CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS:
THE IMPACT OF BICULTURALISM ON IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This research project deals with the experiences of children of immigrants in Sweden regarding biculturalism and personal identity. Using a method of qualitative interviewing we aim at answering the following research question: What effects of biculturalism have children of immigrants in Sweden experienced? What perceptions do children of immigrants have regarding the effects of biculturalism on their personal identity? This study uses the social identity theory approach as a framework for the analysis because it helps explain how the social context can affect identity formation.

**Key words:** children of immigrants, identity, biculturalism, ethnical identity.
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In addition when it comes to who wrote what in this thesis, we would like to clarify that we have helped each other in writing the various parts/chapters that this study consists of.
INTRODUCTION

Many things such as the environment, social factors, etc., affect how individuals identify themselves. When it comes to self-definition, children born in Sweden to immigrant parents with a different cultural background than that of the host society, pose an interesting case. Trying to combine the background culture with the culture of the new country can create obstacles and confusion for children growing up in bicultural households. Identity development is a social process that continues throughout life’s different stages and is something that starts when a person is very young.

Phinney, (et al., 2001) writes that, every individual have a unique identity—their own qualities, opinions, thoughts, and a one-of-a-kind personality. People create identities of their own so that they can relate to their surrounding environment in different ways. There are many things that affect the way people identify themselves, e.g. the surrounding environment, social factors, etc. When it comes to the children of immigrants, born in Sweden to parents who have a different cultural background from that of the host society, one might wonder how they define themselves.

To understand the identity formation of individuals with bicultural backgrounds, it is important to understand the social context of these individuals, acknowledging that issues such as immigration, inclusion and community affect the identity of an individual.

This essay focusses on a particular group of individuals with bicultural backgrounds, namely, children of immigrants that have been born and raised in Sweden. Although these individuals are not themselves immigrants, the topic of immigration is nevertheless an important aspect in the analysis of their identity formation.

A brief explanation of terms that is recurrent in the study:

Children of immigrants: Refers to children who are born and raised in a society where their parents aren’t originally from.

Biculturalism: Is the concept about an individual that deals with two cultures, i.e. children of immigrants, and must then affirm parents’ culture as much as the culture of the society that one
lives in. In its essence biculturalism is the combination of the cultural norms and attitudes of two or more cultures, ethnic groups and peoples.

**Identity:** When it comes to identity, as it suggests is about the self and being able to be who you are: and in this case, we focus on identity in connection with biculturalism and moreover on how the children of immigrants creates an identity as part of biculturalism.

**Research objective and research questions:**

The main purpose of this essay is to consider how the children of immigrants, who are in constant contact with at least two cultural contexts, perceive this duality, and to try to understand how it affects their identity. This thesis studies the way in which children of immigrants perceive their own identity in relation to biculturalism. How are the children with bicultural backgrounds affected by these events when it comes to shaping an identity? These are issues that deserve further investigation. The objective of this research project is to study the experiences of children of immigrants regarding biculturalism and personal identity, guided by the research questions below:

- What effects of biculturalism have children of immigrants in Sweden experienced?
- What perceptions do children of immigrants have regarding the effects of biculturalism on their personal identity?

**CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY**

This section describes the methodological approach of the study, explains how data have been analysed, and sets out the various criteria to ensure the quality of the research.

**1.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study takes a qualitative approach, using interviews as a tool to collect data. Qualitative research is a good application method when attempting to understand human activities and behaviour. This method can also be used as a way of describing complex social situations.
Moreover, it creates the ability to accurately, and in a nuanced way, describe complex social situations in society (Patton, 2004).

Research methods allow access to a more detailed way of studying people with a bicultural background and understanding their perceptions of living in a society in which they are members of a minority group.

1.2 SAMPLING METHOD

The sample for this study consisted of five participants with bicultural backgrounds living in the city of Stockholm, Sweden. A 'convenience sampling’, as described by Deacon (1999), was used because of the short time allowed for this study, which meant that it was more convenient to interview people who were geographically close.

Participants for the interviews were selected through acquaintances and people in the neighbourhood who fit the description of informants appropriate for this study. The choice of interviewees resulted in a selection of people who were willing to participate, all of whom have immigrant parent(s) coming from different cultural backgrounds. All of the informants are born and raised in Sweden. Of the five informants, four were female, and one male, all of whom were aged between nineteen and thirty years old.

1.3 DATA COLLECTION

THE INTERVIEW GUIDE AND THE INTERVIEW SITUATION

The interviews were conducted with the use of a semi-structured interview guide, which can be seen in Appendix II. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explain that when performing semi-structured interviews in a research study that all respondents are asked the same sets of questions and that the questions are open-ended with response options. Gives people more equal chance to express their opinion on the same issues. The themes in the interview guide were selected from among relevant information from the literature review and theoretical concepts, which are described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). All interviews were conducted in a setting that was familiar to the interviewees. The interviews took thirty to forty minutes, mainly because of the need to repeatedly explain the concepts that were central to the study, such as biculturalism and ethnic identity.
TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWS

During the interviews, one of us asked the questions, while the other took notes. The note taker would later do the transcription. Through the interview process, we took turns conducting, taking notes and transcribing the data collection. The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder and were interpreted separately, before the individual interpretations were combined. Finally, the interpretations were compared, with the goal of reaching and presenting a common interpretation.

1.4 DATA ANALYSIS

ANALYTICAL METHOD: MEANING CONDENSATION

The method of analysis used with the data was the meaning condensation method. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) explain that the method includes five steps. First, the researcher reads the entire interview to get a sense of the whole. The researcher then determines the natural meaning entities in the text, as expressed by the interviewees. Third, the researcher formulates as simply as possible the theme that dominates a natural meaning entity, and then arranges statements according to themes based on the interviewee's point of view as they are perceived by the researcher. The fourth step is to ask questions of meaning units based on the research’s specific purpose. In the fifth step, the data material is linked together in central, non-redundant themes in a descriptive statement. Through this method, an analysis of data collection identifies key themes in the interviews, which makes it easier to analyse the results.

1.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When conducting a study, it is important that much care is taken to ensure that the research has been conducted in unison with ethical considerations, which means that researchers need to respect the persons involved in the study and consider the harm it might create for them. This study took into consideration both the ethical aspects advocated by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), as well as the ethical guidelines formulated by the Swedish Research Council. The ethical guidelines that were taken into consideration for this study are outlined in the sections below.
INFORMED CONSENT

The ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council emphasise the need for the researcher to inform all respondents and survey participants about their role in the project and the conditions required for their participation. Before the interviews for this project were scheduled, participants were provided with information on the study, were informed that participation in the study would be voluntary, and were told that they would have the right to withdraw at any given time. The information provided to the participants included all the aspects of the study, which gave the informants the opportunity to reflect upon any possible harm their participation might have on their personal situation. All informants were handed an information letter (see Appendix I), which they could sign as an indication of their consent to participate in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) maintain that it is very important to secure the confidentiality of the respondents when conducting interviews. To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees for this project, in the presentation of the results, any data that could lead to the identification of the respondents was removed.

UTILISATION OF DATA MATERIAL

One of the principles in the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (2002) specifies that data which is collected for research purposes shall not be used or loaned for commercial or other non-scientific purposes. To fulfil this principle, the data collected for this study will not be used for any other purpose than that which was explained to the participants.

CONSEQUENCES

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue that when conducting a qualitative study, the consequences of the study should be addressed. The researchers should make a trade-off regarding potential harm against the respondents and the scientific knowledge that is expected to derive from the study.

We believe that the topic of the present research will cause no harm to our informants. This is based on conversations held with all participants after the interviews were conducted. The
conversations covered the feelings and reactions the participants had regarding the questions asked during the interviews. None of the respondents felt that the questions were unpleasant in any way, which led to the assumption that the study was not harmful to them.

ROLE OF THE RESEARCHERS

We realised that because the subject of this study was of such personal interest to us, it could very naturally lead to biases in our research. Acknowledging that there is a duty to consider how best to interpret the results and conduct the interviews, especially when the researchers are related in any way to the research subjects, we tried to remain sensitive to preconceptions we might have, attempting to put them aside when designing the interview questions and analysing the data.

For this study, the children of immigrants spoke of how they define themselves and what impact having a bicultural background has on their identity. We first tested the interview questions on ourselves, and as we answered the questions, we wrote down any preconceptions to avoid mixing our own thoughts with those of the interviewees.

1.6 THE CREDIBILITY OF THE STUDY

When it comes to the credibility of the study, there are some general aspects that one must consider. In this section, essential information that impacts the credibility of the study such as the validity and reliability are discussed. Both validity and reliability, which are generally used to assess credibility, are difficult to apply in qualitative research, but, as Guba and Lincoln (1985) affirm, there are other, more appropriate concepts that can be used. The reasoning they have built on is that there is no absolute truth that scientists can reach. Rather, they argue that there can be multiple truths which are accessed through the interpretation of social reality. For interpretation to be considered credible and trustworthy in a qualitative study, other criteria must be established such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

CREDIBILITY

Guba and Lincoln (1985) use the term “trustworthiness” in qualitative studies as equivalent to what is referred to as “internal validity” in quantitative research. They explain that it is aimed at the researcher's theoretical models as they develop and as the observations match. Credibility should lead to the acceptance of the researcher’s discoveries and conclusions by others,
depending on whether they convince the reader that they have made a correct observation of the social world.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) explain that the way to ensure a credible result is through respondent validation and triangulation. To perform triangulation in a study involves combining different methods; this is done to explain the same phenomenon from different perspectives. Respondent validation means that the researcher shares the data with the informants to confirm that the correct interpretation has been made of the material. Credibility of qualitative research is aimed at understanding the phenomenon and describes it from the participants' perspective because the participants are the only ones who can judge whether we understood them correctly. To ensure the credibility of the present study, children of immigrants with different bicultural backgrounds were interviewed; resulting in a more general picture of the impact biculturalism has on their identity.

As all interviews were recorded and transcribed in their entirety, there was less room for our own interpretations to influence the results, as can occur when only records are kept of the interview. All interviewees were given the opportunity to read through the transcript after the interviews, but some of the informants preferred just to receive the final version of the study.

TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability is a component that can also be referred to as external validity, and has to do with the extent to which the qualitative research result can either be generalized or transferred to other settings or contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). External validity is described as the way in which the results of a study must be acceptable (valid) in another context or another association. To ensure good transferability, the study must be representative of the context into which it is desired that it be transferred. The primary responsibility to ensure the transferability of a qualitative perspective rests on the one who is conducting the study to illustrate the context in a rich way so that other researchers can make their own assessment as to whether the study can be used to understand a similar context. One of the ways to enhance the transferability of qualitative research is by describing carefully the research context and the central assumptions made during the research work.
This research was based on a semi-structured interview study of the children of immigrants regarding their experiences of the effects of a bicultural background on their identity. The purpose of the study had to be stated beforehand and the individual questions needed to be sensitive. The interviews produced a great deal of information, and the informants were told that there were no right or wrong answers due to the fact that every answer to the questions came from a unique story.

DEPENDABILITY

Dependability is used in the same context as reliability, and deals with the correct method being selected for the study. There are different procedures for ensuring dependability. For example, the various processes can be documented, i.e. from hypothesis to conclusion, and this attests to a study’s dependability. Readers of the work find it easier to become acquainted with what is written, and, in addition, it is possible to critique whether the model of what is appropriate has been followed. In a qualitative study, this generates large quantities of data (Bell, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

We had numerous discussions with our designated supervisor to ensure that suitable practices were used for our research. Descriptions as to how the study was conducted, how the data was processed, the theoretical framework used, etc. were also carefully communicated.

There are circumstances that can affect the interviewees' responses such as the way questions are worded and the location of the interview. To compensate for this, we reviewed the wording by first asking ourselves the questions. The participants were allowed to choose the place for the interview.

The individuals interviewed for the study had parent(s) who had originated from different corners of the globe, which was considered to be a good thing.

CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability has the same meaning as objectivity. Guba and Lincoln (1985) maintain that it is almost impossible to achieve a hundred percent objectivity in a study. The researcher's task is to ensure that he acts in good faith and does not allow private thinking or other hypothetical
knowledge to influence the implementation and impact of the study (Bell, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

The interview guide used for this study was based on an extensive literature review. To minimise the risk of bias, we tried to be extremely careful not to ask leading questions, and most of the questions asked were of an open character. If it was necessary, the participants were asked to explain what they meant. In addition to utilising a structured approach to address all euphemisms, we also tried to strengthen the study through the use of quotations.

1.7 ANTICIPATED DIFFICULTIES

We acknowledged that our own experiences of being immigrants could affect the interpretation of the study process, but we also considered that this same factor could be beneficial, since it could give us the knowledge required to understand and be able to interpret certain situations described by our respondents.

CHAPTER 2: 2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses the social identity theory approach as a theoretical framework for the analysis of this study. Since the study is about personal identity and how it is affected by biculturalism, it was important to find a specific theory that could be related to this issue. At the beginning of the research process, there were several theories, such as social constructivism that seemed suitable for this kind of research. However since the social identity theory is more specific than social constructivism, this theoretical approach was deemed to be more suitable for our study.

Hornsey (2007) elucidates that social identity theory redefines the mind-set around numerous group-mediated phenomenon. Social identity theory arose around 1970, and over the years, has been reinterpreted, elaborated and even sometimes misinterpreted. Furthermore, according to Verdugo and Mueller (2009), social identity theory is based on the idea that everyone is born within a social group, and this creates progress, promotes growth, and develops faith in oneself; it also leads people to divide themselves into categories and groups. The society in which people live decisively shapes their social identity.
Since this research is concerned with impacts on the identity of children of immigrants, especially focusing on their experiences of biculturalism, Hornsey’s (2007) elucidation of social identity as a theory that focuses on how social contexts affect intergroup relationships indicated that this was the most appropriate theory to use.

However, Wearing (2011) explains that social identity theory is a concept that emerged from group identity. According to social identity theory, people usually classify themselves and others according to social categories, general stereotypes that are typical of some members of groups in a society. The Mångfaldsbarometern (2013) shows that over all, a high percentage of the population in Sweden has a generally good experience of immigrants. Even though there are variations from year to year, positive opinions have slightly increased among the different groups for which the statistics are compiled. Most of the groups have either remained stable in their attitudes or increased their positive opinion towards immigrants. According to Wearing (2011), social identity theory is a theory that may seem diffuse, but it is interrelated with a group of social psychological theories. Furthermore, Wearing (2011) explains that this theory is related to issues such as when and why an individual identifies with a particular identity, and interacts as part of a social group, leading to the adoption of common attitudes and values.

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2.2 THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Even though the social identity theory has a broad influence on social research, it has been criticized for being oversimplified and rigid. Hornsey (2007) writes that despite the broad influence social identity theory has had, its different approach has not gone unnoticed and without criticism. Researchers are now starting to pay attention to different types of groups and their identities, and are beginning to realize that the guidelines previously proposed by the social cognitive theory (SCT) may not be sufficient for understanding how identity is shaped. Some argue that the social identity theory has become so widespread and powerful that experiments and theories no longer have enough free parameters, and observations can no longer be falsifiable, as they can only be interpreted within its scope. Another criticism comes from focusing on the development and race and behaviour of individuals to the extent that the theory suffers from flaws and cracks because it is pointing in the opposite directions, for example, at more fundamental parts. Finally, it has been stated many times that the social identity approach is more
comfortable with promoting in-groups, rather than acknowledging the discrepancies in out-groups and that it fails to have a proper approach to inter-group hostility.

Although there are many limitations to and criticisms about this theory, we have determined that the positive aspects of social identity theory are a good complement to a study like ours that seeks to understand how biculturalism might have an effect on the identity of children of immigrants.

2.3 SOCIAL WORK CONNECTION

Social work is a profession that focuses on solving complex social problems by enhancing human capacity and creating a society that is more human and just.

Since social work deals with complex problems, one of the cornerstones of this profession is the focus on the strengths of individuals, communities and families, rather than the shortcomings. Other positive aspects of social work are that it promotes justice and empowerment for those in need in a society. Since social work is a profession that necessitates a diverse range of relationships, it provides many opportunities for working with individuals and organizations across a society, e.g. families, children, welfare, rehabilitation, healthcare, counsellors, immigrants, etc.

The present study is focused on children of immigrants and how their experiences, due to their bicultural backgrounds, have impacted on their identity. We maintain that our study has a social work connection because the overall objective of social work involves caring for all individuals in the society and providing a platform for the improvement of the quality of life for members of societies. There is a widespread belief among social workers that research is a good way to recognize and implement the changes that are needed in order to highlight the different factors that determine whether individuals will either be alienated or become part of a society. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) explains that social work is based on human rights and social justice, and has values that are based on respect for the equality, worth and dignity of all humans. They explain that social work is focused on helping to meet the needs of people in order to develop the human potential we all have. Therefore, it is our hope that by trying to understand how a small minority of the population of Sweden, i.e. children of
immigrants, identify themselves, our research will result in information that will be helpful to social workers, and will also be of benefit to the wider world. Identity crises can adversely affect a person's life and it can lead to that one can expect that the identity process may be more complex for a person that have to consider two social contexts. For this reason, knowledge of how biculturalism affects a person’s identity process, which we hope to achieve more by this thesis, is important for individuals with foreign-born parents.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 SELECTION OF LITERATURE

The background research conducted to inform the study was collected from academic journals and databases, including Discovery, Academic Search Elite, Sage Journals Online, Web of Science, etc. We also searched with Google Scholar in order to find materials such as articles and e-books. The search words used were children of immigrants, biculturalism, second generation immigrants and immigrants.

3.2 EARLIER RESEARCH

In this chapter we will describe different forms of the background research that were found to be relevant and essential for our study. The chapter is divided into subcategories related to the type of knowledge that was valuable for our study, i.e. children of immigrants, biculturalism, identity, and ethnic identity.

3.3 CHILDREN OF IMMIGRANTS

There seems to be disagreement among researchers regarding the most correct terminology when speaking about the subject of this study, i.e. ‘second-generation immigrants’ or ‘children of immigrants’. Because there is no doubt about the use of the term ‘children of immigrants’ among scholars, we have chosen to use that term in our paper. Previous research showed that many of the studies connected with children of immigrants focused on immigration and family interaction in a new host country, and it was difficult to find specific content that related to identity impact and experiences of the children of immigrants.
Tafarodi and Kang (2002) explain that there has been a lot of research conducted on the experience of immigrants themselves and how their identities are affected when moving to a host country, but there are only a few studies that have focused on the experiences of the children of immigrants. Furthermore, they explain that cultural distance between the host country and the country of origin has an influence on adaptation to the host society. Everyone has a self-defining personality with its own values, beliefs, and so on, and this has to be accounted to immigrants as well when moving to a new country. They bring with them the cultural values and life style connected to their country of origin. Research has shown that children of immigrants are affected by having to deal with both the cultural impact of their parents and of the mainstream culture of the new society. This has led to a formation of a bicultural self-identity for children of immigrants. The children of immigrants have to create a self-identity that is influenced by a diverse multi-cultural mix. What this means is that children of immigrants connect their identity to both the main stream society and the culture of their parents, and therefore they start to categorize themselves as being partly from both cultures. Tafarodi & Kang (2002) indicate that there should be an awareness of the ethnic identity which is noticed mostly after adolescence as this is when individuals choose to categorize themselves as part of a particular group.

Padilla (2006) writes that when it comes to the identity formation of an individual, there are different social contexts that have an effect on how people identify themselves and these factors have to be considered.

There is an important aspect to take into consideration and that is that; children of immigrants belongs to a minority in a society - and Padilla (2006) writes that, if a child grows up in a society where alienation is created for a minority group, there is a risk of alienation being created in that child. What happens to the children of immigrants who have two worlds to account for—the culture of their parents in parallel with the culture of the society in which they live? Nowadays, topics such as ethnic identification, biculturalism and ethnic socialization have a greater importance in ethnic psychology. Even though interest in this subject has increased, there is still little attention paid to the psychology of culturally diverse children and adolescents, especially in the area of developmental psychology. Further Padilla (2006) elaborate that when it comes to evaluating the effect that experiences of children of immigrants have on their identity formation
and categorization, the host society should be more concerned about enhancing the wellbeing and development of these children.

3.4 BICULTURALISM

Padilla (2006) notes that, historically, a bicultural person has been defined in sociological literature as a dual-culture personality. To understand what the definition of biculturalism means for an individual, it is important to acquire the historical knowledge of how the term emerged and whether this is negative or positive for the individual. Padilla (2006), with reference to the studies of Park (1928), explains that the idea of a marginal person is based on a situation in which individuals find themselves in-between cultures. Padilla (2006, p. 469) quoting Stonequist (1937, pp. 2-3), explains the conditions leading to marginality and the impact of marginality by claiming that:

“the individual who through migration, education, marriage, or some other influence leaves one social group or culture without making a satisfactory adjustment to another finds himself on the margin of each but a member of neither. He is a ‘marginal’ man. The marginal personality is most clearly portrayed in those individuals who are unwittingly initiated into two or more historic traditions, languages, political loyalties, moral codes, or religions.”

Stonequist (1937) refers to situations that cause individuals to unwittingly leave one cultural orientation for another. A marginalized person is an individual that has trouble adjusting to the new culture, which in turn leads to the person becoming excluded by both cultures. When it comes to the subject of marginality, we believe that it is important to include this aspect in the thesis because we want to highlight that there are different outcomes of belonging to two cultures, i.e., that one outcome is to be excluded from both cultures, and the second to be included, and thereby take advantage of both cultures?. It is also an important part of the essay to address these two perspectives for the simple reason to see whether our interviewees perceive that one or the other in the analyses.

Furthermore Padilla (2006) elaborates that the downside of the marginalization concept is that the responsibility for assimilation is placed on the individual as well as the society that should be part of the assimilation process by assisting and accepting the person. Biculturalism on the other hand
differs from assimilation, in that one sees the positive aspects of keeping both cultures while the other assumes that an individual should leave one culture for another.

The concept of biculturalism emerged in psychology and had a positive meaning, referring to the way in which individuals manage two cultures successfully. This more contemporary view allows individuals to be members of two cultures without favouring one culture over the other, and without serious psychological conflict. It is this concept that will be used to look closely at how children of immigrants feel or express themselves about their own identities and the effects of biculturalism on their identity formation.

Compared to the concept of marginalization, in which dual-cultural individuals are ascribed with negative personality characteristics, biculturalism focuses on the positive aspects. Marginalization describes an inferior person being isolated from one culture, or even from both cultures, and assumes that the person is in an inferior position. This is explained by the Park-Stonequist model (1937), which claims that the person in inferior positions suffers from feelings of inferiority because of self-hate or low self-esteem, which is related to the negative response that comes from being isolated from either one or both cultures that they would normally relate to. Biculturalism provides a more positive image of the personality of individuals with a bicultural background, in which the person is seen to be well-adjusted and open to the multiculturalism of the society. A bicultural person is seen as someone with two social identities and persona, because often the person is at ease with socializing with members of both cultures and has no trouble switching from one cultural orientation to another. The biculturalism perspective recognizes the social flexibility of a person with dual-cultures, and considers this as an advantage and good reason for bicultural socialization.

Tafarodi & Kang (2002, p. 1131) provide a useful description of biculturalism:

“The children of immigrants possess bicultural identities that reflect their ethnic heritage and their membership in the wider community. For most, strong identification with the dominant culture creates a desire for full inclusion within it. In the case of visible minorities, however, physical dissimilarity is at times experienced as an ‘ethnifying’ obstacle to assimilation or integration. One response to this challenge is compensatory alignment with the majority group when physical appearance is made salient.”
Here they bring up the effect of biculturalism in connection with identity, acknowledging that the ethnic heritage of the children of immigrants might have an effect on the formation of either an included or excluded identity in relation to the main society. Children of immigrants that are always ‘ethnified’ have problems assimilating in the society. Kang’s article (2002) explains that ‘ethnified’ refers to those who are recognized as immigrants because of their appearance and as a result are given identification or a group categorization.

Tafarodi & Kang (2002) explain that there are some challenges for children of immigrants that are related to biculturalism. Immigration leads to negotiations with a new culture and the difficulties with this negotiation increase proportionally to the distance that separates the culture of origin from the new culture. Furthermore, the distance between the new culture and the culture of origin may challenge the traditions, beliefs and values of the immigrant and that needs to be adjusted to. They point out that cultural differences would be even greater if it were not for the homogenizing effect of globalization today. Cultural distance constitutes challenges for the children of immigrants who are trying to bridge and reconcile the two worlds they are part of. Biculturalism tries to maintain a culture that is conserved within the family and the ethnic community, as well as incorporating that of the main society in which they may participate through public education, popular culture, reference groups, and employment.

Tafarodi and Kang (2002) explain that the struggle of being in-between two cultures experienced by the children of immigrants results in a bicultural self-identity. What is meant by this is that the children of immigrants begin to identify with both cultures, and therefore begin to categorize themselves differently, for example, as Swedish-Chilean. It is only in late adolescence or adulthood that this bicultural self-identity categorization takes an active form, depending on various factors that arise in the society such as singling out an ethnic group. This means that individuals with dual background can start to categorize themselves in different social groups depending on what they feel are close to them.

Most often this is due to prejudice and discrimination directed against an ethnic group by the cultural majority. Usually this happens in the form of racism by which the ethnic group whose physical resemblance differs from the majority population is the exception in a generalized way. Common experiences, described by ethnic minorities, create broader pan-ethnic identities that they then use to categorize themselves within the society, for example, as Black American or
Afro-Swedes. Furthermore, Tafarodi and Kang (2002) talk about visible minority status and immigrants’ inclusion in society. When it comes to the social and economic success of immigrant children with bicultural backgrounds, it is required that they get involved and participate in the mainstream culture; only then will there be full acceptance and recognition of the legitimacy of the majority group. This way of involvement in the mainstream society can lead to frustration for so-called visible minorities, due to the fact that the majority group members tend to ethnify them based on their appearance.

Tafarodi and Kang (2002) examine certain facts related to bicultural, visible minorities and their attempt to retain dual cultural identities by manoeuvring between both of them. A large segment of these minorities usually desires to merge and fit in with the native faction of the society which is in the majority. They try their best to follow and adapt to the native culture and practices in order to cover up the traits that make them stand out as a different community. However, the physical ethnic dissimilarity becomes an obstacle, because they always remain noticeable and distinctive. Tafarodi and Kang (2002) build a strong argument on the basis of an in-depth examination and studies performed on minority groups (immigrants), suggesting that when an individual (or a group) has cultural differences and is ethnically dissimilar from the local society, the individual tends to show an adaptive behaviour (compensatory conformity). The individual tends to adopt the native (e.g. Swedish) social values, cultural norms, attitudes and tendencies in order to compensate for the dissimilarities with their parents’ culture. The demographic and ethnic diversity provides a basis for the immigrants and their children to accept expected and accepted emotional patterns of the local culture for overcoming their demographic dissimilarity. Tafarodi and Kang (2002) explain that, for example, in a particular work group or environment comprised of individuals of mixed gender, the female members with a distinctive ethnicity will be more cautious and sensitive as a result of the emotional difference that separates them from the native male team members. The female members of the out-group will struggle to compensate for the dissimilarity.

3.5 IDENTITY
When it comes to describing and discussing identity, many different concepts could be used. We have found the general description offered by Stets and Burke (2000, p. 224) to be particularly helpful:

“In social identity theory and identity theory, the self is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications. This process is called self-categorization in social identity theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell, 1987); in identity theory it is called identification (McCall and Simmons, 1978). Through the process of self-categorization or identification, an identity is formed.”

Stets and Burke (2000) elaborates that social identity theory describe social identity as; an individual’s acknowledgement and understanding that they belong to a social group or category. A social group is explained as a group of individuals that view themselves belonging to the same social category or that have common social identification. There are two processes involved in social identity formation that are of importance which are; self-categorization and social comparison and both leads to different consequences. The implications of self-categorization is an emphasis of the perceived similarities between the self and other in-group members, and could also be an accentuation of the perceived differences between self and out-group members. This accentuation relates to all the values, beliefs, styles of speech, behavioural norms and attitudes that are believed to be correlated and relevant within the intergroup categorization. As a result of the social comparison process is the separation of the use of concrete insertion effect, especially when referring to the different measurements that will lead to self-change for the better. In other words, it’s the self-confidence that is raised by the assessment of the in-group and out-group based on different measurements which results in the in-group being examined favourably and the out-group negatively.

Although we are not focusing so much on what identity is in our study, rather emphasis is on finding out the impact of biculturalism on identity for children of immigrant parents; it might be good to have different definitions of identity described by various researchers. In the article “Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-Being: An Interactional Perspective” (Phinney, et al., 2001), identity is described as an individual perception of the self. To be more precise, identity denotes that which makes an individual unique, the different quality that an individual possesses
and no one else does. Payne (2005) says that people interact with others and try to comprehend the similarities and the differences that are evident between the self and the other. This is one of the main issues when one studies the integration of immigrants or even touch upon the subject of children of immigrants.

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3.6 ETHNIC IDENTITY

To understand how being part of two different cultures impacts one’s personal identity, it is first essential to define ethnic identity. Phinney et al. (2001) explain that ethnic identity is the sense of self an individual has when it comes to belonging to a particular ethnic group. This definition of ethnic identity was found helpful for this study because it describes many different aspects cultural phenomena have on individuals.

Phinney et al. (2001) demonstrate that ethnic identity is an aspect that focuses on the subjective sense of belonging to a particular group or culture. In the most general terms, ethnic identity can be defined as ‘the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs when individuals from different cultures come into contact’ (Phinney et al., 2001, p.).

When it comes to ethnic identity, according to Phinney et al. (2001), whether immigrants keep their ethnic identity or take on the national identity depends on whether the host country supports ethnic maintenance. However, earlier studies show that the best adaptation is noticed when there is a strong combination of ethnic identity and national identity. For those ethnic communities that have strong support in doing so, the outcomes will be positive, depending on the particular group. There is a sense of belonging to a group or culture through ethnic identity which is an aspect of acculturation.

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CHAPTER 4: ANALYSES AND RESULTS

As with all research studies, qualitative analysis creates an opening for research in which theories and descriptions of phenomena are grounded in reality, and it allows for a more nuanced and rich description of reality, instead of a one-sided picture of reality that is fixed and absolute. Instead,
the analysis is based on surrounding social conditions (Patton, 2004). For this reason qualitative analysis was especially well suited for this study, as the relationship between identity and culture is so complex that it does not allow itself to be restricted by general assumptions. To further aid in the exploration of how children of immigrants experience the effects of biculturalism and the determination of what affect biculturalism has on their identity, in this chapter, the key themes that arose from the interviews will be presented, in accordance with the use of the analytical theory of meaning condensation. The informants’ views, perceptions, thoughts, and comments will be featured in the analysis of the data that has been gathered. The social identity theory will be used to analyze our results along with a comparison between our results and those of earlier research.

The chapter is divided into two parts in order to deal individually with the topics; identity influences and ethnic identity.

Before continuing with the analyses of the data, a short description of the informants who participated in this study will be presented. As stated above, of the five interviewees who participated in this study, all had immigrant parents from different cultural backgrounds. Four of the informants were female, and one was male, with all aged between nineteen and thirty years old. The informants are referred to with abbreviations in the analysis:

- INV1 is female and has a bicultural background; her parents are from Chile.
- INV2 is female; her parents are from Puerto Rico and Jamaica.
- INV3 is male; his parents are from Somalia.
- INV4 is female; her parents are from India.
- INV5 is female; her parents are from Pakistan.

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IDENTITY INFLUENCES
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Tafarodi and Kang (2002) elaborate that when it comes to children of immigrants and their experiences connected with biculturalism, previous research has shown that the effects on their identity can be categorized according to the ways in which they are viewed by the dominant group members in the society.
Some of the questions used for this study were based on how children of immigrants generally identify themselves and the influences that have impacted them. We found that there were only minor differences in how the informants in our study answered the same questions. Below are some of the answers provided by our interviewees:

INV 5: “I would say I define myself 50/50. When asked, I emphasize that I was born and raised in Sweden, whereas my parents are from Pakistan. Most of the time my answer is both unconsciously and consciously related to the person who is asking. If a person with a Swedish origin is the questioner, I tend to claim my Swedish side slightly more than if someone from a non-Swedish background is asking, and I believe that might be because I want to claim myself as someone who is very familiar with the Swedish culture, system and people—that it’s nothing new to me. Nor are the Pakistani culture and norms.”

INV 3: “I define myself as an immigrant from Somalia. Nothing can change the colour of my skin, nor my culture, regardless where I live.”

INV 2: “I’m bi-racial. My mother is Hispanic and my father is Black (Jamaican). When asked, I usually go with my mother’s race only because I have been living with her due to the fact that my parents are divorced. I have also spent a lot more time with my mother’s side of the family than with my dad’s.”

These answers showed us that some of the informants felt that due to their skin colour, which could not be changed, they found that they identified themselves either as immigrants living in Sweden, or as partly immigrant. Some of the informants related that they did not feel as if they were a part of Swedish society at all, and focused rather on how they defined themselves ethnically. At the same time, we had one respondent who described that she highlighted her Swedish side among ethnic Swedes and her Pakistani side among Pakistanis. This is a good example of biculturalism, i.e. to switch between cultures and feel comfortable in both - and just as social identity theory emphasizes the social context plays role in such cases. This particular informants highlighting of the social identity depends on which group she is in - and since she defines herself as both Swedish and Pakistanis, she can emphasize one or the other depending on the context.
It seems that biculturalism has both good and bad aspects, but one of the positives is that children of immigrants have the advantage of being members of a multi-cultural world rich with diversity.

During the interviews, we found that there were different responses to biculturalism and the effect it has on identity formation. Aspects related to biculturalism mentioned by the informants were related to religion, skin-colour, and values that were not a part of the normal Swedish society, as these comments from INV 3 demonstrate:

“I grew up in a small town community with only four thousand inhabitants. Almost every single one of those four thousand individuals was ethnically Swedish with Christian values. There was only our family and one other Somali family with Islamic values living there. The first couple of years were very hard for us as we tried to adapt to this new environment, but as time went by, we blended in pretty well. The strongest memory I have of being aware of my different culture was when I graduated from high school. My brother and I were the only non-white people there. I remember feeling very awkward.”

This gives us two perspectives: being part of the society was normal for some of the informants, but there were also moments when they found that they were not part of the society because of different aspects such as being black in an almost all-white society, or having a different religion from that of the main society. This statement given by one of our informants says something about biculturalism and that it is not always easy to find a balance between the cultures. The informant felt that he in time managed to bring together the two cultures, with other words blended in the society. At the same time there was some situations when he felt it was more difficult to do so, which led to feelings of discomfort. If anything, this demonstrates that biculturalism is a complex process with both positive and negative sides.

Another informant (INV 5) gave us a broader explanation of how biculturalism appears to her and to other people in her surroundings:

“Despite the difficulties of being brought up with biculturalism, I feel it has been a great contribution to my life and the person I am today. Seeing both cultures have contributed in a way in which I can pick and choose the best of both worlds and pass those on to my children (with fewer prejudices, of course). Seeing both cultures has given me a broader perspective and removed many prejudices which Swedish people can have with other
cultures and vice versa. On the other hand, I am fully aware of the fact that many people (friends, etc.), despite living in Sweden for many years, are expected to live a life in a culture very similar to which their parents were brought up with, which influences their children to the extent that they experience an identity crisis, which, in my opinion, should not occur.”

This detailed statement provides us with the perspective that even though there is the sense of being proud of being a member of two cultures, being a part of two cultures also includes responsibilities. The children of immigrants must not only take into account their parents’ culture and traditions, but are expected to carry them on. The expectations of their parents are high; the children of immigrants are supposed to base their lives on their cultural heritage, which does not always go well with the values they have acquired on their own. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge and take into consideration on one particular aspect that this respondent's gave on her experiences when it comes to biculturalism i.e. and that’s that she looks at both cultures as an asset, and recognize the importance of passing on both cultures to her children with less prejudice. It is also a good example of bringing together two cultures - and an interesting aspect – i.e. to eliminate some parts of the two cultures (which the respondent thinks is harmful, such as prejudices). This may lead to the creation on a new culture that is influenced by, but not quite like any of the two cultures.

ETHNIC IDENTITY

Our informants provided us with much information during our interviews. We received mixed messages regarding their own views on how they define themselves ethnically. Depending on how life has been for them so far, and the people that surround them, there seems to be a pattern with regard to how they associate themselves, either completely with the inherited culture, or with a sense of being part of both. We were also told that they consider themselves Swedes, but due to different reasons, they felt they also had to bring up their inherited culture because it is obvious in their appearance. The majority of respondents considered themselves to be either from both cultures, or they considered themselves to be Swedish, as indicated by INV 4: ‘I would say
that I am Swedish. I mean, I have parents that came from India and I have that Indian culture and tradition at home with my family members. But I was born here in Sweden, so I am Swedish.’

This is how the majority of our informants answered the question of how they ethnically define themselves. Their thoughts on being part of two cultures and where their parents originated from came up first, and afterwards the response was that even though they acknowledged they had a different culture from that of the main society, they recognized themselves as Swedish. Because they were born in Sweden and live in Sweden, then they identify themselves as Swedish.

On the other hand, one of our participants only mentioned the inherited culture of her parents when she would describe her ethnicity as ‘heritage’. Although it was an exception, since this person’s answers distinguished her from the majority of our informants, we thought it would be interesting to depict her answer to this particular question regarding ethnical affiliation:

“I’m bi-racial. My mother is Hispanic and my father is Black (Jamaican). Usually when asked, I go with my mother’s race only because I have been living with her due to the fact that my parents are divorced. I have also been spending a lot more time with my mother’s side of the family than my dad’s.” (INV 2)

It seems that different social contexts impact the way in which children of immigrants define themselves. As we already have described previously, most informants spoke about the fact that they have two, or multiple, cultures to reflect on as part of their daily lives. But in the end, most of the participants considered themselves to be Swedish because they were born here and have their lives here. In addition, most of the participants felt that their bicultural background is something positive because then they can take the best of each culture.

CONCLUSION

The interviews with our informants provided a lot of information that fulfilled the aim of the study by answering the three main questions that had been posed. After the results of the interview were analysed, the main findings were that the children of immigrants had a lot to say about how they define themselves. The majority of the informants had a lot to say about their bicultural background, and most of the information about their relationship to this subject was
positive. Almost all of the participants talked about the fact that they had a bicultural background, describing where their parents originated from. At the same time, they brought up that they were born here in Sweden and that they defined themselves as Swedish. Despite the fact that they had two or more cultures to relate to in their lives, being Swedish was what they defined themselves as the strongest. The information we received from the children of immigrants seem to be answers to questions that they had already been thinking about at some time in their lives. Therefore, it seemed natural for the participants to associate themselves into different cultures and define themselves according to what felt closest to them. Another aspect that the informants provided us with was that they felt it was important for them to take advantage of the best of both cultures.
REFERENCES


Hi!

We are two social work students from the University of Gävle that are conducting a thesis about children of immigrants living in Sweden and their perception of biculturalism and how that might have an impact on their identity.

What we are seeking is to gain a broader understanding of the impact biculturalism has on identity forming for children that are born in Sweden with immigrant parents. Therefore the related questions on this study will be connected to the subject.

The participation is voluntary and a withdrawal from the study is possible at any time during the study process.

For the sake of remembrance, we will record and take notes during the interviews. However, this information will not be used for any other purpose than mentioned above, and will be spoiled after the study is implemented.

For more information, feel free to contact Sahra Mao or Kacy Sundell.

**Sahra Mao:** vsn11smo@student.hig.se

**Kacy Sundell:** vsn11ksl@student.hig.se

Your signature below verifies your consent to participate in this study.

Name                               Date

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Questions for the interview:

How do you define yourself ethnically?

How would you define the ethnic identity of your parents?

What is your relationship to this ethnic identity?

What are your experiences of biculturalism?

Can you describe a special event on which you became aware of biculturalism?

How do you feel that your personal identity has been influenced by being part of two different cultures?