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THE IDENTITY FORMATION OF DESCENDANTS OF ERITREAN IMMIGRANTS IN SWEDEN

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International Migration and Ethnic Relations
Bachelor 15 Credits
Spring 2019
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Word count: 10888

Abstract

The topic of this thesis is the identity formation of descendants of Eritrean immigrants in Sweden. The aim of this research was to understand how descendants of Eritrean immigrants have adapted to the Swedish society and how this has contributed to who they are and what this means for their future based on the process of social identity theory. The research sought to answer the following questions (1) How descendants of Eritrean immigrants identify themselves, and (2) How they negotiate their Swedish and Eritrean identity by interviewing six interviewees. A qualitative approach was used in this study, and data were analyzed using social identity theory. The result of the study was that descendant immigrant identified with Swedish and Eritrean cultures. They also categorized themselves based on culture, language, and religion. Therefore, language, ethnicity, culture, and religion constitute identity formation of the descendants of Eritrean immigrants in Sweden.

Keywords: Identity formation, Descendants of Eritrean immigrants, Ethnicity, Swedish society, Social identity theory

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1. Introduction

Today, Eritrea is regarded as one of the primary source countries that produce refugees in the world. Millions of Eritreans have been moving to neighboring countries within the past decades. Fundamentally, there are two generations of Eritrean immigrants who differ specifically in their reasons for flight. The older generation left since they were fighting for independence with Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s. Fukuyama (2017), states that the new generation has been fleeing from the country since early 2000 as a result of the current state of government affairs.

Sweden constitutes one of the leading Western destinations for Eritreans (Park, 2015). In the case of Eritrean immigrant Sweden is one of those states, which has offered humanitarian protection to a considerable number of Eritrean asylum-seekers, especially after the political upheavals that hit the country (Connell, 2010). As a consequence, thousands of Eritreans were granted residence permits and had the opportunity to settle in permanently, work, create families, and born their children in Sweden. Since the second-generation immigrants are a growing group in Sweden with different political and socio-economic situation compared to the first-generation, it should be acknowledged that the second-generation immigrants or descendants of immigrants are considered as a distinctive group. The identity formation of the descendant immigrant is a product of how people define them or how they view themselves. Jacoby (2009, 19) describes descendant children of immigrants as the bridge between roads which move at different speeds. They act as intermediaries between the pace of their parents' lives and that of typical Western culture. Primarily, they serve as a link between two worlds that are unlikely to connect otherwise.

The descendants of Eritrean immigrants observe and absorb a wide range of environmental elements. It allows them to describe what they see, how they feel, and have unique experiences. The descendant of Eritrean immigrants in Sweden was raised in a society that is different from that of their parents. Therefore, it is of interest to understand the approaches they used to balance their existence between the dominant society and the minority culture. Moreover, it is essential to determine whether they feel part of the host society and identify themselves as such as it helps in understanding the way their identities have shaped up. In this thesis, existing views show that identity formation is a continuous process which is dynamic and tends to unfold as people interact with each other. It is thus apparent that an individual's identity is fluid and changes depending on prevailing situations.

1.1 Research problem

Many Eritreans initially immigrated to the country to avoid war or other devastating issues that were occurring in their home country. The Descendant of Eritrean immigrants have lived in Sweden for many years and, unlike their parents who had difficulties adjusting they have been positively exposed to different lifestyles, cultures, languages and living standards (Van, 2016). All of these factors can have an impact on self-identification. At home, they may be expected to uphold original Eritrean traditions from their parents. Thus, the descendant of Eritrean immigrants must decide how to cultivate an appropriate balance and what is the best way to identify themselves.

A more profound comprehension of identity formation regardless of the generation of immigrants is required. Sandra Uwase of the University of Ottawa also completed research in which is closely linked to this topic (Uwase 2014). Her study was about determining whether or not the descendant immigrants had an independent identity. The identity of these immigrants is perhaps not black and white, as there are many things to take into consideration here, such as their traditions at home and how impacted they are by the new society. She pointed out that there is a lot of work that should be done to ensure that all generations form a specific identity with which to relate because it is not so easy to blend into a new culture and society that is completely different from their original cultures or homelands. This suggests that perhaps the descendant of Eritreans have faced difficulties in regard to adapting to society.

This thesis will expand on the theory of social identity by researching the opinions and effects of Eritreans' integration into Swedish society. The thesis will further strive to understand how the descendant of Eritrean immigrants have adapted to society and how this has contributed to who they are and what this means for their future.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The thesis will explore how the descendants of Eritrean immigrants have adapted to society and how this has contributed to who they are and what this means for their future. It is also important to gauge how much they value their original Eritrean heritage. To help achieve the aim of this study, primary qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted, involving six descendants of Eritrean immigrants living in Sweden. All the interviewees were born and raised in Sweden.

The primary research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How does the descendant of Eritrean immigrants identify themselves?
2. And how do they negotiate their Swedish and Eritrean Identity?

1.3 Thesis Outline

This study is qualitative research. To understand and explain important phenomenon related to the research problem and questions, this study uses qualitative data. In the second section of this paper, the background of Eritrean immigration to Sweden will be discussed. This covers both pre and post-independence Eritrea. Section three includes a literature review, which is primarily about placing this dissertation into the proper context of current research regarding the perceived factors of identity formation surrounding the descendants of Eritrean immigrants in Sweden. The theoretical framework will be introduced, followed by the conceptual frameworks in section four and the research methodologies in section five. After that, in the end, findings and analysis will be discussed in section six. The conclusion is in section seven, which ends with suggestions for future research in section eight.

2. Background of Eritrean Immigration to Sweden

There was once hope for Eritrea to be a model for success that many other nations around the world would emulate (Hailemariam, 2015). The origin of this hope was from the long and challenging years that the Eritreans endured while fighting for independence. It also originated from the need to demonstrate high discipline, commitment, and organization that the Liberation Movement was portraying for the national cause. However, immediately after assuming power, the liberation movements and the nationalist leaders, just like any others on the continent, chose to disregard and exclude their people (Cheeseman 2015: 27). After independence, the new rulers couldn't allow the nation to partake in any political activity as a way of upholding its terror-based authoritarian rule.

2.1 Before independence

The struggle for freedom among Eritreans was intensive. There was a war fought between the Ethiopian government and the Eritrean liberalists for 30 years. During this time, many people found it difficult to live in the war-torn nation. Instead, they chose to seek asylum in different countries, both neighboring and abroad. Sweden is one of the leading European countries that played host to most of the pre-independence Eritrean immigrants (Hepner 2015: 42). According to Sweden statistics, Sweden as of 1990 just before Eritrea attaining its independence accepted more than 4500 Eritrean immigrants. During this time, civilian killings, famine, little arable land and widespread presence of landmines were among the main reasons for migration. Additionally, the economic instability and the continuous border conflict with Ethiopia were clear indications that many people had to flee this African country.

2.2 After independence

After obtaining power and successfully separating from Ethiopia in 1993, the nationalists' leaders in Eritrea developed the authoritarian rule. As a country that doesn't have a constitution or a free press, it is difficult for the citizens to participate in any meaningful conversation championing for the national cause. Similarly, the fact that Eritrea owes its unsavory reputation, notably to its national military services is the other primary reason for post-independent migration. There are 18 months of compulsory military service for all young people, which, at times, comes with indefinite extension at the discretion of the military commanders (Bozzini 2011: 93). It is this compulsory military service that causes massive fleeing of Eritreans to other countries

Furthermore, the growing economic deprivation and the fear of imprisonment without trial also contribute to the post-independence exodus today. Poverty levels are soaring, and the totalitarian rule worsens the situation by imposing adverse conditions to the citizens. For instance, it is only possible to leave the country when one has an exit visa. Contrastingly, it is nearly difficult for any Eritrean citizen to obtain this particular traveling document (Kibreab, 2009). According to Sweden Statistics, a total of 35,142 Eritrean-born immigrants were living in the nation as of 2016 (Statistikdatabasen, 2019).

3. Literature Review

The primary focus of this section is to review the relevant literature. It should help to place this study in the proper context of current research on identity formation regarding descendant of Eritrean immigrants in Sweden. The body of literature review includes research from different countries, races, and cultures to give the present research an international context and multicultural dynamics. The review of the literature in this section will identify the assumptions, beliefs, and limitations in regard to comprehending the identity formation of the descendant of Eritrean immigrants living in Sweden. Therefore, it is implied that the way the immigrants define themselves is complex.

In her study about the identities of descendant immigrants, author Sandra Uwase investigates the phenomenon of descendant young adults of African Canadian origin and the process of their identity formation (Uwase, 2014). With the help of semi-structured interviews comprising of 8 interviewees, of which five males and three females between the age group of 18 to 30, Uwase presents the experiences of identity formation of these interviewees in Toronto.

The inferences made by the author point to the fact that these youngsters have formed a fusion of identities which can be attributed to them being raised between two different and independent cultures. To be precise, they have been leading multinational lives that bestowed them with the ability to gain the best of both cultures and identities, with them also facing issues of inter-generational conflicts with their respective parents. Ultimately, their identities have been shaped largely by their personal experiences.

The literature presented by Uwase in this particular research offers an exhaustive synopsis of the African Diaspora, the socio-economic challenges experienced by the African immigrants, the new acculturation mechanism and the individual life experiences of second-generation African Canadian young adults (Uwase, 2014). This study revealed that descendant immigrants live transnational lives because they participate in activities that reflect culture from their countries of origin and the countries they live. Their personal experiences in both cultures influenced how the interviewees perceived themselves and interacted with both cultures.

According to Uwase (2014), competition and resentment amidst groups is therefore not just an issue of competing for resources like employment opportunities or social security, but instead a result of the varied identities that are involved in such competition.

Semhar Zerat (2009) also carried out a qualitative study, *Identity retention, and sense of belonging: an examination of second-generation Eritrean youth in Toronto*. This research aimed to identify perceptions of young Eritreans who live in Toronto. In this study, Semhar Zerat found that many people of the second generations may easily assimilate with the societies of host nations at least in comparison to their parents' generation; yet, forming an identity for themselves in a new place was quite difficult and took a long time.

From the multiculturalism aspect, Graf (2018) maintains that the issue of identity usually arises when self-identification fails to match the tags that outsiders place on an individual. The ideal features of identity revolve around multiplicity and continuity, rather than coherence and stability of an individual's identity. An individual can use various ways to identify him or herself. According to Graf (2018), ethnic and cultural identity transfer from the parental generation and social perceptions like the use of tags as identity markers are among the actual ways an individual comes to know him or herself.

The other past study reflecting on this particular research study is by Sewite Kebede (2010), *The struggle for belonging: Forming and reforming identities among generation asylum seekers and refugees*. In this research, it is apparent that several aspects determine the different elements that help to structure and restructure identity of individuals. The substantial differences in social class, early childbearing, education attainment, and incarceration play considerable roles in influencing identity.

Deconstruction and reconstruction encompass a complicated process surrounding cultural, emotional, and social adjustment (Jaspal and Cinnirella, 2012). Parents of the descendant immigrants integrate their children into the culture of their host nation so that they fit into society (Papastergiadis 2018: 22). The integration to both the culture of their country of origin and culture of the host nation for the descendant children is responsible for the formation of hybrid identities that incorporate numerous aspects of different cultures. Therefore, it is relatively difficult for descendant immigrants. This issue of social identity becomes hard to define since they feel as though they don't belong anywhere (Jenkins, 2014).

4. Theoretical Framework

This research attempts to discuss the conceptual framework of identity formation to determine how descendant of Eritrean immigrants in Sweden perceive their identity. Research done by Cote & Levin (2014) has established the foundation of the idea that relates to identity formation of immigrants. This theoretical framework treats the identity formation process in multiple aspects which will be discussed in the following sections.

4.1 Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory explains how individuals find their identity. Social identity theory proposes that individuals develop their social identity through a cognitive process. As such, social identity theory is essentially built upon three important cognitive elements, namely, social categorization, social identification, and social comparison (Vinney, 2018). Importantly, social identity is a social process that explains how identity works (Jenkins, 2014). It refers to the way individuals' self-concepts are founded on membership in social groups. As such, social identity theory explains how social identities impact individuals' behavior and attitude regarding their groups.

The theory of social identity was formulated originally by two social psychologists Henry Tajfel and John Turner. This is a theory which explains the concept of social identity in the intergroup behavior and one that predicts few inter-group behaviors that are based on perceived group status, differences, perceived legitimacy, and the stability of those differences. According to Jenkins (2014), social identity influences individual behavior. Individuals categorize themselves in relations to their groups (the "we"), and they compare themselves against the other groups "others"). Fundamentally, having a particular social identity means that a person belongs to a certain group, becomes like the others in the group and sees things from the group's perspective (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Social identity theory states that identification determines what humans do (Jenkins, 2014). Human behavior starts at an individual level and then extends to intergroup behavior. The interpersonal behavior would be one which is determined purely by individual characteristics and interpersonal relationships between an individual and the other people in his/her group. The intergroup behavior, which is the behavior among members in the same social group, would be determined only by the social category that applies to them. The cognitive nature of the differences

between personal and social identities and the interaction between them can be seen more evidently in the self-categorization theory.

The social identity theory places importance on social structural factors which would be able to predict on to which end of the spectrum is most likely to influence an individual's behavior. A primary assumption in the social identity theory is that there is a fundamental motivation among individuals towards achieving positive distinctiveness, which is nothing but the implication that individuals would strive for positive self-concept. Individuals could also, to a different extent, be defined by their social identities along with the interpersonal-intergroup continuum. This is further derived in social identity theory, which states that individuals would try to achieve in maintaining positive social identity.

The interpersonal and intergroup continuum, as well as the assumption of positive distinctiveness motivation, were derived as a result of minimal group studies. It was found that, under certain conditions, individuals endorse resources distribution by maximizing the positive distinctiveness of an in-group, contrasting to that of an outgroup sacrificing personal self-interest. The social identity theory also suggests different strategies that could be used to achieve positive distinctiveness. Specifically, the choice of strategy is directly related to the perceived permeability of group boundaries and perceived stability and legitimacy of the intergroup status (Leaper, 2011).

Such strategies include individual mobility, social creativity, and social competition, which are specifically from a point of view of a low-status group member. High-status group members may also adopt these behaviors. There are also three specific mental processes upon which the social identity theory lays emphasis on, and the same are namely, social categorization, social identification, and social comparison.

Social categorization is the process through which individuals are organized into social groups in order to better understand the social world. This process helps people in defining fellow individuals, including the self, on the basis of the individual groups to which each one of us belong to. Such a process of defining people is essentially based, quite often, on their social categories rather than on their individual traits (Jenkins, 2014).

The next process defined by the social identity theory is the social identification process that identifies individuals as part of a group. Being social identified with a specific social group result in individuals behaving in such a way which is deemed as being the most appropriate form of behavior for that particular social group. For example, if a person defined himself as being as an animal lover, then he might try being as a friend as possible with animals, take care of animals, including stray animals, etc. Although this process entails such individuals becoming emotionally devoted to their respective groups, the end result is that their self-esteem would tend to get affected by their group's status.

The last process in social identity theory is the social comparison between groups. In this process, people compare their social group with others based on cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral lines (Stets & Burke, 2000). Comparison based on the cognitive line leads to social stereotyping. Stereotyped perceptions of in-group members and out-group members are enhanced and made more similar through social comparison. Furthermore, along attitudinal lines, social comparison people in a group make positive evaluations of their group and feel a strong attachment to the group as opposed to the out-group. Along the behavioral lines, individuals compare themselves to the out-group, and they use group-labels to describe themselves. They participate in the group's culture in order to distinguish themselves from the out-group (Yuki, 2003).

There are some vital variances amidst the first and second generation of immigrants, particularly in the way they perceive and experience their identity. While the first generation perceives and experiences their identity predominantly in relation to the roles and social status, the identity of the second generation, on the contrary, is largely fixated on emotions that are mostly related to their age and the activities they do, despite the presence of significant in-group differences (Vathi, 2015).

4.2 Ethnicity

Ethnicity plays an integral role in identity formation. It refers to the state of fitting to a certain societal set which presents a common cultural or national custom. Ethnic identity combines factors common descent, a set of attitude and behavior, physical characteristics and socially relevant cultural elements. Cultural attributes such as institutions, language, religion, beliefs, and practice often form the basis of ethnicity (Cohen, 2015: 19). In some instances, skin, physical features, and body shape offer the foundation of ethnic identity. A unique distinction from the aspect of sharing ideas, behaviors, meanings, and feelings should consolidate the ethnicity of a particular group.

Two fundamental approaches are ideal for an understanding of ethnicity. The primordial approach considers a common ancestry as an imperative factor. It is because it is easy to activate the primordial loyalties than the national organizations and principles founded upon them. The other approach is known as instrumental, situational or subjective. The emphasis of the approach lies in the perception of members to be different from others. It also emphasizes the implication of identity perception on the current status of group and predicament as well as the understanding of contemporary reality (Cohen 2015: 23). This approach is often no more than an impressive exercise in the re-establishment of the past. Definition and redefinition of circumstances are used to describe the present, as well as strategies for attaining the desired future.

4.3 . Hyphenated Identity

Hyphenated identity refers to dual identity of a person who belongs to two cultures plays a role in the identity formation because it creates a sense of belonging. The hyphen separates the identity based on racial or national identity (Vandeyar and Vandeyar 2015). The aspect of hyphenated identity plays a significant role in identity formation; it allows an individual to identify with more than one particular group. Significantly, hyphenated identities are defined in relation to other categories. As such, individuals with hyphenated identity might claim one identity based on country of origin and another based on their race or ethnicity. Hyphenated identity allows individuals to more than one sociocultural group. Subsequently, individuals obtain an identity that acknowledges their cultural background while accepting the reality of a new identity in the new society.

Individuals with hyphenated identity represent different cultures, and they normally position themselves towards these cultures. They struggle for belonging in both cultures they represent. Therefore, the issue of identity can be challenging for individuals with a hyphenated identity. For second generations of immigrants, hyphenated identity might not be as challenging as first-generation immigrants because they are able to integrate into the society of the host countries. However, the hyphenated identity can mean that social perception is that the individual belongs to a different social group or has another place of origin (Belanger, Verkuyten, and Maykel (2010).

There are challenges associated with claiming to belong to two ethnic or national groups. Legitimizing hybrid identities can be challenging because there is a debate on which side of the hyphen a person belongs to. Normally, the hyphen makes a person who belongs to two cultures liable to be perceived as wavering between cultures. Furthermore, the hyphenation can create a feeling of conflict between the two cultural identities in areas that do not support hyphenated identities ((Belanger, Verkuyten, and Maykel (2010)

Nonetheless, despite the challenges associated with hyphenated identities, this is a categorization that is crucial to understanding identity processes. Hyphenation reveals the complexities of identities and cultures, such that identification is explored through a process of self-perception instead of putting clear boundaries and categories. Cognitive compartmentalization of social identities can resolve the social identity conflict caused by hyphenated identity (Vandeyar and Vandeyar, 2015).

5. Methodology

This is qualitative research. According to Victor Jopp (2006: 248-49), the qualitative research investigates aspects of social life which aren't amenable to quantitative measurements. Qualitative research is associated with a variety of perspectives and use a range of methods to focus on the meanings and interpretations of social phenomenon and social process in a particular context in which they occur. The qualitative research method is often use interview and data collected through this method can be exposed to subjective interpretation. However, it allows exploring more and detailed information in a relatively close setting, such as interviews and participant observation. This qualitative study presents two central features. First, it was crucial to gather relevant data by interviewing six descendants of Eritrean immigrants. The second feature was to record, classify, and analyze the data depending on the purpose of the study. Here, the qualitative analysis helped to understand better experiences, and descriptions of several issues and people taking part in the study (Creswell 2017: 5). The researcher took diligent notes and received descriptive information on the opinions, beliefs, and assumptions of interviewees. More specifically, this involved speaking with interviewees who were able to provide personal accounts about how they perceive about their new home, whether they identify themselves as Swedish and how this has impacted their daily lives and cultural practices over a longer period.

5.1 Sampling Process

There are six interviews conducted with descendants of Eritrean immigrants, who were born and raised in Sweden. All interviewees voluntarily took part in the research and were interviewed on their willingness. I did not know the interviewees previously, but I could get in contact with them through acquaintances. Therefore, the snowball sampling, which is a useful tool in gaining access to certain people, was employed in order to approach other appropriate individuals that might be suitable for the current study (May, 2011). For that reason, snowball sampling methodology was applied. This is a flexible type of sampling methodology that allows for the introduction of new interview subjects, in which one interviewee will recommend another potential interviewee who is equally or more highly qualified in the field, who would have more pertinent information, or who has access to such information (May, 2011). Interviewees who were geographically limited from the physical location of this study were contacted by using Skype.

5.2 Research Methodology

The study applied a qualitative approach, ensuring that primary data collection was through a qualitative research method. Interviews by interviewees and responses formed a ground for analysis and to formulate the research topic. The ages of the six interviewees varied from 20 to 28. This was an ideal age bracket for the accurate data collection on the matters of identity formation among this group because they all belong to the descendant category of the Eritrean immigrants living in Sweden.

Gender balance was apparent because of the six interviewees, three were males, and three were females. This played a significant role in strengthening the outcome of this study. A set of questions guiding the interview was formulated with a semi-structured style applied in conducting the interviews. The interview technique combined Patton's (2002) approach for an interview with the consistent open-ended interview technique. The essence was to uphold uniformity from one interview to the other based on questions asked. At the same time, it allowed flexibility during the interview, making it possible for the addition of probing questions.

5.3 Narrative Analysis

All the collected data from the interviews are analyzed by using a qualitative method. Narrative analysis is, therefore, the most appropriate data analysis method as all the conducted interviews are self-narratives of the individuals under study. All the interviewees in this research were asked to reveal specific episodes of their personal life experiences, as well as to share their individual views on certain topics during the interview. In order to transcribe, interpret and analyze the stories told by the descendants of Eritrean immigrants, the narrative analysis is applied (Packer, 2011)

5.4 Researcher's Role

In qualitative research method, the role of the researcher is different, and the researcher considered an instrument of data collection (May, 2011). This means that the collected data are analyzed through human perspective rather than other instruments like questionnaires. The researcher may take various roles, and these roles can range from being an insider or outsider. Being an insider gives more advantages as a full participant in the research, such as access to the field and knowledge of the culture of the group under study. However, sometimes there could be a great deal of variation in between. Sometimes a researcher starts as an outsider and may end up to be a

member of the group, and the reverse is true (May, 2011). In the current study, I consider myself as an insider due to I come from Eritrean and have full knowledge of the Eritrean culture. However, being an insider did not influence my perception towards the responses of the interviewees. I selected neutral wording and did not modify survey responses. Therefore, the status of being an insider ensured the openness of the interviewees, as well as, their willingness to share sensitive information easily (Ajagbe, Sholanke, Isiavwe, Oke 2015: 23).

5.5 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are fundamental features in data analysis because they determine if findings represent the characteristic being measured (Trochim, Donnelly & Arora 2015: 15). Validity refers to the extent to which scores measure the intended variable. In this research, face validity was applied. Face validity is based on human behavior, and it was up to the researcher to determine how the interview questions measure the construct of interest. The face validity questions in this research were asking the interviewees how they would define key terms.

In the article *Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research* by (Maxwell, 1992) described reliability as the consistency of the expected result of a particular study over time and able to represent the population under study. If the results of a study reproduced using a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable (Maxwell, 1992). According to Creswell (2017), reliability adheres to the notion of consistency which questionnaires (test) scores supposed to be relatively same and can be determined through the test-retest method, and this attribute ensures stability.

5.6 Ethical consideration

Before the interview, there were some ethical issues to take into consideration. When working with a sample population, this includes authorization to record, to transcribe, to keep data, and to add any information received during the interview. It was mandatory to seek authorization from the interviewees. Measures to protect the interviewees and their specific wishes were necessary to ensure an adequate understanding of the study, its nature, and the purpose of data collection. Anonymity, if requested, entailed the removal of names within stored information through deletion or blackout, and were maintained throughout the study.

6. Findings and Analysis

This section presents the findings of the qualitative semi-structured interviews with the sampled interviewees. The findings were analyzed through the perspective of social identity theory. Social identity refers to how identification, which is considered a social process, works (Jenkins 2014). The interview responses were analyzed to determine how the interviewees attained their social identity through the cognitive processes in social identity theory.

6.1 Social Categorization

This is the first stage of the social identity theory, where people categorize themselves in order to understand their social environment. The categorization process enables individuals to define themselves on the basis of the groups to which they belong. Social categorization can be based on nationality, culture, and ethnicity (McLeod, 2008). The interviewees used Sweden and Eritrea as social categories. The first set of interview questions were designed to reveal how interviewees categorized themselves as the descendant of Eritrean immigrants living in Sweden. The questions asked about the interviewees' migration information (parent's country of origin, the interviewee's mother tongue, and their preferred language). All the interviewees categorized themselves as Swedes and as Eritrean ethnic groups based on their mother tongue. They also categorized themselves based on their ethnicity and religion.

1st interviewee stated:

My mother tongue is Afar language. Afar people are one of the ethnic groups in Eritrea. In Eritrea, we have nine ethnic groups. Afar is the language that is most used at home, so I learned through hearing and observing. I often communicate at home with my parents in Afar language. I speak six languages besides Swedish and Afar languages. I speak Afar with both family and friend from Eritrea who are Afar as well. I feel very confident when I speak Swedish because it's the language, I know the best.....

Furthermore, the interviewee categorized himself based on his Afar culture and as a Muslim. He said:

...I identify myself with Afar culture. I know a bit about Eritrean culture, but mostly about an ethnic group. I don't celebrate Swedish festivals at home. I celebrate birthdays, New Years, Ramadan, and Eid. I celebrate the festivals with family and friends.

2nd interviewee:

My mother tongue is Tigrinya. I learn Tigrinya at home. Both my parents are Tigrinya speakers. They can also speak Arabic because they lived in Sudan for about five years. We speak at home Tigrinya and Swedish. I speak almost three languages (Tigrinya, Swedish and English). Of course, I feel confident to speak Swedish because it's the only language I learned at school. It is difficult to say which language I prefer; however, I think I would say I prefer Swedish. In Swedish, it is so easy to express myself. I don't have friends from Eritrea excepts cousins in Stockholm. However, with Swedish and foreign background friends we always speak Swedish together. I feel very confident when I speak Swedish.

The interviewee also categorized herself based on culture (Afar) and religion (Orthodox Christian).

.... I identify myself first as Afar Swedish and then Eritrean.

... Yes, I celebrate both Swedish and Eritrean festivals at home. For example, birthdays, Orthodox Epiphany, Christmas, Eritrean independent day and all the Swedish festivals.

3rd interviewee:

My mother tongue is Tigrinya. Tigrinya is the official language in Eritrea. I learned Tigrinya at home. We always speak in Tigrinya at home. I speak Tigrinya, Swedish and English. Of course, I prefer Tigrinya over Swedish. It is my heritage, and I'm proud of it. I feel confident to speak both Swedish and Tigrinya. I don't have Eritrean friends, but I have many foreign background friends. We always speak Swedish together. Yes, I feel confident to speak Swedish.

The interviewee also used culture (Tigrinya) and religion (Orthodox Christian) to categorize himself

... I identify myself with Tigrinya or Eritrean culture.

... except we celebrate the Christmas though we celebrate Eritrean Christmas on January 7th due to my parents are orthodox Christians

4th interviewee:

My mother tongue is Tigrinya. I speak Tigrinya with my husband. Both my parents are well educated, and they have a liberal mind. They love Sweden so much. I speak both Swedish and Tigrinya with them. It doesn't matter which language we speak at home. I speak almost three languages (Tigrinya, Swedish and English). Yes, I prefer Tigrinya, which is my mother tongue, but I like Swedish as well. I think it doesn't matter. After all, I was born and

raised here in Sweden. I speak Swedish with my friends and Tigrinya when I go to church or on some special occasions. Yes, I feel confident to speak Swedish.

The interviewee also used culture (Eritrea) and religion (Orthodox Christian) to create her identity.

...I identify myself with both cultures – Swedish & Eritrea. My parents played a great role in my life and to learn more about my heritage. Yes, we celebrate both cultural festivals. Mostly we celebrate birthdays, Christmas, Mid-Summer, and all orthodox calendar festivals.

5th interviewee:

My mother tongue is Tigre which is different from Tigrinya. Both my parents speak Tigrinya because they grow up in Asmara. I can understand Tigrinya, but I can't speak fluently. We often speak Tigre at home. I speak almost four languages (Tigre, Swedish, English, and little Arabic). Yes, I prefer my mother tongue over Swedish. It's my heritage, and I'm proud of it. Tigre is the second largest majority ethnic group in Eritrea which is marginalized by the current government of Eritrea. There are no many Tigre in Stockholm, and I have many foreign background friends, and I speak with them in Swedish. Yes, I'm confident to speak Swedish.

The interviewee identified with culture (Tigre) and religion (Muslim)

I identify myself first with Tigre culture because in Eritrea we don't have a single culture... As a Muslim, at home, we celebrate Ramadan and Eid.

6th interviewee:

My mother tongue is Tigrinya. I learned Tigrinya at home. Both my parents often speak Tigrinya at home. I speak three languages (Tigrinya, Swedish, and English). I feel confident when I speak Swedish. Of course, I prefer my mother tongue over Swedish, but I always want to speak Swedish. I speak Tigrinya at home only. Even with few descendants of Eritrean friends usually, we communicate in Swedish. I feel confident to speak Swedish mainly because the only language I learned at school and even at the university level as well.

The interviewee also identified with culture (Eritrean) and religion (Orthodox Christian).

... I primarily identify myself with Eritrean culture, but still, I also identify myself with the Swedish culture too... We celebrate mostly Eritrean festivals at home, but we also celebrate birthdays, Christmas, Easter, Mid-Summer, and other orthodox church festivals

6.2 Social Identification

This is the second stage of the social identity theory, where people identify themselves with certain groups. All the interviewees had a social identity that was based on the language and culture, and they had the knowledge that they belonged to a certain social group (Stets and Burke 2000). The shared social categories that were identified in the interview were Swedish, Tigre, Tigrinya, Eritrean, and Afar groups. Interviewees were asked questions surrounding their culture; the culture they identified with and whether or not they were determined to preserve the Eritrean culture. This was to determine the interviewees' self-identity.

1st interviewee:

I identify myself first as Afar Swedish and then Eritrean. I don't know what my parents or friends think of me, but you would have to ask them. If someone asked me who I'm, I would say I'm Swedish, but my heritage is from Eritrea. I feel like I have a hybrid identity because I'm Afar and still Swedish since I was born here. Yes, I have a lot of Swedish friends. Yes, of course, I feel I'm a part of Swedish society.

2nd interviewee:

I identify myself as Eritrean but born & raised in Sweden. I think both my friends and my parent would describe me as I'm too Swedish. I would tell them I'm Swedish, but if they insisted I will tell them that my families come from Eritrea. I don't think I have a hybrid culture. I raised to be Swedish. All my surroundings smell Swedish. I know that I have Eritrean background, but I'm not obsessed to adopt that kind of identity. Almost all my friends are Swedish. I feel and are part of Swedish society.

3rd interviewee:

I identify myself first as Eritrean and then Swedish. I don't have Eritrean friends, but my other friends will describe me as I'm Eritrean or African. My parents might describe me as I'm more Eritrean than Swedish. I will tell them that I was born in Sweden, but I'm Eritrean. Yes, I might have a hybrid identity.

4th interviewee

I identify myself as Eritrean Swedish. My friends would describe me as I'm more Swedish than Eritrean. My parents don't bother much about who I want to be. They lived here in Sweden for more than 20 years, and they achieved everything here in Sweden. So, they like everything about Sweden. Due to my color if I say directly I'm Swedish no one will believe

me, or they will get a bit confused. I prefer to say I was born in Sweden, but I have Eritrean heritage. I think I have a hybrid identity both Swedish and Eritrean.

5th interviewee

I identify myself as Tigre or Eritrean. Since elementary school, I knew that I'm black or African. Therefore, it's unthinkable to say that I'm Swedish. My friends or my parents identify me as I'm Eritrean or African. That's all. I would say I'm Eritrean, born & raised in Sweden. Yes, I have a hybrid identity that I inherited from my parents and my surrounding as well.

6th interviewee

Even if I was born in Sweden, my origin is from Eritrea. I identify myself as Eritrean Swedish. My friends would describe me as Eritrean or African but not Swedish. If you have an immigrant background, even if you come from Finland, you are an immigrant, and, in my opinion, you can't be a Swedish. If someone asks me where I'm from I will tell them that I'm originally from Eritrean but born and raised in Sweden. I think that I have a hybrid identity.

It is important to point out that identification also involves considering how others think about a person (Jenkins 2014). For some of the interviewees, others' perception of who they were and what culture they are identified with seemed to matter. That is where they explained how their parents and friends considered them, either as Swedes or Eritreans.

Social identification with a group leads individuals to adopt the behavior that they believe defines their group. Social identification in the findings is expressed through cultural festivals, language, and social circles. This aspect was captured by the interviewees' language preference, social life, and celebration of cultures. The first interviewee identified with both Eritrean and Swedish cultures. He stated that he communicates with his parents at home in the Afar language, and he does not celebrate Swedish festivals. This illustrates his association with his Eritrean identity. He also had a lot of Swedish friends, and he identified with Swedish society. The 2nd interviewee identified herself as a Swedish. Therefore, she felt comfortable speaking Swedish and celebrated Swedish festivals at home. The 3rd interviewee identified himself with Tigrinya culture. He followed Eritrean culture and preferred Tigrinya language over Swedish. The 4th interviewee identified with Tigrinya and Swedish culture: she preferred Tigrinya over Swedish, but she celebrated both Eritrean and Swedish cultural festivals. The 5th interviewee identified with Eritrean

culture: he stated that he preferred his mother tongue (Tigre) over Swedish and he was proud of it, he also wore cultural clothes occasionally and had very few Swedish friends. He also identified with Swedish culture because he knew all its norms and values. The 6th ingroup interviewee identified with both cultures: she celebrated both Eritrean and Swedish cultural festivals.

Ultimately, identification determined what the interviewees did. According to Jenkins (2014), identification determines what humans do (Jenkins, 2014). All the interviewees identified themselves as Swedish. Therefore, they spoke the Swedish language with their friends, and some of them even at home with their families. Furthermore, for those who identified with Eritrean culture, they spoke the language (and in some cases preferred their mother tongue over Swedish), and they celebrated Eritrean festivals.

6.3 Social Comparison

Social comparison refers to the process of comparing in-group with out-group. According to Stets and Burke (2000), social category or group is comprised of individuals who have a common social identification or perceive themselves as members of the same social category. Therefore, though the social comparison process, individuals who are similar to self are labeled the in-group. Conversely, individuals who differ from the self are categorized as the out-group (Yuki, 2003)

The response from the interviewees illustrated how the social comparison process occurs in the descendant of Eritrean immigrants. Those who identified with their Eritrean social identity compared themselves to the Swedes while those who identified more with the Swedish culture compared to Eritrean culture. Importantly, in-group is defined by its similarity to or difference from out-group. The fifth interviewee identified as a Muslim (in-group) and his response illustrates how he considers the Swedish society and Tigrinya as the out-group. He said

I don't feel that I belong to Swedish culture. Nowadays, if you are a Muslim and if you have a Muslim name it would be difficult to easily integrate, get acceptance and validation from the Swedish society. I'm not a member of the Eritrean community because most of the Eritrean associations in Stockholm are mostly belong to the Tigrinya people who are the majority in Eritrea and have power there as well. As a Tigre people, we have a unique and vibrant culture in Eritrea, and I experience my culture every day.

During the interview, the fifth interviewee showed out-group bias when he compared his in-group (Tigre and Eritrean) to immigrants from other countries. He stated:

I don't think I'm like Iranian or former Yugoslavian descendant immigrants. They automatically adopt a Swedish identity by having a Swedish boy or girlfriend, drinking alcohol, eating pork, etc. For me those things are forbidden in my religion, and also I came from very nationalist parents and influenced my lifestyle as well.

Social comparison also creates group affiliation. This affiliation helps sustain social identity. For the interviewees, they had Eritrean background, but they were raised in Sweden. Therefore, for those who identified with Swedish culture, there was in-group assimilation as illustrated by response from the second interviewee. She stated:

I think both my friends and my parent would describe me as I'm too Swedish. I would tell them I'm Swedish, but if they insisted I will tell them that my families come from Eritrea. I don't think I have a hybrid culture. I raised to be Swedish.

6.4 Impact of Social Identity on Interviewees' Attitude and Behavior

Self-categorization and social comparison are the important processes that are involved in identity formation. These two processes produce consequences. The consequence of self-categorization is an accentuation of the perceived similarities between self and the other in-group members. In this research, accentuation of the perceived similarities (Stets and Burke 2000). The second interviewee stated:

...because both my parents are university graduates and they have good jobs. So, we live in the Swedish middle-income residential areas.

In her response, the interviewee was identifying the similarities between her family and the Swedish society.

Furthermore, self-categorization can also lead to accentuation of the perceived differences between the self and the out-group members. The 4th interviewee said:

Due to my color if I say directly I'm Swedish no one will believe me, or they will get a bit confused. I prefer to say I was born in Sweden, but I have Eritrean heritage. I think I have a hybrid identity both Swedish and Eritrean. No doubt that I feel part of Swedish society. I think the native Swedish consider me as a Swedish except my skin color.

In this response the interviewee was identifying the difference between a Swede and a non-swede based on skin color. She did not point out the skin color of Eritreans immigrants but considered her skin color in reference to how it was different from the out-group (Swedish natives).

The consequence of social comparison is selective application of the accentuation effect. This comparison results in self-enhancing outcomes for the self. Particularly, one's esteem is enhanced by analyzing the in-group and the out-group on a perceptible that lead to the positive judgement of the in-group and negative judgement of the out-group (Stets and Burke 2000). That is why social identity can be used to explain group-based prejudice. The 1st interviewee experienced prejudice because of his ethnicity. He stated:

I have been racially abused by opposing fans when I was playing professional soccer in the second top tier of Swedish football divisions.

5th interviewee said:

I don't think a native Swedish consider me as I'm Swedish. No one with immigrant background considered Swedish by the native. Above all, if you are black or African. I experience discrimination when I was at secondary school and long ago when I did my first practice.

Response from some of the interviewees showed that membership to a group was integral to their self-concept and they felt strong ties to the group. The second interviewee said:

All my surroundings smell Swedish. I know that I have Eritrean background, but I'm not obsessed to adopt that kind of identity. Almost all my friends are Swedish. I feel and are part of Swedish society.

Stets and Burke (2000) opine that having a particular social identity means being like others in the group and seeing things from their perspective. The interviewee felt part of the Swedish society; therefore, she saw her surroundings from a Swedish perspective.

3rd interviewee said:

Yes, the Swedish culture has a positive impact on my identity. Few to say punctuality, respect and to be modest.

Having a particular identity means fulfilling the expectation of the role. The interviewee adopted the characters that were associated with Swedish culture.

6.5 Religion and Ethnicity

Religion and ethnicity are significant components of identity formation in social identification theory. Eritrea has nine major ethnic groups, but Tigrinya remains the largest one. Here are how some of the interviewees spoke about religion and ethnicity in relation to identity formation.

1st interviewee was apparent, and this is what he had to say:

I celebrate birthdays, New Years, Ramadan, and Eid.

To 5th interviewee also backed the sentiments by stating the following:

As a Muslim, at home, we celebrate Ramadan and Eid. All family, friends, and relatives celebrate at home together. We visit each other's home during the Eid time. We don't celebrate any of Swedish festivals at home. My parents are religious Muslims, and they only celebrate Muslim festivals according to the religion.

The fact that they celebrate Ramadan and Eid shows that they are Muslims who still subscribe to Islamic religious activities. They are proud of their religious affiliation, which also gives them their identity.

The question, in this case, is whether the social identity is inherited or developed through individual perception. In the late-modern society, it is not the ascribed status nor achieved status that matters. Instead, it is the status that an individual upholds through a process of strategic or involuntary fitting of an individual in a particular society of strangers (Marti 2015: 7). It follows the approval of the strangers by creating the appropriate impressions.

Religion is within Eritrean culture, whether they are Muslims or Christians. It is one of the conventional pillars of their heritage. Therefore, all of their cultural practices comply with the religion for both Christians and Muslims. It is possible that religion has influenced the way this population identifies themselves in the host nation.

6.6 Language and Identity

Language is one of the key aspects that play a fundamental role in establishing the identity of an individual. Different people speak different languages when communicating with one another (Jandt 2017: 21). For the descendant of Eritrean immigrants, language has been vital in ensuring that they interact with both sides of the divide and still maintain their identity. All of the research interviewees are bilingual or multilingual. They speak both their mother tongues and Swedish, alongside other languages. Arguably, this is one of the major concepts that the parents of the interviewees have successfully managed to instill in their children as far as maintaining the Eritrean heritage in Sweden is concerned. The parents always speak to the children in their native language. For instance, the 1st interviewee stated:

Afar is the language that is most used at home, so I learned through hearing and observing. I often communicate at home with my parents in Afar language.

Moreover, the 2nd interviewee had this to say:

I learned Tigrinya at home. Both my parents are Tigrinya speakers. We speak at home Tigrinya and Swedish as well. I speak almost three languages (Tigrinya, Swedish and English). I feel confident to speak Swedish because it's the only language I learned at school.

And the 6th interviewee said this:

I learn Tigrinya at home. Both my parents often speak Tigrinya at home. I speak three languages (Tigrinya, Swedish, and English). I speak Tigrinya at home only, but even with few descendants of Eritrean friends usually, we communicate in Swedish.

And the 4th interviewees stated:

My mother tongue is Tigrinya. I speak Tigrinya with my husband as well. Both my parents are well educated, and they have a liberal mind. I speak both Swedish and Tigrinya with them. It doesn't matter which language we speak at home. I speak almost three languages (Tigrinya, Swedish and English). I prefer Tigrinya, which is my mother tongue, but I like Swedish as well.

From this narrative, one can deduce that language plays a critical role in an individual's sense of belonging. Language is an essential cultural connector. The ability of a person expressing him or herself in a particular language enables them to understand a specific way of thinking (Levinson, 2007). Cultural assimilation in the receiving countries seems to erode the linguistics of the immigrants. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the parents of the subsequent generations to ensure that they allow their children to learn and speak their local language.

However, as much as this population may be exposed to their parent's language at home, the retention of bilingualism and multilingualism is stronger among them. This is probably a result of the experiences of the group which have provided them with a sense of belonging to that particular culture. Furthermore, most of the descendant of Eritrean immigrants seem not to have adequate knowledge regarding their culture. Their native language is necessary for conversation. Therefore, the parental generation of the descendant immigrants does not perceive this particular generation as fully Eritreans.

6.7 The Influence of the Swedish Society

Swedish culture had a significant influence on the interviewees. Generally, most of the interviewees agreed that they had been influenced by the Swedish culture and other aspects in significant ways. This seems evident even by looking at the many ways in which they perform daily tasks or interact with one another. In fact, even their parents have adopted numerous practices and behaviors that are in line with the Swedish culture. The 6th interviewee stated:

I primarily identify myself with Eritrean culture but still, I also identify myself with the Swedish culture too. It is quite evident that regardless, the influence of Swedish culture has to take a toll on the immigrants' descendants. Living in proximity as two or more ethnic communities is somehow natural that the influence of either will be felt in one way of the other.

The 5th interviewee:

The Swedish culture has a positive impact on my identity. Because when you realize you don't belong to a certain culture, then you start appreciating who you are. However, I don't deny that the Swedish culture has a positive impact on my identity or who I'm right now.

The 4th interviewee also confirmed this:

The Swedish culture has a positive impact on my identity. I'm more Swedish than Eritrean.

This is what the 3rd interviewee had to say:

Yes, the Swedish culture has a positive impact on my identity. Few to say punctuality, respect and to be modest.

2nd interviewee said this:

The Swedish culture almost has a positive impact on my identity. I don't want to stand in the middle of two cultures, and I always feel like I'm Swedish.

It is only the 1st interviewee that had a contrary opinion on this issue:

I experience my culture through conversation and history lessons by people close to me. A Swedish culture doesn't have much impact on my identity.

These narratives suggest that there is a strong integration of many descendants of Eritrean immigrants into the Swedish culture. Their process of self-identification has been influenced by Swedish culture. That is why most of them identified with both Swedish and Eritrean cultures.

Furthermore, this influence also contributed to the preferences (in some of the interviewees) to prefer Swedish culture over Eritrean culture.

6.8 Analysis

Once individuals become part of the society, they derive their identity or sense of self largely from the social categories in which they belong. The interviewees were descendant immigrants from Eritrea but born and raised in Sweden. Therefore, there existed the Eritrean background and Swedish nationality. The society was structured in a way that the interviewees' nationality was determined by their place of birth, but the cultural background of their parents (Eritrea) also determined their hyphenated identity. The social structure for the interviewees was complicated by the multiple social groups that the interviewees are expected to fit in. They are Swedes who have an Eritrean cultural background. This means that the identification process for the interviewees was equally complex. Jenkins (2014) states that identification is a process, and sometimes individuals can be unsure if they belong to a certain social group if they are unsure of how other people perceive them. Identification involves individuals, collectivity, and history.

Fundamentally, in the course of personal history, an individual becomes a member of a unique combination of social categories. Subsequently, the combination of these social identities that make up a person's self-concept are distinct (Stets and Burke 2000). Even though all the interviewees were born and raised in Sweden, they showed a strong connection with Eritrea, except two of the interviewees (first and second interviewee) who had had a weak connection with Eritrea. The rest (third to sixth interviewees) stated that they had a strong connection with Eritrea, even though some of them had never visited the country. This shows that they associate themselves with the Eritrean background, even though they are Swedes.

Stets and Burke (2000) state that social categories in which individuals place themselves are part of the structured society. Furthermore, these categories exist in relation to other contrasting categories. Each of these structures has less or more power, status, and even prestige. This explains why the interviewees identified with both Sweden and Eritrean culture. The level of commitment to one particular culture depended on individual's self-identification, that is why some felt more connected to their Eritrean culture than the Swedish culture while others put Swedish culture first before Eritrean culture.

The self-identification with both Swedish and Eritrean culture can be explained in social identity theory. Indeed, some of the interviewees identified with more than one culture because, in social identity theory, it is possible for an individual to identify with more than one social group. In this case, they identified with Swedish culture, but they also identified with Eritrean culture. For

those who identified with Swedish culture, the 'prototype' is Swedish. According to Yuki (2003), 'prototype' is the features shared by group members. The prototypical features illustrate ingroup similarities and intergroup differences. Importantly, perception of self and the other ingroup members are assimilated in this prototype. All the interviewees were descendants of Eritrean immigrants. However, they identified with Swedish culture, because they were born and raised in Sweden. That is why a large number of interviewees identified with both cultures. The Swedish language is the prototype that the perceptions of self are assimilated into the Swedish culture.

The findings of this research reveal self-categorization and social comparison. Fundamentally, self-categorization and social comparison are important processes involved in social identity formation, and they have different consequences (Stets and Burke 2000). As established by the interviewees, self-categorization is an emphasis on the perceived similarities between the self and the other ingroup members. The interviewees categorized themselves as Swedes because they could speak Swedish, and they had Swedish friends. The emphasis of similarities can be through styles of speech, attitudes, behavioral norms, and values. In this case, the interviewees behaved according to their social identity. This shows that personal identity influences behavior (Jenkins, 2014).

The outcome of the social comparison process is a discriminatory application of the accentuation effect (Stets and Burke 2000). In this process, there is special emphasis on dimensions that enhance the outcomes of the self. That is why one of the interviewees used the term 'too Swedish' and stated that she would only mention about Eritrea if a person insists on knowing her background. Similarly, Muslim identity enhances the self-esteem of one interviewee. Subsequently, the interviewees evaluated the ingroup positively and illustrated how the outgroup judged their ingroup (Muslims) negatively. Therefore, one can conclude that group behaviors originate from cognitive representations of the self in terms of membership in a shared social category (Yuki 2003).

In social identity theory, the first cognitive process is self-categorization where the self takes itself as an object, and it can categorize or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories (Stets and Burke 2000). Identity is formed through the process of self-categorization. The interviewees identified first with the existing social structure of nationality, and then their cultural background. Every interviewee mentioned his/her cultural background (Eritrean). This illustrated that in all the interviewees, there was the aspect of depersonalization of

self-representation. In this process, individuals consider themselves more as identical examples of society than as unique personalities who are defined by their individual differences from others (Yuki 2003). In this case, even though the interviewees were Swedish nationals by birth, they were able to identify themselves as Eritreans because they had a common background (their parents were immigrants from Eritrea).

All the interviewees did not have a problem fitting into the Swedish culture, despite their Eritrean background. This shows that the interviewees were able to navigate the complex self-identification process and attain an identity through self-categorization and social comparison. Importantly, self-categorization and social comparison are important processes that are involved in identity formation. Having a distinct role identity means acting to meet the expectations of that role, negotiating interaction with role partners, and using the environment to control the resources for which the role has an obligation (Stets and Burke 2000). The interviewees felt at home in Sweden and stated the Swedish culture had a positive impact in their lives. Therefore, they were comfortable identifying with the culture because identification affects human experience (Jenkins, (2014).

From this study, it is clear that language, ethnicity, culture, and religion constitute identity formation. The descendants of Eritrean immigrants are very proud of their Eritrean heritage and haven't given up their original traditions; however, they have made a significant effort to adapt to Swedish society which has made them very versatile in a different social setting. As the research title suggests, the argument is based on fluidity and multiplicity of identities. It is a constant journey to define oneself and different for the individual based on their cultural life at home and how much they desire to fit in.

Identity formation refers to a person's social identity and only occurs when one has attained approval from others. There are specific institutionalized tags that have the power to determine an individual's identity, and such labels can be markers of exploitability (Hall 2013: 38). Tags that bear negative stereotypes tend to reduce the ability of an individual to form their own identities. Social environments play integral roles in influencing the reality of individuals. Therefore, these immigrants have experienced a lot of pressure and judgment from society, making it difficult for them to decide how they want to present themselves. This is why a lot of them mentioned that they would switch their identities according to the social situation at hand—a means used to help them fit in, so they aren't rejected by their peers.

It is evident that the fluidity and multiplicity of identities are continuously in the process of formation by social and personal interactions among individuals. Some scholars, however, maintain that denial of the necessity of identity is dubious concealment of what many people consider fixed and assured. The argument is also conceivable given that some people prefer to juggle the in-betweenness position of their identity to create space or have little commitment to one particular identity. Identity formation process among the descendant of Eritrean immigrants in Sweden is, to a large extent, elaborate. Perhaps this is because they are bi-cultural, bi-lingual, and able to operate within two unique cultures.

7. Conclusion

Social identity is a cognitive process that involves self-categorization, social identification, and then social comparison, which allows a person to identify with a certain social category or group. This study confirmed that social identity comes from a person's knowledge that he/she belongs to a social category or group. The identification process starts with self-categorization, where a person finds a social group based on nationality or culture. This study shows that descendant immigrants categorized themselves according to the existing social structures. This means that they fit into the Swedish culture and the Eritrean background. The existing social structures simplified the self-categorization process.

Self-identification is a complicated process when an individual is trying to find his/her identity, especially identifying with the in-group and the out-group. It is challenging for an individual who belongs to two groups to find self-identity. However, the findings of this research have shown that despite the challenge of fitting into a certain social group, it is possible for individuals with a hybrid identity fit into multiple social groups.

Social comparison is also an important process in the self-identification process, and it can influence an individual's attitude and behavior towards the out-group. The interviewees' ability to fit into both Sweden and Eritrean cultures shows that individuals with hybrid cultures can identify with both cultures and adopt both cultural practices.

Hybrid identity is possible when individuals fit into more than one category of the social structure. Their hybrid identity comes from their language, culture, and society, and their identity is determined by their social interaction. When at home, most speak their mother tongue but speak Swedish when they are with their friends. This shows that the interviewees adopted the identity that was most convenient for their social interaction.

7.1 Future Research

This study is important because it explains the identity formation process of the descendant of Eritrean immigrants in Sweden. A substantial body of research confirms the elaborate process of self-identity formation for individuals with hyphenated identity, in particular, the descendant of Eritrean immigrants residing in Sweden. It reveals how the descendant immigrants connect with their cultural background in their host country. The main limitation of the study is a limited sample, which may affect the validity of the findings. Therefore, in order to study the subject comprehensively, a larger study population is necessary.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. Background information

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Occupation:

Education level:

Marital status:

2. Migration information

Both or one of your family members born in Sweden?

Where your parents come from?

When did your family migrate to Sweden?

Why did your parents decide to move to Sweden?

3. Language and culture

Language

What's your mother tongue?

How did you learn your mother tongue?

Do your parents often communicate with you by your mother tongue?

What language do you often speak at home?

How many languages do you speak?

Which language would you prefer or feel confident to speak?

Would you prefer your mother tongue over the Swedish language?

Where do you often speak your mother tongue? Friend/ family

Do you feel confident when you speak Swedish? Yes, why?

Culture

In which culture do you identify yourself?

Do your family teach you about Eritrean culture and history at home?

Do you often celebrate Swedish festivals at home?

What are the most important festivities you celebrate during the year with your family?

How do you celebrate them?

Do you consider yourself as a bicultural person? Yes, why?

Do you feel that you belong to a Swedish culture?

Do your parents accept or adopt a Swedish culture?

Are you a member of Eritrean community association?

How do you experience your culture?

How far a Swedish culture has an impact on your identity?

4. Homeland travel

How many times have you been to your homeland?

Do you have a strong connection to your homeland and engage in diaspora dialogue?

Would you prefer in the future to live in your homeland or Sweden?

5. Belonging and identity formation

Belonging

What's home for you? Are you home in Sweden?

Has it always been home to you?

Does your surrounding or where you live looks like Swedish?

6. Identity Formation

What comes to your mind when you hear the word Identity?

How do you identify yourself? Swedish/Eritrean?

How would your friend describe you?

How would you parents describe you?

If someone asks you who you are, what do you answer?

Do you feel that you have a hybrid or a double identity? If yes, then why?

Do you have many Swedish friends?

Do you feel that you are part of Swedish society?

Does native Swedish consider you as a Swedish?

What language do you speak with your Eritrean friends?

Do you have any experiences of being discriminated against because of your nationality and ethnic background in Sweden?

Appendix 2

Transcription of Recorded Interviews

1st Interviewee (Yacin H) Male

Background information

22 years old and born in Uppsala, Sweden. I'm a professional Football coach and study at Stockholm University. I'm single.

Migration information

My father moved to Sweden in 1990 due to the independence war in Eritrea, and my mom followed him in 1993 as well. Both of my parent born and raised in Eritrea. However, before independence in 1993, Eritrea was part of Ethiopia.

Language and culture

Language

My mother tongue is Afar language. Afar people are one of the ethnic groups in Eritrea. In Eritrea, we have nine ethnic groups. Afar is the language that is most used at home, so I learned through hearing and observing. I often communicate at home with my parents in Afar language. I speak six languages besides Swedish and Afar languages. I speak Afar with both family and friend from Eritrea who are Afar as well. I feel very confident when I speak Swedish because it's the language, I know the best.

Culture

I identify myself with Afar culture. I know a bit about Eritrean culture, but mostly about an ethnic group. I don't celebrate Swedish festivals at home. I celebrate birthdays, New Years, Ramadan, and Eid. I celebrate the festivals with family and friends. I consider myself as a bicultural person. Yeah since I grew up in the Swedish culture mixed with Afar culture. I got the best of the two worlds. I feel a little bit belonging to Swedish culture. My parents probably accept a Swedish culture, but they don't adopt it. I'm not a member of Eritrean association. I experience my culture through conversation and history lessons by people close to me. Swedish culture doesn't have much impact on my identity.

Home Travel

I have never been to Eritrea. I only stay in contact with my relatives, but I cannot say that I'm involved in any other dialogue since I'm not interested in politics at all. None of them, but if I have to choose, I will choose Sweden.

Belonging and identity formation

Belonging

Yes, I feel at home in Sweden. Yes, it has always been home for me. Most of the people where I live have a foreign background, but they are all Swedish. I have a couple of Swedish colleagues and friends as well.

Identity

Something you can relate to family history. I identify myself first as Afar Swedish and then Eritrean. I don't know what my parents or friends think of me, but you would have to ask them. If someone asked me who I'm, I would say I'm Swedish, but my heritage is from Eritrea. I feel like I have a hybrid identity because I'm Afar and still Swedish since I was born here. Yes, I have a lot of Swedish friends. Yes, of course, I feel I'm a part of Swedish society. Yes, I think Swedish people consider me as Swedish because I was born here. I speak Swedish with my Eritrean friends because I cannot speak their language (Tigrigna). Yes, I have been racially abused by opposing fans when I was playing professional soccer in the second top tier of Swedish football divisions.

2nd Interviewee (Eden G) Female

Background information

24 years old and born in Lund, Sweden. I study social science bachelor program and 3rd-year student at Lund University. I'm in a relationship, and my boyfriend is Swedish.

Migration information

Both my parents left Eritrea in the late 80s to Sudan and then moved to Sweden in 1990. As obviously, they left Eritrea because of the independence war which erupted in the late 80's.

Language and culture

Language

My mother tongue is Tigrinya. I learn Tigrinya at home. Both my parents are Tigrinya speakers. They can also speak Arabic because they lived in Sudan for about five years. We speak at home Tigrinya and Swedish. I speak almost three languages (Tigrinya, Swedish and English). Of course,

I feel confident to speak Swedish because it's the only language I learned at school. It is difficult to say which language I prefer; however, I think I would say I prefer Swedish. In Swedish, it is so easy to express myself. I don't have friends from Eritrea excepts cousins in Stockholm. However, with Swedish and foreign background friends we always speak Swedish together. I feel very confident when I speak Swedish.

Culture

I identify myself with both cultures but more with the Swedish culture. Both my parents were freedom fighters, and they teach me everything about Eritrea. Yes, I celebrate both Swedish and Eritrean festivals at home. For example, birthdays, Orthodox Epiphany, Christmas, Eritrean independent day and all the Swedish festivals. Since my boyfriend is Swedish, we celebrate all classical Swedish traditions. Yes, I consider myself a bicultural person. However, I'm open-minded, and I like to experience more about the Swedish culture. Yes, my parent to some extent has adopted a Swedish culture. Both of them well integrated into the Swedish society. I experience my culture occasionally when there is a celebration with friend and family. The Swedish culture almost has a positive impact on my identity. I don't want to stand in the middle of two cultures, and I always feel as I'm a Swedish.

Home Travel

I have been to Eritrea once because I have close families there. My families have a strong connection, not me, and I don't engage in any political dialogues. I would prefer to live in Sweden or another EU country but not in Eritrea.

Belonging and identity formation

Belonging

Home is where I feel safe and been accepted. I always feel at home in Sweden. Yes, because both my parents are university graduates and they have good jobs. So, we live in the Swedish middle-income residential areas.

Identity

I relate identity to where I come from and who I'm now. I identify myself as Eritrean but born & raised in Sweden. I think both my friends and my parent would describe me as I'm too Swedish. I would tell them I'm Swedish, but if they insisted, I will tell them that my families come from Eritrea. I don't think I have a hybrid culture. I raised to be Swedish. All my surroundings smell Swedish. I know that I have Eritrean background, but I'm not obsessed to adopt that kind of

identity. Almost all my friends are Swedish. I feel and are part of Swedish society. I have never been discriminated because of my background.

3rd Interviewee (Daniel A) Male

Background information

20 years old and born in Malmö, Sweden. I study gymnasiet (secondary school) in Malmö. I'm single.

Migration information

My family migrated to Sweden in 1996. My father fled Eritrea before the Ethio-Eritrean war broke out. The main reason he left his homeland is due to unending military service. He was a soldier for about ten years. He met my mom in Sudan, and they came together to Sweden.

Language and culture

Language

My mother tongue is Tigrinya. Tigrinya is the official language in Eritrea. I learned Tigrinya at home. We always speak in Tigrinya at home. I speak Tigrinya, Swedish and English. Of course, I prefer Tigrinya over Swedish. It is my heritage, and I'm proud of it. I feel confident to speak both Swedish and Tigrinya. I don't have Eritrean friends, but I have many foreign background friends. We always speak Swedish together. Yes, I feel confident to speak Swedish.

Culture

I identify myself with Tigrinya or Eritrean culture. Yes, of course, my family taught me everything about my heritage. No, we don't celebrate Swedish festivals, except we celebrate the Christmas though we celebrate Eritrean Christmas on January 7th due to my parents are orthodox Christians. We celebrate all the cultural festival at home with family and relatives. Yes, I consider myself as a bicultural person. Because I was born in Sweden and my parents came from Eritrea. I don't think I belong to Swedish culture because I only follow Eritrean culture. No, my parents still keep their culture and they don't adopt a Swedish culture at all. No, I'm not a member of Eritrean community association. I experience my culture at home or when there are special occasions. Yes, the Swedish culture has a positive impact on my identity. Few to say punctuality, respect and to be modest.

Home Travel

I traveled once to Asmara Eritrea in 2010. Yes, I have a strong connection to my homeland. Yes, my parents are active supporters of the Eritrean government, and I'm concerned as well. If Eritrea has peace and a stable economy, then I would prefer to live in Asmara, Eritrea.

Belonging and identity formation

Belonging

Yes, I feel at home in Sweden. My surrounding, unfortunately, more looks like the Middle East than Swedish. I live in one of the biggest ghettos in Sweden called Rosengård.

Identity

Identity is all about who you think you are. I identify myself first as Eritrean and then Swedish. I don't have Eritrean friends, but my other friends will describe me as I'm Eritrean or African. My parents might describe me as I'm more Eritrean than Swedish. I will tell them that I was born in Sweden, but I'm Eritrean. Yes, I might have a hybrid identity. I believe that I'm part of a Swedish society like other immigrants, but I know that I'm not a pure Swedish. I didn't experience direct discrimination so to speak. But I know that I don't have equal privilege as a native Swedish.

4th Interviewee (Meron G) Female

Background information

28 years old and born in Stockholm, Sweden. I studied a Bachelor of Economics at Stockholm University, and I work for a private company. I'm married and have no children.

Migration information

Both my family came to Sweden in 1990. They were refugees in Sudan and then they moved to Sweden. They left Eritrea because of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrean freedom fighters.

Language and culture

Language

My mother tongue is Tigrinya. I speak Tigrinya with my husband. Both my parents are well educated, and they have a liberal mind. They love Sweden so much. I speak both Swedish and Tigrinya with them. It doesn't matter which language we speak at home. I speak almost three languages (Tigrinya, Swedish and English). Yes, I prefer Tigrinya, which is my mother tongue, but I like Swedish as well. I think it doesn't matter. After all, I was born and raised here in Sweden. I

Speak Swedish with my friends and Tigrinya when I go to church or on some special occasions. Yes, I feel confident to speak Swedish.

Culture

I identify myself with both cultures – Swedish & Eritrea. My parents played a great role in my life and to learn more about my heritage. Yes, we celebrate both cultural festivals. Mostly we celebrate birthdays, Christmas, Mid-Summer, and all orthodox calendar festivals. We celebrate at home by wearing cultural clothes, and we have a unique coffee ceremony, and we invite our Swedish friends as well. Yes, I consider myself as a bicultural person. Because my parents came from Eritrea and I was born & raised in Sweden. Yes, I belong to Swedish culture. It's the only culture that I know well. Yes, my parents adopt a Swedish culture in corresponding to Eritrean culture. However, they celebrate all Swedish festivals. Yes, in Stockholm we have an Eritrean community association, and I'm a member. I experience my culture as usual, and I inclined more to the Swedish culture except when we have Eritrean wedding or other cultural festivals. The Swedish culture has a positive impact on my identity. I'm more Swedish than Eritrean.

Home Travel

I never traveled to Eritrea. All my close relatives live abroad in Europe and the USA. I have a connection to my motherland Eritrea, but I don't like the current government in Eritrea. I always want to live in Sweden.

Belonging and identity formation

Belonging

Sweden is my home, and it will be forever. I live in a mixed residential area in Stockholm, and my surrounding quite looks Swedish.

Identity

I relate identity to my heritage. I identify myself as Eritrean Swedish. My friends would describe me as I'm more Swedish than Eritrean. My parents don't bother much about who I want to be. They lived here in Sweden for more than 20 years, and they achieved everything here in Sweden. So, they like everything about Sweden. Due to my color if I say directly I'm Swedish no one will believe me, or they will get a bit confused. I prefer to say I was born in Sweden, but I have Eritrean heritage. I think I have a hybrid identity both Swedish and Eritrean. No doubt that I feel part of Swedish society. I think the native Swedish consider me as a Swedish except my skin color. I speak Swedish with my Eritrean friends. Not so much experience of discrimination.

5th Interviewee (Saleh O) Male

Background information

25 years old and born in Stockholm, Sweden. I studied political science at Stockholm University, and I work in the public sector and single.

Migration information

Both of my parents came to Sweden in the early 90s that's 1991. They were in Egypt for around four years, and they left the country because my father was active in Eritrean liberation movement.

Language and culture

Language

My mother tongue is Tigre which is different from Tigrinya. Both my parents speak Tigrinya because they grow up in Asmara. I can understand Tigrinya, but I can't speak fluently. We often speak Tigre at home. I speak almost four languages (Tigre, Swedish, English, and little Arabic). Yes, I prefer my mother tongue over Swedish. It's my heritage, and I'm proud of it. Tigre is the second largest majority ethnic group in Eritrea which is marginalized by the current government of Eritrea. There are no many Tigre in Stockholm, and I have many foreign background friends, and I speak with them in Swedish. Yes, I'm confident to speak Swedish.

Culture

I identify myself first with Tigre culture because in Eritrea we don't have a single culture. All nine ethnic groups have their own culture. Then I can say that I can identify myself with the Swedish culture. As a Muslim, at home, we celebrate Ramadan and Eid. All family, friends, and relatives celebrate at home together. We visit each other's home during the Eid time. We don't celebrate any of Swedish festivals at home. My parents are religious Muslims, and they only celebrate Muslim festivals according to the religion. Yes, of course, at the New Year eve I go out together with my friends to celebrate it, but we don't put a Christmas tree at home. I consider myself as bicultural person mixed with Tigre and Swedish cultures. I don't feel that I belong to Swedish culture. Nowadays, if you are a Muslim and if you have a Muslim name it would be difficult to easily integrate, get acceptance and validation from the Swedish society. I'm not a member of the Eritrean community because most of the Eritrean associations in Stockholm are mostly belong to the Tigrinya people who are the majority in Eritrea and have power there as well. As a Tigre people, we have a unique and vibrant culture in Eritrea, and I experience my culture every day. For example, I often eat cultural foods, and on occasions, I also wear cultural clothes. The Swedish

culture has a positive impact on my identity. Because when you realize you don't belong to a certain culture, then you start appreciating who you are. However, I don't deny that the Swedish culture has a positive impact on my identity or who I'm right now.

Home Travel

I have never been to Eritrea. I will go there if the current government leaves the power or collapses. I have a strong connection to Eritrea and especially to my ethnic group Tigre. But currently, I'm not participating in any diaspora dialogue.

Belonging and identity formation

Belonging

Home is where you live, and I feel at home in Sweden. Yes, it has been home always, but I know I have another home called Eritrea. In my surrounding almost, no Swedish people live, and the majority are foreigners or immigrants.

Identity

I'm always fascinated about the word identity, and I think it's possible to have many identities. However, I identify myself as Tigre or Eritrean. Since elementary school, I knew that I'm black or African. Therefore, it's unthinkable to say that I'm Swedish. My friends or my parents identify me as I'm Eritrean or African. That's all. I would say I'm Eritrean, born & raised in Sweden. Yes, I have a hybrid identity that I inherited from my parents and my surrounding as well. I have Swedish colleagues at work, but generally, I have very few Swedish friends. I think I feel that I'm part of Swedish society because I know all Swedish cultural norms and values. However, I don't think I'm like Iranian or former Yugoslavian descendant immigrants. They automatically adopt a Swedish identity by having a Swedish boy or girlfriend, drinking alcohol, eating pork, etc. For me, those things are forbidden in my religion, and also I came from very nationalist parents and influenced my lifestyle as well. I don't think a native Swedish considers me as I'm Swedish. No one with an immigrant background is considered Swedish by the native. Above all, if you are black or African. I experience discrimination when I was at secondary school and long ago, when I did my first practice.

6th Interviewee (Melat Y) Female

Background information

21 years old and born in Uppsala, Sweden. I study a Bachelor of Nursing at Uppsala University. I'm single.

Migration information

My father fled Eritrea in 1989 due to war in Eritrea and stayed in Sudan refugee camp for few years and moved to Sweden in 1992 and my mother followed in 1994.

Language and culture

Language

My mother tongue is Tigrinya. I learned Tigrinya at home. Both my parents often speak Tigrinya at home. I speak three languages (Tigrinya, Swedish, and English). I feel confident when I speak Swedish. Of course, I prefer my mother tongue over Swedish, but I always want to speak Swedish. I speak Tigrinya at home only. Even with few descendants of Eritrean friends usually, we communicate in Swedish. I feel confident to speak Swedish mainly because the only language I learned at school and even at the university level as well.

Culture

I primarily identify myself with Eritrean culture, but still, I also identify myself with the Swedish culture too. Yes, my parents taught me everything about my heritage at home. We celebrate mostly Eritrean festivals at home, but we also celebrate birthdays, Christmas, Easter, Mid-Summer, and other orthodox church festivals. We celebrate, for example, Easter or Christmas first by going to church then celebrate at home with family and friends. We wear occasional Eritrean traditional clothes. I believe I'm a bicultural person, belong to both Eritrean and Swedish cultures. I believe that I belong to the Swedish culture. Yes, my parents accept and adopt the Swedish culture along with Eritrean traditions. Yes, I experience my culture when there are special occasions like wedding, holidays, and when we celebrate all orthodox church festivals (Christmas, Easter, Epiphany). The Swedish culture has a positive impact on my identity. Because it helped me to be aware of my heritage in one hand and on the other hand helped me to appreciate to be part of modern society.

Home Travel

I have never been to Eritrea. I think I'll never travel until there is a regime change or a stable political situation. Of course, I'm concerned about Eritrea. It's still a young country going through political and economic transitions. I didn't participate in any diaspora dialogue, but I have discussions at home with my parents. It's difficult to say because I was born in Sweden and Sweden is my country. However, I might think of retiring in Eritrea in the future.

Belonging and identity formation

Belonging

Home is always where I was born and live. Yes, I feel at home in Sweden. My surrounding is quite mixed with people of immigrant background and Swedish. Somehow, looks Swedish.

Identity

The direct word comes to mind when I hear the word identity is where I come from. So, it's obvious that even if I was born in Sweden, my origin is from Eritrea. I identify myself as Eritrean Swedish. My friends would describe me as Eritrean or African but not Swedish. If you have an immigrant background, even if you come from Finland, you are an immigrant, and, in my opinion, you can't be a Swedish. If someone asks me where I'm from I will tell them that I'm originally from Eritrean but born and raised in Sweden. I think that I have a hybrid identity. However, the Swedish identity takes more spaces. I have many Swedish friends, and I don't have a problem to spend time with them. I feel that I'm part of Swedish culture and it suits me in many ways. No, I don't think a native Swedish consider me as I'm a Swedish, but they know I was born here, so there is no problem. I don't have many Eritrean friends, but I speak Swedish with all my friends. To be honest, I didn't experience so much discrimination as compared to some other people. You know, in Sweden it's important to have a strong friend circle, and you always spend time with your close friend. In that way, it's possible that you might not expose to open discrimination. In Sweden, you have the right to report to the police if someone discriminated you because of your race, gender, or religion.