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**Theories of Identity Formation among Immigrants:
Examples from People with an Iraqi Kurdish Background in Sweden**

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Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process ...

(Stuart Hall 1994: 392)

ABSTRACT

This essay portrays the formation and construction of the identity development of immigrants through their cultural encounter with a new society. It is an attempt to give voice to four Iraqi Kurds, who came to Sweden at the age of six months, nine years, twenty-two and twenty-seven years respectively, in order to interpret issues about their identity construction and belonging. What does it mean for them to be Kurds in Sweden and live between two different cultures? How is their identity formulated and where do they belong as Kurds, Swedes, in-between or both? The individuals' identity changes when encountering a society that is completely different from their country of origin because "[...] the nature of the individual depends upon the society in which he or she lives" (Burke and Stets 2009: 4). Moreover, the first generation includes those immigrants who arrived at a very young age and thus grew up and were raised in diaspora, lived between two different cultures, and are "confronted with two motherlands" (Jodeyr 2003). One is their country of origin and the other one is the host country that they migrated to. The host country is considered the real home country for those who arrived at a very young age according to some of my informants. Therefore, the narratives my informants tell about their identity are the result of their relationship as individuals with the Swedish society.

Key words: immigrants, identity, collective identity, identity formation, ethnicity, cultural hybridity, culture-in between, third space.

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of the Iraqi Kurds in Sweden refers back to the 70s when they emigrated from Kurdistan to Sweden after being in a plight with the authorities in Iraq and after the Iraq-Iran war in 1980, that lasted for eight years (Berruti et al. 2002: 163, Myhill 2006, p. 173). In addition, many Iraqi Kurds immigrated after the Iraq-Kuwait war in 1991. Many of whom received asylum in Sweden (Berruti et al. 2002: 131, 166). Numerous studies are conducted on first generation Kurdish immigrants in different European countries such as Sweden, Great Britain, Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands, which are considered as relatively new studies on the formation of Kurdish identities in the European context (Eliassi 2013: 1-2). This empirical qualitative study is limited to the Swedish context and discusses identity issues of four Iraqi Kurdish immigrants. All of them are from the first generation, though two of them were very young when arriving, six months and nine years respectively and thus could be considered as belonging to the second generation. The aims of this study are as follows:

- a. To understand and analyze the formation of the informants' identity, and the way their identity is developed in diaspora.
- b. To investigate the impact of the Swedish culture on the informants' identity.
- c. To investigate whether the informants have developed an "in-between" (Bhabha 1996) cultural identity or have formed identities that are part of both cultures; the Swedish and the Kurdish.

To achieve these aims, interviews were conducted with four Iraqi Kurds living in Sweden. The research questions are part of the interview questions, which are formulated in a cultural sense in order to reach the aims of the study. For example, do those immigrants feel as Kurds, Swedes, in-between or both? Do those immigrants consider themselves as belonging to the host country (Sweden) or to their country of origin (Iraqi Kurdistan)? What are the visions and perspectives of those immigrants about the society around them and how do they understand themselves "in relation to the surrounding individuals, collectivities, and social structure"? (Eliassi 2013: 17) Moreover, other interview questions are also addressed (see appendix), in order to fulfill the aims of this study.

It is highly important to know what happens to immigrants' identity in migration (Anthias 2002: 491), when they encounter another culture. Do they identify with the country of origin or with the host country? Anthias claims that through location and positionality the outcomes of collective identity are investigated and this helps individuals to make their views about their position in the social order of things and what they belong to and what they do not belong to (ibid). In addition, it is worth to know whether those immigrants adapt their behavior, language, and values (Sam and Berry 2010: 472) to the host country's culture or to their homeland. It is also important to know the way those immigrants maintain balance between two different identities, in which integration could be a reason behind forgetting one's original identity.

1.1 The Organization of the Study

The study starts with reviewing the development of identity studies in social science analysis in the United States according to Gleason (1983) and Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and some identity definitions are introduced. Works by Eliassi (2013), and Alinia and Eliassi (2014) on Kurdish identity formation and belonging are introduced as the main resource on Kurdish identity in diaspora. Kurds are considered a minority in the Swedish society and it is of great importance to investigate the formation of Kurdish identity in Sweden. Therefore, this study tries to investigate to what extent those Kurds have been able to shape a positive sense retaining their Kurdish roots and identity and still include a feeling of belonging to the host country (cf. Anthias 2002: 491). In addition, different patterns are negotiated with regard to belonging in a dynamic way and how those immigrants position themselves in relation to people from both homeland and the host country.

Phinny and Baldelomar (2011: 163) claim "No identity is culture-free". They argue since identity, whether personal or social, is filled by the cultural-context, the way in which an identity is divided into parts is important in understanding various aspects of the construct. Therefore, the relationship between identity formation and context is very essential and depends on the cultural values in certain domains such as the relationship with people from the host country. As a result, culture plays the greatest role in the development of identity, which is explained in terms of "person-context interaction" (Ferrer-Werder et al. 2012: 64). In the following, all these notions are investigated through a number of narratives that give the voice to Kurds in order to interpret their inner feelings about the formation of their identity in Sweden.

Diaspora identity theories are introduced, for example “roots and routes” by Clifford (1997) and “uprootings and regroundings” by Ahmed et al. (2003). Brubaker and Cooper’s (2000) study about identity as “self-understanding” is discussed, as an alternative term to identity. Identity Process Theory (IPT) as a very well-known theory of identity development is discussed according to Breakwell 1986, and Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011 Vignoles et al. (2006) extended IPT principles. All these theories are introduced in the next chapter.

As the main concern of this study is identity formation, it displays individual, collective and ethnic identity theories and ethnicity definition. Collective identity plays a great role in giving the answer to the question “where do I belong?” (Eder 2009: 432). Therefore, social relations among people are important in shaping the identity construction. In addition, the study displays some identity concepts and usages which are discussed by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) (see chapter two). These usages explain that identity is a very wide and at the same time rich concept. For example, it argues that identity, whether collective or individual refers to sameness among members of a group that might be understood objectively or subjectively. The former refers to sameness “in itself” and the latter refers to identity “as an experienced, felt or perceived sameness” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 7). In addition, identity is something more bounded to self-understanding than self-interest (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) and deeply valued. That is, people’s identity is related to how they understand themselves according to their surrounding environment rather than an interest in a false identity, that they do not feel belong to them. In addition, other identity usages are also discussed (see p. 15).

The other issue that is discussed in the current paper is ethnicity in migration that is considered as the basis of identity theory since it is associated with color, race, language, and mode of living (Phukon 2002). The concept of ethnicity in this study is discussed according to Jaspal and Cinnirella (2011). In addition, themes of location, dislocation and relocation (Anthias 2002) are explained with regard to ethnicity in migration. Anthias (2000) discusses the boundaries of sameness and otherness, as well as how immigrants recognize themselves when it comes to cultural-encounter.

Post-colonial theories are one of the main issues in this study. The concepts of hybridity and in-between cultures are argued according to Homi Bhabha (1996) that illustrates the hybridity or the mix of two cultures concerning identity of immigrants. The immigrants represent “cultures

in-between” (Bhabha 1996) because they are trapped between two different cultures that formulate their identity. Their position in the society is different and alike at the same time. This hybridity leads to the third space (see p. 19) that immigrants create for themselves or they discover “the others of ourselves” (Bhabha 2004: 56).

Consequently, a brief introduction about integration, acculturation, assimilation, and marginalization is presented via giving different definitions of these concepts argued by Rubin et al. (2011) and Sam and Berry (2010). The concepts above are very crucial because they depict the relationship between individuals and the social milieu, and affect the formation of the immigrants’ identity. The situation of the Iraqi Kurds in Sweden is highly bounded to the Swedish society and some Kurds share a collective identity and a sense of belonging with the Swedish society because of integration. In addition, the Swedish multiculturalism plays a great role in the formation of the immigrant’s identities, according to my informants.

To sum up, the second chapter of this study consists of two sections. The first one presents a theoretical background of identity concept with regard to collective and individual identity, ethnicity and narratives. Post-colonial theories such as cultural hybridity and third space and their relation to identity are also discussed. Integration, acculturation, assimilation, and marginalization theories are concepts that are explored in the second chapter. The second section of the second chapter deals with data and methodology, and explains the way the data is collected and include a reflection of the chosen methods and the informants’ fictive identities. The third chapter starts by informants’ narratives about their identity formation which concerns self- identification, belonging, cultural encounter, foreigner and diaspora identity. In addition to cultural encounter and economic situation, citizenship and identity, language role and family, identity and personal choice, cultural hybridity, successful integration and assimilation, naming, and home return. Finally, a conclusion is drawn on the main findings and outcomes of this study.

2. A. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2. A. 1 Identity Definitions and Theories

According to Brubaker and Cooper, identity and its initial diffusion was introduced into social analysis and science in the United States in the 1960s (2000: 2). As expected, it was used as a social science popular term only in the 1950s (Gleason 1983: 910). In addition, the word identity established itself in the journalistic and academic lexicon and was used in the social and political analysis and practices. It developed in the late 1960s with the Black power movements in the American context. Later on, identity developed itself in other fields such as gender, class, race, immigration, sexuality, religion, ethnicities, nationalism, culture, new social movements, in which many theorists felt obliged to address the identity question, although their work was not primarily concerned with the above concepts (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 2-4). This study will discuss identity in relation to the concepts of immigration, culture, and ethnicity.

In this regard, I would like to define identity according to the following scholars. Jackson II claims that, “Identity is that which confers a sense of personhood. It also refers to self-definition” (1999: 9). Eriksen defines identity as “being the same as oneself as well as being different” (2002: 60). Sometimes self-identification is subjected to negotiation in which people express themselves according to the context and the cultural they encounter. Many researchers agree that identities are constructed and negotiated through interaction (Prins, J et al. 2013: 81). The relationship between the self and identity is important because ‘self’ influences society through actions and the society influences the self through having “shared language and meanings that enable the person to take the role of the other” (Stets and Burke 2003: 128). Consequently, the self is acting in the society and we have to understand the self in order to understand the society. Hall argues that the old logic of identity is either philosophical or psychological. The former suggests that identity “is the ground of action”. The latter concerns the notion of continuous, self-sufficient, unfolding, developmental and inner dialect of selfhood (1997: 42). What Hall is interested in is the psychological logic. This logic relates the inside of the self to the outside of it while depicting the relationship between the individual and society, as well as the truth of what people say about themselves (1997: 42-3). The present study has adopted a psychological perspective of identity, belonging, and how the informants formulate a new culture that stands for both or in-between the Kurdish and the Swedish society through their position and

experience. It is not a matter of how those immigrants identify or represent their identity; rather it is their experience in the new location, which has an influence on their identity, that is the essential issue. Anthias claims that, “Location and positionality (and translocational positionality) are more useful concepts for investigating processes and outcomes of collective identification” (2002: 491). In addition, how people position themselves as what they belong to and what they do not. When do the immigrants’ children define themselves in the age of adolescence in terms of who they are? Where do they come from? And what are they going to do with their lives? (Jodeyr 2003: 209) They often tend to define what is valuable and significant to them, while comparing both cultures. In addition, it is not an easy task to make balance between the two cultures. This is what is going to be discussed in the third chapter with regard to what some interviewees have gone through during their different age periods. It reflects that the question of who they are is not restricted to a special age category, in contrast to Jodeyr (2003) who specified his study on the adolescences’ category.

Many studies have found significant differences between older Kurdish generations who migrated as adults and younger generations, and those who were born or raised in Sweden with regard to identity, belonging, and homeland considering their experience in diaspora. These studies have illustrated the changes that those generations underwent in the process of time. However, these studies proved that the need for homeland, identity and a sense of belonging are among the constant factors that the Kurds share, as well as nationalism is the main framework that construct a collective identity among the Kurdish diaspora (Alinia and Eliassi 2014: 73). However, the present study does not discuss Kurdish nationality which constructs identity at group level; rather, it concerns identity process of individual people. Moreover, as new generations are born and reach adulthood in Sweden, it has been of a great importance to investigate their identities in their diaspora community. Studies by Alinia and Eliassi have displayed that the new generation, who was born in Sweden or raised there, have more attachment to the Swedish society compared to the first generation immigrants (2014: 74-5). In my study, I will include the first generation, who came to Sweden at a young age such as twenty-two and twenty-seven as well as those who came at the age of six months and nine years as children.

Furthermore, when it comes to the studies of immigrants and ethnicity, the researchers focuses on the question of what happens to identity in diaspora during the process of migration and settlement (Anthias 2002: 491). In addition, how the immigrants themselves understand their identity. The constitution of immigrants is through discourse and “lived through the discourse” and “immigrants are constructed as not really belonging to “us,” even if they share the same citizenship as ‘us’ ” (Eliassi 2013: 45). This study will show through the informants’ interviews that citizenship has nothing to do with their ethnic identity. Eliassi argues that through discourse, immigrants construct an identity that stands in contrast to the dominant identity and representation (2013: 45). The reason behind that is that many dominant societies define the immigrants in binary oppositions as bad/good, civilized/primitive according to the practices that constitute the immigrant identity. Therefore, even if the picture of the immigrant is stigmatized through the practices and representations of some members, this is not a reason for one to change completely his/her identity because each person represents himself. Eliassi argues that the immigrants’ modes of belonging are often questioned and challenged by dominant subjects, because they “experience the problem of where to belong and ‘not knowing where one belongs’” (2013: 53). In this study I will not display the challenge of belonging modes as Eliassi did, but I will display what one of my informant said, “Why are you here then, if you do not act like us? [...]” (see p. 34) and how my informants maintain balance between two cultures.

In addition, Eliassi claims that immigrants often respond in a ‘fuzzy’ way when they are asked “where are you from?”, which is seemingly an innocent question (2013: 53). It is however important that one has his own identity to be respected by others and to maintain his/ her self-confidence. Alinia and Eliassi claim:

“ ‘To be’ a Kurd and to become involved in the Kurdish community in Sweden can be a strategy to actively create an alternative identity and home in relation to the forced and stigmatised immigrant identity and exclusion from the mainstream society. Constructing a diasporic Kurdish identity is thus about nurturing a positive Kurdish identity based on self-confidence and respect” (2014: 77).

The relationship and the bond between territory (geographic place) and cultural identity changes in migration because of transnational migration and mobility (Alinia and Eliassi 2014: 74). Some scholars describe diasporic identities as a concept of “roots and routes” to construct identification outside the national time and space in order to live inside (Clifford 1997: 251). Ahmed et al. (2003) describe it as “uprootings and regroundings” which rethink of home and

migration through plurality of experiences and histories and “the regroundings-- of identity, culture, nation, diaspora—can both resist and reproduce hegemonic forms of home and belongings” (p. 1-2). Therefore, the process of identity construction in diaspora is something that changes according to the immigrant’s history, position, language and experience and the oppositions in their life.

There are many usages for identity because identity depends on the used context. In this study the contexts of identity are concerned to focus on “self-understanding rather than self- interest” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 8). However, self- interest context is also discussed.

As already clarified, the meaning of identity in this study is going beyond the basic meaning of identity, which merely concerns the identity origin of the self; rather, it concerns the self-identification according to my informants experience in the new position. It means the self-understanding and social location as defined by Brubaker and Cooper. They propose the term “self-understanding” as an alternative to “identity” as:

“It is a dispositional term that designates what might be called “situated subjectivity”: one’s sense of who one is, of one’s social location, and of how one is prepared to act. As a dispositional term, it belongs to the realm of what Pierre Bourdieu has called *sense patique*, the practical sense-at once cognitive and emotional-that persons have of themselves and their social world” (2000: 17).

Therefore, the way people understand and position themselves in different contexts and across time is one of the principles of identity. This also means that identity changes across time and in flux. Furthermore, in order to refine and develop the concept of identity in a better way, it may be useful to rethink about the concept through narratives of location and positionality that concerns collective identities (Anthias 2002: 493). Hall argues, “What we say is always ‘in context’, positioned” because all people write and speak from a certain time, place, culture and history (1994: 392). In order to connect Hall’s notion of positioning to the focus of this paper we have to investigate a number of narratives of Iraqi Kurds, who were born in Kurdistan, and now are living in Sweden as diaspora community for a long time. Therefore, the position from which they speak (culture) and the experience they have is connected to their identity.

Reaching the meaning of identity beyond what is presented in narratives of positionality, relocation, dislocation and experience, we would be able to discover what identity means when it

comes to cultural-encounter. Although, the results of this present study cannot be used as an optimal model to measure standards, it is an empirical study applied to a small number of immigrants.

Other studies explain the structure of identity according to the proposition of Identity Process Theory (IPT) in which that structure should be conceptualized in terms of content and value (Breakwell 1986: 23, Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 505). In addition, two universal processes adjust the structure of identity which are the assimilation-accommodation process and the evaluation process. Assimilation refers to the intake of new component or information into the structure of identity, while accommodation refers to the amendments that take place in the existing structure and has to fit the new elements. Furthermore, the evaluation process grants meaning and value to the contents of identity (Breakwell 1986: 23, Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 505). The meaning of assimilation is how people accommodate new elements that help into the construction or formation of the identity structure. In this study, almost all the informants are proud of their Kurdish ethnic identity and give value to their new cultural identity, since they have absorbed new information that helped them construct their identity. Moreover, four identity principles are identified by Breakwell (1986) and are mentioned by Jaspal and Cinnirella (2011) to guide the universal processes mentioned above. They are named respectively as: continuity across time and situation; uniqueness or distinctiveness from others as the products of assimilation-accommodation and evaluation processes; feeling confident and in control of one's life; and feelings of personal worth or social value (Breakwell 1986: 24, Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 505).

In addition to the principles mentioned above, in order to extend IPT motives Vignoles et al. have added two other principles such as belonging, which illustrates how to be accepted by other people, and meaning which refers to the importance of having a target on one's life and existence (2006: 311, Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 505). Therefore, the effects of social change upon identity construction are the explicit concern of IPT (Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 506). That is identity in the life of each person has its meaning and certain issues through time and space measure it. Thus, having one's own identity is a way to acquire self-confidence and social value. However, identity changes due to the new information absorbed and the meaning of the contents of each identity. Therefore, even the hybrid (mixed) identity has its purpose and meaning

according to the situation and social values and identity process theory makes the outline under which the process of identity operates successfully. In my study, some of the above motives are part of the construction of some informants' identity.

As ethnic identity is very crucial in the social construction of identity, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2011) adopted 17 hypothesis based on genealogical facts on the ethnic identity in order to make it validated by significant others (p. 509). Some of these hypotheses could be applied to my informant's speech such as the positive implication when people identify themselves with their ethnic identity and hypothesis related to distinctiveness, as we will see in the interviews presented in the third chapter.

2. A. 2 Collective and Individual Identity, Ethnicity and Narratives

The basic assumption of collective identity according to Eder (2009) is that "collective identities are narrative constructions which permit the control of the boundaries of a network of actors" (p. 428). The social construction of collective identities gives answers to the questions of "who do I belong to?" and "who do we belong to?" (p. 432). In addition, collective identities create a psychological sense of people's needs through concrete social interactions. Eder claims that the construction of identity sometimes does not imply a return to a psychological notion of an identity sense; rather, social relations imply the shared meanings or 'narrative bond' that people share together in some social relations and not all of them which create being part of a particular 'we' (p. 431). Therefore, Eder characterizes collective identity as a "metaphor for specific type of social relations" (ibid). That is these narratives are produced and reproduced in social relations in a dynamic way in ongoing social communication. A better use of the term collective identities is required in this study since the social relations among people shape the construction of identity and this illustrates the macro-theoretical argument which argues that "The more a human society is differentiated, the more it needs a collective identity" (Eder 2009: 430). This assumption demonstrates that the indirect social relations vary with collective identities and the network that links people shapes the structure of identity, in which collective identity could be multiple and not unitary (ibid).

This paper discusses the construction of the Kurdish identity and the contradictions and complexities that some Iraqi Kurds have about their identity in Sweden. As it will be displayed

the construction of the informants' identity is depicted through being more Kurd than Swede, in-between or both. Moreover, the informants argue that some immigrants refuse in a way or another to have a shared Swedish identity and live in a way that contradicts the majority society in Sweden. However, many Kurds from the new generations, who were raised in Sweden or born there feel more attached to Sweden and have claims on social power and space more than the older generation (Alinia and Eliassi 2014: 75).

According to Brubaker and Cooper (2000) identity is a very rich concept, but there are many key uses to it. The first use is that identity, whether individual or collective, is self-understanding rather than self-interest (p. 6). The second use concerns identity in a collective phenomenon that refers to sameness among a group, which is perceived objectively “(sameness ‘in itself’) or subjectively (experienced, felt, perceived sameness)” (p. 7). The third use is to understand identity (individual or collective) as a deep and valued concept rather than superficial and fleeting (p. 7). The fourth key use is understanding the collective identity as groupness, process, and interactive development of the collective self-understanding (p. 7). The last use is that identity represents the multiple, fragmented, unstable nature of the self (p. 8). These usages are all found in post-structuralism and post-modernism. In this study, I will take into consideration some of these key uses, but my focus is on the first one. For example, one of the informants highly appreciates and deeply values her collective identity, and all of them understand their identity as sameness or different among Kurdish or Swedish group members through their experience. This implies the formation of their identity is structured through their experience in the country of origin and the host country.

Particular notions of ethnicity and ethnic identity constitute answers to collective identities questions. In social science, ethnicity received theoretical attention; however, its relationship with the motivations of identity principles is rarely explored (Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 503). According to Anthias “Ethnicity is a highly contested term: sometimes denoting a sense of belonging to an ethnic group; sometimes meaning shared cultural ingredients; sometimes being depicted as a social place structured by the existence of ethnic hierarchies, and so on”. Moreover, ethnic identity is constructed through social organization and shared culture (2002: 497). Therefore, most informants of this study have the feeling of belonging to their Kurdish ethnic

group and simultaneously-share cultural and social relations through their location and position in the majority society.

Many scholars identify ethnic groups as groups that are biologically self-perpetuated. These ethnic groups share fundamental cultural values in the field of interaction and communication, and have membership that is identified by others and by themselves to be distinguished from other categories of the same orders (Barth 1998: 10-11). This means that they have language, culture, color, religion, kinship, race and mode of living (Phukon 2002:1) as classified identity markers. These identity markers according to Anthias (2002) may function contextually and situationally. They should be applied in a useful way and not be treated as markers of racially distinctions between minorities and majorities and to be considered as “the active participatory element”. An example is the issue of migrants, and blacks as being a minority in a dominant society (p. 498) which are treated racially in some societies. However, this paper does not focus on racism since not only none of my informants mentioned themselves that they were subjected to racism, but also even when I asked them about racism and being foreigner; they did not refer to any problems in this regard. Hence, the topic of racism is not concentrated on in this thesis. What I want to do in this paper is to investigate ethnic groups or minority groups in diaspora and in particular the identity construction and formation among Iraqi Kurds who live as a minority ethnic group in Sweden. Neither does this paper aim at investigating the origin of the Kurds as an ethnic group; rather, it attempts to investigate the role of social interaction and the Kurdish-Swedish cultural encounter and its impact on the Kurdish ethnicity and identity.

Moreover, ethnicity in migration is portrayed through the way that those immigrants express themselves in terms of location and relocation. Anthias (2002) argues that ethnicity in migration is expressed at multiple levels with regard to dislocation and relocation. The levels embrace: structural, cultural, and personal (p. 499). In addition, Anthias claims that there are three locales that the migrants are dynamically placed in or looking at as social actor. Those are homeland, country of migration, and the migrant group communities and networks (2000: 18, 2002: 500). Moreover, he claims that these locales are ascriptive, symbolic identificational/non-identificational and not just physical in which the migrant is placed in a range of other terms such that construct group belonging such as gender, class, age etc. (2002: 500). In addition, Anthias claims that it is problematic to talk about migrant identity “since it fixes the migrant in

time, process and space” (ibid). This time issue also could be related to the cultural identity, which is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’ and belong to the future as much as to the past. It refers to crucial points of difference and similarity of what we really are and what we have become (Hall 1994: 394). Hall continues by claiming that “Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourse of history and culture” (1994: 395). Thus, cultural identity has its histories that are constructed through memories and narratives of people. Two axes or vectors frame the memories of Iraqi Kurdish people in a different culture such as Sweden. The first one is the axis of similarity and continuity to their past in their country of origin, while the second axis, is the difference and rupture in migration and diaspora (Alinia and Eliassi 2014: 78).

When it comes to self- identity in collective identity issues, it contains crucial processes that can be distinguished in terms of sameness and otherness boundaries because the self is embedded in the collective idioms and draw defining features from them. In addition, the boundaries of sameness and differences and the hierarchical social position are produced and reproduced in interact with the narrative structure around them (Anthias 2002: 497, 500). Therefore, collective identities are the boundaries that construct individual’s sameness or otherness. Anthias claims:

“However, narrative accounts by actors are often the most accessible for social researchers who are interested in the ways individuals understand and interpret their place in the world and are of particular interest to scholars of collective imagining around belonging” (2002: 498).

Referring to what Anthias claims, the social researchers and scholars are among those people who are most interested and accessible in analyzing the way individuals position themselves in the social world through individuals’ narratives.

The narratives are expressed through the experience process of immigrants in diaspora that construct their identity. Moreover, Anthias claims that the narratives of location are structured in terms of what one is not rather than a clear formulation of what one is. This makes the researchers to understand how the narrator’s make sense of their placement in the social order of things (2002: 501). Therefore, the narratives are the product that identifies the narrator’s identity. It represents an inter-subjective issue that the narrators share in collective identity and not merely a story about identity. Therefore, by collecting narratives we would be able to investigate some issues of identity process.

2. A. 3 Cultural Hybridity and its Relation with Identity

The concept of hybridity is developed from cultural and literary theory to describe colonial antagonism through the formation of culture and identity (Bhabha 1996). In this paper, the term refers to the mixture of two cultures in the same way as it was used to be in post-colonial era in the twentieth century in political and cultural concepts. Bakhtin defines hybridity as the following:

“It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousness’s separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor” (1981: 358).

I am going to deploy this term when discussing cultures in-between and how some Iraqi Kurdish immigrants use the words ‘both’ and ‘in-between’ in expressing their identity. According to Eliot, modern migration has transplanted to a mixture of social, religious, economic, or political determinations and migrants have taken with them only one part of the their original culture and the new culture. What has developed on the new soil is bafflingly both alike and different from the parent culture. Moreover, in such situation culture-sympathy and culture-clash emerge (1949: 63-4). Eliot wrote this a long time ago however, it still applicable to the current situation. In addition, this partial culture is connective tissue between cultures; it is something like cultures in –between that stands both different and alike at the same time (Bhabha 1996: 54).

Hoogvelt expresses the concept of hybridity as “celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-between, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference” (1997: 158). In contrast, Bhabha claims that the agencies of hybridity locate their voice in a dialect that does not seek supremacy and sovereignty. They circulate their partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and “versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy; the outside of the inside: the part in the whole” (1996: 58). Bhabah claims that hybridity is a form of in-between space and the “cutting edge of translation and negotiation” which carries the main meaning of culture. He named it the third space that helps to explore and “emerge as the others of ourselves” (2004: 56). In this paper, the cultural hybridity is negotiated in terms of the narratives stories about the construction of identity in diaspora, which

may depict a hybrid identity in terms of the cultural encounter in Sweden. Therefore, to understand in-between concept, a discussion of third space is needed in the following.

2. A. 4 Third Space and its Relation with Identity

Again, third space or thirdness and hybridity are notions proposed by Homi K. Bhabha to express the power and authority functioned in subjectifying discourse of the colonial moment and the cultural difference. In an interview with Bhabha conducted by Hoeller, Bhabha's interest was focused on the cultural relations domain, such as the transmission of Christian ethics, as part of the civilizing mission, which required both the institution of English language as way of communication and pedagogical medium. In addition, Bhabha's interest in third space was in the field of colonial relations. The cultural interaction and antagonism were at the center of power struggles and conflicts based on a pre-constituted notion of Christian/Hindu or British/Indian sense of tradition and identity (Hoeller 1999) as representing the subject of such conflicts in a binary division. The purpose behind using this theory in this paper is to investigate whether the Iraqi Kurdish immigrants in Sweden represent or create a third space in Sweden, where they stand in-between the first (Iraqi Kurdistan) and second cultures (Sweden). In addition, the purpose is to investigate if that in-betweenness represents an inner conflict or struggle within individuals and how that could affect their identity construction in diaspora while encountering other cultures, which pave the way to negotiate new identities.

In the interview with Bhabha, he claims that this third space addresses questions of the problem of authority in situations where cultural differences are the focus of social hierarchy and hegemony. An example of this is the minorities in contemporary metropolitan societies, who face the social crisis of 'who' they are and 'where they belong' (Hoeller 1999). This means that, the experience and the intercultural development of immigrants in the host country could affect their identity. This is due to their perception about the world is changed and developed and that could affect or change their identity according to new standards, which are based on the foundation of the new system. Bhabha claims:

“First of all, a politics of identity does not see its establishment as an interruption or on-going form. It wants to essentialize various identities- like black, feminist, etc- and then judicate and mediate between them. A politics of identification refuses to separate out one such entity and says that one cannot entirely constitute one's political subjectivity around just race or difference. On the other hand, it also says

that the notion of multiple subject position is just another pluralism as though you could choose among them. That is why I favor identification in its psychoanalytic dimension which says that identity is a continual negotiation between the fantasmatic structuring of psychic affect and desire, and the more 'realistic' demands placed upon the ego in its social and relational engagements. You don't become a political agent on the basis of an identity already constituted. It is through the structuring of an identification- which depends on the legal apparatus of the time, the economic situation in which you are, the cultural dispositions around your choice, the psychic conditions of choice, the ethical implications of the interest that you represent- that you emerge as an agent in the interstices of the contingent causalities" (Hoeller 1999).

Therefore, the previous claim is an emphasize that identity is not bounded only to the origin that you came from; rather, it is a social context that you live in and has its effect on one's psychic and desire. Identity according to Bhabha is structured through time and is associated with the economic situation that one lives in and the position of the self in different cultural contexts. One's origin is a reality that cannot be changed and has its place and roots within the self, but the society that one lives in has its great influence on the self. However, people are free to choose which identity they have, but this does not prevent some variations in the new identity as a result of other cultural meanings and symbols because culture is changeable and has no fixed unity. Bhabha claims

"it is that third space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity, that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (2004: 55)

2. A. 5 Integration, Acculturation, Assimilation and Marginalization Theories and the Iraqi Kurdish Identity Concept in Sweden

The concept of diaspora formation has been conceptualized in a triadic relationship between the country of origin, the country of settlement, and the ethnic group (Anthias 2002, Eliassi 2013: 2). In addition, many scholars deployed the concept of diaspora among the Kurdish immigrant's activities culturally, socially and politically (Eliassi 2013: 2). As mentioned in the introduction, the reasons behind the migration of Iraqi Kurds to Europe are the maltreatment of the authorities in Iraq. Therefore, in modern times, the migration was involuntary and the

Kurdish community in Europe contains war refugees and political refugees (Alinia 2004: 80). However, the perspective of this study is not political but cultural.

Kamali (1997) argues that the question of citizenship, belonging and being a member of a different society other than the familiar social milieu is associated with the immigrants' primary relationship to the host country (p. 19). Therefore, I would like to introduce the reader to the concept of integration, assimilation, and acculturation theories respectively. According to Rubin et al., social integration refers to the social connections and interactions with other people in terms of quantity and quality (2011: 498). In addition, integration in the immigration context takes the strategy of acculturation, which means that immigrants makes regular contact with the native people in the host country and maintain their original cultural identity as well (ibid). Moreover, Rubin et al. distinguish the strategy of acculturation from the strategy of assimilation. Assimilation means that immigrants refuse, reject their original cultural identity, or do not have contacts regularly with people in the host country (ibid). Acculturation refers to "the process of cultural and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures" (ibid).

The immigrants' integration in the host society has many benefits such as developing and improving the relationship between immigrants and the people of the host society. It helps to access better employment opportunities and reduce psychological health risks (Rubin et al. 2011: 499) which are grand among immigrants. Rubin et al.'s concept of integration, mentioned above, is the same as the concept of acculturation by Sam and Berry's (2010). While they define people who integrate as people who engage in both in their own cultural heritage and the outside or society culture. Sam and Berry argue that people who acculturate are those people who orient themselves to one or the other culture as a way of assimilation or separation (2010: 472). They also refer to marginalization, by which they refer to people who orient themselves to neither of the cultures (ibid). This is applicable to the children of one of the informants who was interviewed for the current study (see p. 43). In addition, Sam and Berry described three features of acculturation framework such as the changes that take place in acculturation, how individuals acculturate and how well they adapt after acculturation process (ibid). These features mean that the more people acculturate, the better they adapt. In this study, I follow Sam and Berry's concepts of integration and assimilation and marginalization. Moreover, integration is one of the concepts that are obvious in the narratives of some informants as a first step to be accepted in

Sweden. Furthermore, the meaning of integration takes the strategy of being introduced to the other culture in the field of study, work, and social relationship. In addition, the present study's informants explain general reasons behind the assimilation of some Kurdish immigrants in Sweden.

The formation of the Kurdish identity in Sweden is constructed through the cultural encounter with the Swedish society. Consequently, if the Kurdish people in the Swedish society orient themselves only to the Swedish culture, this may cause assimilation to their identity and that is what the next chapter discusses.

The successful Kurdish integration in the Swedish society supports the more pro-Kurdish voices that strengthen the engagement of the Kurds in a wider society, and this success does not mean the loss or the negation of their identity (Eliassi 2013: 10). In the memorandum of Halabja more than 5000 Kurds were killed in March 1988 by the Iraqi chemical weapons. Sven-Otto Littorin, Swedish Minister of Employment, said, "I see the Kurds in Sweden as a positive addition and they are often examples of very successful integration" (my translation; DN 2008). Mona Sahlin, the Social Democratic Party leader, who also participated in the ceremony, expressed that Kurds as very present in Sweden (DN 2008). The reason behind what those politicians claim could be the successful integration of Kurds in the Swedish society that could gain the Swedish foreign policy support. As the Kurds are regarded as a minority in Iraq, they have a strong need to sustain their ethnic identity since they were subjected to oppression in their country of origin (Eliassi 2013: 70-1). Therefore, if their identity assimilates in the Swedish country, this will not help them in saving their identity. In addition, preserving their Kurdish identity "[...] should not be interpreted as a political resistance against the Swedish identity or Society [...]" (Eliassi 2013: 71) a notion I will discuss in chapter three. As one of the informants said "It is important for me to know who am I and where I belong to". This shows how some Kurds adhere strongly to his/ her ethnic identity.

Furthermore, the Swedish multicultural policies facilitate the way to strengthen ethnic identities but according to some scholars such as Ålund and Schierup (1991) this can also minimize or reduce the successful integration into the society. They claim, "Immigrants and ethnic minorities belong to those marginal groups that find themselves at the center of authorities' focus of attention. They experience power really close at hand as they become

important 'cases' in public files” (p. 14). Therefore, if they adapt difficultly in the society, this will cause a social problem of being poorly integrated. The Swedish multicultural policy has its role in strengthening and promoting the Kurdish ethnic identity for example, opening the way for the Kurdish literary production and offering financial support (Eliassi 2013: 72). Therefore, in this study, I will introduce mother tongue learning in Sweden as an issue related to the role of the Swedish multiculturalism in strengthening the Kurdish identity as the informants clarified.

The host country’s citizenship constitutes a fundamental building block in the identity formation according to some informants. The right to get Swedish citizenship after five years or more of being granted asylum is another way to be a Swedish citizen. Moreover, it opens the way for more integration in the society. Eliassi claims that the rights of citizenship inform people how belonging to a collectivity is constructed (2013: 100). In addition, Azar (2001: 60) claims, “Swedish is simply the one who has Swedish citizenship (with rights and obligations) that this entails. In legislative respect the Swedish State share this principle, the problem is of course that in reality it competes with other demarcation ideologies and nationalist discourses that perceive Swedishness as something internal, exclusive, distinct from citizenship” (my translation). Consequently, having Swedish citizenship is a legal right according to one of my informants. For another informant, it is very important for practical reasons because Sweden as a state is politically successful, but it does not affect her Kurdish identity. In addition, having citizenship is a part of the formation of another informants’ identity. Examples of this will be discussed in the next chapter.

2. B. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, the present study discusses identity issues of four Iraqi Kurdish immigrants in Sweden from the first generation and two of them grew up there. This paper is based on a qualitative study method that takes the form of semi-structured interviews, in which many questions emerged during the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewees, whom I consider as case studies for this empirical study on identity formation. I reached the informants through my family and supervisor. I explained to the interviewees the reason behind the interviews and they agreed to participate and cooperated fully. The different themes in this paper investigate the informants' identity formation; therefore, I preferred to ask interview questions that have relation to identity belonging in terms of cultural encounter. It is worth to mention that, I have studied the themes of in-between cultures and third space after attending a course on cultural encounter during my master program before starting the thesis writing course. All the other themes and hypothesis of the present paper were decided after conducting the interviews and were formed on the basis of the analysis of research data. Therefore, I started conducting the interviews and then I wrote the theoretical background based on the interview analysis. I choose all the literature according to the interviews data and observations, except for one resource which I have read before conducting the interviews.

As the interviewer, I informed my interviewees that they are not obliged to answer the questions they do not intend to. Then, I collected my data in the form of audio-recording and written notes. After recording, I transcribed the data into a written form. I interviewed each person once and each interview took approximately half an hour. One informant asked me to have some time for coffee, which is considered a time outside the interview questions, and during that time we also discussed issues about the study and she added more information, which i collected as written notes. The interviews were conducted in Kurdish language (Badinani dialect)¹ as the mother tongue of all of the participants including myself and all the interviews have been translated by me into English as the language of the thesis. In addition, I told my informants to send me telephone messages, emails, or have another meeting if they feel that they want to add something they have already forgotten. I kept contact with them afterwards through emails, phone calls and messages for more clarification on their narratives. I met three of them in

¹ Kurdish language embraces two main dialects, which are Badinani (Kurmanji) and Sorani and the sub-dialect, which is Zaza (Hawramani) (Eller 1999, Haig and Matras 2002).

person and one of them on Skype, as she requested. As I think that the facial expressions, hand movements, and general appearance are very important during face-to-face interview, it is worth to mention that using Skype affects the interviewer in depicting an obvious picture that links what message the interviewees convey through facial expressions and reactions. For example, the hand movement of one of my informants while talking gave me the impression that what he says was true. In comparison to what one of my informants did by smiling at certain points of talking, which made me a little doubtful about what she was saying and I asked more questions to clarify what she meant. Moreover, the clothes of one of my informants expressed to me to which extent she is influenced by the other culture. Therefore, face-to-face interviews are more helpful than using Skype. However, using Skype is helpful when an informant is not able to meet the interviewer in person for special reasons. In addition, using phone calls and messages as assistant tools are important to clarify some ambiguous points in the informants' speech which were recorded previously.

All the interviews are conducted with Iraqi Kurds who live in Sweden but two interviews were made in Iraqi Kurdistan, where I met two of the informants when they were celebrating Kurdish New Year on March 21, 2014. The other two interviews were conducted in Sweden. The informants were very comfortable with giving me information since they did not know me in person. Because according to my Kurdish culture, it is not easy to clarify issues about your personal life easily in front of people you know in person in order to avoid any probable criticism and especially for something which is going to be documented in a study like this. All the participants were given pseudonyms as an ethical issue to protect their real identities. I chose my informants from both younger and older generation in order to have the opportunity to compare their identity perspectives where possible. After recording all the interviews I realized that they all share some common opinions in some issues that could imply I am moving in the correct direction in line with the research aim. Moreover, the informants gave me more information than expected. I did not asked my informants about their views of Kurdishness and Swedishness and Kurdish and Swedish culture. The reason is that the present paper deals more with the informants' psychological understanding of their identity formation and the aim is not to make a comparison between two cultures. All the interview questions (see appendix) are take into consideration the aspects of identity construction in diaspora. The informants were as follows:

- A. Aram is a Kurdish man who has lived in Sweden for more than fifteen years. He immigrated at the age of twenty-two and now he is thirty-eight years old. He works in the field of building constructions and is married to a non-Swedish European, and has a child. I interviewed him in Kurdistan.
- B. Shilan is a nineteen-year old single Kurdish girl who immigrated with her parents from Iraqi Kurdistan in the 90s, when she was six months. She is preparing to study at the university. I interviewed her in Kurdistan.
- C. Lailan is a twenty-nine year woman who immigrated with her parents to Sweden in 1996 when she was at the age of nine. She is married to a Kurdish man and has a child. She is a student at the university and I interviewed her in Sweden.
- D. Zerine is a thirty-six year old single mother who has been living in Sweden for nine years. She works as a teacher and has two children. I interviewed her in Sweden.

3. THE FORMATION OF IRAQI KURDISH IDENTITIES IN SWEDEN: FOUR VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES

This chapter focuses on how four Kurdish immigrants from Iraqi Kurdistan identify themselves culturally in Sweden. Some of them, as mentioned earlier, live in Sweden since their very childhood and some were very young when they arrived to Sweden. The theme of belonging in the narratives of these informants has nothing to do with politics; instead, it describes identity belonging in terms of cultural encounter. In addition, this chapter explains how living with two different cultures could create an identity that interpret their belonging either to Kurdistan or to Sweden, in-between or both. However, the study shows how the informants are proud of their background. The main study questions in these narratives are based on the impact of the Swedish culture on the Kurdish identity in Sweden and “cultures in-between” (Bhabha 1996) as a theory that belongs to postcolonial era. As mentioned before, the first aim of this study is to understand and analyze the formation of the informants’ identity, and the way their identity is developed in diaspora. The second aim is to investigate the impact of the Swedish culture on the informants’ identity. The third aim is to investigate whether the informants have developed an “in-between” (Bhabha 1996) cultural identity or have formed identities that are part of both cultures; the Swedish and the Kurdish. As mentioned in the introduction, in addition to the study questions I addressed other interview questions to the informants in order to achieve the aims of the study.

The narratives of this study are based on the informants’ individual experience about positioning themselves in the encountered culture. Some informants answered some interview questions and related them to their childhood. This childhood could be applied to what Stuart Hall call “Organic community”, a community that existed in childhood and is left behind now. Some social critics say “measure the present in relation to the past” and the past here refers to childhood and many adults say, “when I was a child” as a notion that is “more organic and integrated” (Hall 1997: 46). In addition, different opinions about identity and belonging highlight the dynamic aspect of identification with the past, present, and future (cf. Eliassi 2013: 69). The concept of ‘when I was a child or at childhood’ is confirmed in the speech of some informants. The narratives are presented in the sub-headings below in a way that serves the purposes of the study in analyzing the formation of the informants’ identity. The sub-headings are connected to each other according to the interview questions arrangement. However, they do not match the

interview questions exactly; rather, they are arranged in order to give the reader the opportunity to compare the informants' opinions.

3.1 Self-identification, Position and Belonging as Kurd, Swede, In-Between or Both

Aram came to Sweden at the age of twenty-two and has lived there for more than fifteen years. He visited his family in Iraqi Kurdistan for the first time after more than ten years. The meaning of self-identification to him goes beyond his ethnic identity (cf. Brubaker and Cooper 2000) as a Kurd from Iraqi Kurdistan. When I asked him about his identity, he explained the way that he integrated in the Swedish society as the beginning of his identity formation.

Aram: At the beginning of my arrival to Sweden, I felt I am still from my country (Iraqi Kurdistan) but after 5-6 years, I integrated very successfully in the society. At that time, what to say, I had changed a little bit and found myself 50% of each. I could not see myself as Swede or Kurd. However, after another 6 years, I tried to change and I always tried to change because the more one integrate in a society of another culture, the more one learn their habits from a particular perspective and cannot be apart from it. This makes it automatically easier to deal with the encountered society as if you are obliged to get their culture. But after a period of time I did know that I am not Swedish in my face, but some of their ideas have become part of my life. Therefore, I can say that I have two identities, the first one is Kurdish and the second is Swedish.

Aram implies that he is strongly attached to the Swedish society and that he learned the Swedish habits in a particular perspective. The reason behind learning the Swedish habit is the integration and his being accepted in the majority society after the passage of time. However, his sense of having a Kurdish identity is also obvious. Aram claims that his identity has changed because of the way he lives in Sweden. He confirmed that the life he spent in Kurdistan was his childhood "Organic community" (cf. Hall 1997: 46) and adolescence period and at that time he was not aware about identity issues. He thinks that one becomes aware of identity issues at the age of 35-36.

Self-identification for Shilan has another dimension. She is nineteen years old and she emigrated with her parents from Kurdistan in the 90s. She could be considered from the second generation because she came to Sweden at the age of six months and was raised there. Now she is preparing for university.

Shilan: There is a difference when you are between them, in which many things are said and happen that makes you feel as a stranger. I do not mean bad things, but I can feel it that I am a stranger and even until now I cannot say that I am Swedish. I always identify

and consider myself as a Kurd when I think of myself personally and never considered myself for a moment as a Swede and I do not know the reason. However, there are things that I might make me look like them and I have learned from them because of the society and the environment surrounding me. I can say I am a Kurd, but not as those Kurds in Kurdistan. It is something like in-between. I feel 'full Kurd' at home, but when I am outside, I have some Swedish culture influence upon me.

According to Alinia and Eliassi (2014) the sense of identity, homeland and belonging that the new generation has is more situational and reflexive (p.75). Therefore, Shilan's feeling as a stranger is reflected in her experience and situation in Sweden because she was raised there. The 'difference' that she talks about is a kind of distinctive principle to differentiate her from others, the sense that enhances the positivity of her in-group than out-group (cf. Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 510). This case study is different from the first one, in which Aram sees himself as both Kurd and Swede. Shilan sometimes feels as 'full Kurd' and sometimes in-between, but at the same time expresses herself as being different; however, she spent all her life Sweden.

Not all the informants identify themselves in the same way. Lailan, came to Sweden at the age of nine in 1996 with her parents, which means that she was a child when arriving Sweden and she could be considered from the new generation. Her self-identification is as follows:

Lailan: Sometimes I identify myself as in-between, and sometimes as more Kurd, but I have never felt a 100% as a Swede. I identify myself more Kurd and in-between and this depends on the conditions and the position that influence and formulate this sense.

Lailan mentions that she is in-between, however more attached to her Kurdish ethnicity and this means that her self-identification and understanding is formed in "multifaceted sense of belonging" (cf. Eliassi 2013: 52) that construct a particular collective and individual belonging. The factors that made Lailan in-between are affected by school, communication, friends, and work, in which she has contact with different people, as she remarks. At work, she has to be like Swedes in order to manage it. Lailan says "I think about my being Kurd more when it comes to political issues that the Kurds faced in Iraq and even with my family I feel in-between and not only Kurd". Her feeling as a Kurd is emerged from the political situation that the Kurds faced in their country of origin.

Zerin is similarly from the first generation and came to Sweden at the age of twenty-seven and now she has lived there for nine years. She identifies herself as follows:

Zerin: I identify myself as a Kurd and I am a Kurd and I celebrate the Kurdish New Year, but I feel that I share a sense and belonging to the Swedish culture because I celebrate the New Year, Mid-Summer and I integrated with them. In addition, I know everything about the Swedish culture. I know who is Olof Palme, Selma Lagerlöf, and Strindberg. I know who are the Vikings and where did they come from. I am very familiar with the Swedish culture.

Zerin shares a sense of collective identity with the Swedish culture because she is very familiar with it. She identifies her belonging to the Swedish society through her knowledge in characterizing the Swedish politicians, authors and Viking history. She sees herself as being a very social person and it is very easy for her to adjust to the society not only the Swedish one, but to other societies such as the Persian, because she lived in Iran for a long time as she clarified.

Consequently, each informant identifies his/her belonging in a different way and according to his or her positioning and self-understanding in the Swedish society. All of them share the responsibility to integrate in the Swedish culture because it is the surrounding culture. Each one created a cultural hybridity and a third space in the construction of his/her identity as being in-between, more Kurd, shared sense, and 50% of each. It is not an assumption of ‘us/them’; rather, it refers to ‘both/and’.

3. 2 The Impact of the Swedish-Kurdish Cultural Encounter on the Informants’ Identity

The impact of the Swedish cultural encounter on the Kurdish identity affected Aram in many aspects such as the psychological aspect. He argues that when he immigrated to Sweden, his personal nature partly changed from being impatient and having no idea about the outside world to a different person after a period of time that has two faces and he confirms, “The human has two faces in diaspora”. He considers himself from both sides as Kurd and as a Swede to the extent, he says that “I have Swedish friends who deal with me as a Swedish person” and this refers to the fact that most of his friends are Swedish. Consequently, he got a positive sense to continue belonging to the Swedish society; since he lives in diaspora and needs a homeland. This illustrates the hypothesis “A positive sense of continuity derived from one’s ethnic identity will have positive outcomes for the self-esteem principle” (Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 512). So, has his culture changed and what culture does he have in his mind?

Aram: My culture has not changed a lot. I look at culture from many perspectives. Until now I have not forgot my Kurdish folklore, in which these

things stay in mind and because I come to Sweden in a young age and I do know something about it. I can say that fifteen years of diaspora is not a long period to forget my Kurdish culture. However, may be after another fifteen years in diaspora, I will forget it gradually, I do not know, and a lot of stuff is prone to forget because of integration. In addition, I got something from the Swedish culture as well because I have to introduce myself to it because the society wants you to try to learn their nature to make it easier for them to deal with you as a person from another culture. The society wants you to get their manners, morals, habits and to be a 'photocopy' of them because the life in all Europe is built on how to deal with each other.

The above narrative illustrates the mixture of two cultures in Aram's mind across a period. He emphasizes that the influence of the society on him made him adapt into the Swedish society. The culture of the country of origin or homeland is the real or the physical place for the older generation (Alinia and Eliassi 2014: 78), in which Aram lived his first experience and has real material bonds to his homeland. Therefore, the relocation in the Swedish society and the dislocation from the country of origin created this cultural mix and formed a third space. Moreover, his experience is structured personally and culturally as Anthias claims that dislocation and relocation are structured on various levels: culturally, structurally and personally in the study of ethnicity in migration (2002: 499). Aram got many things from the Swedish culture and introduced himself personally into their culture by integration. He believes the Swedish society requests immigrants to learn the Swedish traditions, morals and manners, such as raising children in a Swedish way. Generally, they are encouraged to follow the Swedish system of life. In addition, when Aram says that the society wants you to be a photocopy of them; he confirms one of the strategies of resistance by people with immigrant background argued by Azar. Azar (2001: 78-9) claims that to become as Swedish as possible is to "consequently contribute to the creation and reproduction of the notion of its [Swedishness] exclusivity and value. [...] if the person adapts to the majority society's imperative (to be Swedish or disappear!) and subtle interrogation techniques, it means that the labor market will open for the person" (my translation). Thus, Aram does not consider himself as a foreigner, because the way that he integrated within the Swedish society constructed the sense of belonging to it. However, this does not affect his Kurdish identity. He tried to become as Swedish as possible to get the opportunity to be a member of the Swedish society and to facilitate life issues.

Eriksen claims that identity in the anthropological discourse means "being the same as oneself as well as being different" (2002: 60). Shilan interprets her identity experience as being more

attached to the Kurdish ethnic culture in spite of living in Sweden. She claims that “the culture that I have in mind is the Kurdish one and I do not know why. Whatever I want to do I think in a Kurdish way”. Thus, Shilan’s identification is related to her ethnic group (Kurdish culture) although, the environment around her is Swedish. This might give her a positive implication about her identity, and she differentiates her identity from others. This positive sense of identity has psychological benefits as explained by Jaspal and Cinnirella (2011), who argue that the identification of people with their ethnic group has its positive embodiment for the belonging principles of identity (p. 510). However, Shilan’s in-betweenness constructs her cultural hybrid identity, which is a mixture of two cultures that create a new identity. We also realize that Shilan contradicts herself as having the Kurdish culture way of thinking and feels in-between at the same time, i.e. she says that she is more attached to her Kurdish group but at the same time feels in-between (see page 27).

For Lailan, the impact of the cultural encounter could be applied to Eliot’s claim (see p. 18).

Lailan: The Swedish cultural encounter affected me very much because I live in Sweden. I have to leave part from my own culture and part from the Swedish culture in order to adapt in the Swedish society. One cannot follow the Kurdish culture 100% here in Sweden because this will not help you to continue in the society, but to leave a part from both cultures will be very helpful. In contrast, if I follow the Swedish culture and identity only I will forget myself or assimilate and a new person will be created. At that time, one cannot adapt with his family who are all Kurds. Therefore, the solution is to be in-between and adopt both cultures.

Lailan continues that her position as in-between refers to the fact that she lives in Sweden, which she considers her real environment. As mentioned before, Lailan grew up in Sweden and that means she has a little experience in the country of origin. Alinia and Eliassi claim that homeland for the younger generation is imaginary, created according to their wishes, and needs (2014: 78). This illustrates what Lailan claims that Sweden is her real environment because she lives there, while Kurdistan is her imaginary world that she creates according to her wishes. Lailan confirms that the culture in Kurdistan is not wrong, but because she has two different cultures and the people in Kurdistan have one, the formation of her thinking or her style of thinking is different from the culture in Kurdistan. Lailan thinks that being in-between and leaving a part from each culture will help her to fit in both cultures and give her the opportunity to integrate with in the Swedish society. In addition, following the Swedish culture only will lead to her assimilation (See Assimilation theory p. 20) and forgetting her Kurdish identity.

Therefore, the case of Lailan's identity could be acculturation (cf. Rubin et al. 2011: 498, Sam and Berry 2010), in which she integrates with the outside society and maintains her Kurdish cultural heritage as well.

Zerin: it is very interesting for me to know about the Swedish culture and understand it. It is important to know how do they think and compare it with what we think because as human beings we get knowledge from that. It cannot change my Kurdish identity, but it is for my interest to be familiar with them. In addition, the Swedish culture for younger age is more attractive than to the older age. The identity of those Kurds, who grew up or were born in Sweden and integrated, is constructed from both cultures and it is different from my situation. I know many Kurds from the older age, who lived for a long time in Sweden, they could not integrate, and they have not learned Swedish language and they have never count themselves with Swedish at all because they do not want to be integrated.

What Zerin said contradicts what Brubaker and Cooper claim that identity is self-understanding rather than self-interest (2000: 6). However, Zerin understands her identity, but she is interested in the Swedish culture. In addition, her experience in life, the experience of dislocation and relocation and living in different countries made her adapt into new societies. She considers integration as knowledge that human beings have to acquire in their life. Swedish culture for her is a self-interest and knowledge. Zerin emphasizes that Swedish integration cannot change her identity because her situation is different from those who grew up or were born in Sweden. Zerin claims that there are Kurds from the older generation who do not want to be integrated in the Swedish society, a strategy that is associated with Azar's (2001: 79) second strategy "to become as un-Swedish as possible". This strategy implies that "when it becomes obvious for a person that her attempts to learn the codes of a society still do not result in her being accepted, she instead chooses a radically opposite strategy" (my translation). Such people reject to be identified within the Swedish society or the majority society and the reason could be either to continue to exist or to achieve higher self-worth (Eliassi 2013: 50) or because they have not learned the codes of the Swedish society.

3.3 Foreigner, Different or Diaspora Identity

Aram does not consider himself as foreigner or having a diasporic identity and the reason is integration. He mentions that within a particular period of time, he felt himself as one of the Swedish people and he got married to a non-Swedish European and they have a child.

Aram: No, this issue of being a foreigner reached another dimension. The reason is integration, which I consider very important. For example, my Swedish friends deal with me as a Swede and do not look at me as a foreigner. We even joke with each other as if I joke with a Kurdish person. They never look at me as a foreigner.

He claims that he does not feel as a foreigner in Sweden and when he travels to Kurdistan, he yearns to Sweden but vice versa as well. He says “I have feelings for both and 15 years is not a long period to forget Kurdistan”. In Sweden, his cultural preferences are similar to the Swedish people, but this does not mean that he is the same, because his cultural identification is different from that of belonging. Anthias claims that it is very essential to “differentiate the existence of cultural mixing from the existence of synthetic identification or new mixed ones” in the debate of hybridity (2002: 505). This means that it is important to differentiate the mix of Aram’s both cultures from the new culture created. He identifies himself as having both identities and by this he creates a new mixed culture.

Shilan emphasizes the powerful influence of the Swedish culture upon her and her Kurdish friends. She clarifies that one must follow the Swedish culture a little bit because it is difficult to follow exactly the Kurdish way of thinking while living in Sweden. This is due to the fact that life in Sweden is different from that in Kurdistan.

Shilan: I am always with my Kurdish friends and most of them are in-between. There are issues that we follow from the Kurdish culture and some issues from the Swedish culture because you have to be like them in some issues, unless you cannot continue and I will be considered as a foreigner if I only follow my ethnic culture.

Shilan wants to follow both cultures. She mentions that if she follows only the Kurdish culture, this would make some Swedish people say, “Why are you here then, if you live here and do not act like us? Because everyone thinks in a different way, some may accept me as I am and understand my situation and some may not”. Shilan is trying to prevent herself from being a foreigner by following the Swedish culture a little bit. She thinks in that way she would be

accepted in the Swedish society. So, cultural diversity is emphasized in her opinion. From Shilan's opinions, we understand that her contradiction means that she acts as a Swede but her inner identity and real feeling about her identity is Kurdish.

Lailan has a different perspective than Aram and Shilan.

Lailan: At the beginning, it is very important that everyone knows about his culture because everybody is identified by his own culture and without it one cannot be recognized. For example, when I dress Kurdish clothes, there is no need to say I am Kurd, but my dress identifies me as a Kurd or from a different culture. So, it is important to keep my own culture and I can do that. Even my daughter who was born in Sweden cannot be considered as a Swede unless she marries a Swedish person. But, if she marries an immigrant Kurd, she will be considered differently because we look different.

Lailan considers herself different or as a foreigner. She emphasizes this difference by two examples, Kurdish clothes and marriage. If we link the notion of the marriage of Lailan's daughter to a Swede with Aram's marriage to non-Swedish European, we can conclude that Aram's Swedish friends do not consider him as a foreigner and the reason could be his marriage to a non-Swedish European girl. Because he says "when a European marries a person from another culture like me, it means that the situation reached zero degree and she does not consider me as a foreigner; rather, as a close friend". The same could be applied for Lailan's claims that if her daughter marries a Swede, she will not be considered as different.

Zerin: No, I do not feel that my identity is diasporic because my Kurdish identity exists. It depends on the self and what kind of person I am? Do I want to integrate with people and is it important for me where they are from? I do not have any problem to be with them. We are all human beings, there are good, and bad people everywhere. If I socialize with a racist person, of course, he will consider me as an 'Other' but if I am with my close Swedish friend, we are considered as sisters and it is not important whether I am a Kurd or Swede.

Zerin also does not consider her identity as diasporic because of her self-confidence about the existence of her Kurdish identity. She links the notion of diasporic identity to peoples' attitudes and that this notion varies from one person to another.

The narratives of my informants explain the way they position themselves (cf. Anthias 2002) in the Swedish society and how their identity is constructed through the cultural and social situations as being different. This explains collective identity issues, in which the self is embedded in collective idioms and draws characteristics from them and contain important

process that can be recognized in terms of boundaries of otherness and sameness (Anthias 2002: 497).

3.4 Cultural Encounter and Economic Situation

Shilan refers to the mixture of both cultures and she mentions that there are many things she cannot do exactly as a Kurd and things that she cannot do exactly as a Swedish person and that “there is something different in everything” :

Shilan: I do not know, but there is something different in everything. For example, in Sweden, it is very natural for students in my age to get work at any place and study at the same time and I studied and worked together. I have to depend on myself and not on my parents and all my friends did the same, while in Kurdistan the situation is different for girls in my age, most of them stay at home and study and they depend on their parents until they get job.

Jaspal and Cinnerilla claim “The distinctiveness principle of identity will be enhanced by ethnic identification; ethnic identification is most pertinently associated with distinctiveness”. In particular, the distinctiveness of groups is relevant to the ethnic identity construction due to the importance of understanding the cultural differences between groups in the construction of the ethnic identities (2011: 510). Shilan mentions the work example to differentiate between the Swedish and the Kurdish culture. She says that it is normal for people at her age to study and work at the same time as one of the Swedish society’s characteristics. In contrast to Kurdistan, in which students at her age depend on their families to get financial support until they get a job. It is worth to mention that from my experience in my culture, family members in Kurdistan support each other economically until a son or a daughter gets work, and many girls have no work at all and they receive economic support from their family until they get married.

Therefore, first-generation- immigrants, such as Aram, have to harmonize to new economic, political, and cultural life and deal with the question of dislocation and displacement in order to reorient himself in the new society (cf. Eliassi 2013: 4). What Aram and Zerin said is compatible to Shilan’s speech.

Aram: I have learned that I have to be compatible with the social conditions and depend on myself and not depend on any person because in Sweden many people (boys and girls) start work at a very young age and study at the same time.

Zerin: The economic life in Iraqi Kurdistan was easier for me because I lived in a rich family and I had no worries about economic life, but in Sweden I started a

new life. I had to study and to get a job and face difficulties in order to continue in my life and this made me feel that life is not so easy and one has to face many difficulties in order to get a decent life.

The narratives above contain almost the same notions about the economic life in Sweden, which is not easy. As a universal fact one needs a secure job everywhere. However, according to their narratives, we conclude there is cultural diversity between Sweden and Kurdistan, and that the economic situation for those immigrants was better in Kurdistan because the family members support each other financially.

3.5 Citizenship and Identity

Citizenship is one of the ways to introduce how belonging to a collectivity is constructed, which is considered as a legal right and draw the boundaries between Swedishness and Swedish citizenship (Eliassi 2013: 100). What I mean with Swedish citizenship here is not associated with the Swedish ethnicity; rather, it only refers to citizenship on paper. Moreover, being Kurdish here is associated with the Kurdish ethnicity and not nationality. Jaspal and Cinnirella claim that in order for group members to know who they are, they must identify and discover who they are not (2011: 512-13). Therefore, there are many immigrants, who introduce themselves as Swedish because they have the Swedish citizenship, but the question is “does citizenship affect the ethnic identity and how?”

Aram: No, I cannot say I am Swedish because it is something normal that one must look where his parents belong, the place of their birth and which ethnic group they belong to. I can say I feel Swedish, but I belong to the Kurdish ethnic group. Even those immigrants who are born in Sweden are not supposed to say that they are Swedish people because their ethnic group is different. For example, a Swedish person born in Kurdistan, cannot say “I am a Kurd” because the ethnic group of his parents is different.

Aram mentions that people have to know which ethnic group their parents belong to in order to know about their origin. In addition, Aram illustrates that integration is a worldwide process and Sweden gives citizenship as a law and legal right to people who have no criminal problems in Sweden. Therefore, citizenship in Aram’s point of view is a legal right and cannot affect his ethnic identity. This illustrates what Eliassi claims that citizenship is a mean of political belonging that adjust the relationship between the individuals and the state and social collectivities (2013: 54). Moreover, citizenship means “having the right to have rights” and to be a member in the political and civil society (Somers 2008: 25). Aram feels Swedish, but cannot

identify himself as a Swede in spite of what he said about his being 50% of each identity. Here he is considered to belong to the older generation because he is not born or raised in Sweden and according to Alinia and Eliassi (2014) when the older generation wants to express their strong attachment to Sweden, they usually say “I feel Swedish” (p. 4) as Aram did.

Shilan claims that having a Swedish citizenship is very important in the construction of her identity, but it does not affect her ethnic identity. In her opinion, it is good to say, “I am Kurd, but a Swedish citizen”. This is due to the fact that Swedish people respect those who know and keep their origin. Therefore, they advise parents to teach their children their mother tongue, as Shilan clarified. Moreover, Sweden gives the opportunity to immigrant’s children to learn their mother tongue through giving mother tongue tuition in Swedish schools (Skolverket 2008). Shilan’s answer “Swedish citizen” could be considered as political reference because having citizenship is a political issue.

Lailan: I do not think that citizenship affects identity, but as I said before, it has a relationship with the surrounding environment and to what extent we as Kurds know about our culture, especially for children, that is parents’ task. For example, my father said, ‘speak Kurdish at home and you are free to speak Swedish outside with your friends.’ and because I am in-between and not the same as some Kurds who live in Sweden and identify themselves as only Kurds. I cannot consider myself as one of them following only the Kurdish culture. I am more attached to those Kurd who are in-between like me.

Lailan confirms that having Swedish citizenship cannot affect her ethnic identity. She refers to her Kurdish culture because she identifies herself as belonging to the Kurdish ethnic group, but not being 100% Kurd. However, she cannot identify herself to the Swedish ethnic group even if she has the Swedish citizenship. Lailan’s father reinforced her relationship with her mother tongue to strengthen her Kurdish identity. She is more attached to the Kurds who identify themselves as being in-between.

Zerin: Having the Swedish passport is highly important concerning political issues. You can travel with it wherever you want. In addition, Sweden is a country with a high political status. The Swedish passport does not affect my Kurdish identity because still my birthplace is written in it. I belong to the Kurdish ethnic group, but I consider myself as belonging to other cultures because I am familiar with these cultures. For example, when I am with a Spanish friend², I realize that I

² Zerin is a Spanish teacher therefore she sees herself as more familiar with the Spanish culture than some of her Spanish friends as she clarified.

am more familiar with his culture comparing to him. Therefore, I am in many cultures but the most powerful is the Kurdish culture.

Although Zerine emphasizes the positivity of the Swedish citizenship and passport, she cannot identify herself as a Swede. She claims the fact that her birthplace mentioned in her Swedish passport indexes that she is not a Swede. This illustrates what Ellassi claims that even if immigrants have citizenship they do not really belong to 'us' (2013: 45). She mentions the importance of having the Swedish passport for political issues and having the ability to travel everywhere because Sweden is a country with high political status. Zerine describes herself as having knowledge in Spanish culture more than her Spanish friends because she is familiar with their culture. I have noticed that she was wearing clothes similar to the Spanish clothes and this confirms the influence of the Spanish culture upon her.

So, all of the informants agreed that the formation of their Kurdish identity has no relationship with having the Swedish citizenship. Both Shilan and Lailan related identity to mother tongue, which is the next subheading.

3.6 The Role of Language and Parents in Identity Formation

Jaspal and Cinnerilla argue that the acceptance and the reproduction of the importance of the heritage language, as a marker of ethnic identity, enables the individuals to confirm the membership in their ethnic group because they claim to possess the crucial self-aspect of the knowledge of the heritage language. This process has a positive implication for identity and belonging (2011: 516). This leads to another hypothesis which argues "Ethnic group members will accentuate the importance of ethnic self-aspects that they perceive themselves to possess in order to enhance the belonging principle of identity" (ibid). As we will see in the following, the role of parents is very crucial in the formation of their children's identity in diaspora.

Shilan's parents urged her since early childhood to speak Kurdish at home because it is something natural that she will automatically speak Swedish at school. In addition, she attended Kurdish language tuitions approximately once a week since the age of four until she reached nineteen. These lessons highly affected her Kurdish identity because she learned how to read and write in Kurdish. In addition, she learned Kurdish history and culture, such as the history of the Kurdish New Year 'Newroz' that she had no idea about before. Moreover, learning the Swedish

language is very important for her since she lives there. However, it is very important to know the mother tongue as well, according to her.

Shilan: Of course, language has a role in forming my identity because I know exactly that there is cultural difference because we speak Kurdish at home and Swedish outside. However, as a Kurd I have to speak Kurdish language.

So again, this distinctiveness gives her a positive implication (cf. Jaspal and Cinnirlla 2011) towards her Kurdish identity. Shilan knows a lot of her Kurdish culture and this is also due to her regular visits to Iraqi Kurdistan. Besides, she has many close relatives in Sweden who live in the same territory in Sweden as she clarified.

Lailan says that, the role of her parents in keeping her Kurdish language reinforced her to be more attached to her Kurdish identity. She attended Kurdish language classes since she was eleven and studied it only for four years.

Lailan: I am very thankful to my father who urged me to speak Kurdish at home because I have learned Kurdish in a good way and Swedish as well. In addition, I will follow the same thing with my daughter as my sisters do with their children because this has its influence in bounding us to our Kurdish identity. The Kurdish language lessons had very positive influence on my identity because at that time, there was not so many Kurds as now in my area and this helped me to meet other Kurdish friends from my age. It was positive in many ways, for example to know about the story of the Kurdish New Year ‘Newroz’.

Shilan and Lailan’s narratives about Kurdish mother tongue and the role of their parents, emphasize the importance of language influence in constructing the ethnic identity of immigrants’ children in diaspora. Mother tongue, as a marker of identity, binds them with their ethnic identity. It gives them the positive sense of being distinctive from the majority society. Attending mother tongue lessons have positive influence on their identity construction. This positivity is obvious for example in Lailan’s claims since she uses her parent’s policy in making children learn their mother tongue with her daughter, in spite of the fact that she came to Sweden at the age of nine. In addition, both Shilan and Lailan mention the Kurdish New Year ‘Newroz’ as a kind of festival related to the Kurds as an ethnic group and one of the Kurdish cultural elements. Jaspal and Cinnirella (2011) claim that the identification of the self with the ethnic group has a great relation with the ethnic festivals, music and stories (p.511) which also give them a continuous sense of belonging to that particular ethnic group through ages (Kalkman 2003: 34). As mentioned above, all Kurds believe in ‘Newroz’ as an ethnic fest.

Shilan: My family has great influence in constructing my Kurdish identity, because if my family were not interested in their identity they would have brought me up in a different way. Many of my Kurdish friends claim that they are Swedish, because their families' roles in activating the sense of their ethnic identity were not successful. In addition, the influence of the outside society has been powerful upon them.

Moreover, Shilan attributes the reason behind her belief about the construction of her Kurdish identity to the fact that she has many near relatives like uncles and aunts, who live in the same Swedish area as she lives. She was also brought up among her cousins and spent almost all the time with them, she said. The most important reason in forming her Kurdish identity is their regular visits to Iraqi Kurdistan as an attempt by her parents to introduce her roots to her. She says, "We love our roots and we love our city there and we have not forgotten our Kurdish language". Alinia and Eliassi claim that the younger generation experienced their imagined homeland in reality because of their trips to their countries of origin (2014: 78). Moreover, Shilan claims that when the role of parents is weak in activating the ethnic identity sense, their children will be more attached to the majority identity. Consequently, the attachment and belonging of the younger generation to Sweden is stronger than their parents' attachment, who often identify themselves with places other than Sweden (Alinia and Eliassi 2014: 75).

What Shilan and Lailan feel about being Kurds is more related to their mother tongue and learning some Kurdish habits, and cultural elements such as the Kurdish New Year that bound them to their Kurdish identity.

The role of Shilan and Lailan's families in bringing them up is different from the role that Aram follows in upbringing his daughter and this may refer to the fact that he feels both identities or because he is married to a non-Swedish European woman. The way that one raises his or her child in Kurdistan is different from the Swedish one. According to the Kurdish immigrant community, the life in Kurdistan is attached to the habits and customs of tribal society. I asked Aram about the identity of his child, who is considered as second generation immigrant in Sweden:

Aram: Each one of us as parents considers the child in a certain way. For me I consider her as Kurd, while my wife considers her as European. I do my best to tell my daughter about Kurdish identity and religion, but when she grows up and pass 17 years, she can decide which identity to choose whether Kurd, European or

Swedish or all of them. However, now she considers herself as Swedish. I raised her as a Kurd, but I cannot oblige her because her life is different from mine.

The above-explained situation confirms that Aram identifies himself as a Kurd and he considers her child as a Kurd and not a Swede or in-between. Although, he creates a third position or a third space for himself by being 50% of both identities (see p. 27). He prefers to consider his daughter as a Kurd. He tries to teach his daughter about her ethnic identity and religion, but he gives her the freedom to choose her identity in the future. He stands between the Kurdish and Swedish identity and culture, which represents balance between the two to create the new identity. In addition, because of dislocation and relocation a shift happened with regard to homeland and belonging. However, the Swedish identity and society is much more important to the younger generation, while the older generation are splitted between their past memories and experience in homeland and their new live as immigrants, (Alinia and Eliassi 2014: 78-9), which require them to make balance between the two.

Furthermore, as mentioned before, Lailan also has a daughter and since she feels in-between, her opinion about constructing the identity of her daughter is as follows:

Lailan: No one forced me to do something at childhood. Therefore, I cannot force my daughter either. I grew up in a way that I have my opinions and select things that I want and I want my daughter to be the same. I will do my best to keep her Kurdish identity, language, and culture because it is extremely important to me and by doing this I am teaching her that ‘you are a Kurd’ but when she grows up she is free to choose. In addition, I will support her in the way that she chooses

Lailan mentions that it is a crucial thing for her to keep her daughter’s ethnic identity, language, and culture and by keeping these elements she is telling her daughter about her Kurdish identity. In spite of what she said previously, she gives the freedom to her child to choose her identity in the future.

For Zerine the situation is almost the same as Lailan. Zerine has two sons, who came to Sweden at the age of nine and eleven and they had good command of Kurdish language. They grew up in Sweden, now one of them is in the age of eighteen, and the other is twenty years old.

Zerine: I do not want to force them to do what they do not like. I give them the freedom to choose what they want. They know that they are Kurds and if someone asks them about their origin, they identify themselves as Kurds. They speak Kurdish with me and sometimes we use some English because they are influenced by the American culture and not the Swedish culture. They listen to

English music and are highly influenced by the American movies, series, and songs. I cannot say that they listen to the Swedish songs.

Almost all the informants' notions in constructing their children's identity are the same and all of them give the freedom to their children to choose their identities in the future. However, all of them do their best to make their children know "who they are" and "where they have come from". This in-betweenness could be problematic for them since some parents try to make balance between the two cultures in order to make their children understand their Kurdish identity. The most interesting thing is the situation of Zerin's children. They are not influenced by the Swedish society or the Kurdish culture as the mother said; rather they are influenced by the American culture and this is due to the American music, movies, and series they listen to and watch. This situation explains the notion of marginalization; a notion that could be applied to those who immigrate and orient themselves to neither cultures (cf. Sam and Berry 2010: 472). However, in my opinion the situation of Zerin's children is not logical, because since her children live in Sweden, they must have contact with Swedish people at least in school, but in all cases as an interviewer I have to respect what my informants says.

3.7 Identity as a Personal Choice

To feel in- between or both Kurdish and Swedish is reported by some of the informants, Consequently, I decided to ask them if identity to them is a personal choice or not.

Aram: It is not a personal choice, but the outside environment and society often affects my choice.

Shilan: The choice of identity depends firstly on the family with regard to small children. That is, if parents do not inform their children about their ethnic culture and language during childhood, it would be a personal choice when children grow up. In contrast, if parents teach their children about their identity and language during childhood, identity issue will remain inside them and with them.

Shilan's situation is different from Aram because she has not experienced dislocation and relocation (cf. Anthias 2002) as Aram did. She was brought up in Sweden, but the influence of her family supported her to construct her identity and to be attached more to her Kurdish identity. Shilan says that it is very important that parents tell their children about their ethnic identity during childhood because identity issues will remain inside them. In contrast, children will choose their identity when they grow up if their parents do not inform them about their ethnic identity during childhood. Alinia and Eliassi claim that the Swedish identity and society is

of much more significance to the younger generation of the Kurdish diaspora (2014: 79). Therefore, when Aram came to Sweden, he was young and alone and the Swedish society has been of much significance for him at that time because of dislocation from his country of origin and he needed a homeland.

For Lailan the situation is more obvious since she expresses directly and freely what she feels as follows:

Lailan: I can say that it is a personal choice because no one forced me to say I am in-between, but some conditions and the surrounding environment made me feel in-between. Therefore, being in-between is easier for me to manage my life and continue. Therefore, it is my personal choice to see myself as in-between.

Lailan's in-betweenness gives her the freedom to choose her identity based on how she feels comfortable. The positive sense that is derived from her ethnic identity has positive outcomes for her self-esteem (cf. Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 512).

Zerin: I am Kurd because my parents are Kurds and they are the most important to me. I am very thankful that I am a Kurd because my parents and family have treated me as a queen. The situation might have been different if I grew up in a different family in a different culture. However, when people immigrate to a new country they have to leave the past behind, but not forget it. They have to start a new life and we Kurds always immigrated to many countries because of the political and economic situation in Iraq, therefore, we have to be strong.

Zerin's point of view emphasizes her identity in a way that means it is not a personal choice, because her parents are Kurds so she is a Kurd as well. Therefore, here the concept of identity is related to the origin of people. However, she refers to starting a new life after immigration in order to be compatible with the new society; but this does not mean to forget the past.

Therefore, the narratives of the informants highlight an essential explanation of identity construction in diaspora. It shows the richness of identity meaning usage that is to understand and identify oneself according to the context in which immigrants live since everyday life affects identity to a certain extent. This issue is not associated with the origin of the self, which is a fact that cannot be changed. Thus, Aram, Shilan, Lailan and Zerin understand their cultural identity and express their opinions with self-confidence according to their experience in both cultures, as it is obvious in their talk. In addition, all of them have a positive implication about their sense of

being Kurd, a sense of positive continuity that is derived from their ethnic identity and gives them positive outcomes and self-esteem (cf. Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011: 512).

3.8 Cultural Hybridity and the Informants' Identity Formation

Some informants agreed on the influential role of cultural hybridity (mixture of two cultures) in the construction of their identities and that this was due to their cultural encounter with the Swedish society. They share a collective identity with the Swedish culture and a sense of belonging as Shilan confirmed.

Shilan: Yes, I think that my identity is a mix. I do know I am Kurd, but still the Swedish identity has its influence on me because I live here (Sweden) and grew up here. And as a result I have two different thoughts and cultures of both.

Lailan: Sure, my identity consists of two cultures. Because in Sweden, they give you, the spaces to learn your own culture (Kurdish), beside to the Swedish one. This is the thing that I have understood when I grew up. I remember when I was a child after one week of our arrival to Sweden, the responsible officer of my father told him that 'the most important thing is that your children have to keep their mother tongue'. The influence of parents and one's own choice are also behind this cultural hybridity.

In accordance with Lailan's narratives about Swedish multiculturalism, many scholars agree on the fact that "Swedish multicultural policies both strengthen ethnic Kurdish identity and, in directly, promote ethnic Kurdish nationalism" (Eliassi 2013: 72). Therefore, since her childhood Lailan learned her own Kurdish culture beside the Swedish culture. In addition she measures the present time with relation to the past and refers to her childhood 'when I was a child' which could be considered "Organic Community" a community that existed in childhood and left behind now (cf. Hall 1997: 46).

Aram admitted that he has two identities, one Kurdish and one Swedish or he is 50% of each, which made him feel as being both and this is due to the successful integration, which will be explained in the next section.

Zerin's point of view is different. She believes that her original identity is Kurdish. However, her cultural identity is not only a mix of two cultures (Kurdish and Swedish); rather it is a mix of other cultures, such as, Spanish, English and Persian. She mentioned Persian because she lived in Iran for a long time. In addition, her work as a teacher in Spanish and English languages in Sweden is another factor behind her cultural hybridity. She emphasizes that in present time, she

is very attached to the Spanish culture and she listens more to Spanish music than to Swedish or Kurdish music.

3.9 Successful Integration and Assimilation Influence on the Formation of Identity

The informants explained different opinions about the successful integration in the Swedish society. In addition, they give some factors that could result in the assimilation of some immigrants while encountering another culture.

Aram: I have lived in Sweden for more than fifteen years and I have many Swedish friends from both genders. Therefore, it depends on the connections (dealing) with people in school, work, friends, and with whom I have relation. In fact, I have very few Kurdish friends and I started my connections with Swedish people. I learned the Swedish language fast as a first step to integrate in the Swedish society, since without language one cannot continue his life there. Besides, one cannot be with people from his ethnic group if they are very few in your territory. Those friends who I know for about fifteen years have not learned Swedish language in a good way because they do not want to learn and integrate (See Zerín p. 33). One must make social relationships and introduce himself to their habits, eat their food and many other cultural things in order to be integrated successfully in their society. As a result of integration I married a non-Swedish European girl. This is because this girl considered me as a Swede. I can say that at that time, I forgot about my own culture and I wanted to be among the Swedish people.

Aram is positioning himself as integrating in the Swedish society in a very enthusiastic way. As the first step of his integration, he considers his identity through his experience and self-identification with Swedish society by learning their language and making social relationships until he gets married to a non-Swedish European person. Aram mentions some of his Kurdish friends who do not want to be integrated in the majority society because they have no interest to be integrated in it. He insists on the importance of the social relations at work, school, and everywhere with the majority society in order to be integrated successfully. He confirms forgetting his ethnic identity and changes (assimilates) in a particular period and he is interested in being among the Swedes. This ‘interest’ goes against what Brubaker and Cooper claim about identity as self-understanding rather than self-interest (2000: 6) in which Aram is interested in being among the Swedes. In addition, Aram’s claim that he forgot his Kurdish identity during a certain period means that he oriented himself to one culture as a kind of assimilation (cf. Sam and Berry 2010: 472). Moreover, what Aram did could be applied to IPT (Identity Process

Theory) and part of the assimilation-accommodation process. That is he absorbed the new component into the structure of his identity to accommodate into the existing structure to fit into the new society (cf. Breakwell 1986: 23, Jaspal and Cinirella 2011: 505).

What Shilan claims, is applicable to Brubaker and Cooper (2000) notions. Shilan confirms that integration and the surrounding environment could change the identity. However, it also depends on one's decision because it is important to her to know who she is and where she is from. This means that identity is self-understanding to her and not self-interest.

Shilan: I can say I am Swedish, but I am not because whether I like it or not I do not look like them in my face and it is obvious that I am from another place. However, it is no problem to be like them and follow things in their culture but it is crucial to keep your own descent identity and know about your ethnic identity and group.

Shilan confirms that she cannot be a Swede because she does not look like them physically, but it is no problem for her to follow some Swedish culture. Moreover, she said that there are many Kurds, who act as Swedes in unpleasant ways. The problem is that those Kurds cannot be like Swedes because they are different and she considers that as something wrong. However, what she means is not a kind of discrimination because she said the Swedish people are very lovely people and only few of them use discrimination. Shilan is not refusing the Swedish society and identity, but she cannot see her life style in a Swedish way. Consequently, protecting and keeping her Kurdish identity is one of her rights and not an opposition against the Swedish society, as she clarified.

Lailan: The integration is good to an extent, but everything has a certain limit. The influence starts from childhood. I integrated, but I have not forgotten my Kurdish culture because my parents introduced our Kurdish culture to me and we visited Kurdistan regularly. My father introduced me to our relatives. I was nine years old when I came to Sweden and if my father had not taught us about our culture, certainly I might have been influenced too much and assimilated. I do not mean that I would forget my Kurdish identity 100% but I would have a different situation from now.

Lailan mentions that to be integrated in the Swedish society is a positive thing to an extent, but the role of parents in exposing their children into the ethnic culture society is also important. That is, it helps their children to be integrated into the majority society without forgetting their ethnic culture. She continues her claims and clarifies that she became culturally rich by keeping her Kurdish identity, which is an important issue for her and it is not an opposition against the

Swedish culture and society. In fact, keeping the Swedish culture also makes her richer culturally because she has two cultures. Therefore, the impact of parents in putting limits to their children helps them to be attached to their ethnic identity.

Zerin: I do not think that successful integration lead to assimilation. In my case, I integrated very successfully, but still sometimes I listen to the songs of the Kurdish singer Tahsin Taha. I know many Kurds who integrated, studied, and married to a Swedish wife, but still protect their Kurdish identity and name their children Kurdish names. We always meet and talk about our Kurdish people and everything is present in our minds. We cannot forget our Kurdish identity and it has to be the same for all Kurds. We have to know where we come from because our origin identifies our identity and if we forget that we will forget ourselves.

Zerin's point of view here relates to the basic definition of identity or the philosophical one, which is related to the origin of people "in terms of the origin of being itself" (Hall 1997: 42). She still sometimes listens to the songs of the Kurdish singer Tahsin Taha, who is popular in singing old Kurdish songs that have relation to the Kurdish folklore. That is, being integrated into the Swedish society does not affect her Kurdishness. She mentions that she has friends who get married to Swedish women but still protect their ethnic identity. In addition, keeping her Kurdish identity is not considered an opposition to the Swedish society, since she mentions that Sweden has a democratic government and one of the democratic basics is the freedom to choose your identity, religion, worship. Thus, Sweden's multiculturalism gives the freedom to other cultures and this does not affect the Swedish society negatively as she said.

Shilan and Lailan explained many reasons behind the assimilation of some Kurds. Shilan thinks that the reason behind the Swedishness of some of her Kurdish friends refers to the lack of many Kurdish relatives and friends in Sweden. They do not regularly visit their country of origin and some of them have not visited Kurdistan for ten years. She added that those young people who do not visit their country of origin for a long time do not remember their culture. Alternatively, they have many Swedish friends and their Kurdish identity assimilates and changes, but still they know who they are and where they belong. This assimilation is considered as a dilemma in keeping the Kurdish identity in diaspora. She concludes that the environment and the surrounding people have a great influence in constructing their identity.

Lailan: As I have seen myself, many young Kurds assimilated, especially 'boys' because they have more freedom than girls do. For example, they can make relations with girls, make trips, and do whatever they want. This makes them to

be absorbed into the Swedish culture more. However, one of the major reasons behind the assimilation of both genders is that they do not visit their country of origin. Their parents do not expose them to their culture and their parents' birthplace. They have no contact with Kurds in Sweden and have only Swedish friends at school, or live in an area that lack Kurdish immigrants. I remember how one of my friends' parents gave the full freedom to their daughter, which made her assimilate.

The role of gender is obvious in Lailan's claims. This may be due to the fact that boys in Iraqi Kurdistan have more freedom than girls because Kurdistan is a predominantly masculine environment. This also could be compared to Aram's situation as being a man from Iraqi Kurdistan and has the full freedom to do what he wants. Both Shilan and Lailan agree that without regular visits to the country of origin and not having Kurdish friends and contacts in Sweden could result in more assimilation.

3.10 Naming and Kurdish Identity Formation

Names could sometimes function as identity markers. For example, there is a tendency among Kurdish people to give their children Kurdish names since it becomes an important element in Kurdish identity politics (Eliassi 2013: 74-5). Some of the informants' points of views are however, different from what Eliassi claims and they claim as follows:

Aram: I gave my daughter an international name that fits into both cultures. Because having a different name may cause problems to her at school with her friends.

So, because Aram feels belonging to both cultures, he gave his daughter a name that fits into both cultures to prevent her from being considered as a foreigner.

But for Shilan, naming Kurdish children with Kurdish names is very important in the process of protecting and following Kurdish culture. It gives the parents a sense of relief. However, there are many Kurdish children, who change their names to Swedish names when they grow up. This is due to the fact that they do not like their Kurdish names and see it as something interesting to change (this refers to those who have more Swedish contacts) or because it makes it easier for them to get jobs, as Shilan said.

Lailan: For me it depends on one's interest. When I was a child, I thought to name my own children Kurdish names because I am a Kurd and because my name is Kurdish. Now I am at an age that I understand more about the Swedish culture and I live and feel Swedish. I do not think that giving a Swedish name to my

daughter is something wrong for us as Kurds because she was born, and lives in Sweden. Whether we like it or not Sweden is our second country.

Lailan continues her claims that in Sweden when children grow up, they have the right to change their names or have more than one name. Her suggestion is that it would be possible to name their children both Kurdish and Swedish names and she supposes that their children would be happy to have names from both cultures. She says, “Of course Kurdish names are markers of Kurdish identity, but since I see myself in-between, both ways are good for me”. Eventually, it depends on parent’s interest.

Zerin: Each group of people is interested in his mother tongue. Naming also depends on the interest of people. Many name their children because they want to give them the name of their dead father or mother as it is in the Kurdish culture. Some names are sweet to people therefore they give it to their children. For example, the name of Larsson or Carlson might not be sweet for Kurds. Therefore they do not give it to their children. For me the situation is the same and because I am familiar with many cultures and affected by the Spanish and Persian culture and I know five languages. One of my sons has a German name and the other has a Persian one.

Zerin also mentions that naming is associated with peoples’ interest and she refers to some Kurds who is interested in giving their children names that has a special memory in their life such as giving the names of their dead father or mother. In addition, some people name their children according to their interest and familiarity with other cultures, such as Zerin’s case in giving German and Persian names to her children.

Therefore, naming policy is associated with family interest according to the informants’ views. However, for me naming has a powerful relation to people’s identity because as Eliassi claims that names are crucial element in Kurdish identity politics (2013:74).

3.11 The Dream to Return to Kurdistan

In a study made by Alinia and Eliassi, some Kurds in diaspora explained that the first generation often dreams about returning to Kurdistan alive, although they are not certain when and if they will return. “But the dream of return seems to be as existential for them as the creation of a home (land) is here and now for the young generation” (2014: 79). In the present study, the dream to return is not limited to first generation, but includes those, who were raised, and grew up in Sweden. I asked the informants if there is any wish to return to Iraqi Kurdistan and their views are as follows:

Aram said that the reason behind his staying in Sweden is that he has a child there and it is very important to him to try to raise his child as he wants. He clarifies that he cannot let his daughter live alone after becoming 18 years and give the full freedom to her. This is because in Kurdish culture girls should stay with their parents until they get married. It is something in his blood and he cannot change it. As he claims “this issue is automatically saved in my mind” and this could be a marker of his Kurdishness. However, he cannot oblige her to do what she does not want. In addition, he says “15 years in Sweden is not a long period to say I am completely Swedish, but may be after another 15 years, ‘if I stay here’, I will be a Swedish person”. However, he thinks to return to Iraqi Kurdistan. The obvious thing in his talk is that, he is more attached to his Kurdish culture with regard to the upbringing of his daughter. He has a profound sense of association with Kurdish culture and identifies himself as a Kurd, although he feels Swedish.

Shilan: Yes, I would like to return. If not now, in the future. But I am sure that there will be a strong relation to Sweden, but I am sure I will return. In Kurdistan, I may change after several years, but at the beginning, I will stay in-between because I grew up in Sweden and my thoughts are changed, but I am sure that many things from the Swedish culture will stay with me.

Shilan wants to return to Kurdistan in the future, but she insists on having a strong relation to Sweden, which makes her position in-between. In Kurdistan she might change after several years, which confirms that identity is changeable and in flux. In addition, identity is experienced largely on the location and positionality or “translocational positionality” of people (Anthias 2002: 491). That is through her position and through time she might change. The same goes for Lailan and she constructs homeland according to her wishes and dreams.

Lailan: Yes, I will return and soon. I always tell my father that I am thankful to them that I grew up in Sweden because I feel comfortable with the thoughts that I have now. I also like to live in Iraqi Kurdistan and I will follow some Swedish culture but I cannot say that for sure. I will choose the positive things and apply it to my life in Kurdistan.

Lailan is thankful to her father because she grew up in Sweden. This due to that she feels comfortable with thinking that she has now and the way her identity is constructed to be consisted of two cultures which opens the way for a better life.

Here the informants see the Kurdish culture through Swedish eyes and this positioning emphasizes their cultural hybridity and the power of the Swedish culture upon them. The double

discourse and the plurality of perspectives are obvious in their narratives. The cultural identity that is hidden inside other cultures reflects a common historical experience that has a critical role in post-colonial theory (Hall 1994: 393). The informant's culture is hidden within the Swedish culture to form culture's in-between. The above interview insures the postcolonial themes, in which they have created a third space for themselves to live a life of cultures in-between.

CONCLUSION

The present paper demonstrates what happens to four Kurdish individuals' identity in diaspora and how their identity is constructed and reconstructed when encountering another culture such as the Swedish culture. Their life experience is translated through their visions and perspectives about the Swedish culture and context. The paper shows how they identify and understand themselves in relation to the surrounding individuals and community. The interviews show that the informants in one way or another all attempt to integrate in the Swedish society and maintain their Kurdish identity as well.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it displays identity as changeable, fluid and not fixed and that this change is resulted from the interaction with other people from another culture. However, here I have also been able to show a psychological reconciliation status between the immigrant and the receiving society through the respondents' voice (views) through making balance in their life, unlike other studies that show a problematic status of discrimination between the immigrant and the receiving society. This study presents how the informants substitute the words 'us/them' which are used as moods of discrimination in some studies, by the words 'both/and. Consequently, the relationship between the individuals and the surrounding environment is very crucial in the formation of their identity. The immigrants' position and location in the Swedish society portraits and depicts what they belong to and what they do not (cf. Anthias 2002: 491).

As mentioned in the introduction the first aim of this essay is to understand and analyze the formation of the informants' identity, and the way their identity is developed in diaspora. The second aim is to investigate the impact of the Swedish culture on the informants' identity. The third aim is to investigate whether the informants have developed an "in-between" (Bhabha 1996) cultural identity or have formed identities that are part of both cultures; the Swedish and the Kurdish. To achieve these aims interviews have been conducted with people, who share their narratives about cultural encounter. The following findings are discovered in accordance to the Kurds I interviewed.

Concerning the ages of the informants, I found that the age factor has no great impact on the self-identification of the interviewees, for example, Aram came to Sweden at the age of twenty-two, but he is very much attached to the Swedish society. Shilan came to Sweden at the age of

six months and she is more attached to her Kurdish culture and identity as she claims “I always identify and consider myself as a Kurd when I think of myself personally and never considered myself for a moment as a Swede and I do not know the reason” (see p. 28-9). However, sometimes she contradicts herself and says that ‘it is something like in-between’. Moreover, Lailan, who came at the age of nine years, feels more Kurd and in-between. Zerine, came to Sweden at the age of twenty-seven feels as belonging to the Swedish society. She is attached to the Spanish culture because of her work as a Spanish teacher, which implies work might affect the identity construction. In addition, all of the informants know they are Kurds and belong to the Kurdish ethnic group. They are very proud of their Kurdish background, but the Swedish society has a great influence on their identity. Besides, all of them share a strong collective identity with the Swedish society.

They all know about their Kurdish roots and are very proud of it, but while encountering another culture a change must occur because they live in a completely different environment than their original one. The informants are very comfortable while talking as I have seen and they do understand their identity formation. Aram follows both cultures and Shilan thinks in the Kurdish way but follows parts of the Swedish culture. Lailan falls in between and Zerine is interested in following more than two cultures. Each informant has his or her own experience and special causes for that.

In addition, by being in-between they create a space that stands between their country of origin and the host country and this space is called third space (Bhabha 1996). However, this space does not represent a conflict in the construction of the informants’ identities because they do know who they are and where they belong to. Rather, it creates a balance in their life. Therefore, this notion contradicts some other situations where cultural differences become problematic as explained in the interview with Bhabha (Hoeller 1999) although it presents the cultural in-betweenness of the informants’ identity.

Shilan and Lailan explained that the Swedish multiculturalism gives them opportunity to strengthen their Kurdish ethnic identity (cf. Eliassi 2013: 72). At that point, I found that those informants who faced dislocation and relocation such as Aram are more enthusiastic to be involved in the Swedish society because he needs homeland. For example, Aram claims that the Swedish society requests the immigrants to be a ‘photocopy’ of them. In contrast, Shilan and

Lailan are already involved in the Swedish society since childhood and they attempt to keep their Kurdish identity, however, Lailan consider Sweden as her second country.

The feeling of being a foreigner or different varies from one informant to another. Aram does not consider himself as a foreigner because of successful integration with the culture of the host country. For Shilan feeling as a foreigner is resulted from following only her Kurdish ethnic culture. Therefore, she prefers to follow some Swedish cultural aspects. Lailan substituted the term 'foreigner' by 'different' because she is sure that she is different and claims "we look different". For Zerine, being a foreigner or as she expresses it 'Other' varies from one person to another. She attributes it to people's attitude and she claims, "If I socialize a racist person, of course, he will consider me as an 'Other' ". However, all the informants agree on the physical traits i.e. never being able to become Swedish because of not looking like Swedes.

Aram, Shilan, and Zerine agreed on the fact that the economic life in Sweden for them is more difficult than their life in Iraqi Kurdistan. They attribute the distinctiveness or cultural diversity between both cultures to the family situation because the role of family in the Kurdish culture is highly important in the economic support of family members to each other. Therefore, this tradition distinguishes the informants from the Swedish culture, in which their cultural distinctiveness is an indication to their Kurdish ethnic identification.

All the informants agreed on the fact that having Swedish citizenship is very important in the construction of their identity. It is considered as a positive factor because Sweden as a country has a crucial political status. However, having Swedish citizenship does not affect their ethnic identity and they cannot identify themselves as belonging to the Swedish ethnic group just because they have the Swedish passport and citizenship. However, having the Swedish citizenship could be considered a political issue.

The role of language for the informants' identity construction is very important. According to Shilan and Lailan, their families urged them to speak Kurdish at home during childhood, and this gave them the sense of being distinctive from the culture outside home. In addition, their Kurdish heritage language is a marker of their ethnic identity, which confirms the membership in their ethnic group (cf. Jaspal and Cinnerilla 2011: 516). Moreover, the role of attending mother tongue tuitions in Sweden supported Shilan and Lailan from educational and moral aspects. They have learned a lot of Kurdish language and history that gave them the opportunity to contact Kurdish

children at their age at that time. Moreover, their parents introduced them to their cities and relatives in Iraqi Kurdistan that made them more attached to their Kurdish identity as Shilan mentions, “we loved our roots and we loved our city there and we have not forgotten our Kurdish language”. Moreover, some informants try their best in raising their small children to be attached to the Kurdish identity such as Lailan and Aram, while Zerine confirms that her children identify themselves as Kurds. Furthermore, Aram, Lailan and Zerine give the right to their children to choose their identity in the future.

In this study, all four informants shared different opinions about identity as a personal choice. Aram claims it is not a personal choice; rather, it is the influence of the outside society that influences him. Zerine claims that identity is not a personal choice; on the contrary, it refers to the parents’ origin. Shilan says that it depends on parents’ upbringing from childhood, while Lailan considers it as a personal choice.

All informants’ identities are culturally hybridized, which means a mixture of two or more cultures as they admitted. This is because of the impact of the cultural encounter and the influence of the Swedish society and the kind of work knowledge that those informants have. This cultural hybridity expresses the double contexts such as double languages, double voice and the mutuality of cultures. For example, Aram sees himself as having two identities as he claims “I found myself 50% of each [...] I can say that I have two identities, the first one is Kurdish and the second is Swedish”. Lailan said that she has to adapt in the society and being in-between will make life easier for her in Sweden, “[...] the solution is to be in-between and adopt both cultures”. Here the word ‘both’ clarifies the mutuality of cultures. In addition, their identification with their Kurdish ethnic identity gives them a positive implication and continuity for the sense of belonging and a psychological benefit (cf. Jaspal and Cinnirella 2011).

Integration, assimilation and acculturation from the informant’s point of view have different dimensions. Aram’s successful integration in the Swedish society made him at a certain period assimilate into the new culture and forget everything about his Kurdish identity. However, he changed his mind to be 50% of each later. This means that he was interested at a certain period to be a Swede and he did not understand himself carefully then.

The situation for Shilan, who grew up in Sweden was different and she claims that ‘I can say I am Swedish but I am not’ which means that she is not interested to be a Swede. However, she

claims there is no problem to be like Swedes. According to other informants, Lailan and Zerine, integration is a positive step and they integrated successfully, but one must not forget one's own culture and identity. Here comes the role of gender and according to my informants, men are more exposed to assimilation than women, since they have more space to follow the host country culture. Moreover, Shilan and Lailan attributed some reasons such having no Kurdish friends and relatives and not visiting the country of origin regularly or for a long time to the assimilation of some Kurds into the culture of the host country. All this illustrates the features of acculturation framework that implies how well people adapt following acculturation (cf. Sam and Berry 2010: 473).

Naming, according to my informants, is related to their interest. The informants named their children according to their own interest. Some have named their children names that fit into both cultures and some according to very special interests. For example, Zerine, named her children with Persian and German names, however, her children were born in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Finally, the informants intend to return Kurdistan and to keep some aspects of Swedish culture because of its impact upon them. However, one of the informants said that she might change after returning to Kurdistan. This home returning, keeping Swedish cultural aspects and the possibility of changing after returning are all markers of their cultural hybridity and the third space that they created for themselves and a confirmation that identity is fluid, changeable and not fixed. Thus, the discussion above achieves all the three study aims, to understand and analyze the formation and development of the informant's identities in diaspora, to investigate the impact of the Swedish cultural encounter on the informants' identity, and is to investigate whether the informants have developed an "in-between" cultural identity or have formed identities that are part of both cultures; the Swedish and the Kurdish.

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The results of this paper could be developed in a further way by extending the notion of cultural identity change in the cultural-encounter context by making more research on the ethnographic background including different ideas about Kurdishness and Swedishness and how they differ and what cultural elements they consider 'Kurdish' and 'Swedish' respectively. In addition, a further research is worth to be conducted about the informants in this study after returning home or other informants who have already returned home and what will happen to their identity.

Moreover, the challenges that they will face in their life considering society and gender identity is worthy of more investigation, since they have lived in diaspora for a period and learned some of the host country customs and traditions.

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Appendix

1. Do you identify and position yourself as a Kurd, Swede, in-between or both?
2. What is the impact of the Swedish cultural encounter on your Kurdish identity?
3. Which culture do you have more in mind?
4. How do you understand the surrounding culture and society around you, and are you considered as a 'foreigner'?
5. What are the factors that make you identify yourself as Kurd, Swede, or in between? And does that have a relationship with citizenship?
6. Does your life as one of the Kurds from Iraq create a hybrid (mix between two cultures) and diaspora identity?
7. Is the successful integration in the Swedish society a reason behind the loss or negation of the Kurdish identity of some Kurdish youth? (cf. Eliassi 2013: 10)
8. Do you think that keeping the Kurdish identity is an opposition to the Swedish culture or it is self-determination?
9. Does naming Kurdish children in Kurdish names protect the Kurdish identity in Sweden? (cf. Eliassi 2013:74)
10. Do you feel as a unique person, or do you think that you belong to a particular ethnic group?
11. Do you have any wish to return to Kurdistan?