deepen the understanding of how multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje. The analysis and results are presented below through relevant themes that serve as headlines to organize the presentation. Themes reflect the purpose of the study and present the respondents' experiences of being multilingual in Skopje. Emerging themes were; *Effects of Multilingualism*; *Impact of Moments on Belonging and Identity*; *Politics of Ethnic Identity Borders* and *Opportunities of Being Multilingual*.

9.1 Effects of Multilingualism:

In this chapter, effects of the respondent's multilinguality will be presented and discussed in accordance with the research aim, how the multilingual respondents experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje. Effects of multilingualism became one of the main themes that emerged in the interviews. The creation of unification and a sense of belonging everywhere and nowhere stood out as notable effects, thus creating the subthemes, *Unification Effect* and *The Everywhere Effect*. All of the informants brought these topics up for discussion and nevertheless had a lot to say about it.

9.1.1 Unification Effect

As an example, Philip described:

“It helped me a lot because I know a lot of people that live here in my city that are also multilingual and it's easy to speak with them, easy to understand them (...). You have basically one big thing in common, that's the language (...). It definitely has more advantages knowing more languages for sure.” (Philip)

Above, Philip emphasizes the significance of his own multilingualism in navigating his identity and gaining advantages. His language skills seem to create a social position constituted by unification and language appears to be the foundation that unites him with other people. An understanding that is similar to what earlier studies have found. For example, Han (2011:395) describes that multilingual skills can generate support by identifying with similar people, Kroll & Dussias (2017:254) argue that multilinguals often utilize language to create access for social

opportunities. Moreover, we can also add that according to Vygotsky (2012:38), language enables interaction that helps people to find belonging, which Philip seems to have found as an effect from multilingualism.

Belonging through language can as well be seen to correlate to ethnicity where Jura chooses to hang out with people of similar ethnicity. Jura notes;

“I think it's cool to have different identities and nationalities. Because I can learn a lot of things from different nationalities, I can understand the way of your thinking, learning, principles and everything. Maybe I think like that because I come from a different nationality, different mix, a mix of two nationalities and maybe that is what has formed my thinking. But I really love to be in the same room as other nationalities and it's funny that most of my friends are also mixed, so maybe that's something in common for all of us. We always choose to go with other people that come from a similar mix. For me, it's great.” (Jura)

Jura describes his multilingual skills and mixed nationality as something positive, because it enables him to choose his social company more easily. This can be understood through Sultana & Dovchins' (2017:67) perspective on how young adults use multilinguality to engage in desired affiliations. Because it connects a social group and fosters a sense of belonging, Jura's statement can be viewed as solidarity and as a capacity to choose to engage with individuals that come from a mix of two different nationalities. In this way, the effect of multilingualism facilitates new cultural understandings. Vygotsky (2012:41) advocates that language facilitates cultural understanding, which, via solidarity, strengthens ethnic identity. As he expresses the positive effects of being in multicultural company and a healthy relationship to his social position as a multilingual person, Jura too describes a preference for spending time with others who share multicultural backgrounds. This preference can be understood as being linked to positive recognition and unification. According to Taylor et al (1995:70), positive recognition implies acknowledgement of one's identity and behavior for identification to take place.

The results are consistent with what Sultana and Dovchin (2017:70) indicate, who state that via language, individuals may be filled with new ideological meaning and promote cohesion. Henry, who claims that his multilingualism facilitates other ways of being, addressed these themes of unity and new meaning. Henry admits to being able to practice code-switching in the interview. According to Gardner-Chloros (2009:57), code-switching requires adapting one's language to the circumstance:

“Being multilingual influenced my identity into being someone that I always wanted to be, because now being multilingual means that I’m a guy who is able to help a lot of people, because I feel at home, in Egypt, in Kosovo, in Macedonia, in Greece whenever I speak the language I feel like home, this is my biggest visa, beyond my passport.” (Henry)

Henry claims that his multilingualism allows him to exist in various ways. Multilingualism seems to give Henry the opportunity to feel like he is able to fit-in and belong, as his multilingualism is a great attribute that allows him to feel at home. Bullock & Toribio (2009:100) describe these experiences as positive attributes gained from code-switching, suggesting Henry has a tool to navigate and express solidarity with different social groups. Due to his many methods of "being" and expressing "home" through language, Henry is able to fit in and be in tune with numerous cultures that suit him.

Ivica also claims that unity took place during the interview. She considers this in light of her multilingualism:

“It was very nice. I could understand a lot more people by speaking multiple languages and it was a lot easier to make friends when I went to visit my grandparents in Croatia, so it was a great privilege to know those languages as a mother tongue from a young age.” (Ivica)

Ivica expresses that multiple languages enabled friendships which are described as positive. She said that knowing several languages during her trips made it simpler for her to understand more people. This idea is supported by Sultana & Dovchin (2017:71), whose research about language describes how multilinguality allows young adults to transcend beyond their location. Kramsch (2006:100) suggests that the ability to communicate in a variety of social contexts and environments creates social identity. As Ivica expresses changes and socializes in international contexts, the influence of her multilingualism enables her to navigate her identity and enable getting in touch with herself. Social interaction produces meaning with favored groups and personal importance to identify with, according to Kramsch (2006:105).

Alma too gives the impression of being able to socialize with more people, as an effect deriving from her multilinguality. Alma says:

“It was like a power, you can understand more people, and they can't hide things from you because you get them, so it was just a plus. It increased my abilities to work more and be more social with

many people.” (Alma)

Alma views her ability to speak multiple languages as a strength that helps her comprehend more people. The fact that she is interacting with others more shows that her multilingualism is being acknowledged, which is a positive sign for embracing one's own identity (Taylor et al, 1995:80).

Recognition can also be seen in the following statement by Jemima whose effects of multilingualism helped her gain social connections, get a better job and therefore earn a better salary. The emphasis of recognition is on the act of being acknowledged and the perception that this identification means to be accepted as legitimate (Taylor et al, 1995:77). Jemima, knowing the Balkan languages, gives the impression she's comfortable with her own identity and can gain belonging in work and social settings. Jemima notes:

“To get around more, having connections (...). Knowing the Balkan languages here helped me get some connections, some jobs and a much better salary. Knowing multiple languages has been a great privilege I cherish dearly.” (Jemima)

Jemima appears to be able to choose environments and find belonging by knowing multiple languages. Jemima's way of negotiating her multilingual identity provides connection and inclusion in a network that gives Jemima the possibility to gain material resources like finding work and getting a better salary. Jemima's demonstration of using multiple languages is in correspondence with Duff's (2015:58) description of a hybrid identity which favors assimilation. Hybrid identity connects with society through united linguistics, which creates the sense of belonging. The belonging that Jemima describes during her interview.

Andrew shares similar positive effects of being multilingual, such as building unification through meaningful social networks. He states:

“Once you learn many languages, the fruits of the languages are as you see, huge relationships, huge friends, you will gain them instantly and you will do a hell of a lot more drinking in many bars, hehe. Lots of good times with people, you will drink rakija with many people (...). It helped me not just by getting better service, it helped me get real friends, it helped me build multilingual connections with people. It also helped me build this special connection with people that I have. It helped me build bridges; you know? It helps me build bridges between the nations and the people (...). When you are multilingual it will help you pass the imaginary borders inside your

brain.” (Andrew)

Andrew comes across as recognised by his environment, in the form of establishing friendships that favor good mental health (Chomsky, 2000:31). According to Andrew, language helped him establish social networks, develop connections with similar people and develop a recognised position. Young people who share similarities often develop more shared meanings and social support within their community. This is something that perfectly explains Andrew's feelings of belonging (Han, 2021:29). He shows signs of embracing his multilingual identity through utilizing language to constitute communication and positions Andrew identifies with (Giles & Johnson, 1987:82). Meaningful relationships and social bridges are evident in Andrew's effect of being multilingual, which suggests belonging.

Kristijan also made use of his multilinguality to build social bridges and integrate himself in Skopje. According to Schoonen and Appel (2005:87), it is common for youth to develop a language register in order to connect with social groups, meanings, and environments, as Kristijan indicates below:

“The most treasurest part about learning languages is that you are making the people feel proud and you also feel proud of yourself, and you are also feeling like a part of this city. Because without learning languages, without being able to build these kinds of bridges, I think that you are a half person in this city.” (Kristijan)

Kristijan feels proud of his multilinguality and describes how it contributed to his feeling of belonging and being a part of Skopje, despite several reports indicating that Skopje is constituted by division and segregation (Piacentini, 2019:273; Bloodworth, 2020:317). Kristijan's multilingualism seems to have created a way to break free from some of the reported ethnic stereotypes in this segregated society and create his own belonging through language.

Even Dena seemed to navigate her multilingual identity smoothly by creating social bridges, new social opportunities and cultural understandings, which are described as giving her the feeling of connection. Dena shares:

“It has influenced me very positively because I have become more open, and more accessible to many cultures. When you speak the native language of the country you are in or the language from another country, where the other person is from it is all different. We connect on a deeper

level.” (Dena)

Dena describes multilinguality as becoming more open to different cultures and connecting with people on a deeper level. This is a common outcome of language according to Vygotsky (2012:48) who emphasizes that language works as a mechanism for communication, which is the foundation for cognitive growth and cultural development. Dena's experience of being multilingual and connected suggests that she is recognised by her surroundings.

However, despite the above answers, there are several respondents that stated that because of their position of being multicultural and multilingual, they had felt like “aliens” several times, and the ability of belonging everywhere. This emotion highlights a person's identity as something newly established and one that is supported by several social constructivist theories. The ability of informants to voice emotions of alienation and ability to fit in with diverse contexts points to a characteristic shared by young adults, which is trying out several identities to see where one fits in (Stets & Burke, 2009:22). The numerous identities that the informants inhabit and negotiate are acknowledged in social constructivist understandings of identity, which accepts that identities change. Consequently, the following subtheme evolved from the effects of being multilingual in Skopje:

9.1.2 The Everywhere Effect

Petar states he doesn't feel like he belongs anywhere, yet at the same time he states that he often feels like he belongs everywhere. He notes the following about being multilingual in Skopje;

“It has influenced me in a way that I don't feel like I belong anywhere, but yet I do belong everywhere. It's a weird thing to say, but I don't feel like I'm a part of the others. I feel I'm a bit different, which I like (...) I guess that's it, the basis, just feeling different, always been different, always been an Alien. Can be everywhere, kinda accepted, but not really.” (Petar)

Petars' ambivalent feelings correlates to an understanding of his experiences that can be understood as third space; a space created by people with cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1994:148). Petar, who is caught in a cultural limbo where he feels he can occupy numerous belongings, finds himself in a position of in-betweenness. Petar discusses the more unfavorable elements of being multilingual, of not belonging, of not being understood or appreciated, and of being alone. Taylor et al (1995:79) emphasizes that non-belonging can inflict harm on the health and well-being,

which can result in an obstructed relationship to oneself. Individuals who don't feel like they belong can result in alienation and misrecognition for the affected. This is something very harmful to the self and self-worth, according to Taylor et al (1995:71). Emma in contrast, highlights solely the positive aspects when she says:

“I belong to the world, because I cannot say I belong to one community. I see myself very open, so easily adjustable, so I can adapt with every person, every situation, and every community. Basically everybody is different, in one community it is normal to sit on the floor, in the other one it is normal to lay down on the floor, in one to sit on the sofa and so on and so forth. So, me, in general, I can adapt easily. I cannot say that I only belong to one community, because sometimes, even though you belong somewhere, something new can happen; something new can open your mind, and you can choose something different to see whether it is good or bad for you.” (Emma)

Emma does not perceive herself as simply belonging to one or the other community, indicating that she is able to adapt to several communities. The code-switching resource mentioned by Gardner-Chloros (2009:51) is displayed when Emma switches to several social communities because she can identify with many social groupings. Thus, Emma acknowledges her code-switching as a resource to being able to belong somewhere then choosing something different for belonging. It becomes evident that Emma's language skills facilitate belonging, which benefits a healthy identity (Vygotsky, 2012:39).

The feeling of being in between groups and not feeling like you belong only to a certain social group is a recurrent state of feeling for many of the respondents. The informants live in an environment constituted by ethnic tensions among ethnic groups (Stojanov, 2020:71). This can perhaps contribute to the respondents' feelings of being different and in-between. Bloodworth (2020:323) reports that the Albanian and Macedonian population separate themselves from each other and encourage allied belonging between themselves. This climate seems to promote a set framework for how identities should act and identify, which might be the reason some respondents feel like they belong everywhere and nowhere.

Karolina's feeling of being Alien perhaps originates from interacting with surroundings, which have labeled her as from another planet:

“Alien, I'm an alien, literally I can declare myself as an alien because people in my surroundings tell me I'm not from this planet, so I always say as a joke that I'm an alien. So, let it be like this

now. But I am Macedonian in general, maybe I have some Serbian blood, maybe some Greek, maybe some Turkish, you never know, that's why I'm an alien." (Karolina)

The alien feeling expressed by Karolina comes from the people in her social environment which label her as “from another planet”. This designation can be the result from the existing hegemonic discourse of mistrust between the dominant ethnic groups (Stojanov, 2020:72). Karolina's “from another planet” label may contribute to her subjective position as an alien. According to Hall (1996:447), being labeled promotes the emergence of a hybrid identity and in Karolina's case, of being and feeling like an alien. In response to being called an alien she identifies at least partially. She implies some resistance to the designation of being an alien when she states she is joking. Here, we may observe how her experiences and the social environment relate to the development of her identity.

The quotes above emphasizes the respondents' experiences of effects from being multilingual, and how the respondents navigate between different environments to find belonging. Language enables them to be part of different groups which stimulate a changing identity and multiple roles affecting their lives. The respondents engage in different positions and social environments through their language abilities, producing acts that are recognised by their social environment that shape the respondents' identities. Their multilingualism has a variety of effects, including the "alien" and "everywhere" labeling, which imply the feeling of being in-between. Feeling like they do not belong, but at the same time being able to fit in with everyone, as well as the development of new relationships and access to other cultures. One could argue that the respondents' experiences are shaped by their interactions with others in their social environment, and that their multilingualism suggests the possibility of becoming flexible.

9.2 Impact of Moments on Belonging and Identity:

The respondents were given a piece of paper with a lifeline from birth to 30 years of age during the interview so they could mark noteworthy occasions. Through this method specific events emerged as significant in relation to the informant's identity and belonging. Events of significance that stood out occurred in school and military institutions, social settings, holidays and war. According to Elder et al (2003:61), events can play an important factor in people's life, influencing their development, identity and belonging. For example, Levi highlighted a memorable event that occurred in an educational setting:

“I was in elementary school, and you know kids are playing games everywhere and usually boys get in fights you know (...). I know I was correct and didn’t do anything, but I was provoked by one kid and everybody from the class stood by his side. I felt it was maybe because I’m not pure Macedonian like everybody and I thought like that. After that I heard afterwards some of the kids saying you’re not Macedonian ‘cause you’re not from here (...). That’s a turning point I think when you realize that your mixed cultures and multilingualism is affecting you in some way.” (Levi)

Here we see how Levi registered his mixed cultures and multilingualism, because others in school perceived him to be different from everyone else since the age of ten, which resulted in a fight. Levi’s student experience is consistent with Bloodworth’s (2020:312) findings about students in North Macedonia attending ethnically homogeneous schools, where ethnocentric thinking thrives. Such segregation increases the likelihood of groups developing generalizations about other people who, like Levi, belong to different ethnicities. This event can be understood as a negative categorization of Levi’s identity, as his environment only refers to the attributes they perceive as different, instead of the Macedonian. According to Stets & Burke (2009:21) Levi’s experience can be viewed as a life event that contributes to forming his identity as he himself describes it as “a turning point”. Using Bhabha’s (1994:150) perspective, it is possible to understand Levi’s situation as a subject position that emerges from the “in-between space”. Levi finds himself in an intermediate state of not belonging to the majority, where his mixed cultures and multilingualism prevents him from harmonizing with his social environment in school. Such experience indicates Levi wasn’t recognised, which can damage a person’s self-image and push one further away from feeling like belonging (Taylor et al, 1995:71).

Similar significant experiences of not belonging were also stated by Martin when he shared his lifeline with me, as he presented in particular memorable events which took place when he was 15 and in a social setting. This event, like Levi’s, is linked to a social environment that perceives Martin as different:

“I had a little religious identity crisis. I don’t know should I take my father’s side of being Buddhist, or my mother’s side of being Christian, or should I just become an atheist? Then I was confused. I was going back and forth, left and right. Then there were a bunch of people forcing me to take that religion, because their opinions about religion were very strong, so they were basically forcing it on me, because I was different. But I was pretty strong at the time with my will and stuff, so I wasn’t pushed down. But it was hard for me, of course. Some random people showing up out of nowhere and forcing their religion on you, and straight up wanna fight, and

I'm like, alright, we will fight. So it was pretty difficult because there were close minded and forceful people, not good experiences but not bad, interesting.” (Martin)

In this case Martin discusses a crisis of identity brought on by his social context, which pressured him to join their faith because they perceived him as unique. They were powerful, narrow-minded people who wanted to fight him, which is why Martin recalls this period as challenging and tough. This expressed oppression can be understood in relation to it occurring in a social setting that was not so ethnically diverse and people lived segregated from one another. Segregation towards other people becomes normalized in the people's daily life (Bloodworth, 2020:310). Martin's Asian features, in addition to his multilingualism, can perhaps also be understood as making him a bigger target for objectification. As mentioned by Hall (1996:468), mixed ethnicity people have a harder time harmonizing with society. Although Martin's identity at the time wasn't recognised, he expressed strength of will. This act can be relatable to Bhabha's (1994:150) third space theory where multicultural people are described as being strong when they negotiate between the differences to emerge with society. Such experiences compelled Martin to negotiate his identity in order to reap the benefits of being "different." As Martin experienced these emotions, which made him feel rejected in society, it becomes clear that boundaries between people are being upheld and even challenged through violence. The enforcement of boundaries between people and groups is also evident in the quotes below from Agneta and Jordan, who both describe being forced to change schools because they were seen to cross boundaries. Fighting becomes noticeable for both Levi, Martin, and Jordan as a result of their differences during their time as students.

Fighting is as well a part of Agneta's particularly significant life event:

“Until third grade, I studied with Macedonians, then I had to leave the school because I was bullied, because I was Albanian, but I didn't care. I was a fighter, so I went to an Albanian school on the other side. The more I fought, the more I wanted to learn new languages and communications skills. Not to prove myself, because they already know, but in this city you always have to (...). I hate the fact that people divide.” (Agneta)

Jordan too mentioned moments in school that had an impact on him and were significant in terms of being multilingual. He was excluded from the Macedonian community because he is ethnic Macedonian and he learned Albanian:

“When I started speaking Albanian intensively, I took a photo with 10 Albanians. I felt like Eminem with Dr. Dre, the only white guy. It was a photo taken in my high school, the Macedonian

community took me aside for that and from my school for learning Albanian.” (Jordan)

These remarks allude to significant life events that occurred during their youth in an educational setting. Variations in events and experiences are more common in adolescence and young adulthood because young people are more likely to explore themselves and their identities (Stets & Burke, 2009:18). Agneta and Jordan describe that exclusion is linked to key moments during one’s years of education. Their sense of feeling regarding belonging and identity can be understood as being excluded from their social environment based on their cultural affiliations with Albanian ethnic culture. Language appears to be an important key to crossing ethnic boundaries, as well as a signal of belonging and alliance. Agneta was bullied, because she was Albanian and Jordan who learnt to speak Albanian became rejected and an outcast from the Macedonian community. The events that Agneta and Jordan experienced point to misrecognised identities, which can become a hindrance for growth of healthy relationships and one’s own identity (Taylor et al, 1995:80).

Gustavo shares significant occurrences in his life that are connected to ethnic conflict in North Macedonia (Stojanov, 2020:70; Piacentini, 2019:277; Bloodworth, 2020:313). As opposed to Macedonia, where he experiences more "differences," his time spent on vacation in Albania stood out as key moments for comprehension of his belonging. Giles & Johnson (1987:82) presents that language enables affiliation through communication that connects the person, it can be interpreted that Skopje’s influences from ethnic divisions do not recognise Gustavo’s multilingual position and therefore he finds more attachment in Albania, where mainly Albanian is spoken. Despite not being of Albanian descent, Gustavo speaks the language and, as a result, feels more at home in Albania due to the divisions that exist in North Macedonia:

“As a kid we would go on vacation in Albania, and when I was there I felt I belonged there, because of the Albanian speaking, so as a kid I felt really nice when I was in Albania rather than in Macedonia because of the differences here.” (Gustavo)

Stojanov’s (2020:75) study helps give important context to Gustavo's experience. He acknowledges that North Macedonia is sometimes characterized as a divided multiethnic nation made up of ethnic Macedonians and Albanians. Stereotypes and distrust between these groups are what make them up, and interethnic self-segregation keeps this distrust alive. The ongoing ethnic exclusion in North Macedonia makes it apparent that Gustavo's identity in Skopje is not being recognised and therefore Gustavo’s vacation in Albania is significant in his life for belonging.

The Albanian speaking language indicates that language for Gustavo is an essential sign for his belonging.

Interethnic frictions are also very evident for Evelina's significant moments for identity and belonging. In the following quote, Evelina highlights the war between Macedonians and Albanians as a significant moment in her life. She describes her assumed identity as Albanian was a problem, but she was in fact Turkish. During this time, it can be understood that Evelina's understanding of her identity was problematic, because of the different groups enforcing ethnic boundaries. Identity seems to be linked to language and groups as her assumed identity wasn't accepted, she says;

“When I was young there was a war between Macedonians and Albanians in Aracinovo. Macedonians removed us from the place that we live and took us to the other side of the city (...). I'm Turkish but they thought that I was Albanian. They made problems with me for 5 years, but now I'm fine. I feel fine. But now I think we accept each other's culture, now it is good that I know more languages.” (Evelina)

Yasar, an ethnic Turk from North Macedonia, saw his experience in the military as a pivotal period in his sense of identity and belonging. He notes;

“I can tell you in the military I joined at 18 years old, it was my decision. In the military the Macedonians were divided, the Albanians were divided, the Romans were divided, so I was close with everyone, privately and in my workplace (...). Since I was born I am able to speak four languages, I have benefited now from this.” (Yasar)

These moments highlighted by Evelina and Yasar furthermore indicate a divided society by different ethnic groups. Evelina notes the war between Macedonians and Albanians, which reveals how complicated and bad the situation once was and still is. Stojanov (2020:74) reports that both these ethnic groups identify with their ethnicity and not as citizens of the state. These experiences of a divided context are brought up and are evident day-to-day by the respondents that share an Albanian or Macedonian ethnicity. On the other hand, respondents with multi-ethnicities indicate moments independent from the interethnic segregation. These findings can advocate that the respondents with a strictly Albanian or Macedonian identity are more likely to be impacted and stereotyped, because of the problematic ethnic climate that reigns. Respondents are being pressured to choose groups or move dependent on their ethnic identity. According to Taylor et al

(1995:71), these stereotypes that informants encounter might result in a person's identity being negatively categorized, which subsequently has an impact on that person. Given that the respondents' statements above express feelings of acceptance toward one another's cultures and friendships with all groups regardless of background, as well as the fact that their experiences are disassociated from the current interethnic divided society, respondents who identify as multiple ethnic groups are therefore more likely to have their identity acknowledged positively. Being able to make connections is a positive outcome due to the respondent's multilinguality.

Evelina and Yasar furthermore note their multilingual capabilities as something beneficial. Perhaps their multilingualism contributes to their ability to establish neutral positions with both sides. Bullock & Toribio (2009:101) describe multilingual capabilities as code-switching, meaning Evelina and Yasar have the resources to adjust their language and behavior to fit in with both groups and cultures. According to Bhabha (1994:148), the resource to adjust language and behavior corresponds to the third space since multicultural backgrounds provide cultural intelligence and the ability to negotiate between the differences which can be interpreted in the respondents' remarks. The lifeline method provided valuable insight into significant moments that influenced their sense of identity and belonging.

9.3 Politics of Ethnic Identity Borders:

This theme emerged from many of the respondents' statements mentioning the political situation and its effects while it was a factor affiliated with many of the respondents' stories about social events that influenced them in the previous section. The lifeline provided information about certain environments, such as contacts with educational and military institutions, which were significant to the informants. Politics could be understood as an underlying social structure affecting the respondent's daily life. This topic, which the respondents all wished to discuss, could not be presented using the lifeline method. There were ethnic divisions between Macedonians and Albanians on both a structural and personal level. In the following statement by Jana, it becomes visible that elements like economy, politics, fighting and polarization are impacting the daily life for the multilinguals. Jana states:

“People are limited here, because of the politics and the biggest problem comes from not having enough money to do the things you would like to do. So one disadvantage is living in Macedonia, in Skopje cause you're like in a box, only due to the politics. One side will say we are right, the other side will say no, we are right, and they're fighting like it's the kindergarten and we as a

people who live in Skopje, in Macedonia and Balkan I can say, it impacts us and creates problems.” (Jana)

The polarized social structure from politics is evident for Theo as well, who encounters hard borders and bullying between both ethnic groups. Theo’s words indicate that the polarized climate might be painful in many ways and perhaps harmful to the multilingual’s mental health. Theo adds:

“The native Macedonians will think that you will convert your religion, that you are a traitor of the nation, that you are not part of them anymore. They will think that, if you speak Albanian they will not be happy about it, they will call you bad words, they will cat call you. You will change your religion. This is equal for both sides. I feel tired about this, I don’t want to hear about hate speech. I feel tired. To me all are equal, all the people are equal. We drink beer together.” (Theo)

Bloodworth (2020:324) emphasizes that as the youth are impacted by a segregated educational system and form negative perceptions about other groups that have a different ethnicity, these conflicts begin in the classroom for them. Politics that are racially divided appear to set boundaries that multilinguals must navigate. In Theo's statement, it appears that these borders are related to religion, since bullying in the form of disparaging language and catcalling is employed against people who are on one side, forcing Theo and other respondents to negotiate their identities.

Lence likewise needs to negotiate her identity since, as she says in the next paragraph, being observed and not being welcomed makes her feel uncomfortable. According to Bloodworth (2020:325), these actions are prejudices between the ethnic groups that have been ingrained through many generations. Lence remarks;

“Due to the political situation here, we were divided like Albanians versus Macedonians, so speaking Macedonian language in a neighborhood which was mostly Albanian caused unpleasant feelings when you were there. They look at you differently. They say something to you in their language and you don't understand them and through their body language, basically, you could see that whatever they were saying was not good, so I was not accepted from their side cause I speak a different language. Macedonian was an official language, so I couldn't understand why this could happen and why it was happening at the time.” (Lence)

Lence’s experience reveals that borders are being drawn around language and ethnicity due to the

political situation. Lence feels she isn't accepted in an Albanian neighborhood. This perfectly displays the ethnic exclusion when moving through the city. Being looked at strangely and being referred to in an incomprehensible language indicate that Lence isn't being recognised. Misrecognition can lead to oppression, which has negative effects on one's health and well-being (Taylor et al, 1995:82). It's possible that Lence's experience of misrecognition contributed to her feeling alienated, which made it harder to embrace her daily activities in some parts of Skopje. According to Lam and Warriner (2012:112), youth are especially vulnerable to being influenced and establishing contextual norms in their social environment. Lence expresses that she did not feel at home on the Albanian side of Skopje, which corresponds to the political climate described by Lam and Warriner (2012:112) and Schoonen and Appel (2005:96).

This politically segregated climate goes both ways as Stojanov (2020:71) presents that both ethnic Macedonian and Albanian groups have mistrust against each-other and consider the other as enemies, who want to repress them. Stephanie had similar bad experiences like Lence while being an ethnic Albanian in a Macedonian neighborhood. Stephanie says;

“I get really angry because it's a trauma from my childhood that I was always living in a Macedonian neighborhood. I was always called “siptarka”, which is a slang word for Albanians. I've also always been bullied. I've always learned to stand up, it kind of triggers me and I hate it, but I fight it with my music, I fight it with my art. I have also had an Albanian tv show, so I always tried to engage my language, not only for the identification, but also for the new generations, not just for me.” (Stephanie)

By Stephanie's quote it can be understood that she, like Lence, doesn't get accepted by the opposite ethnic group, which in this case is the Macedonians. This reveals that both ethnic groups participate in border maintenance activities and that multilinguals are victims of each-other's stereotypes that can be linked to the ethnic segregated climate (Stojanov, 2020:73). Both Lence's and Stephanie's comments point to their identities being distorted by stereotypes from opposing ethnic groups. Taylor et al (1995:25) claims that stereotypes can cause identity distortion and a contemptible image of oneself, imprisoning identities in a false mode of being. Stephanie seems to oppose the bullying through art and music to negotiate her identity, where she seems to find belonging and identification.

Taylor's (1995:26) description of misrecognition as imprisoning someone in a distorted mode of being is also evident in the following quote by Kim. His position as Torbesh can be interpreted as

a blend of both Albanian and Macedonian culture. Kim shares:

“There is a term called Torbesh, which means Macedonian muslims that were converted before, so every time somebody asks me what are you, I dont say Im Albanian or Turkish but I say I'm torbesh, and they are like ok (...). Because Torbesh is then interpreted by the Macedonian people as traitors, because they trated their country by not paying tax, and for Albanians they see you as just Macedonian, so both sides are a lose-lose, but I identify like that as my nationality. It pisses me off because you have to change yourself to how these political people want to see you.” (Kim)

Kim feels like he is in a “middle” position and is not accepted by either side. One way to understand Kim’s statement is that he's alone in this middle position. His position reveals the frictions between Albanians and Macedonians, findings which are seen in Stojanov’s (2020:72) results about both groups being constituted by negative opinions about each-other. This exposes Kim to pressures for outward conformity, which can lead to pressures on his own inner nature, affecting his mental health and well-being and putting Kim in an even more vulnerable position. These pressures, according to Kim, stem from how "political people" want to see him. Taylor et al (1995:30) explains that such demands of external conformity can result in an even worsened mental health and insecurity for the individual's own identity and beliefs.

The existing political climate that created ethnic segregation in North Macedonia can be seen in the respondents' various responses and Stojanov's research (2020:75). These findings are consistent with Helena's observations:

“People are very big nationalists. If you grew up in a multilingual family, like mine, and if you identify as all of them or even one more, most of the time you'll be seen as someone who doesn't love their country (...). Because they only know their own and they only love that, for them it is not possible to love more nationalities and you must identify as a single one, which is not true for me personally. In my opinion the cause of that, is that we only love the things we know and are close to us, we only understand what we know.” (Helena)

Politics of ethnic identity and borders, was an evident topic where ethnic divisions between Albanians and Macedonians became most noticeable. According to all the remarks above stated by the respondents, it's evident that the political situation in North Macedonia affects its multilingual citizens. Each one of the respondents feels categorized by the opposing ethnic group and there's no indication of a united nationality. Belonging to a certain ethnic group seems more

perceivable than a united view as citizens of North Macedonia. Instead, the respondents' experiences support what's reported by Stojanov (2020) and Bloodworth (2020) about a deeply divided multiethnic North Macedonia, where ethnic stereotypes are maintained about other ethnic groups. Due to the fact that these racial hostilities have persisted for decades and show no indications of abating, this restricts the responders. Social stratification has taken place for both ethnic groups on opposite ends of the spectrum, which can be attributed to the political system driving ethnic groups apart rather than integrating them as Piacentini argued (2019:285). This political hegemony contributes to the populace's disaffection at not being accepted for who they are, which feeds into the idea that people are to be distrusted. Consequences include a projected derogatory image of the respondents' identities, which, according to Taylor et al (1995:26), can result in the adoption of negative meanings and the infliction of identities.

9.4 Opportunities of Being Multilingual:

Earlier section described the dissatisfaction that respondents' felt when their identities were not getting recognised along with experiencing hostility. However, this was not the only case, as some of them revealed opportunities that helped them cope and navigate their identity and belonging. In opportunities of being multilingual, social and job opportunities stood out as noticeable in response to the informant's multilinguality.

9.4.1 Social Opportunities

Opportunities were related to social advantages, which were particularly clear for multilingual people. As a result, some of the social opportunities that were mentioned will be presented in the part that follows. Aleksandra believes that being multilingual prevented her from absorbing the ignorance of her social milieu and helped her become more acceptable to others. Instead, she became more approachable and eager to converse with visitors and those who spoke other languages. Aleksandra observes:

“When you speak another language it can broaden your mind. It can open your mind. You can accept different people around you. It is not so good to say, but in the Balkan's, in general, we are sometimes ignorant, so we do not accept different people (...). If somebody is speaking another language that is somehow normal for me and I'm happy to hear we have foreigners coming and that I can even learn something from them. But when we are stuck in one language we cannot open ourselves to something more, so knowing the different languages actually helped me open

my mind in a way. To see something from the other side as well.” (Aleksandra)

Aleksandra claims that her language abilities enabled her to accept others and gain knowledge from them. This is one of the results of knowing various languages, according to Vygotsky (2012:42), because language generates communication, which in turn develops a social community and culture. Aleksandra's multilingualism seems to have prevented her from becoming mired in one place and given her the ability to work around the words' constrained meanings. She places a strong emphasis on tolerance for distinct members of various ethnic groups. This exemplifies the "new ethnicity" strategy since she makes adjustments to new individuals in order to fit in with society (Hall, 1996:443).

Martin's multilinguality provided social opportunities, such as bargaining in the markets, being able to handle himself better in order to avoid getting teased and move around between countries and different groups of people. Martin further states:

“I can bargain about stuff in the market and I guess I can't be teased by others. Since I am a minority, I used to get teased, but now I can't because I'm pretty solid with the languages and know how to handle myself. Even around the other Balkan countries when you know a bit of their language it's easier to move around and do stuff.” (Martin)

This statement acknowledges opportunities provided by his multilingualism. Martin, who describes himself as a minority in Skopje, used his language skills to avoid getting teased. According to Hall (1996:450), this is a common phenomenon for minorities to experience their identity of being oppressed. By using the term “New Ethnicity” we are able to recognise Martin's subjective position as measures to achieve social status and hegemony with societies (Hall, 1996:451). Martin's description of being able to move around can be understood as a form of the new ethnicity, as he shows how he uses his multilingual abilities to coordinate for his advantage.

The use of Arthur's multilingualism to facilitate belonging and understanding with others is similar; he refers to it as "switching identities," which he claims opens up social opportunities. Arthur claims:

“It helped me a lot, without the language you can never belong in the community, learning the language helped me understand how people behave. For example, you can switch identities, you can always learn about other people, and you will understand the other people, and then you will

get back a little bit, you will choose your words wisely, you will be more chill, and culturally aware about the country.” (Arthur)

Switching identities corresponds to Gardner-Chloros (2009:45) description of code-switching, which enables Arthur to understand other people. Arthur shares this as a resource to better fit-in and adapt in social interactions. Code-switching appears to help Arthur achieve integration with preferred social groups as well as constantly have a cultural awareness. His description of understanding people and cultural awareness supports third space ideas. According to Bhabha (1994:151), the third space acknowledges Arthur's created position because it includes new cultural meanings that denote opportunities, good health, and well-being.

9.4.2 Job Opportunities

The following part will highlight how language might be connected to material resources by presenting career chances that were frequently repeated for the multilingual interviewees. Jonathan explains how his knowledge of numerous languages has given him greater access to work prospects. His ability to speak multiple languages allowed him to interact with many different people, assimilate into their cultures, and therefore land many jobs. Jonathan reveals:

“I mean knowing many languages helps you a lot, because you can connect with people and it's a lot easier to communicate with them. Because of that I get a lot of job opportunities here, knowing Macedonian, English, Albanian and Turkish, you have an advantage over the other people, so from my side it helps you a lot to speak these languages and communicate with a lot of people (...). It is a big deal if you know the language. It makes you a part of their culture too.” (Jonathan)

Jonathan gives the impression of capability to navigate his multilingual identity in Skopje with contentment. Despite multiple reports, (Piacentini, 2019:460; Stojanov, 2020:74) state that North Macedonia's ethnic mistrust limits the citizen's opportunities to work together. Jonathan's capabilities with languages seems to help him get past these circumstances and still have multiple job possibilities. Bhabha (1994:145) refers to this phenomenon as third space, meaning it can be interpreted in the sense that Jonathan's cultural ability through languages enables negotiation between the present social differences in Skopje and establishment of own adaptable subject positions.

Even Hanna was able to get employment because she spoke several languages. Her ability to speak multiple languages appeals to Hanna greatly. She further claims:

“Advantages are definitely in the jobs sector. That’s huge, because not only knowing other languages like German and English, in which I’m not a native, but knowing Serbian, Croatian and Russian has helped me a lot in the student organizations I’ve been a part of and always gave me a higher position rank at Balkan conferences. Only for knowing the languages as a native (...). I would also always speak with the customers in their language, so it was an advantage. I used to get better tips. I was also offered multiple job opportunities. It’s been a very nice ability of mine to know this many languages.” (Hanna)

Hanna claims that through using her code-switching skills, she was able to connect with customers and advance in her career. Hanna exhibits code-switching resources, which transition between languages to blend in (Bullock & Toribio, 2009:98), by employing many tongues to speak with clients. She seems to be acknowledging her multilingual identities in a healthy way by mentioning her involvement in student organizations, Balkan conferences, job offers, and advertisements, which Taylor et al (1995:77) indicates is a sign of a positive connection with oneself. Hanna's ability to speak several languages allows her to communicate with a variety of individuals, which helps her avoid being oppressed.

Christella also got a job because of her ability to speak different languages. Christella adds:

“I decided to apply, I got the job and went there and again knowing the Greek language helped me a lot to fit-in very fast. My ability to speak different languages helped me to fit-in in my work environment and after that it helped me to actually see the world when I was working on the cruise ships.” (Christella)

Christella claims that her multilingualism made it possible for her to work, travel, and blend in. She was able to blend in, which means that her multilingual identity was recognised, indicating that she was in good physical and mental condition (Taylor et al, 1995:79). The creation of new ethnic identities has a connection to Christella's policies. This is an essential identity that recognises itself and constructs subjectivity in order to escape being repressed, according to Hall (1996:446). Hanna makes it clear that she values her multilingualism, which can be seen as a "new ethnicity" and is advantageous for her in avoiding being constrained by the political and social environment (Stojanov, 2020:76). Christella's ability to fit in through language can be seen as a code-switching resource to establish social membership; it looks that Christella navigates through the segmented segregation with ease (Gardner-Chloros, 2009:45).

10. Discussion

The purpose of this section is to remark on and reflect on the research findings that sought to understand how multilingual young adults in Skopje, North Macedonia, negotiate and experience identity and belonging. The main ideas will be emphasized, and a conclusion will follow.

Knowing that Skopje is a diverse, multicultural city provided the impetus for conducting a study on how multilingual young adults in Skopje navigate identity and belonging. Veron (2016:1448) confirms this by describing Skopje as one of the last remaining multicultural cities in South-East Europe that preserved its characteristics of ethnic diversity and cultural mixing for centuries. The findings of this study confirm that respondents' daily lives are markedly diverse in terms of ethnicity. Many of the respondents claimed that, depending on where they were in Skopje, different facets of their identities were ignored by the community. This finding responds to the study question: *How do societies and social groups' attitudes affect the respondents' understanding of themselves and their descriptions of identity development?* The results imply that multilingual individuals can experience misrecognition when they are in a region where their ethnicity is not the majority or when they are speaking a language that is a minority language. That results in a sense of not belonging and mental health problems, such as being excluded, bullied, stared at, pushed to choose sides, changing schools and moving to another location in the city of Skopje. Multilingual consequences as these cause the respondents to be alienated from other ethnic groups because of perceived unwanted traits and appearance.

Because of their perceived differences in ethnic belonging and language they understand themselves as not accepted for who they are, nor the language they speak or the culture they identify with. This is facilitated by the existing ethnic stereotypes that create problems for its citizens as it seems language is linked to different groups enforcing ethnic boundaries. Stojanov (2020:74) reports these stereotypes originate from prior history of Albanian nationalism along with Macedonian independent ethnicity and nation establishment, stereotypes that are created and maintained by ethnic exclusion and the interethnic self-segregation. Even though this environment of mistrust between ethnic groups is reported by multiple sources, (Piacentini, 2019:460; Stojanov, 2020:74; Bloodworth, 2020:310), it is, however, not something evident for the respondents to share such opinion about other ethnicity groups. They, instead, only demonstrate their own experiences of being victims of such neglect.

Based on these findings, it may be argued that their multilingualism encouraged these individuals

to form links with diverse persons and ethnic groups, which helped them to be receptive to other cultures. Instead of perpetuating these ethnic prejudices, multilingualism allows for people of all cultures and ethnicities to feel like they belong as well as it makes them experience understanding. This can be attributed to Bhabhas' (1994:152) description of the in-between position of the third space, which is created when the respondents' multilingual abilities let them gain additional cultural intelligence and navigate their identity independently. Many of the respondents' multilingualism in Skopje enabled their identity to find unification with others and to choose suitable companies that recognised them.

Respondents advocated that their language abilities help them adjust to the environment they find themselves in and to better fit-in. This indicated that many of them utilized the code-switching ability to understand more people and create connections. Gardner-Chloros (2009:58) states that this benefits the individual's identity to get in touch with themselves. The respondents' tendency to select social groups with common characteristics, like multilingual or multiethnic, is especially notable. Han (2021:28) says that this is particularly clear for young adults who can then find purpose and social support inside their social groupings to feel a sense of belonging.

The results demonstrate that the benefits of multilingualism helped some respondents feel at home just about anywhere in Skopje. Something that addresses our research question: *How does their multilingualism in Skopje affect their belonging and mental health?* The respondents' multilingualism appears to enable them to navigate through these experiences and geographical areas and yet exhibit indicators of excellent mental health and belonging, despite the fact that Skopje's social environment is made up of interethnic segregation and ethnic stereotypes. This might be seen as a beneficial outcome that gives individuals the freedom to navigate their identity anyway they like. The option and feeling of belonging everywhere displays the respondent's third space occurrence of creating new subject positions (Bhabha, 1994:154). Their multilingualism indicates adaptability to create dualistic identity positions, which provides multiple belongings in Skopje. Through using Hall's (1996:451) "New Ethnicity" term, the informant's dualistic positions were revealed as measures to coordinate with societies.

The implementation of the Lifeline along with the interview guide, answered the question: *What life course moments are lifted as significant in their experiences of being multilingual?*

Life course theory found that incidents cited as "very significant" frequently happened while the respondents were younger in educational or social settings. The lifeline findings showed that respondents who are of Macedonian or Albanian ethnicity in Skopje are more likely than respondents of other ethnicities to experience events of exclusion; frequently, they experienced

pressure to choose groups or move based on their ethnic identity. This can be linked to the reported separation between ethnic Macedonian and Albanians who promote cooperation between themselves (Bloodworth, 2020:322). Respondents that were multi-ethnic, instead, indicated moments independent from the interethnic segregation, although these respondents experienced moments their ethnic identity was labeled, not accepted or questioned. These results enable understanding for the research question: *How do experiences affect their understanding of themselves and their identity development?* Results imply that respondents who identify as Macedonian or Albanian are more susceptible to being negatively impacted by stereotypes. Respondents of other ethnicities are presumably more likely to get recognition for their identity as every described moment was disconnected from the reported interethnic frictions (Stojanov, 2020:75; Bloodworth, 2020:324).

In light of these findings, it is clear that the respondents are impacted by and occasionally marginalized by the sociopolitical division and ongoing ethnic conflicts between the populations of Albania and North Macedonia (Piacentini, 2019:462). Because of politics, which was another theme that arose from the respondents' responses, this may place the respondents in precarious positions. Respondents who identified as Macedonian or Albanian expressed not being accepted by each-other's ethnic group, which links to the segregated climate in the country (Stojanov, 2020:75). As a result, many respondents believe they must alter and adapt in response to politics and the surrounding environment, which can be uncomfortable. The respondents experience a projected negative image because they identify as Albanian, Macedonian, or seen to be so, and as a result, they don't feel welcome in some parts of Skopje.

Many of the respondents perceived their multilingualism as an enabling mechanism that helped them manage through the difficulties by engaging with many cultures where one feels that they belong, although not always accepted and sometimes even suffering antagonism. Their multilingualism highlighted the capacity to juggle through their identities for social and professional opportunities. Bullock & Toribio (2009:99) suggest that the majority of the respondents made use of resources like code-switching skills to their advantage. The benefits of multilingualism in terms of social interactions, such as learning to tolerate others and forging new relationships, have become extremely clear. Social connectivity encourages belonging and facilitates a reinforced identity, claim Walton & Cohen (2007:82). The respondents' multilingual capacities to cooperate beyond provocation as a minority status are explained by a strengthened identity. Hall's (1996:451) acknowledges the respondents' status as members of a minority and would draw attention to their language use as a means of achieving social rank and hegemony

within societies. The respondents' multilingualism helps them avoid being constrained by preconceptions and nevertheless exhibit evidence of finding a place in Skopje, which is a social setting where stereotypes exist between the ethnic groups that live in the city (Stojanov, 2020:72-74).

The respondents' sense of belonging was further demonstrated by the employment prospects made possible by their multilingualism. Many of the respondents received employment offers and felt recognised because they could speak various languages. This facilitated cultural exchanges with other ethnic groups, so the respondents' multilingual identity could prevail in the reported segregated climate (Stojanov, 2020:73). Although the respondents expressed dissatisfaction of sometimes being limited from the political circumstances, their multilingualism displayed greater outcomes that compensate for the bad.

Some of the male respondents in the younger age spectrum of the early 20s reported having engaged in fights when they were younger. Fighting was also something reported by a 29-year-old female respondent. Fighting was connected to the respondents' positions as minority students in multilingual contexts. Findings would suggest that young men are more prone than women to experience fights as a result of their multilingual status. Age disparities may be explained by a closer proximity to the fights, which suggests that younger responders may remember these bitter experiences better. Alternatively, we might add that since the older respondents were students themselves, the racial tensions have become worse.

11. Conclusion

This study offers factual arguments for how multilingual young adults in Skopje navigate and experience identity and belonging. The goal was to learn more about how young adults in Skopje, a city allegedly characterized by ethnic tensions, navigate and experience identity and belonging. In addition to the study's objective, the diversity of clients could be emphasized to increase awareness among social workers and anyone else who shows any form of interest in the subject.

Four questions were formed to achieve this research purpose: What life course moments are lifted as significant in their experiences of being multilingual? How do societies and social groups' attitudes affect the respondents' understanding of themselves and their descriptions of identity development? How do experiences affect their understanding of themselves and their identity development? How does their multilingualism in Skopje affect their belonging and mental health?

Premised on the results from the study, it is sufficient to say that multilingual young adults in Skopje have different experiences, when it comes to identity and belonging. Language appears to be a significant sign of belonging, identity and alliance. Findings indicate that the respondents' experience of identity, belonging and how they navigate is linked to their geographical location in Skopje and cultural ethnic affiliation. Oftentimes the respondents experience pressure to choose groups or move dependent on their ethnic identity. Some environments promote certain ethnicity and language use while other environments neglect it. Ethnic groups look to tie language to group belonging and as a result ethnic boundaries are enforced.

It is common for respondents to feel misrecognition, stereotyped, stuck in-between cultures, objectification, exclusion, and limited in environments where they find themselves in the minority or are seen to cross ethnic boundaries. However, the respondents' multilingualism and multicultural backgrounds enabled them to negotiate the differences in Skopje while remaining members of society. Their multilingual skills generate support by allowing them to identify with the desired affiliations and open up new social opportunities, all of which contribute to the respondents' continued comfort and sense of belonging in Skopje.

These findings highlight the difficult position that the multilingual youth faces; raising awareness of their situation can contribute to more knowledge and more research being conducted in the field of social work. As a result, oppression can be avoided and social workers can provide relevant expertise in such areas to assist multilingual service users.

The qualitative methods I chose allowed me to conduct semi-structured interviews that enabled open answers and good analytics regarding experiences, identity, and belonging. Face-to-face interviews helped get a nuanced picture of the aimed phenomena. Respondents were gathered through information letters and snowball sampling. Respondents were carefully chosen through snowball sampling to avoid bias. Although precautions were made to prevent prejudice, drawbacks with snowball sampling could still, somewhat have affected the outcome of the results. Seven respondents were obtained through nominees who may be people they genuinely know well, even though the respondents were made aware of the bias issues of oversampling a certain network of friends. Thus, true distribution of unbiased respondents could not be entirely fulfilled. The responses are not representative because they may, for example, reflect the opinions of respondents from the same side of Skopje or respondents of similar ethnic backgrounds. The sample size of 14 respondents can be regarded as small, making it less likely to be representative of North Macedonia's overall population, but it may be a good indicator of the current demographics of Skopje.

In order to improve research credibility, seven random people were acquired through the information letters shared throughout Skopje. If more time to acquire respondents was possible, I would have preferred gathering respondents through random sampling such as information letters and then truly opting for informant diversity regarding all ages, ethnicities, genders, religions, languages and geographic areas. The results of this study point to the need for further investigation into issues of identification, navigation, experiences and belonging because many claimed ethnicities were left out of the study, even though North Macedonia is one of the most ethnically varied nations in Eastern Europe.

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Appendix I

Information letter

My name is Milan Wall Kovacevski and I am studying for a Master's degree in Social Work at the University of Gothenburg. My master thesis will investigate “*How multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje, North Macedonia*”. Through the study, several individual interviews will be conducted with multilingual respondents who are between 18-30 years old. With multilingual the study aims to include respondents who speak more than two languages with a decent level of fluency in their daily life. The interviews are estimated to take about 30 minutes and can be conducted in either Macedonian, Swedish, or English according to the respondent’s preference. For a better interpretation of the questions, a lifeline will be used that enables you to point out periods that stand out in your life as significant in relation to being multilingual.

- The following research ethics principles for you to know before the interview takes place:
- Participation is voluntary and you can choose to cancel the interview at any time or refrain from answering a certain question during the interview without consequences.
- The interview will be conducted in a calm environment that the respondent finds preferable.
- The interview will be recorded and then transcribed by me.
- Recordings and transcripts will be kept in a locked room and only accessible to me.
- The recordings will be destroyed after the essay is approved by the examiner.
- Information that emerges in the interview will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.
- No information will be passed on to any partner, and fictitious names will be used.
- The final study will be published online, and you will be given the opportunity to receive electronically a copy of the study, which will be written in English.
- Results from the study will be located under the headlines, abstract, results and conclusion.

Feel free to write to me if you have any questions or if something is unclear about your participation in the research interview. You can reach me on tel. or by email.

Milan Wall Kovacevski: +389 XXXXXX / XXXXXXXXX@gmail.com

Lena Sawyer, Associate Professor, Department of Social Work at the University of Gothenburg, is the supervisor and can be reached via email: XXXXXXXX@XXXX.gu.se

Sincerely, Milan Wall Kovacevski

Letter of consent

Research paper, *“How multilingual young adults experience and navigate identity and belonging in Skopje, North Macedonia”*.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any point. The interview will be recorded with an iPhone 13 Pro and then transcribed by me, Milan Wall Kovacevski. The participants name or other sensitive information will not be included to protect your identity.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact me at, Milan Wall Kovacevski: +389 XXXXXX / XXXXXXXX@gmail.com

By writing your name, signature, contact info and date, you as a respondent hereby declare that you have read and understood the information letter and will participate in this study and interview.

Respondent details to be signed:

Name:

Consent signature:

Email:

Mobile number:

Date:

Your time and effort for this research are valuable and I appreciate your participation.

Sincerely, Milan Wall Kovacevski

Appendix II

Interview guide

For easier interpretation of the questions a lifeline will also be used for facilitation of the interview guide, a lifeline will enable you to draw and point out years or periods that stand out in your life as significant in relation to being multilingual. This can for example be certain cohorts which highlight historical time and certain social changes, turning points in life, transitions in life and statuses, trajectories that involve different relationships and phases and other life events of special significance. Lifeline will start with highlighting the childhood, followed by other specific moments you think are of importance or that have impacted you. Moments can vary between childhood, teenage years, and young adulthood where events or moments can be recognised. The questions from the interview guide will be used in alignment together with the lifeline. Lifeline will cover your age between 0-30 with age charts where you can use different colors to write and mark major events and transitions and the appropriate ages. These events can for example be interlocking trajectories, family or educational moments, or other transitions in occupational or health events.

Introduction questions:

What is your age?

Where do you live?

Your occupation?

What languages do you speak?

What languages were spoken in your home as you grew up?

Multilingualism and city:

How long have you lived in Skopje?

How is language a part of this city?

What ways have being multilingual helped you in this city?

How have your multilingual abilities been recognised and by whom?

How has being multilingual influenced your identity?

What ways has being multilingual posed difficulties for you in this city?

How is multilingualism related to identity in this city?

Belonging and lifeline:

What was it like to grow up multilingual?

How has it affected your upbringing and belonging?

Certain events that stand out in your mind?

How is your identity/multilingualism linked to different social contexts / environments?

How is your identity/multilingualism linked to belonging in different communities?

What communities do you feel belonging to?

Lifeline:

If you think about your whole life and where to draw a lifeline, can you mark where and what specific moments have been important in relation to your feeling of belonging and multilingualism?

Identity:

How do you identify to nationality as a person?

How do people in your surrounding identify you based on your multilingualism?

How does the social environment affect self-perception of one's own identity?

How do you experience, if any, people trying to pressure you to identify in a certain way?

What advantages or disadvantages are there to your identity in Skopje?

How does identity change over time?

Finally, is there anything else you would like me to know about the topic of multilingualism and belonging in Skopje?

Thank you so much for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Milan

LIFELINE

Health Trajectory

Occupational Trajectory

Family Trajectory

Social Trajectory

Educational Trajectory

0

10

20

30

Age
