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Where are you *Really* from?

(Trans)formation and (Re)construction of Identity

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Abstract

Within migration studies, the concept of identity has come to play a significant role in both immigrants' and the descendants' lives. The aim of this paper is to get more in-depth knowledge of how the Lebanese community construct their identity in Sweden by focusing on Scania region. This is done by analysing their self-identification, ethnic identity, cultural identity and how they feel they are perceived by the mainstream society. This qualitative study is based on six semi-structured interviews with first-generation Lebanese immigrants who came to Sweden in the 1980s because of the civil war in Lebanon. In addition, six semi-structured interviews with the descendants who are born in Sweden to two Lebanese parents. The results of the study show that the first-generation immigrants have a strong sense of being Lebanese. However, the descendants have developed a bicultural identity that is context dependent.

Keywords: Identity, first-generation immigrants, descendants, ethnicity, culture

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1. Introduction

We live in an era where transnational migration, globalization and border crossing are at an increasing rate. The issues of identity are still, in the twenty-first century, discussed and debated. The changing nature of nation-states, regional demands and the spread of ethnic minority groups has highlighted concerns about ‘who’ belongs ‘where’ (Kershen 2011, p.1). Migration does not only challenge national borders but individual’s identity and belonging as well. In the migration context, ethnicity and culture have become especially important as identity markers. Throughout the migration process, migrants continuously question the here and the there, the past and the present, the homeland and the country of settlement, and most importantly the self and the other. Such question arise in confusion of affirmation or contradiction of the self and community as migrants are lost between the belief of where to belong, which religion and cultural values they hold and how they might fit into the host society (Haci, 2014, p.3).

This thesis will look into the identity construction of the Lebanese community in Sweden by focusing on Scania region. This will be done by 12 semi-structured interviews in total; six first-generation Lebanese immigrants and six “descendants”. The motivation for selecting this research topic is intrinsically linked to my personal experiences of being the descendant of first-generation Lebanese immigrants living in Sweden.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this paper is to get more in-depth knowledge of how the Lebanese community construct their identity in Sweden by focusing on Scania region.

To reach the aim of this paper, three research questions will be answered:

- 1- How do the first-generation Lebanese immigrants and the “descendants” identify themselves?
- 2- How do the interviewees feel they are perceived by the majority society outside the Lebanese community?
- 3- Which differences can be found between the identity construction of the first-generation immigrants and the “descendants”?

1.2 Delimitations

There are a number of delimitations when it comes to this research which should be brought up. First, there is a territorial delimitation since my interviews only involve inhabitants that live

in Scania region in Sweden. The decision to only focus on first-generation Lebanese immigrants and the “descendants” living in Scania region is due to practical reasons since it would be time and money consuming for the researcher to travel to different parts of Sweden in order to make individual face-to-face interviews. I am aware of that the results of only one region in Sweden is not a representative sample for an entire country. However, this thesis can be seen as a pilot research in the broader field of identity and migration studies. The study is delimited to only focus on the first-generation immigrants who came to Sweden in the 1980s because of the civil war in Lebanon and currently working in Sweden. In addition, on the “descendants”, who were born in Sweden to two Lebanese immigrant parents. Furthermore, the research is delimited to only using qualitative research methodology, by focusing on the experiences of the interviewees. Therefore, I do not attempt at generalising or quantifying the responses. Finally, this study is only interested in investigating the interviewees’ ethnical and cultural identities disregarding the interviewees’ religious affiliation.

1.3 Background

It is important to be aware of different concepts used throughout this study such as first-generation immigrants and the “descendants”. In this section, a brief historical background of the Lebanese immigration wave in the 1980s to Sweden is also explained.

1.3.1 Clarification of terms

First-generation immigrants refer to those who have immigrated from their country of origin and resettled in the host country (Bretell and Nibbs 2015, p.2). In this paper, first-generation immigrants are those who are born and have grown-up in Lebanon but moved to Sweden in the 1980s when the civil war took place and are still residing in Sweden today.

Whom to count and include when referring to second-generation immigrants is not consistent between countries and there seems to be a disagreement among researchers regarding the correct terminology when speaking about the children of immigrants. Second-generation immigrant usually includes those whom were born and raised in the host country to immigrant parents (Bretell and Nibbs 2015, p.2). However, in some public debates, it has been argued that the term ‘second-generation immigrant’ should be avoided because ‘immigrant’ are only those who have moved to Sweden. Referring to persons born in Sweden as ‘immigrants’ is discriminatory (SMR, 2015). Moreover, as argued by Thomassen (2010, p.29), the term ‘second-generation immigrant’ reproduces difference and it categorizes a growing part of the Swedish society as standing outside the ordinary society. People born and raised in Sweden to foreign-parents should instead be called the ‘descendants of first-generation immigrants’.

Therefore, young people who were born and raised in Sweden to two Lebanese parents are referred to as “descendants” in this paper.

1.3.2 Lebanese immigration to Sweden

The outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975 significantly accelerated emigration. The first wave of Lebanese immigration to Sweden took place in the 1980s when the country was torn apart by the civil war (Regeringskansliet 2013, p.142). Many Lebanese came to Sweden as refugees. According to Statistics Sweden (2016), there are around 27,000 Lebanese immigrants living in Sweden. This number includes those who were born in Lebanon, referred to as first-generation immigrants in this paper, as well as those born in Sweden to two Lebanese immigrants, referred to as “descendants”. The regions with the most significant number of Lebanese can be found in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Uppsala and Malmö (ibid).

1.4 Thesis Outline

This study begins with an introduction which will give the reader an insight into the topic at hand. In *chapter 1* I also present the aim, research questions and delimitations of the study. Following, I define some important concepts that will be recurrent in this research and a brief historical background of the Lebanese immigration to Sweden. In *chapter 2* I outline relevant existing previous literature on the field. In *chapter 3* I examine the concepts used to achieve the aim of this paper. In *chapter 4* I outline the philosophical standpoint which is focused on a social constructivist approach. Following, the chapter provides a description of the research design, tool for data-collection, how I accessed the participants, and a discussion on how the study was conducted. In *chapter 5* I present the findings and analyse my material in relation to the prior research and theory discussed. In the final *chapter 6*, I highlight the main conclusions and discuss implications for future studies.

2. Previous Research

The purpose of this section is to pull together existing studies made on both first-generation immigrants and the descendants. However, due to the fact that the field of identity within migration lacks research conducted, relating both first-generation immigrants and the descendants, this section will follow two inter-related categories deduced from the research found. The first part will discuss studies made on the first-generation immigrants and the second part will discuss the descendants. The present thesis aimed to fill this gap by conducting a qualitative research focusing both on the first-generation Lebanese immigrants and the descendants.

2.1 Identity formation among first-generation immigrants

Sociologist Dalia Abdelhady (2011) carried out a study concerning the identity formation of first-generation Lebanese immigrants in Montreal, New York and Paris. In her study *'The Lebanese Diaspora: The Arab Immigrant Experience in Montreal, New York and Paris'* she focuses on the first-generation immigrants who left Lebanon because of the civil war and how after many years their identity is shaped. In order to achieve the aim, she relied on qualitative methods for data gathering. The data collection was in the form of 87 semi-structured in-depth interviews collected over a period of six-years. The studies have shown that the Lebanese immigrants have a strong sense of being Lebanese and even though the Lebanese community has been living outside Lebanon for many years they still identify themselves as being "Lebanese" because no one can deny where they originally come from. Moreover, they still do not feel fully accepted within the society. However, the interviewees in the study emphasized that living abroad gives their children "a decent future" (ibid, p.24). This study is of essential importance as the research of this thesis follows in its footsteps but negotiating Lebanese identity developed in Sweden from both the first-generation immigrants who came in throughout the civil war in Lebanon and the descendants born in Sweden to two Lebanese parents.

2.2 Identity formation among the descendants

Zubida, H. et al (2013) conducted a study among 125 children of immigrants from various part of the world i.e South America, Eastern Europe and Middle East living in Israel to study their identity formation. The data-collection was in the form of a survey. The results showed that most of the immigrant children identified themselves as a mixture of both Israeli and with their parents' country of origin; as referred to in the study as bi-cultural identities. The study

concludes that the identities of the children of immigrants is more fluid and flexible because they juggle between different norms, customs, languages and cultures. The children of immigrants are socialized into the ethnic communities by learning the language, values and customs of their parent's country of origin.

Another study conducted by Phinney et al. (2000) who also studied the identity formation, specifically the ethnic identity, among adolescents in immigrant families showed similar results as the previous research. However, Phinney et al. (2000) conducted a survey research on 81, 47 and 88 adolescents respectively, having Armenian, Vietnamese and Mexican backgrounds living in United States, Los Angeles area. The results showed that adolescents with immigrant parents grow up by being socialized into the language, values and customs of their parents' origin country that they carry with them to the host country. The results show that families who have a strong ethnic identity are more eager to teach their children their ethnic language and to associate with peers from their own group. Moreover, parents can have an important impact on their children in the sense of ethnicity, either directly or indirectly through the promotion of the ethnic language in the home. Due to their parent's impact on their identity, the adolescents' social identity becomes their ethnic identity because they categorize themselves based on their ethnic group membership.

Moving on to another study by Serine Gunnarsson who investigates the identity dilemma in the everyday life of six young women aged between sixteen and eighteen. The study was conducted by interviews with women having a Middle Eastern background; Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian born in Sweden. The aim of the study was to explore the social identity formation among these young women from a social perspective by focusing on the theoretical framework of 'social identity theory' formulated by Henri Tajfel. According to this theory, a person's identity is an ongoing process where it is shaped by daily social interactions (Gunnarsson 2013, p.89).

The findings of Gunnarsson (2013) show that the young women interviewed have mixed feelings of attachment to several groups. The shifting feelings of ethnic identification shows a degree of social attraction to a group depending on the situation. For example, they decide to identify with their ethnic community or the 'in-group', in order to keep their parents satisfied. Moreover, some decide to identify themselves with their parents' ethnic community because they do not want to be regarded by the society or accused by their ethnic community as trying to 'become Swedized'. As defined in the study, 'Swedized' is a concept externally ascribed to those trying to act 'Swedish' and those who do not embrace their ethnic heritage (ibid, p.96). Gunnarsson (2010) finally concludes by arguing that the construction of the ethnic boundaries

that the ethnic community has set is not keeping their children decide how to identify themselves. The reason behind this is because the results of the study showed that throughout the interviews the young women could not decide for themselves without referring to their parents and the importance of maintaining their parents' traditions even if they live abroad.

The last study I would like to shed light on is a study conducted by Clara Lee Brown (2009). A combination of structured and semi-structured interviews was employed to study the identity of four college students born in the United States to Korean parents. The data found that the participants identified themselves as "Korean American"; in other words, they constructed a hybrid identity. The interviewees expressed that their ethnic identity is hard to be hidden because of their physical features. It is like the society expects children of immigrants to take on their ethnic identity even if they identify themselves as "Koreans" or not.

3. Conceptual Framework

The upcoming chapter provides a conceptual framework for the analysis of this research. The concept of identity is first explained following cultural, bicultural and ethnic identities. This chapter ends by discussing “in-group and out-group”.

3.1 Identity

Identity has increasingly become a key concept in contemporary discussions of migration in social sciences (Barbera 2015, p.1). The concept of ‘identity’ is complex and scholars have defined the term differently. Jenkins (2008a, p. 5), points out that identity is the human capacity rooted in language to know ‘who is who and what is what’. This includes knowing who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are and us knowing who they think we are. Jenkins is arguing that identity is not a *thing* rather a *process* understood as ‘being’ or ‘becoming’(ibid). Within identity we can understand different aspects, such as ethnic identity and cultural identity that will be explained later in this paper.

Anthony Giddens (2003, p.44) explains that identity refers to the understandings and expectations individuals have about themselves and about others. These understandings are based upon a foundation of certain aspects which people find more important than other aspects. Some of the most important derivations of identity are for instance gender, nationality and ethnicity. Giddens states that such a “simple” thing as your name can be a significant part of yourself and your identity. To be “Swedish” or “Lebanese” is for instance an important designation and an example of an individual’s social identity.

As claimed by Hall (1996, p.608), identity is not formed at birth, but it is actually formed over time through our unconscious processes. Individuals cannot speak of identity as a finished process because it remains incomplete and always in the process of being formed. Identity is “filled” from *outside of us*, by the way we see others and the way we want to imagine ourselves. Therefore, as Hall (1996) has argued, individuals always search for ‘identity’ because they want to make themselves “fulfilled”.

3.2 Ethnic Identity

The term *Ethnic* is derived from the Greek term *ethnos*, which means ‘people’ or ‘nation’ (Jenkins 2008b, p.10). Ethnicity is an umbrella term, representing the precise quality characterising a people’s understanding of itself as a collective (Westin 2010, p.11). Max Weber assumed that concepts such as ethnicity will decrease and vanish in the twentieth century due to globalisation and modernisation. However, Weber’s assumption was proven wrong and the

term 'ethnicity' has on the contrary grown in its importance and has become an important subject in several disciplines, particularly in social science (in Guibernau and Rex 1997, p.3). Ethnicity refers to the social identity which is formed around a shared lifestyle, language, beliefs, ideas of a common history (ancestry), or 'homeland' (Kershen 2011, p.260). John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (2009, p.5) defines ethnic identity as the "individual level of identification with a culturally defined collectivity, the sense on the part of the individual that she or he belongs to a particular cultural community". Jenkins (2008b), argues that others may assign an ethnic identity to a group however, what they are actually establishing is an ethnic category. It is the group's claim to that identity that makes them into an ethnic group. Ethnic category is externally defined whereas, ethnic identity is internally defined.

Primordialism developed by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1996, pp.40-45) is an important definition and view within ethnicity. According to this view, ethnic identity is static, fixed, homogenous and unchangeable. Ethnicity is a natural part of human life and exists from time immemorial. For instance, a person's language, religion and other characteristics are emphasized as being essential and difficult to change in a person's ethnic identity. Moreover, anthropologist Fredrik Barth has a close perspective to the primordialist view. He argues that ethnic identities persist over longer periods of time throughout several generations because people create boundaries between each other. These social boundaries enable the ethnic group to maintain its language and culture. The idea of primordialism has been criticized because some degree of adaptation will occur when an immigrant spends a significant period of time living and working in a foreign society (Spencer 2014, p.100). Thus, as we have come to understand, these fixed ethnic identities have been constructed within migration (Westin 2010, p.14).

Jenkins (2008b) in his book *Rethinking Ethnicity* developed a model called 'basic social anthropological model of ethnicity' for the understanding of the concept 'ethnicity'. For simplicity I have developed figure 1 to illustrate what Jenkins underlines as ethnicity:

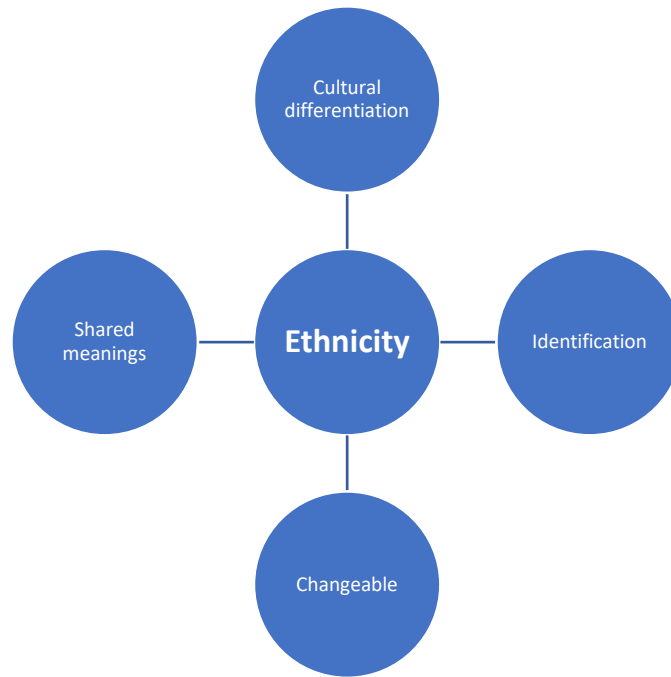


Figure 1: Basic social anthropological model of ethnicity deduced from the theoretical framework.

According to Jenkins (2008b, p.14), ethnicity emphasizes cultural differentiation where it involves a dialectic between similarity and difference. Second, ethnicity is cultural, based on a shared meaning but it is produced and reproduced in social interaction. Third, ethnicity is not fixed and unchanging rather it is to some extent variable and a process. Lastly, ethnicity as a social identity is both collective and individual, externalized and internalized.

Ethnicity in this research is analysed on the basis of Jenkins model, ‘basic social anthropological model of ethnicity’, since it sees ethnicity as socially constructed and as a process in contrary to the primordialist view.

3.3 Cultural Identity

In social sciences, as noted by Hall (1997, p.2), ‘culture’ is often used to refer to whatever is distinctive about the ‘way of life’ of a people, community, nation or social group. ‘Culture’ may include language, beliefs, ideas, customs, codes, laws and ceremonies. We are born into a ‘culture’ but at the same way ‘culture’ is something that is learnt. It is changeable, optional and geographically transferable (Kershen 2011, p.15). As argued by Kershen (2011, p.15) individuals may identify with one culture however as a result of immigration, they may start to absorb elements of the host-country’s culture. By this process cultural hybridity develops. According to Barth (1969), cultural differences emerge because different ethnic groups have

put boundaries between each other (in Westin 2010, p.39). Therefore, a common culture is seen to bind members of an ethnic groups and as a social glue of community cohesion (Westin 2010, p.39). Thus, cultural identity covers the ethnic belonging to a group and is seen as a collective phenomenon.

Usually culture can be connected to ethnocentrism. William G. Sumner (1906) defined ethnocentrism as "the technical name for the view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it." Thus, ethnocentrism is when an ethnic group judges other groups based on their own ethnic group or 'culture' especially with concern for language, behaviour and customs. This judgment is because one sees their own group as superior to any other culture and one's own values and ethnicity are more important than other's values. The view of ethnocentrism causes groups to make wrong assumptions about other people because it leads to the making of premature judgments. Thus, distinguishing between "us" and "them". However, it is argued that these ethnic divisions and judgments made, serve to define a group's cultural identity (Andersen and Taylor, 2006).

Hall (in Sardinha 2010, p. 234) emphasises that "culture is one of the principle means by which identities are constructed, sustained and transformed". Hall addresses two approaches to further understand the concept of 'cultural identity'. In the first approach, cultural identity is regarded as "one shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves' which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (Hall 1994, p.223). According to this perspective, cultural identity is viewed as unchanging and stable. The second view of cultural identity recognizes that cultural identity is a way of 'becoming' as well as of 'being' where cultural identity belongs to the future. In the second view he argues that a person's cultural identity undergoes constant transformation and is not fixed and inherited but constructed (Hall 1994, p. 225).

3.3.1 Bicultural identity

Members of an ethnic group within a society is exposed to two cultures; their ethnic minority culture and the culture of the mainstream society (Phinney and Devich-Navarro 1997, p.3). LaFramboise et al. (1993) developed two models to further explain biculturalism; fusion and alternation models. Fusion model argues that an individual in an ethnic group may develop a "new" type of culture as a result of biculturalism which binds aspects of the two cultures together. Thus, forming one unique cultural identity (ibid, p.401). On the other hand, alternation model does not combine aspects of the two cultures to form one "new" culture, rather the

individual shifts between the two cultures depending on the situation. This model assumes that an individual can have a sense of belonging to two cultures without having to choose one of them. Thus, keeping their cultural identities separate from each other (ibid, p. 399).

In this study, bicultural identity is used to understand the way the interviewees think of themselves in relation to the two cultures to which they are exposed to.

3.4 'In-group' and 'Out-group'

Tajfel and Turner (2004, p.283) define a group as “a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, share some emotional involvement in this common definition of themselves and achieve some degree of social consensus about the evaluation of their group and of their membership in it.”

The theory understands inter-group relations based on three different processes; identification, categorisation and comparison. Tajfel and Turner (2004, p.287), argues that an individual evaluates in which group he or she belongs, based on certain attachments to that group and its practices such as language and culture. Upon comparing with other groups, he or she either falls in the 'dominant' group or the 'subordinate' group. Lastly, based on the comparison, the individual can either be satisfied or unsatisfied, ascribing either positive or negative feelings for their social identity (ibid, p.281). Image 1 illustrates a chart to better understand the division of 'in-group' and 'out-group'.

The classification of groups into 'in-groups' and 'out-group' is usually based on social categories and general stereotypes that are typical for some groups. Hence, we create the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy which allows us to compare the groups we want to identify with. As argued by Kershen (2011, p.2) “without an 'other' to identify with or differ from, self-recognition would not be possible”

Norbert Elias (1994) discusses in his book *The Established and the Outsiders* that the 'in-group' usually think of itself as stronger, superior and more powerful than the 'out-group'. The more powerful group or the 'in-group' regards themselves as the “better” people with a specific virtue shared by all its members and lacked by the others or the 'out-group'. The 'in-group' tends to attribute to the 'out-group' the “bad” characteristics to show that their group is “good” (ibid, p.xix). He further argues that these “bad” characteristics are only based on prejudices and stereotypes that the 'in-group' has of the 'out-group' (ibid, p. xx). These prejudices and stereotypes arise due to the lack of competence about the 'out-group'. The 'out-group' is easily

distinguishable, as explained by Elias (1994, p. xxx) by their physical features or the language accent they might have.

Image 1 illustrates Tajfel and Turner's 'social identity theory' for a better understanding:

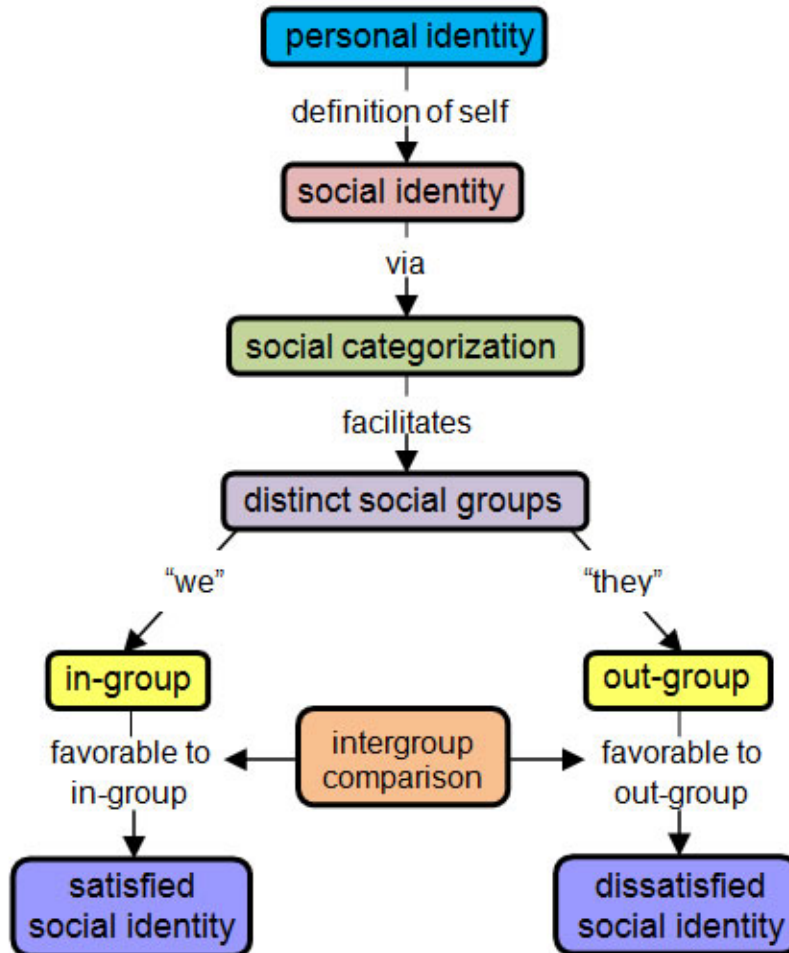


Image 1: Social-identity theory chart¹

'Social-identity Theory' was used as a guidance during the interview process in order to better understand *how* the interviewees' identified themselves, *why* they identify themselves in that way and *how* they feel they are perceived by the majority society.

¹ Age of the Sage ' Social Identity Theory' ' http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/psychology/social/social_identity_theory.html' (Accessed: April 7, 2018).

4. Methodology and Method

In this chapter, I will account for and discuss the method used in this research. This chapter begins by the philosophical standpoint implemented by the study. Following, the research design is presented. This involves the discussion of the method, the data-collection and how I further analysed the materials. Following, the role of the researcher as well as the ethical consideration is discussed. This chapter ends by briefly presenting the participants profiles.

4.1 Philosophical standpoint

Taking a side in philosophical questions determines the scientific questions we, as researchers, consider significant and answerable, as well as the methods we employ to answer them. The positioning enables us to realize what kind of knowledge we are producing as well as its limitations (Rosenberg 2008, p.4).

This research is influenced by a social constructivist understanding of the world. The term interpretivism is often used interchangeably with social constructivism. I believe that the way we see the world is socially constructed and there is no single reality. Rather there are multiple realities or interpretations which are influenced by our personal, historical and cultural experiences (Creswell 2014, p.8 and Meriam 2014, p.9).

As a researcher, I am myself part of the world I study, I not only influence the data collection but also offer my own understandings of the meanings due to the fact that I have interpreted and analysed the interviews. As a researcher, I am therefore, engaged in the so called double-hermeneutics (May 2011, p.37).

As this paper has now introduced the philosophical standpoint, it will now discuss how this will be relevant in the research design of this thesis in the next section.

4.2 Research Design

This paper will have a qualitative research methodological approach by using semi-structured interviews as a tool to collect data in order to fulfil the aim of this research.

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.47) “qualitative research can give us compelling descriptions of the qualitative human world, and qualitative interviewing can provide us with well-founded knowledge about our conversational reality. Research Interviewing is thus a knowledge-producing activity [...]”. Therefore, qualitative interviewing is well suited for this type of research since it imparts the Lebanese’s interviewees’ life stories, experiences, opinions and feelings concerning their identity in Sweden.

Quantitative research was not suitable for this research because it would restrict the interviewees' answers since it does not allow for in-depth answers and elaboration. Furthermore, quantitative research creates more generalizable answers that could further be used in statistics. Meanwhile, the understanding of identity required a deeper understanding of the participants' opinions and experiences and therefore was a more descriptive method in the form of qualitative research required to achieve the aim of this paper (Marvasti 2004, p.7).

To get a better insight of the access to my interviewees, the next section will discuss the model of snowball sampling.

4.2.1 Snowball Sampling

Bryman (2012, p.424) explains that snowball sampling means that the researcher establishes a contact with a small number of Lebanese immigrants and later this group recommends potential interviewees for the study. This causes the researcher to gain a wider contact with other Lebanese immigrants. The advantage of using snowball sampling in this study is because it enables the researcher to interview persons from the Lebanese community with diverse experiences, in the form of age, education and employment.

For this study, I initially got in touch with an acquaintance who is born in Sweden to Lebanese parents. I explained to her my aim and how this research is conducted. She was interested to be part of the research herself. After interviewing her, she helped me find more Lebanese in Sweden. I also decided to take advantage of the social networking site Facebook to get in contact with other Lebanese in Sweden. I contacted the admin of the group *Lebanese in Sweden-Libaner i Sverige*. I explained to him about my research and he was very happy to help me find more Lebanese in Scania region however he could not participate in this study since he lives in Stockholm and my study is only focusing on the Lebanese community in Scania. He provided me with other people's Facebook information. I later contacted them and explained the purpose of the thesis. They were later asked if they are willing to take part in this study. For this reason, the next section will discuss how the data was collected.

4.2.2 Interviews

According to Halperin and Heath; "individual face-to-face interviewing is the best data-collection. Individual face to face interviews provide flexibility and can enable the researcher to probe or ask follow-up questions" (2012, p.254). May (2011, p.132), explains that there are various types of interviews that could be used in social research. However, in this study, semi-structured interviews were deployed. Semi-structured interviews involve a small number of

interviews were both structured questions are used to obtain authentic information as well as unstructured questions which enables the researcher to investigate deeper into the participants experiences (ibid). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is able to probe beyond the answers and ask follow-up questions allowing the interviewer to seek elaboration on the answers given (May 2011, p.134). I would not have been able to achieve the same results if structured interviews alone were used since this approach is predetermined and probing for elaboration would not have been possible (ibid, p.132).

In total, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted in the form of individual face-to-face. All the interviews were tape-recorded along with taking notes. The advantage of using tape records is because the records capture the whole conversation and it enables the researcher to re-listen to the recording during transcriptions (Kvale 1996, p.160). The semi-structured interviews are helpful in this research since it allows the interviewee and the interviewer to have a dialogue but at the same time allows the interviewee to answer the questions (May 2011, p.135). The interviews followed a guided list of questions to not lose focus on the purpose of the interview which is included in the Appendix section. The questions for the interviews were prepared prior to the interviews. The interviews started with a set of general questions which are related to the research questions (Bryman 2008, p.438). By having general questions at the beginning, the interviewees feel more comfortable with the interviewer and confidence is built between the two. Moreover, it helps the interviewees lead the conversation (ibid, 438). The questions used for the interviews were open-ended since the researcher wanted to give the interviewee enough space to express their thoughts of the topic studied. Moreover, as argued by Byrne (in Silverman 2011, p.167) "[...] open ended and flexible questions provide better access to the interviewees' views, interpretation of events, understanding, experiences and opinion. When done well, it is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other, particularly survey-based approaches."

While conducting the interviews, the interviewer, tended to restate the interviewee's comments and incorporate them into further questions. As argued by Willig (2013, p.30) this indicates to the interviewee that the interviewer is listening, and this also gives the interviewer a chance to examine if the interviewee has understood the questions correctly. The clarifications on points gave the researcher more details and additional insights of the topic at hand (Galletta and William 2013, p.82). All the interviews were concluded by asking the interviewees if they have anything to add, as argued by Galletta and William (2013, p.53) this is important because it gives space for the interviewees to formulate final thoughts.

On the other hand, there is always an inherent risk that “a reliance on interview data can allow phenomena to ‘escape’” (Silverman 2008, p.117) and what the researcher is trying to investigate disappears in the background of the conversation. Hence, the researcher needs to be aware that “interviews do not tell us directly about people’s experiences but instead offer indirect representations of those experiences” (Silverman 2008, p.117). People tend to forget or may have problems in recalling accurate experiences. Therefore, the experiences of the interviewees are embedded in interpretation and re-interpretation (Silverman 2008, p. 129) and therefore are “interviewers and interviewees engaged in constructing meaning” (Silverman 2008, p.118). Thus, as argued above and reiterating Silverman (2008), a social constructivist philosophical approach is used in this research.

4.2.3 Data Collection

The data collection took place over a period of two months, between March-April 2018. 11 interviews were carried out at the interviewees’ place of residency, based on their preferences. One of the interviews was conducted at Niagara building at Malmö University. Interviewees were asked if they preferred to conduct the interviews in English, Swedish or Arabic language. Six of the interviews were conducted in Arabic with a mix of Swedish and later translated to English. The other six interviews were conducted in English with a mix of Arabic.

4.2.4 Data Analysis

This study is iterative since I constantly went back and forth with the material conducted from the interviews (Bryman 2012). Bryman (2012) explains that the iterative process enhances the internal validity of the data collected. After the interviews were conducted, the data analysis was divided into 4 steps. The steps were implemented as follows:

Step 1: *Transcriptions*- each interview took between 53-75 minutes, and the transcription of each interview took around 3 hours. I transcribed the interviews immediately after each interview in order to maintain its immediacy.

Step 2: *Organization of material into NVivo*- After transcribing the records into written texts, I used a computer program called NVivo to help me organize the material. NVivo is a software program used for qualitative research. It takes over the physical task of writing marginal codes, making photocopies of transcripts and then pasting them however it is still the researcher’s responsibility to transcribe, code and interpret the data (Bryman 2012, p. 591).

Step 3: *Construction of themes*- in this step the coding of the data started. I read all the transcribed interviews again, identified developing themes for data analysis and organized the

data according to the themes. Emerged themes were: Self-Identification, building and maintaining ethnic identity and perception by the majority.

Step 4: *Description of findings*- in the final section of this paper the most representative extracts from the data were presented. The data is further analysed through the theoretical lens.

To better understand the choices made, the next section will deliberate the role of the researcher.

4.3 Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher is important to shed light on due to the fact that the interviewer is the main instrument in this study for obtaining knowledge. This means that information is exchanged between the researcher and the interviewees (Kvale 1996, p.117 and Galetta & William 2013, p.75). Moreover, as argued by Kvale (1993 p.66), who the researcher is as a human being can influence the outcome of the research therefore, in this section, I discuss the way in which my background has influenced the study.

The motivation for deciding on this research topic is essentially linked to my personal experiences. I was born in Sweden to Lebanese parents, which makes me the descendent of first-Lebanese immigrants. At home, I spoke Arabic and followed the Lebanese traditions however at school I spoke Swedish and followed the Swedish traditions. In other words, at a young age I was taught to live with two different cultures which made me question my own identity after each “*but where are you really from?*” question I get when I say I am Swedish. My identity is informed by these experiences and I am easily adaptable depending on where I am and with whom.

Since in this paper, the research has taken a constructivist approach, I am aware of my biases which may influence the research. This means that I minimized my personal characteristics such as the way I construct my identity and the knowledge of the Lebanese and Swedish cultural traits especially because I am myself born in Sweden to Lebanese parents, as mentioned previously, and focused entirely on the voices of the interviewees (Lapan and Quartaroli 2011, p.23). However, from another perspective, having a Lebanese background can be an advantage because it gave me a better understanding of the context each interviewee was talking about. While, conducting the interviews, I had a positive effect on this study because the interviewees were relaxed and expressed their thoughts and experiences freely. Moreover, being an insider and having the same cultural background and experiences as the interviewees helped me interpret and understand their situations better. One might argue that being an insider can make the research bias and subjective by overseeing some details that may be obvious for me but not

for the reader. However, I am aware of this and I do my best to stay as objective as possible throughout my interpretation and analysis of the data.

Lastly, I was aware of my subjective feelings while interpreting and analysing the data. According to Foucault (in Rosenberg 2008, p.155), individuals have unconsciously internalized meaning that make us act as interpretive instruments while we analyse different situations. In social science, researchers cannot but use a double interpretive research process. Therefore, in this study, I was engaged in a reflexive stance starting from the interview sessions to the data analysis by self-reflecting on my prejudices.

However, to better understand what measures were taken, the next section will look into the ethical considerations followed in social research.

4.4 Ethical considerations

The aim of this research to accumulate knowledge and develop an understanding of the Lebanese community's identity in Sweden, Scania region. However, achieving the aim of this study should not harm the interviewees in this study. Therefore, several ethical considerations were taken into account while conducting the interviews (Halperin and Heath 2012, p.178). Some of the main concerns when it comes to ethical considerations are consent, the right of withdrawal and anonymity which will be explained below. Kvale (1996, p.110) argues that ethical decisions are not only at a specific stage of the interview investigation but arise throughout the whole research process. Therefore, in this study ethical questions were taken into consideration at every step of the research (Flick 2014, p.41).

The interviews were conducted according to the ethical guidelines as outlined by the Swedish Research Council (Hermeren, 2011). As expressed by May (2011, p.141), it is important to explain for the interviewees about the purpose of the study and what topic will be discussed beforehand because this allows the interviewees to come prepared for the interviews and thus feel more comfortable. Therefore, I explained to the interviewees that the purpose of the interview is for a research thesis conducted on the identity of the Lebanese community in Scania region in Sweden. Before starting with the interviews, I received the interviewees' consent to participate as well as to be recorded. Upon agreeing to participate, it was emphasized that the interviewees could stop the interview at any time and/or refuse to answer any question that might make them feel uncomfortable. They were all informed that the participation is voluntary and that they had the full right to withdraw from the study at any point. Moreover, it was also explained that in order to protect the interviewees' confidentiality and anonymity, the names of

the participants will be altered in this study (Halperin & Heath 2012, p.178 and Somekh & Lewin 2004, p.57).

4.5 Validity, Reliability and Generalization

This thesis should fulfil three main characteristics to obtain a well answered research question. Each subsection will discuss how this paper achieved those categories; validity, reliability, and generalization.

4.5.1 Validity

According to Kvale (1998 p.75), “Validation is the investigation what is intended to be investigated, continually checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting the findings”. To ensure the validity of the findings and the interpretations of the interviewees’ stories in this study, all the recorded interviews were reviewed and compared with the transcribed materials in order to ensure that the data was compatible. Follow-up interviews were made with the interviewees in order to provide an opportunity for them to comment on the findings. As argued by Creswell (2014, p.202) this increases the validity of a study.

4.5.2 Reliability

Unlike quantitative research, is qualitative research less concerned with the reliability of the study. The reason is because in qualitative research, the researcher explores a particular experience in depth by using a relatively small number of participants and does not measure a particular aspect in a huge number of individuals. Reliability is the idea of replicability, that if another researcher is interested to do the same study, the findings would be the same if the researcher followed the same procedure and interpretations (Willig 2013, p.24). Since there has not yet been so much research conducted on the Lebanese community’s identity within migration, it is possible that future researchers could be inspired by my study and conduct similar studies. In this paper, the researcher attempted to increase the transparency related to reliability by digitally recording the materials. Moreover, transparency has been achieved through using the appendix where the questions of the interviews can be found as well as providing a clear presentation of data analysis and results.

A high level of reliability can be hard to achieve since this paper only focused on the Lebanese community in Scania region. The experiences of other Lebanese in other parts of Sweden or the world might be different. Another difficulty with the reliability that this research faced is the language. This thesis should be written in English however six of the interviews were conducted in Arabic and/or Swedish due to the participants’ inability to understand English. All

the interviews were then translated to English by the researcher. It is therefore important to note that in translation some meanings can be lost although the researcher is fluent in all of the three languages but nonetheless it should be taken into account. Nevertheless, I believe that being a native Arabic speaker enhanced the validity and reliability of this study. By speaking the language and being of Lebanese descent, I believe the interviewees were open and honest with their answers, which is a central element in this study (Willig, 2013).

4.5.3 Generalizability

Moreover, it is important to see whether the interviewees' experiences in this study can be generalized. In this study, the number of interviews were limited to 12; six interviews with first-generation immigrants and six interviews with the descendants. Since it is a qualitative research, it does not aim at producing generalizable information about a large number of people rather it only reflects the experiences and thoughts of the 12 interviewees. In order to achieve a more generalizable study, future researcher can use a quantitative approach (Halperin and Heath 2012, p.254). However, throughout the interviews, there was a tendency to see a pattern of similarities between the experiences and opinions of the interviewees which will be discussed later in this paper.

4.6 Participants profile

Before presenting the interviewees, it is important to mention the criteria that were set for each target group in order to achieve the aim of this paper. Since according to Creswell (2014, p. 189) "the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research questions". For both groups the gender was not important to achieve the aim of this research thus both women and men were interviewed. However, all the first-generation immigrants should have moved to Sweden in the 1980s and have lived here for more or less 25 years. The reason of focusing on Lebanese immigrants that came in the 1980s is because it was one of the first waves of Lebanese immigrants that fled to Sweden. Moreover, the Lebanese community was one of the first Arab communities to settle in Sweden. Everyone should have an employment because I believe that employment makes the participants more adapted to the society. On the other hand, the descendants were chosen if both of their parents were born in Lebanon because it makes them more into the Lebanese community as well as all should be above the age of 18 because I think that a person's identity is not shaped at a younger age.

As mentioned previously, all the names of the interviewees are fictitious in order to protect their identity. However, it is important to bear in mind that Lebanon is one of the most religiously diverse countries in Middle East with 18 recognized religious sects. Nevertheless, the names of the interviewees were not chosen based on their religious background rather the names were chosen randomly, and I do not intend to categorize the interviewees into religious groups.

4.6.1 First-generation immigrants

Rita an early 50-year-old woman, married with three children. She has her own business in a small city not far from Malmö. She met her husband who came to Lebanon for a vacation and later they got married and she came to Sweden in 1985. She holds a bachelor's degree in business from Lebanon.

Tony a mid- 50-year-old man, married and with two children. He is working in the transport business. He came to Sweden in 1983.

Fady in his early 50s, married with three children. He works full-time at a company. He came to Sweden in 1982. He holds a bachelor's degree in Electronics from Lebanon.

Rebecka is a woman in her early 40s, married and has one child. She works as a Nurse. Rebecka came to Sweden in 1988. She holds a degree in Nursing from Sweden.

Rana is a mid-50-year-old woman, married with three children. She is currently working in the service-branch at a small company outside of Malmö where she also lives. She came to Sweden in 1982.

Omar is an early 60-year-old man, married with three children. He works as a salesman. He has a bachelor's degree in finance from Lebanon. He came to Sweden in 1981.

4.6.2 The descendants

Walid is an early 30 years-old man, married and has no children. He works part time in the service-branch. He holds a bachelor's degree in Translation and Humanities.

Pamela is in her mid-20s. She is currently studying her master's degree in Social Sciences. She also works part-time as a language-assistant and consultant at the private sector.

Elie is a 19-year old man. He is in high-school and he plans to become a pilot in the future.

Nizar is in his early 20s. He lives with his parents in a small city very close to Malmö. He is currently studying his bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences.

Rasha is in her mid-20s. She is married and has no children. She holds a bachelor's degree in Pedagogic and works at a school.

Aya is in her early 20s. She still lives with her parents in Lund. She is currently studying her bachelor's degree in Social Sciences.

5. Findings

This chapter portrays the voices and personal opinions of the six first-generation Lebanese immigrants as well the six descendants interviewed in detail in order to address the aim and the research questions of the study. After carefully analysing the interview transcriptions, three main themes came to light; self-identification, building and maintaining ethnic identity which is divided into three subsections; language, family values and participation in associations and perception by the majority. This chapter ends by briefly discussing the differences between the answers of the first-generation immigrants and the descendants interviewed.

5.1 Self-Identification

It was important to begin by examining how the first-generation immigrants' interviewees and the descendants' interviewees identified themselves. According to Jenkins (2008a, p.14), the simplest form of identity is 'our understanding of who we are'.

When comparing the answers of the interviews, there was a tendency to see a pattern of similarities concerning identity among the first-generation Lebanese immigrants interviewed. Throughout the interviews it was apparent that the first-generation immigrants interviewees have a strong sense of being Lebanese. The interviewees narrated that they embraced their ethnic origin and stressed that they have no desire to identify with the host country. This is particularly shown in Tony's and Rita's responses.

"I do not really think of my identity regularly because I think it is obvious that I am Lebanese. I do not only look like a "Middle-Eastern" I also feel like a "Middle-Eastern" and especially Lebanese. So, my identity I would say is 100 percent Lebanese." (Tony)

"It is indeed true that I have been living in Sweden for more than 30 years and I believe many things have changed in my personality and the way I understand life. But what I am sure of is that my identity will always be Lebanese no matter where I live." (Rita).

Rita further emphasized that she feels that her Lebanese identity has become stronger and more visible after moving to Sweden.

“I am thinking of myself as a Lebanese stronger than before. Actually, when I was in Lebanon, I never thought about my identity maybe because in Lebanon we are all Lebanese and there are not so many foreigners as in Sweden. So, in Lebanon I do not have to think about what it means being Lebanese but after moving here, I have started to think about it more often.” (Rita)

Rebecka highlighted that she is thankful she lives in a country that has given her the kind of respect for humanity that she lacked in Lebanon. However, that did not affect her identity and where she feels she belongs.

“The kind of respect for humanity that I get here in Sweden, the basic human rights, the equal treatment, the health care and the good education for my children, these are some of the things that make me very thankful to be living in Sweden. But then again, my identity will never change, and it will always be Lebanese. Because identity is where your roots are.”

The descendants interviewed, on the other hand, identified themselves both as Swedish and Lebanese. Sweden is the country they are born and raised in however they emphasized that they were raised by following the Lebanese culture and lifestyle. This has helped them shape their identity. This could be shown in Pamela’s answer.

“Despite the difficulties of being brought up between two cultures, I feel it has been a great contribution to my life and it has shaped the person I am today. I am glad to identify myself both as Swedish and Lebanese. I actually feel gifted to have two identities. I cannot hide my ‘foreign’ physical appearance so why should I hide my identity? In addition, I think my parents have a great influence in constructing my Lebanese identity because they brought me up in a different way by following the Lebanese values.”

Elie emphasized the place he was born and raised in because he believes this shows that he is part of the Swedish lifestyle and system.

“I would say I define myself as half Swedish and half Lebanese. I usually emphasize I was born and raised in Sweden whereas my parents are from Lebanon. I do not want the “Swedes” to think I am a newcomer that is why I usually highlight that I was born and raised here (Sweden). I want them to know that I am familiar with the Swedish culture and system. The Swedish lifestyle is not something new for me neither is the Lebanese culture and norms.”

Nizar on the other hand expressed himself differently.

“I used to say I am Swedish, but it is like they think I am lying and I always get questions about where I come from, from the beginning. So today I say I am Swedish Lebanese but born and raised in Sweden. Because I think the Swedish society expect me to tell them my ethnicity as well. Physical markers of ethnicity seem to play an important role for Swedes.”

Nizar was never perceived as Swedish because of the way he looks. Nizar further adds that people who questions his identity makes him feel ‘uncomfortable’.

In conclusion, Pamela, Elie and Nizar identified themselves in bicultural terms by emphasising their Swedish and Lebanese identities. They identified themselves as “Swedish Lebanese” or “half Swedish half Lebanese”. The reason behind their bicultural identification, according to Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997), is because they combine both their parent’s cultural traits with the mainstream cultural trait in their everyday life. Moreover, Elie’s and Nizar’s answers showed that the identification process is not only about how they identify themselves but how others perceive and identify them.

5.2 Building and maintaining ethnic identity

The interviewees did not just state their ethnic roots but also implemented it in their daily life through various cultural practices such as language, holidays, cuisine, music and participation in associations. In family context the interviewees maintained their Lebanese traditions. They speak the language of the origin which in this case is Arabic and cook Lebanese food. However, participation in the Swedish society was also an important part of their life that has influenced their identity. In the mainstream society, both the first-generation immigrants and the descendants interviewed, speak Swedish fluently, celebrate at least some of the Swedish traditions like Midsummer and enjoy Swedish food. Thus, the participants have internalized the traditions of the two countries. The internalization of two cultures has been termed as having a bicultural identity by Zubida H. et al. (2013), as discussed in the literature review and conceptual framework sections previously. Biculturalism identification happens because an ethnic group is exposed to two cultures that differ from each other. In this study, the interviewees are exposed to the Lebanese culture at home and to the Swedish culture in the mainstream society.

This section will focus on the three most important cultural practices, narrated by the interviewees, for maintaining the ethnic identity for the interviewees from the first-generation

immigrants as well as for the development of ethnic identity for the descendants interviewed. The interviewees considered their cultural identity as part of their ethnic identity. In what follows I will present the matter of language, the importance of family values as well as the participation in associations.

5.2.1 Language

Language was the most frequently cited contributor to the maintenance and development of ethnic identity. Interviewees from the first-generation immigrants emphasised the importance of teaching their children the Arabic language in order to maintain the ties down in Lebanon. In some cases, the first-generation immigrants were strict, and the language of origin was the only language they could speak at home. Rana's and Omar's responses illustrated this.

“Speaking Arabic is really important in order to maintain the ties with our family back in Lebanon. No one understands Swedish, so Arabic was emphasised on all my children while growing up.” (Rana)

“We had rules at home. That we only speak Arabic together because my kids will learn Swedish automatically at school.” (Omar)

Tony on the other hand, emphasized that language was a way to distinguish them, the Lebanese community, from the mainstream society.

“Language is part of our ethnicity. Speaking and knowing Arabic proves that we are still maintaining our ethnic values and roots even though we live abroad.”

Despite the fact that the descendants interviewed are born and raised in Sweden, they all speak Arabic fluently. None of the interviewees had taken any language classes at school but learned it at home with the help of their parents. Rasha's answer reflected this.

“I think it was a challenge at the beginning. At school I had to switch to my Swedish identity and speak with my other peers in Swedish and then at home I had to switch to my Lebanese identity and speak Arabic. My parents would not accept me speaking Swedish with them, they would not reply and wait until I said it again in Arabic. Today I only speak Arabic with my parents because I got used to it.”

Rasha mentioned situational difference in how she uses her identity. Usually at school she switched to her Swedish identity, while at home to her Lebanese identity. She functions comfortably in both cultural settings. She therefore seems to fit the alternation model of La

Framboise et al. (1993). As discussed previously, this model argues that a person can comfortably separate their cultural identity depending on the situation.

Pamela on the hand other, explained that the Arabic language has helped her by not only keeping ties with her family back in Lebanon but also career wise.

“I actually did not take any Arabic classes at school. My siblings and I used to have “compulsory” Arabic classes with my mom at home every Saturday. She used to tell us how important it is to know our ethnic language. At a young age, I did not understand why she emphasized the language on us. But today I understand why. Arabic language has actually helped me keep ties with my family back in Lebanon. Knowing Arabic has opened many doors for me career wise as well. Arabic is actually an important language today worldwide and I am really grateful to have learned it.”

Walid narrated that the Arabic language has helped him shape his Lebanese identity.

“I could not really say that I am Lebanese unless I knew how to speak it. Speaking Arabic helps me keep in touch with my roots and being able to speak Arabic makes me feel more like a Lebanese person. Being able to speak Arabic has shaped my Lebanese identity.”

As stated by Giles et al. (1977, p.307) “Ingroup speech can serve as a symbol of ethnic identity and cultural solidarity. It is used for reminding the group about its cultural heritage, for transmitting group feelings, and for excluding members of the outgroup from its internal transactions.” As shown from the interviews, the Arabic language and the role the descendants’ parents have followed, by emphasizing the importance of language, seems to have influenced the descendants’ ethnic identity construction. Mother tongue has become a marker of identity that binds the Lebanese community with their ethnic identity. The language enables the individuals to confirm their belonging to the ethnic group. Moreover, this confirms Phinney et al.’s (2000) study as she argued that parents who have a strong ethnic identity is more likely to influence their children’s ethnic identity by emphasizing the ethnic language on them at a young age.

5.2.2 Family values

The interviewees were asked what they valued the most in both the Swedish and Lebanese cultures. Both the first-generation immigrants and the descendants interviewed, did not have much to say about the Swedish cultural traits rather they mostly focused on discussing about the Lebanese cultural traits. The interviewees highlighted the importance of family values in

the Lebanese society that they felt as contradictory in Swedish society. Meanwhile, Swedish society was seen more as individualistic, where decisions are not made by the family as a whole. They described the Lebanese culture as family oriented where family plays a significant role in their lives and decision making. This was particularly shown in Rita's response.

“I believe that keeping strong family ties is very important in the Lebanese society that we unfortunately lack in Sweden. I always emphasize the importance of family to my children. I worry that my son will leave me and move out when he turns eighteen. This is for example not common in Lebanon. Down there, your children are supposed to stay and live with you until they get marry.”

Further, Rebecka highlighted that the regular visits with their children to Lebanon has strengthen the Lebanese values and introduced the Lebanese roots to their children.

“I actually think the regular return visits to Lebanon has not only strengthened the family ties but also sustained the Lebanese values in general. Today, my children love to travel to Lebanon to visit their family.”

Aya expressed that she has a responsibility to take care of her parents when they get older because that is one of the values she has been brought up into.

“For example, nursing homes and residential care facilities are rarely resorted to in Lebanon unlike in Sweden. When my parents get older I am responsible for them. They have taken care of me my whole life, so I believe it is also my duty to care of them when they need me.”

Walid on the other hand, phrased himself differently. He emphasized the importance of family values in the Lebanese culture but also emphasised that there are many positive aspects in the Swedish culture as well. He filtered away the bad aspects in each culture and created a “new” culture by mixing the positive aspects of each. He stated the following.

“Of course, I was raised by my parents always emphasizing the importance of Lebanese values and especially family values. But I also think that Sweden has many positive aspects in its culture that I also embrace. Swedish culture is not any better than Lebanese culture and the Lebanese culture is not any better than Swedish culture. I have now both of these cultures and I take the good in each culture and follow it. It is like I filter away the bad things in each culture and keep only the good and positive aspects of each.”

LaFramboise et al. (1993) fusion model is relevant to the above quotation of my interviewee as he argued that he has fused the positive aspects of both cultures and mixed them and created a “new” culture.

Thus, as has been seen from the above answers, culture is an important factor in shaping the identity of the interviewees. Rita and Aya identified what is ‘ours’ and ‘acceptable’ in comparison with what is ‘unacceptable’ in other cultures. According to the interviewees’ answers above, the respect and the importance of family values in Lebanese culture is the main axis in which the Lebanese community draws their distinction from Swedish society and emphasize their ethnic identity. As argued by Tajfel and Turner (2004), sometimes a group categorize other groups based on stereotypes to create the ‘in-group’ and ‘out-group’. The cultural trait of family value has become a useful marker for distinguishing between “us” and “them”. According to the interviewees, respecting the family and Lebanese values was one of the most important aspect to differentiate them from the mainstream society. Moreover, it was apparent throughout the interviewees’ answers for instance, Rita’s and Aya’s, that they tried to use their Lebanese values as a reference point to show that Lebanon’s culture is better than Sweden’s culture. According to the ethnocentric view, an ethnic group views the world from the perspective of their own ethnic group with a belief that their own culture is superior to any other culture (Sumner, 1906). However, Walid’s answer showed the opposite. Instead of showing which culture is better and superior, he filtered away the bad aspects in each and decided to create a “new” culture that he follows.

As explained by Jenkins (2008b), to claim an ethnic identity is to distinguish ourselves from others; it is about drawing the boundary between “us” and “them”. This is done, as argued by Elias (1994), to show that the ‘in-group’ which according to the interviewees’ voices are the Lebanese is better than the ‘out-group’ which is the Swedish. The distinction was evident throughout the interviews with both the first-generation Lebanese immigrants and the descendants. Moreover, as claimed by Jenkins (2008a) identification is a process, it is something that we do. In addition, we come to understand who we are by realising the others. In this case, the Lebanese community interviewed, know who they are when they realize that Swedish people are not like them.

5.2.3 Participation in associations

During the interviews, participation in Lebanese associations emerged as another important aspect for the maintaining and the development of ethnic identity.

Even though there are not so many Lebanese associations in Sweden and mainly in Scania region the interviewees were aware about the few of them, usually the ones that were nearby them. Associations were seen as a source of solidarity for the interviewees where they had a chance to network, obtain information and maintain a link with the Lebanese community living in Sweden. The first-generation immigrants interviewed, highlighted their interest of participating in several activities conducted by these associations when they had small children because for them it was important for their kids to experience the Lebanese atmosphere and be surrounded by the people with the same ethnic origin. However, Omar and Rana for example, narrate that today they are not keen to participate mainly because their children have grown up.

“When my kids were younger like between the age of 10 to 15 we used to participate in Lebanese associations because I wanted my kids to meet other Lebanese kids and talk Arabic. I also wanted them to learn our traditions.” (Omar)

“I wanted my kids to know that even though we do not live in Lebanon, there are also many Lebanese in Sweden that we can connect with, that is why we used to go to Lebanese associations. For example, we used to go there to celebrate New Year with other Lebanese, eat traditional Lebanese food, listen to Lebanese music and dance our traditional Lebanese dance [dabke]. I think that was important for my kids because it made them closer to our traditions and values.” (Rana)

Aya narrated that these associations have made her closer to Lebanese traditions, culture and lifestyle.

“I remember every month or so when we used to go to these Lebanese associations and meet other Lebanese. Of course, this made me closer to my parent’s culture, norms and values.”

I later asked her if for example going to these Lebanese associations has affected her identity. She explained what follows:

“Yes of course. Not only have the associations affected my ethnic identity. But the way I was raised by my parents for example by following the Lebanese culture, speaking Arabic with them, eating Lebanese food and visiting Lebanon often. Everything has affected my identity. However, I would say that I identify myself as Lebanese along with Swedish because I feel that I belong to Lebanon and its culture. I am not forced by my parents to identify as Lebanese as many may think.”

Pamela also highlighted that even though she does not have time to participate in Lebanese associations, she is still surrounded by the Lebanese environment in her spare time.

“We used to go to this Lebanese association in Malmö when I was younger, and I really enjoyed it because it made me meet people that have the same origin as me. Unfortunately, due to studies and work I do not have time now. But of course, one day when I have a family of my own, I will also take them to Lebanese associations because I think it is important to maintain and transfer the cultural heritage to my kids. I also want to stress that I spend most of my free time with my family and Lebanese friends. I think the Lebanese associations and my Lebanese friends have bounded me to my Lebanese identity more.”

As these reflections of Omar and Rana has shown, the participation in the associations was significant for the first-generation immigrants mainly because they wanted their kids to meet and connect with other Lebanese and get closer to the Lebanese traditions and lifestyle. On the other hand, for Aya and Pamela, these associations have to some extent affected the way they identify themselves. Moreover, for instance Pamela feels that she has a responsibility to maintain and transfer her cultural heritage to her children in the future. As Barth (1969, p.16) has argued, the interaction and the persistence to keep a contact with the same ethnic group indicates not only criteria and signals for identification but also the persistence of cultural differences.

Thus, to strengthen the interviewees’ answers above, we can understand their ethnic identity from Jenkins (2008) basic social anthropological model where he argued that a person’s ethnic identity is produced and reproduced by the social interaction between different ethnic groups. As seen from the interviews the first-generation immigrants’ interviewees adhered to maintain the interaction with the Lebanese community in Sweden and persisted that their children at a young age participate in diverse Lebanese activities which has affected the way they identify themselves. In addition, as highlighted by Barth (1969, p.18) the tendency to interact with the same ethnic group emergences boundaries within the mainstream society.

Moreover, the issue of ethnic identity was particularly important for the descendants interviewed. On the one hand, as argued by Phinney et al. (2000) they have grown up with and been socialized by their parents who have carried with them the language, values and customs from Lebanon, and are likely to keep these characteristics with them throughout their lives. On the other hand, the descendants have been educated in Swedish school system, which

emphasizes Swedish proficiency and Swedish customs. In Swedish schools they also interact with peers from the same ethnic group or peers that have different cultures. Sometimes they have to switch to their Lebanese identity and sometimes their Swedish identity. The differences between the two cultures that these descendants encounter is likely to play a role in the formation of their ethnic identity.

5.3 Perception by the majority

Another theme that was highlighted through the interviews was how the interviewees feel they are perceived by the mainstream society. The construction of identity not only involves how individuals define themselves, but also how others perceive them (Cornell and Hartman 2007, p.191). The first-generation immigrants and the descendants interviewed, had similar answers concerning the question. Both groups felt that they are always being excluded from the majority society even though they try their best to fit in. Moreover, they feel they are being rejected because of their physical traits and because of their ethnic origin. Even the descendants interviewed, who may regard themselves as Swedish or having a bicultural identity, expressed that they feel that they are not admitted into the society and not fully accepted as members of the Swedish society.

What was also apparent in my interviewees' answers is that how the majority perceived them affected how they identified themselves as well. This was particularly shown in Fady's, Tony's, Rita's and Nizar's responses.

"It does not matter how much I try. Even if I speak Swedish fluently or accept the Swedish cultural traits I will always be regarded as an (invandrare) immigrant by the majority. I think it is because of the way I look. I have black hair and dark eyes that is enough for them (Swedes) to categorize me into an immigrant no matter how many years I have lived here. I also think just because they see me different than them I still identify myself as Lebanese." (Fady)

"I do not feel welcomed or accepted and I do not think the society as a whole is helping because they always look at me differently. In Sweden I will always remain as they say an (invandrare) immigrant." (Tony)

"Sadly, I still feel that the majority see me a stranger when I walk on the streets. I still feel as a newcomer even though I have lived, more than half of my life, in this country. It might be because of my physical traits and the accent I have when I speak Swedish. The way they make me feel has actually strengthened my Lebanese identity." (Rita)

“The majority see me as an outcast. No matter how much I stress my Swedish identity I will always be seen as an outsider or immigrant because I have foreign parents. To be identified as a Swedish, I think you must have Swedish parents and be raised in Sweden within a Swedish environment.” (Nizar)

Walid on the contrary did not mind being perceived as an immigrant. The reason was that others can see him as an immigrant but that does not mean they make him feel like an immigrant.

“In Sweden, I can see how the other Swedes look at me like an immigrant just because of my black hair. But that does not mean I am an immigrant. I am born in this country and I speak Swedish fluently why do they still see me as an immigrant? [...] But for this reason, I cannot fully see myself as a Swedish because I feel the way other people in the same society see me influences the way I can identify myself.”

To conclude this part, Fady, Tony, Rita and Nizar felt that they are being perceived as ‘immigrants’, ‘outcasts’ or ‘strangers’ by the mainstream society. In addition, they emphasised that their “Middle-Eastern” physical traits or their accent when speaking Swedish made the mainstream society look at them as different. Due to their physical traits and accent when they speak Swedish the interviewees from the first-generation immigrants and the interviewees from the descendants felt that they are being categorized into the ‘out-group’ by the majority society who perceives themselves as the ‘in-group’. As argued by Norbert Elias (1994) the ‘out-group’ is easily distinguishable by their physical traits and accent. For this reason, many cannot fully perceive themselves as Swedish because they are not perceived as Swedish by the mainstream society. Moreover, this leads to the differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

5.4 Differences between the first-generation immigrants and the descendants

Interestingly enough, throughout the interviews I could see a pattern of similarities between the answers of the first-generation immigrants and the descendants interviewed. I found that the interviewees from the first-generation Lebanese immigrants identified themselves solely as Lebanese. On the other hand, the descendants interviewed identified themselves as bicultural; by their place of birth and by their ethnic origin. Both target groups interviewed, emphasized the importance of maintaining and building their ethnic identity even if they live far from their origin country by for example learning the Arabic language, keeping family values and by participating in Lebanese associations. When it comes to the perception by the mainstream

society, both the interviewees from the first-generation immigrant and the descendants felt they are being looked at as “strangers”, “immigrants”, “outcasts” and as the “other”.

6. Conclusion

In this final section, I will discuss and draw a conclusion of my findings. I end my conclusion by providing suggestions for further research.

6.1 Concluding remarks

The aim of this paper was to get more in-depth knowledge of how the Lebanese community construct their identity in Sweden by focusing on Scania region. My main research question has been to analyse how the first-generation Lebanese immigrants and the descendants’ identify themselves. Furthermore, besides how the interviewees define their identities, I wanted to investigate how they feel they are perceived by other people outside the Lebanese community because how people perceive themselves may be connected to how they are first perceived by others. Moreover, I was curious to see if there is any difference between the identity of the first-generation Lebanese immigrants who came to Sweden in the 1980s and the descendants who are born in Sweden to two Lebanese parents that is why I have chosen those two target groups.

In order to achieve the right results and goal of the aim of my thesis, I chose to use qualitative approach as a method. I conducted semi-structured interviews with six interviewees from the first-generation Lebanese immigrants and six interviewees from the descendants to give a more personal insight into their experiences and views concerning the concept of identity. All of the interviews were held at the interviewees’ place of residency except one, which was held at Niagara building at Malmö University. The interviewees are a mix of both male and female. All the interviewees were above the age of 18, some were young others were old. The reason behind this is to get as diverse responses as possible. The reason for choosing Lebanese as an ethnic group in my study is because of personal connection to this identity since I am myself a descendant.

In the theory part, I have used relevant main concepts to my subject in order to highlight and strengthen my interviewees’ views and experiences about their identity. The basis to why I have chosen specially those concepts; ethnic and cultural identity, is to give a broader understanding on how the participants choose to identify themselves. Tajfel and Turner’s ‘social identity theory’ was mainly used as a guidance during the interviews to understand the interviewees’ choices of identification and to further explain how the mainstream society perceives them.

In my analysis, I have come to the conclusion of my aim and research, where I have summed up what my interviewees have been answering and tried to connect their answers with the theory and previous literature parts in order to strengthen my analysis. The collected data was analysed into 3 main themes that were relevant after transcribing the materials. The first part in the empirical analysis is 'self-identification', which is then followed by the category 'building and maintaining ethnic identity', this section is divided into three sub-categories; language, family values and participation in associations. The last emerged theme is 'perception by the majority'. Finally, I have ended my analysis by briefly explaining the differences between the answers of the first-generation immigrants and the descendants interviewed though I tried my best to show the differences between the answers throughout the whole analysis.

I have come to the conclusion with this study research that the first-generation immigrants interviewed, seem to have a strong sense of being Lebanese. Some have never thought about their identity because it was apparent that they were Lebanese others argue that their Lebanese identity has become stronger after moving to Sweden. However, what was apparent throughout the first-generation immigrant interviewees is that they identified themselves as "Lebanese". I also tried to understand how the descendants' interviewees identity have been shaped by their experiences of living in a Swedish society and been raised by traditional Lebanese ways. The descendants interviewed on the other hand, could not identify themselves as Lebanese or as Swedish, instead they considered themselves to be bicultural, that is both ethnic and Swedish. Their bicultural identification is context dependent. The descendants interviewed feel Lebanese because they have been socialized into the Lebanese traditions and values at a young age by for example learning to speak Arabic and attending different Lebanese associations. Thus, the role of the parents was very crucial and influenced the descendants' identity to some extent. Moreover, they identified themselves as Swedish because they are born and raised in Sweden. They attend Swedish schools, speak the language and celebrate some of the Swedish traditions.

The first-generation interviewees moved to talk about how important it is to keep their heritage even if they live outside Lebanon. This was done by teaching their children at a young age how to speak Arabic, the importance of family values and they attended Lebanese associations to get in contact with other Lebanese. They tried to prove to me that what distinguishes "them" from the Swedes are the values, norms and thoughts they have. They made comparisons by drawing distinctions between what is typical Swedish and what is typical Lebanese. However, as argued by Tajfel and Turner (2004) these distinctions that a group draws about another group is only based on stereotypes. Moreover, the distinctions were made, as argued by ethnocentrism,

only to emphasize that the ethnic group's culture is superior and better than any other culture (Sumner, 1906). I came to the conclusion that my interviewees, have come to understand who they are after they have met the cultural differences between Lebanon and Sweden and differentiated between 'us' and 'them'.

The interviewees also took into consideration how they were perceived by the society outside their community. This is because it is not only how you perceive yourself that you know who you are, but also how other people perceive you. The interviewees from the first-generation and the descendants feel they are perceived as the "other", "outsider" and as an "immigrant". They also emphasized that their "Middle Eastern" looks can influence how other people perceive them.

6.2 Suggestions for further research

Initially, the topic of religion was not one of my main themes of interest within the frame of my project. However, as I conducted the interviews I realized that the issue of religion may be important for the interviewees. Therefore, investigating the interviewees religious identity along with their ethnic and cultural identity could be interesting for further research. Furthermore, throughout the interviews, the interviewees emphasized the importance of language in keeping their ethnic identity in Sweden. Therefore, exploring the extent to which the relationship between language and ethnic identity remains in later generations would be interesting. Since this paper focused on the first-generation Lebanese immigrants and the descendants, having two Lebanese parents, future research could be conducted on the identity formation of the third and fourth generations. Moreover, in order to obtain a more generalizable answer, a quantitative research could be conducted in the form of a survey.

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8. Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview questions for the first-generation Lebanese immigrants

Appendix 2: Interview questions for the descendants

8.1 Appendix 1

1. Can you tell me about yourself? Age, education, employment, when did you arrive to Sweden?
2. How did you come to live in Sweden?
3. Do you feel/think you belong to Lebanon or Sweden more?
4. Do you feel you are part of the Swedish society?
5. How do you feel when you go back to your home country (Lebanon)?
6. Do your friends and family in Lebanon identify you as Swedish or Lebanese?
7. Do you follow Lebanese or Swedish culture/values? Why? And in what way?
8. Where is “home” and why?
9. When you travel outside Sweden and Lebanon, do you feel Swedish or Lebanese? Why?
10. Do you feel that the Swedish culture is different than the Lebanese culture?
11. How do you feel that people outside your community perceive you?
12. What do you like and/or dislike about living in Sweden and in Lebanon?
13. If you could return in time, would you still immigrate to Sweden?
14. Would you ever consider going back to Lebanon for good? Why?
15. Do you have anything else to add?

8.2 Appendix 2

1. Can you tell me about yourself? Age, education, employment...
2. Do you feel/think you belong to Lebanon or Sweden more?
3. Do you feel you are part of the Swedish society?
4. How do you feel when you go to Lebanon?
5. Do your friends and family in Lebanon identify you as Swedish or Lebanese?
6. Do you think your Lebanese parents play a role in your identity formation?
7. Do you follow Lebanese or Swedish culture/values? Why? And in what way?
8. Where is "home" and why?
9. When you travel outside Sweden and Lebanon, do you feel Swedish or Lebanese? Why?
10. Do you feel that the Swedish culture is different than the Lebanese culture?
11. How do you feel that people outside your community perceive you?
12. What do you like and/or dislike about living in Sweden and in Lebanon?
13. Would you ever consider going back to Lebanon for good? Why?
14. Do you have anything else to add?