Self-identification and sense of belonging among Kosovo Albanian descendants in Sweden

Mirela Shamo
Abstract

This paper investigates on the self-identification and feeling of belonging among the “Kosovo Albanian” “descendants” in Sweden. This is a study performed through semi-structured interviews of six volunteering participants, born and/or raised in Sweden, whose parents migrated after the 1990 which was the period of Bosnian and Croatian war that caused tensions in the Balkans. The concept of belonging together with the concept of identity, seen as self-identification, personal and collective identity, have guided through the findings of this paper. The result is that, regarding this sample, age of migration, and place of birth seems to matter in more easily defining identity and belonging.

Keywords; Kosovo Albanian descendants, Sweden, sense of belonging, ethnic identity, personal identity, collective identity, self-identification.
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Thank you all for the encouragement!
To my father!
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1. Introduction

I still remember the 1999, when the Kosovan war started and a lot of people moved to Albania. My grandfather took my hand and we went outside to find a family to host in our house. It was easy to spot the sadness in those people’s eyes. They were looking forward to find a place to sleep, for an undefined period of time, as they did not know what was going to happen with their country. We hosted a family of six persons, and they are very close friends of us today. Even though I was only 11 years old, I have these memories printed in my mind, and this is one of the reasons which pushed me to investigate on the Kosovans in Sweden. My grandfather had been through the same situation when he moved from a region called Chameria, to Albania. Chameria is located in the south of Albania, today part of Greece. To me it sounded like an interesting story, thanks to the way my grandfather use to tell me how they had to move together with their family. So, when the war in Kosovo was ongoing, he was fully understanding towards the Kosovans trying to escape the war. I remember hearing very often that we are one nation with Kosovo, we shared the same language and culture, but for some specific reasons, related to politics, Albania and Kosovo were separated. Reasons I could not understand during that period.

This research paper regards a study on the female “descendants” of Kosovan immigrants raised in Sweden, either born or migrated not older than five years. The group of reference in this research is ethnic Albanians of Kosovo and this is the reason why, very often Albanian and Kosovan are used as synonyms throughout the paper. This study is interesting because now there are a lot of “Kosovo Albanians” living in Sweden, who migrated in the 1990 as a result of the tensions created during the Bosnian and Croatian war, and there are not so many studies related on this topic about “Kosovo Albanians” in Sweden.

1.2. Clarification of terms

After reading some arguments regarding the definition of second generation and children of immigrants, it was decided to define with the name of “descendants” the participants of this study, in order to avoid misunderstandings. The term “second generation” was subject to criticism as it would label as migrants, people that are not migrants (Thomassen 2010:28), while, actually some of the interviewees are “descendants” of migrants who did not themselves migrate as they were born in Sweden. Calling them “children of migrants” would have been appropriate if the participants were in a young age, and if this was a study on children, therefore the definition that better suits the participants of this study, being adults, is descendants of Kosovan migrants in Sweden.
The reason for using the term Kosovo Albanians, is related to the fact that I am referring to the ethnic Kosovo Albanians in Sweden. According to Cia.gov there were 92.2% of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo by 2011, and the remaining were minorities from Serbia, Bosnia, Turkey and other nationalities. The official language is Albanian and Serbian and the nationality is also described as Kosovar (Albanian), so this is the way these two terms are used in Kosovo as well.

1.3. Aim, research questions and delimitations

The aim is to investigate on the self-identification and sense of belonging among descendants of Kosovo Albanian immigrants in Sweden.

It was investigated how this Kosovan group identify themselves while living and being born, or raised from an early age, in a different country compared to that of their parents. For this study, I will try to answer two research questions, considering the experience of the participants. The questions are simple and open, in order to avoid eventual implications or subjectivity.

1. How do the descendants of Kosovo Albanian immigrants identify themselves?
2. What is the sense of belonging among the “descendants” of “Kosovo Albanian” immigrants in Sweden?

Choosing the participants that were raised by parents with a background from Kosovo, will be a strong point of this research bringing in-depth knowledge about this specific group. A delimitation of this study is the fact that the participants are above the age of 20 and their parents migrated to Sweden after the 1990s. Another delimitation is related to the fact that all the participants are living in the region of Scania in Sweden, as choosing participants from other parts of Sweden would be time and money consuming. Another delimitation regards the fact that the study was performed with a sample of only female participants and all of them had both parents born in Kosovo. Secondary education was another delimitation of this paper, in order to enable me to get more elaborated and clear information from the interviews. The last delimitation is that all the participants speak Albanian.

1.4. Thesis structure

This thesis has different sections. It starts with a short introduction, aim and research questions to introduce the reader with the main idea about this research. The following section is about the background of the general Kosovan migration and Kosovo Albanians in Sweden during the 1990s, to have an idea of the group being studied and their main reasons of migration. The upcoming section
will cover the previous similar research on the field, which will introduce some similar studies and create the idea of how previous researchers have investigated on the concepts of identity and belonging related to descendants of immigrants in their parents’ host countries. This section will be followed by the theoretical framework, which will introduce the reader with the main concepts used for this study through detailed explanation of each of the concepts. The thesis will continue by introducing the method used for the research. This section will explain what was specifically done to perform the study, and also it will describe the reasons of choosing the given method. Finally, an analysis of the collected material will be presented, followed by concluding remarks and eventual suggestions for future research.
2. Contextual Background

This chapter will cover some aspects of the history of migration in Kosovo. The persons studied here are post 1990s immigrants, who moved to Sweden during the difficult situation created in Kosovo, as a result of Kosovo’s demands of independence and also because of the Bosnian and Croatian war in 1992 which created a difficult economic and unsecure situation, and also until 1998-1999 during the civil war of Kosovo provoking a significant number of immigrants.

Albania is a country surrounded by ethnic Albanians living currently in different cities, which after the Albanian independence in 1912, were left outside the borders of the new Albania. They are currently located in the Northern Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia (Judah 2008:4-8). In Judah’s words there are needed some serious research to have an official number of Albanians in Kosovo, however the the majority of the population of Kosovo is ethnic Albanian, with minorities as Serbian, Roma, Bosniaks, Goranis and others (2008:3). The political conflicts between Serbia and Kosovo caused the clashes and civil war, causing a large number of people deciding to migrate from Kosovo in the 1998 (Bideleux, 1998). Sweden was among the main countries of destination for Kosovo Albanians according to ASK1, (ASK 2014, Gollopeni 2016:300). According to some statistics presented by Gollopeni (2016:298) a considerable number of Kosovan migration started after the 90’ as a result of a difficult political and socio-economic situation, while struggling to become an autonomous nation. However, the earliest Kosovan migration to Sweden occurred during the late 1960s as guest workers (Buckley 2000:110). There were many reasons that pushed especially the youth to migrate during the 1990s, such as the closing of many schools and universities, closed hospitals, prosecution of many intellectuals, fear and anxiety from the created situation, and also, because of the fact that a lot of male Kosovans were forced to participate in the military service of Serbia so migrating was a way of escaping from it. The Kosovan migration reached a peak in the 1999, during the civil war, which, as Gollopeni claims (2016:298) was the Serbians aim in “cleansing” the ethnicity of Kosovo by forcing them to leave so that the territory would become part of Serbia. Except for the political and socio-economic tensions that would lead the Kosovan people to migrate, in 1999 Serbia started using police, military and paramilitary service to displace the Albanians from their homes, which caused a reaction of the NATO2, enabling the liberation of Kosovo in June 1999 (Gollopeni 2016:308).

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1 Agency of Statistics Kosovo 2014
2 North Atlantic Treaty Organization
2.1. Sweden in the 1990s
When it comes to Kosovans in Sweden no previous research was found related to them, so it is very hard to refer back and make a background about it.

The 1990 was the year when Sweden started to apply the quota system (Abiri 2000;93). At the beginning of the 1990s Sweden would grant permanent residence permit on four grounds, in accordance with the Geneva Convention to the following categories; convention refugees, de facto refugees, war rejecters and politico-humanitarian immigrants. Generally, permanent residency was granted to nuclear families³, older parents over the age of sixty with all their children in Sweden and exceptionally to the so called “last link”⁴ cases (Abiri 2000; 94). But with the immediate considerable number of Kosovar and Bosnian immigrants, the policy changed. The Swedish government decided to accept 5000 Kosovans who would be financed in part by the quota system, and they were granted temporary residence permits for the fact that a permanent residency would support the “ethnic cleansing” of Kosovo.

³Nuclear families consisting of married couple with children under the age of 20
⁴“Last link” cases meaning a person that had no family or relatives left in the country of origin
3. Literature Review

The literature review will introduce some previous research, which is similar to this topic, albeit referring to different groups of people, considering that there is lack of research on this specific community. Among the previous research found in the field, what rose attention was the PHD dissertation of Arriagada (2007), *In search of an identity in young adulthood; ethnic self-identification among children of immigrants*, developed on identity and ethnic self-identification of the children of immigrants in the American society, during the young adulthood. With the use of longitudinal data from the 1992 and the 1995, the author aims to explore why and how, adolescents change their identity, when they enter the young age. Nativity, family structure and the parents play a focal role in changing the ethnic identity. The study uses the concept of identity as ethnic, personal and collective, and investigates on the formation of identity, checking with the theory of assimilation if children of migrants follow the predicted straight path. Arriagada uses a deductive method, pointing out the different predicted factors influencing the changes of self-identification of the second generation. The participants were 5,262 students of four different schools who completed a survey in the 1992 and were followed up with a second survey in 1995. Among the findings, the place of birth of both parents and children, family structure and ethnic background were determinants of changing identity, while proficiency in parental and host country language was found to be non-significant. Ethnic self-identity is a degree to which children of immigrants identify with their parents, but at the same time their thoughts are much influenced by their parents’ ethnic networks as well as by the kind of relationship that children have with their parents. What this means, according to Rumbaut, is that ethnic self-identity is about internalising the ethnicity of the parents, therefore it is directly linked with the relationship that the youth have with their parents. What he found out was that those young people who had a better relationship with parents were more willing to identify with their parents’ ethnicity (Rumbaut 1994:756).

Another similar study was the one from Østberg (2003), *Norwegian-Pakistani adolescents; Negotiating religion, gender, ethnicity and social boundaries*. This research was performed through a qualitative longitudinal study between 1994 – 2001, focused on the concept of identity and how it is formed and the theory of negotiation according to the context. In this article, Østberg presents two different studies. One of them was on anthropological field, where the author participates in the daily life of five Pakistani families with a total of 14 children during the 1994-1995. The second study instead was conducted in 1999 - 2001, interviewing the same 14 children, putting emphasis in the long-term identity rather than in the transition from childhood to adolescence (Østberg 2003:163). Negotiation was used to understand identity management of Norwegian-Pakistani youth, and it was investigated in different levels; institutional and political between majority and minority, local
attachments and global networks, schooling and media as well as in different contexts between sibling and peers, children and parents and between boys and girls (Østberg 2003:176). Religion was found to be a cause of creating social boundaries with the mainstream society, as it was difficult to follow certain practices of the Norwegian youth that would be in contradiction with Muslim religious values such as the prohibition of alcohol and the prohibition of relationship with the opposed sex. Another reason of creating social boundaries was the hierarchical sense of family guiding the youth of Pakistani- Norwegian, but in terms of identity, Islam contributes to strengthen rather than weaken it (Østberg 2003:177).

The study of Katartzi in the 2017, Young migrants’ narratives of collective identification and belonging, was found to be similar to this study as well. The author made a qualitative research on the young migrants’ collective identifications and belonging. The collective identification of migrants in the Greek society was examined as formed through self-identification and categorization, using as core concepts of the study identification and belonging (Katartzi 2017). The research deals with negotiations of identity, among the different migrants’ ethnic groups in Greece, performed through observations, focus groups and 46 in-depth interviews, in two schools of Thessaloniki. The participants were of a young age, 16-19 years old, and they were asked to identify themselves through a narrative. Among the findings, the author mentions identification as ethnic descent, as a result of identification with a group, which is able to provide feelings of love and belonging among individuals and groups (Katartzi 2017:38). Another finding was identification as a mixture of ethnicity, culture, language and religion and the shared historical experiences. The convey their sense of belonging as both bonds and attachment with the motherland and the struggling to belong in the Greek community, enduring discrimination and racialization through a long process of bureaucracies related to documentation.
4. Theoretical framework

The concept of identity, together with the concept of sense of belonging were considered relevant for this research because they theoretically represent what I am looking for in this study. They are interconnected concepts and belonging is explained here as related to personal and collective identity, which explains the choice of taking into consideration the aforementioned perspectives of the concept of identity.

4.1 Identity

Identity is without doubt an ambiguous term (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:6). Demanding a definition of identity in scientific and popular usage, would seem petty, as it is a term that sometimes describes large and seemingly self-evident things, while other times it is used to describe something so narrow that the overall meaning is lost, and it could even take another name (Erikson 1968a:15). One of the main terms used by Erikson was “identity crisis”, which would describe the confusion related to identity during a young age (Erikson 1968a).

Identity is the human capacity to know who is who and what is what (Jenkins 2008:5), having thoughts about us and the others either individually or collectively. Identity is a process, which is formed and changed with time, and not something someone can have, therefore it is something that must be seen as a continuum through life (Jenkins 2008a:5). Identity is not “just there”, it needs to be established by classifying things and/or persons and associating oneself with someone or something else and therefore implies “doing something” and not “having something” (Jenkins 2008:17). When it comes to the descendants of immigrants, Rumbaut holds that the situation related to identity is more complex as they carry the culture of their family and in the meanwhile, try to adapt to the culture of the new country (1994:753).

Brubaker & Cooper (2000:14) distinguish between identity and identification and view the latter as either identification of the self or identification of the other as strictly linked to social life and can therefore change according to the category of reference. How one might identify oneself, and how it might be identified with the others may vary greatly depending on the context and situation (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:14). Identification, therefore does not match with “identity” in the strong sense, which is supposed to be something fixed and congealed, emphasising sameness over time. While a weak understanding of identity, which can mean “too little”, indicated as multiple, unstable, fragmented and constructed, so what they suggest, is to abandon the term identity altogether (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:11). They find a number of possible terms to use instead of identity, among which Identification and Categorization. The former, lacks the reifying connotations of “identity” as it invites us to specify the agents that do the identification and they further explain that identification is intrinsic to social
life, while identity in the strong sense is not (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:14). Categorization or identification from the others, depends as well on the different contexts and may therefore vary. A weakness of the self-understanding is its’ subjectivity, as it does not capture how the others understand or identify one person, but only the understanding that one has for himself, even though, the understanding of oneself is somehow determined on how the others treat, see or identify someone (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:18). For Jenkins, “there are no groups, ethnic or otherwise, without social categorization” (2008b:170). To Hall & Gay (1996:2) the concept of identification is just as tricky and misunderstood as identity. Identification is seen as a process which is never completed and always “in process”.

4.1.1 Personal/ Individual identity
The self, as a human characteristic, has a process of development, which is formed through life (Mead 1934;135). This process is not possible outside of social experience, as the self, arises in social experience, and after that we can talk about solitary self (Mead 1934;140). Self-identity, how Giddens describes it, is what the individual is “conscious of” It is not something that is given but is created routinely through reflexive awareness (Giddens 1991;53). Thus, self-identity is not about certain traits, it is the reflexive understanding of self by the person in terms of how one identifies (Giddens 1991;54). Meads’ view of identity distinguishes between the “I” and the “Me”, where the “I” is the one we identify ourselves with, and the “Me” is constituted by the attitudes of the others and which makes the aware self of a person (Mead 1972;175). Thus, the “Me” is the result of the experience of someone, carrying the attitudes of the others, viewing the self as object, to which one responds with the “I” which describes the self as subject (Mead 1972;176).

4.1.2 Collective identity
Collective identity has to do with “similarity among and between a plurality of persons, […] who either see themselves as similar or have similar behaviour and circumstances in common” (Jenkins 2008a;103). But at the same time, collective identity implies pointing out not only similarities, but differences as well, with the reference group. As Jenkins puts it:

“To say who I am is to say who or what I am not, but it is also to say with whom I have things in common” (Jenkins 2008a:21).

In collective terms, identity can be understood either objectively as sameness with a category or a group, or subjectively as perceived sameness (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:6). When this identification is internal, coming from the people who identify themselves with others, and being conscious about their membership, they create group identification (Jenkins 2008a;108). However, identification can
be external, and come from the outside of the group perceived as similar, without necessarily implying consciousness of this similarity from the group itself and this identification is what they call categorisation. Group identification and categorisation are both types of collective identification and they are linked to each other, as group identification might begin from a prior categorisation. (Jenkins2008a:110). For Jenkins “There are no groups, ethnic or otherwise, without social categorization” (2008b:170).

4.1.3 Ethnic identity
The word *ethnicity* derives from the Greek word *ethnos*, which was primarily used to describe people living and acting together, and it literally means “people” or “nation” (Jenkins 2008;10).

Ethnic identity is, in part, answering the question ‘Where do I come from’ and one’s birthplace or one’s parents’ birthplace, are important for the self-definition (Portes & Rumbaut 2001:161). Seen as a process of self-identification it could be stated that ethnicity is a complex process formed through life and experiences, building and understanding a sense of the self, and changing related to time and context (Jenkins 2008:15, Phinney 1990:502). Tajfel (1981:255) defines ethnic identity as the ethnic component of social identity, as a self-concept of the individual which comes from the knowledge of being a member of a social group and the emotional attachment this membership creates. Achieved identity does not imply ethnic commitment, it rather implies being clear and confident about one’s ethnicity even without maintaining customs and language, so someone can identify with one’s parents ethnicity even without being committed to culture or language (Phinney 1990:503). In contrast with this, Leeman expects the heritage language learners to claim their ethnic identity through language study (2015:100), and Norton holds that the language is not only a communication tool, but also a way of organising the sense of oneself in the social world (2013:4). Cho has the same view in considering the heritage language as an important part of identity formation (2000:369).

Achieved identity is the ideal outcome of identity formation, which in ethnic terms, means accepting and internalising one’s own ethnicity (Phinney 1988:12-13). Ethnic identity is formed and transformed through interaction between individuals (Hutchinson & Smith 1996).

Portes & Rumbaut (2001;150) hold that the process of ethnic self-identification is more complex among the second generation, while living between two cultural groups they must define themselves referring to different reference groups. Youths compare themselves with the others, find similarities and differences, and their self-identification with one group, implies differentiation with another one (Portes & Rumbaut 2001; 151).
4.1.4 Perspectives of ethnic identity
There are two main perspectives of ethnicity, contradicting each other, which describe ethnicity either as fixed and unchangeable or as changing through time and context. The first perspective is primordialism, mainly discussed by Geertz (Hutchinson & Smith 1996) who points out the importance of several cultural traits as religion, language, race and nationality which are difficult to change, therefore culture and ethnicity are described as static and homogeneous. Primordial attachments regard kinship; common territory of origin and residence, and biological connection. Contradicting primordialism, Barth brings the “instrumentalist” perspective, considering ethnicity not as a quality in itself, but as an aspect of relationship, changeable and negotiated, depending on the environment and adapting according to interests. In Barth’s words, ethnic identity is a social identity, which is formed through social interaction (Martiniello 2010:407). The anthropologist Barth (1969;16) expects interaction between different cultural groups, to diminish the differences, provided that, interaction requires a cultural similarity. Bell (1975:153) supports this view claiming that, in the modern times, as a result of rapid social changes, one can consciously choose one’s identification. Also, Jenkins (2008b:8) brings an instrumentalist view of self-identification, describing it as something that emanates from one’s interests, thus changing according to time and context.

4.2. Belonging
According to Probyn (1996:5) the notion of belonging can be interpreted as “longing to be or having a desire for becoming other, longing to be something/someone else”. The concept of belonging by Jones & Kzryzanowski (2008) investigates into the relationship between personal identity and collective identity, while describing how a group which has a lot differences between the members and yet be a group, produces a sense of belonging by creating a collective identity. They describe how individuals identify themselves with a group by finding attachments. They suggest that the concept of “belonging” simplifies the understanding and analysing of many identity related processes for social scientists (Jones & Kzryzanowski 2008;38). These authors unpack the concept of identity, in order to avoid misunderstandings, claiming that it is often wrongly used in academia, to describe complex processes of individual and collective levels (Jones & Kzryzanowski 2008:40) The concept of belonging, related to migration, is used here to understand how relationships influence the position of an individual vis-à-vis the collective identity. It is through attachments and subjective feelings that people develop a sense of belonging. Belonging is therefore a process of how individuals find attachments with a group and build a relationship between personal and collective identity. How Jones & Kzryzanowski (2008: 44) define belonging is;
“In a purely conceptual way belonging is about the relationship between personal identity and a collective identity – there is something about one’s personal belonging that is comparable to one’s perception of the aims and constitution or values of a given collective”.

Belonging, however has to be associated with “elective attachments”, in term of an individual positioning himself into a group, albeit the so-called “weak attachments” are important to understand how the sense of belonging is created by individuals becoming part of collective identities. Belonging occurs in different ways and with different objects of attachment (Yuval-Davis 2011:19). Feelings related to safety and rights are according to Yuval-Davis endemic to belonging, so people tend to relate the sense of belonging with a place who gives them rights and makes them feel safe (2011:155). “Where you belong is where you are safe and where you are safe is where you belong” (Ignateff 1995:25, Yuval-Davis 2011:18).

### 4.3 Interconnection of identity and belonging

The concepts used in this thesis are highly interlinked to each other and it was challenging to keep them separate in different sections.

As Yuval-Davis hold, identity and belonging have been used several times as synonyms (2011). To illustrate this usage, Antonisch (2010:1) introduces a relevant argument related to belonging claiming that the latter should be taken into consideration as a place – related phenomenon (a place of feeling “at home”) and as “a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion: the politics of belonging.” Home in this case, is not the material space or building where someone lives but a symbolic space that ensures emotional attachment and security. In this context, place - belongingness becomes equal to group belongingness, which views belonging and identity as synonyms. Yuval Davis (2011:20) holds that “Identity is not an individual matter” and for Probyn (1996:13) “Belonging is not an individual matter”. With these statements they outline the relationship between identity and belonging with the social world, which are according to Yuval-Davis mostly related to experiences of exclusion rather than inclusion.

Tajfel describes social identity as “That part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from the knowledge of being a member of a social group, together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (1981:255). Here it can be seen the interconnection between identity and sense of belonging, where the latter is described as feelings of attachment with a group, therefore related to collective identity.

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3 Thoughts about a nice place to visit or supporting a sports team of another city.
Ethnicity as well, in itself, in terms of identification is personal and collective, externally viewed as categorization of the others and internally as self-identification (Jenkins 2008:14). Ethnic identity refers to the sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the feelings that this sense causes (Phinney & Rotheram 1987:13).

For Arce (1981:186) ethnic identity is established when a person develops a sense of belonging with a group and feels part of it, after the desire to be accepted and adapting the behaviour with the mainstream society to enable inclusion. Ethnic self-identification, is part of ethnic identity. Among the main and the mostly studied components of ethnic identity, Phinney 1990:503) points out self-identification and the sense of belonging to a group. The development of an identity depends both on the culture where one is born as well as the support provided from the collective sense of identity assigned from the society (Phinney 1988:3).

When it comes to identification Jenkins (2008a;37-38) claims that the individual unique and the collectively shared have similarities in some respects; they are usually entangled with each other, they exist only through interaction, they have analogous processes of being produced and reproduced and finally the theorisation of identification must include an equal measure of the individual and the collective. However, they contrast each other on the fact that individual identity emphasises difference while the collective one emphasizes similarity. It is the human world that enables the contact and merging between the individual and the collective (Jenkins 2008a: 38). Therefore, identification, of oneself or of the others, is essential to social life and may take different forms depending of the context (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:14). Identification, as the way someone defines oneself is different from categorization: the way one is defined by the others (Brubaker & Cooper 2000:15). Moreover, internal and external identification do not exist independently from one another (Jenkins 2008a;59).

Jenkins (2008a:8) claims that self-identification is intertwined with interests therefore people identify themselves according to how they define their interests. This interlinkage between identification and interests was stressed out by Jenkins in claiming that how one identifies oneself depends on the definition of one’s interests. Categorization indeed depends on how others define someone’s interests (Jenkins 2008a:7). One’s interests emanate from who one is, and self-definitions could be clarified by interests, and therefore identity and interests are intertwined (Jenkins 2008a:8).
5. Method
The method, is an appropriate way of creating, collecting, coding, organising and analysing data in social science (6 & Bellamy 2013). The study consists of a qualitative research performed through semi-structured interviews with six female participants. A qualitative study enables the researcher to explore and have a better understanding of complex phenomena (Williams 2007;70) and captures the individual’s point of view (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:12). One of the reasons of doing qualitative study is the study being exploratory, meaning that not much have been researched on the topic and/or on the object of study, and that the information shared by the participants will be crucial for the understanding of the researcher (Creswell 1994:23). A quantitative study would, in this case, provide a more overarching idea of the topic and bring out more facts and numbers enabling the generalisation of the outcomes, but it would not reach the purpose of presenting “feelings” and eventual reasons lying behind. This kind of research would have been more difficult to perform without getting in-depth knowledge about the informants, therefore a qualitative study was preferred over a quantitative.

My interest when performing this study, was to bring the experience of some persons with Kosovo Albanian background, and the most relevant way to do it was through interviews. People use conversations to exchange knowledge, explain thoughts and feelings, which is the scope of this study, and this way of producing knowledge was, recently defined as interviewing (Brinkmann 2013;1), which is why this method was chosen as the most relevant considering the characteristics of the research. The interviews were conducted in Albanian and further on translated and transcribed in English. Having myself a language background education, I could make the translation by myself from my Albanian mother tongue in English which was also a language I previously studied in the University of Foreign Languages, where I practiced a lot on translation and direct interpretation. Thus, possible risk of losing relevant information from the participants, was avoided.

5.1 Semi structured interviews method
Asking questions and getting the answers we are looking for is more difficult than it appears to be (Fontana & Frey 2005:697), yet the interview is considered the best way and the most powerful way to try to understand the persons being studied. Interviews enable a research to get information about experiences, feelings and opinions of the informants (May 2011:131) and is the flexibility that makes interviews so attractive (Bryman 2012;469). Semi-structured interviews are attracting interest (Flick 2009:150) as they are expected to bring better viewpoints of the interviewed as compared to

6 Mine and the participants mother tongue.
standardized interviews or questionnaires. Flick (2009:172) suggests noticing the difference between research questions and interview questions, in order to create interview questions by using everyday language rather than an academic one, so that the participants can easily understand what kind of information I am seeking and feel comfortable in giving answers.

Theoretical concepts were instead used for analysing the data outlined in the chapter of the findings. Conducting various questions, open and specific regarding everyday life, sense of belonging and self-identification, has helped reach the purpose of this study. To get the high-quality information, I bore in mind that the scope of the questions was to put the interviewees into their world and then to apply “the art of hearing” to those persons who had the information without influencing them (Patton 2001:341). The open questions were useful to bring out different relevant details, which were not thought of during the interview creation. This was further investigated into with the use of probes, by asking either to elaborate, clarify or simply provide more details on their answers. The use of probes is of relevant importance in the semi-structured interview, as it allows the researcher to clarify every information received from the participants (Bryman 2012:478); gives the possibility of interaction, facilitates the creation of a rapport with the interviewee, and consequently enables the interviewer to dig deeper into the interviewee’s responses (Patton 2001:372).

The questions were not numbered but had a logical sequence, with several follow up questions. Semi-structured interviews are the most frequently used type in social research, and therefore more relevant in knowledge production, considering their flexibility in following whatever is deemed important during the interview (Brinkmann 2013;21). Semi structured interviews were chosen as a method of data collection for this study because they are suited to explore perceptions and opinions of the participants and they enable face to face interviews to have many benefits (Barribal & While 1994:329). They can as well provide a higher degree of involvement from the respondents (Bryman 2012:669), can ensure a better understanding of attitudes and values and it is easier to maintain a rapport with the informants (Bryman 2012:668).

The study is inductive starting with a research question and finding out through the research what might turn out to be plausible and relevant about the topic of interest (6 & Bellamy 2013).

6 & Bellamy (2013) relate a large part of methodology of social sciences with “subjective interpretation” meaning how the researcher presents the feelings or conditions of the people being studied. They explain “subjective interpretation” as studying meanings, in terms of beliefs, desires and styles of thought.
5.2 Sample selection
In order to qualify for this study, the participants had to be people with a background in Kosovo in reference to both parents. The reason of choosing adults was because, considering the research dealing with identity, it was preferred to avoid adolescents and their “identity crisis” period (Erikson 1968a, 1970). There is a lot of confusion related to the many changes of the body (Erikson 1968b; 235) and identity formation is supposed to occur during this age, thus, the adult age was chosen in order to enable this study having the aiming results, after having passed the age of confusion related to identity. According to Erikson, after this age, people tend to have passed the age of “identity crisis” and therefore feel more clear about their identity (1968b). The informants are therefore expected to be able to reflect on their identity, or at least about their sense of identity as with increasing age people are more likely to have an achieved ethnic identity (Phinney 1990:510).

All the informants are either university students or they have already completed their education. I chose the time frame after the 1990s because this is the period which brought more Kosovo migrants to Sweden because of the Bosnian and Croatian War, compared with the guest workers during the 1960s, and I wanted to have a homogeneous group, which was at the same time easier to find.

Another criterion regards the fact that the participants are raised from both parents born in Kosovo and not from intermarriages, to have a clear spectrum of a similar family culture among all the participants.

The participants sample was created in different ways such as; snowball method and network-based sampling. What was done in specific, was making an announcement in different Albanian social network pages, explaining in detail the purpose of this study, the persons that were qualified to fit in the research and also explaining that this material would be used only for research purposes and would maintain the anonymity of the participants.

This method did not arise much interest on the participants, and only two of them wrote to me asking for more information in order to participate in the study, and one of them did not meet all the criteria needed for participation. Being new in Sweden, my social network is quite limited, but it was enough to provide me the rest of my participants through snowball method.

5.3 Data collection
The interviews were performed by meeting personally the participants, except from one, with whom we arranged a Skype interview. The meetings were arranged with the participants where better suited the interviewees. I have asked every participant to meet whenever they would feel comfortable express themselves better. With two of them I had the possibility to arrange an informal meeting in advance, with the purpose of building trust, where I explained some main points about my study and
had a general spontaneous conversation. These two ladies were the ones that introduced me to other three participants. The interviews lasted around one to one-and-a-half hours, approximately. I set up the interviews and recorded them. Three participants preferred to meet me in different libraries, near their place. One woman asked me to join her in her workplace, and with one we conducted a Skype interview. Deakin and Wakefield argue that Skype interviews provide the same answers as face-to-face interviews (2014:607). During the skype interview with this participant, we managed to establish a smooth and easy-going interview which made the participant feel comfortable in sharing the experience with me, so I did not notice any relevant difference compared to the face-to-face interviews. During all the interviews, I used a tape recorder, in order to save and hear again the recordings, which I furtherly used for the transcriptions.

Secondary material consisted of previous research on the general phenomenon of Kosovan migration, general reasons of migration and articles related to case studies of Kosovan experiences in the host countries as well as previous research on the experiences of identity formation and sense of belonging on the descendants of immigrants in general or regarding other groups of people.

5.4 Reliability and validity
Reliability and validity are two simple standards of making a good research design (6 & Bellamy 2013). Qualitative validity is about whether the study is accurate with the findings and the procedures employed (Cresswell (2013:201). Validity ensures that a study measures what it purports to measure (Carmines & Zeller 1979:12). According to Kvale (1989) for a study to be valid, it is needed investigation, continuous check, questioning and a theoretical interpretation of the findings. So, to ensure validity different strategies were employed. After investigating to get the information required from the interviewees, it was applied the so-called “Member check strategy” which means sharing with participants the transcripts and the final report to check the accuracy of the interpretation (Cresswell 2013; 202). This procedure was performed with follow up-interviews with the informants, with the goal of checking the already interpreted material (Creswell 2013;202). The second strategy is “clarifying the bias” which means providing detailed information through reflecting on how my background, gender, culture and origin would affect the interpretation of the information. This is explained in detail on the section Role of Researcher. In the end, a theoretical interpretation of the results was presented, by backing up the findings with the theoretical material used.
Reliability instead, has to do with how the data of the researcher’s interests are coded, so that the study could be repeated from other researchers and in order to provide a reliable method, different researchers should be able to reach the same conclusions while using the same material (6 & Bellamy
2013). Qualitative reliability means that the research is consistent and can be replicated by other researchers (Creswell 2013:201). Reliability on this research was ensured by documenting the whole process, and by giving detailed information and describing as many steps as possible about the procedures used to conduct the study. In this way the research will be transparent, to enable the other probable researchers follow the same procedures and use the same material (Creswell 2013:203). Thus, it might be possible that the study could be replicated, by using the same material and procedure, albeit it cannot be guaranteed, given that a qualitative research depends much on the researcher and what he/she empathizes the most. It depends as well on the influence that the researchers’ characteristics (personality, gender, age and so on) have on the informants and also, because of the unstructured nature of qualitative data. Therefore, the interpretation depends on the subjective leanings of the researcher which makes the study harder to replicate (Bryman 2012:405). The interviews were tape recorded (Flick 2009:387), and transcribed in original language and in English, to provide transparency of the raw material. Audio tapes are frequently used to provide a transparent insight of the performance of both researcher and interviewee and furthermore, they can minimize errors and avoid cheating (Barribal & While 1994;332). The recordings and verbatim transcriptions will avoid the threat to valid descriptions, by proving to write about accurate information, and interpretation threat was avoided by conducting non-leading open questions, in order to enable receiving the participants viewpoints without any influence (Maxwell 1996:90). The questions set for the interviews are also presented in the appendix of this paper.

5.5 Ethical aspects
Before the interviews took place, a “rolling information consent” (Somekh & Lewin 2004;56), which was read and signed from all the participants individually. This kind of consent enabled the interviewees to have a better picture of the “risks” and consequences of the shared information during the research and not only before the interviews. They had to consent the participation of the research after ensuring that they had the capacity and voluntariness to do so, once they got all the relevant information regarding the study and the use of their information. To all the participants was explained that they were free to choose whether or not they would like to answer to specific questions, and also explained that I would really appreciate if they accepted me to record the interviews. After this, I gave them an inform consent written in Albanian, which they needed to read and sign for me, in order to formally authorize me the use of their data for the research purpose. They were voluntarily participating and free to withdraw their participation in any time of the study (Creswell 2003:74). No harm was caused to the participants by asking sensitive questions, albeit this
study had nothing to do with vulnerable situations, and their privacy was protected by publishing anonymous information only.

Confidentiality was approached through anonymity and concerning the participants with the usage of the data in the specific context (Somekh & Lewin 2004; 57). All the names of the informants were changed and no personal information leading to them in person was revealed.

5.6 Role of the researcher
The reason of choosing the Kosovo Albanians in Sweden is because of my Albanian ethnicity, and the fact that Kosovo Albanians have migrated earlier in Sweden and now there is a considerable number of migrants living in Sweden for several years, which enabled me to investigate into the identity and feelings of belonging among this group of people. Being myself an ethnic Albanian, I am aware of my subjectivity about the preconceptions and assumptions related to our ethnicity, therefore I tried to stand out and control my subjectivity, by not assuming anything and giving the possibility to the informants to provide me with the details of their feelings. Having the same ethnic background with the participants, I am aware of the fact that there might be things I might overlook and which would not be the same for another researcher with a different background.

However, considering that Kosovo and Albania are two different nations nowadays, there are still some significant distances among the two countries, which helped me be more objective. By providing biographical details and making statements about the underlying values the researcher acknowledges the subjectivity and its’ influence on the research process (Greenbank 2003;795). I can also, on the other side, have benefits for being Albanian, as I have the possibility to conduct the interviews in Albanian without any interpreters and thus without losing any relevant information. I expect, therefore, the participants to be more comfortable in sharing their experience with someone who is like them.

5.7 The sample
Eda is a 30 year old lady, living in a small town. She is married and has children. She came to Sweden in the 1991 with her family when she was three years old. She has a degree in Social Sciences and is currently working in her profession.

Arta is 25, living in Malmo where she is also studying Social Sciences. She was born in Sweden, where her family moved in the 1991.
Adelina is 27 years old, living in a small city in Scania with her family. She has studied Social Sciences and works in Malmo. She came to Sweden with her family when she was a few months old.

Ana is 24 years old and she was born in Sweden. She is studying social sciences in Malmo. Her family migrated in Sweden in the 1991.

Aferdita is 23 years old, studying Social Sciences in Malmö. She was born in Sweden where her family migrated in the 1991.

Flora is 27 years old, living on her own as she moved in Scania for work. She has studied Engineering and is currently working in her profession. She was born in Kosovo and came to Sweden when she was almost one year old.
6. Findings
This chapter consists of a detailed analysis of the material used for this research. The concepts used in this paper were complicated to investigate into. The participants were quite confused and therefore their answers were also complicated. Given that belonging in this case is related to personal and collective identity and the various attachments, one way to investigate into it during the interviews, was by asking questions related to personal and group identification. The analysis started with coding and recoding the collected material through interviews. I organised it by pointing out several themes that were relevant for this study. The main themes regard the self-identification and the sense of belonging. In order to investigate into these topics, I took into consideration several factors, such as the perceived cultural differences by the participants, the sense of categorisation and the role of the Albanian language in shaping their feelings.

6.1 Self-identification
As Portes & Rumbaut hold, self-identification of the descendants of immigrants is complex as it entails a reference with multiple groups, sometimes two countries and two languages and the categorization they receive by the ethnic community as well as from the larger receiving society. Sometimes this pressure can cause a sense of marginality, making them feel in between of the two cultures, and not being able to identify with one or the other (2001:150-151). These feelings of marginality and confusion was visible in Arta, Adelina, Ana, Flora and Aferdita.

When I asked Arta to tell me something about herself she started by telling me her name and age and then affirming that she is an Albanian Kosovan woman. She identified herself as coming from Kosovo even though she was born in Sweden.

“It is very important for me to say I am Albanian. Even if I say I am Swedish I am sure it will not be accepted in my surrounding environment. It is because I do not look like Swedish. I speak perfectly Swedish, maybe even better than the Swedish people (laughs) but I also like to say I am Albanian. We have many good things to be proud of” (Arta 25).

Arta expresses her self-identification referring to her to ethnic pride. However, she mentions the fact that people would not believe her if she introduced herself as Swedish because of her looks. This kind of identification recalls Jenkins definition of identity as never being unilateral, therefore it has to be considered in interaction with the society (Jenkins 2008a:42). This is also how Barth (1969) explains one of the key propositions of identity saying that it is not enough to send a message about identity, it is also important that this message should be accepted by the others in order to have that identity.
The identity construction in this case involves social interaction between the individual and the society (Portes & Rumbaut 2001).

“Every time someone asks me about my identity I proudly say I am Kosovan. I really feel Kosovan here (in Sweden) but the interesting thing is when I am in down there (in Kosovo), I feel an outsider. I am obliged to say I grew up in Sweden, so I can justify my attitude to them, otherwise I will be the weird one. It is very hard to explain, but these two cultures I grew up with, are totally different from each other” (Adelina 27).

Even though Adelina introduces herself as Albanian, further on she explains that is it quite hard for her to feel Kosovan when she is in Kosovo, because she has the Swedish influences, which she needs to remind people of, otherwise her attitude would be framed as unusual.

“There are times when I feel more Kosovan and other times when I feel more Swedish. I was in the house of mother in law once and there came some guests. I asked these guests if they wanted something to drink and they said no. After this, my mother in law insisted that they had something, and after several tries they accepted. I don’t know if they were shy or which was the reason behind. I don’t see a reason why these guests would not accept to drink something if they wanted to. In these cases, it is hard for me to feel Kosovan” (Adelina 27).

Adelina emphasizes the differences that she can notice between Kosovans and Swedish people and she explains that there are specific situations when she does not have the feeling of being Kosovo Albanian. This is how Jenkins and Phinney describe ethnicity as a process of self-identification. They affirm that ethnicity is a complex process formed through life and experiences, building the sense of the self which changes according to the time and the context (Jenkins 2008: 15, Phinney 1990:502). Østberg (2003) also discusses the theory of negotiation according to the context when she points out the different factors influencing identity. And one of the factors in Floras’ case is the cultural differences that she finds with Kosovo Albanians, who seem to impede her from feeling 100% Albanian.

The same identical view was expressed by Flora:

“I was almost one year old when I came to Sweden, so I don’t really know how life is in Kosovo. I am a bit confused when it comes to self-identification as I feel both Swedish and Albanian at the same time. It depends pretty much on the context. There are times I feel more Swedish and other times I feel more Albanian. It’s hard to explain. The reason I have this confusion is because I see a lot of differences when I am in the middle of the people. When I am in Kosovo I feel so different from them and I can see my Swedish influences. The same happens when I am in Sweden. So, I consider myself
in the middle. My ethnicity is Albanian, but my identity is half Swedish and half Albanian” (Flora, 27).

Flora is as confused as Adelina, Aferdita and Ana when it comes to her self-identification because she finds many differences with Kosovo Albanians and with the Swedish people. She identifies herself as half Swedish and half Albanian. The same statement was made by Ana also, who cannot fully identify only with one culture because of the many differences with each of them, however she would like to feel more Albanian. This kind of identification was predicted also in the dissertation of Arriagada (2007:19) where she explains that in some cases, the descendants of the immigrants form their identity by selecting certain aspects from the culture of origin and from the culture of the host country. Their identity in these cases becomes a mixture of the two relative cultures and it becomes hard to identify either with one or the other.

When Ana starts to introduce herself to me, the first thing she says is “I come from Kosovo”

“I come from Kosovo, but I was born and raised in Sweden. If you ask me on how I identify myself it’s quite hard to answer, because neither Kosovo Albanians nor Swedish people are exactly like me. I would like to feel more Albanian, but I notice many differences with people when I am in Kosovo. It is hard to identify with only Kosovo or Sweden because I have features from both cultures, so I can say I am both Albanian and Swedish” (Ana 24).

Self -identity is directly linked with the collective identity and the participants got confused when I asked them “How do you identify yourself?”. They have the tendency to identify as Albanian in the beginning, but then immediately they start comparing themselves with the collectivities and when they find differences, they are somehow unclear about their self-identity.

“I feel so different when I am in Kosovo. It is quite hard to explain. I don’t feel a 100% Albanian nor Swedish. I find no similarities with my age there, and sometimes when I am in the middle of Swedish friends, and they start joking about something, I realize I get hurt, and I understand I am not like them either” (Aferdita, 23).

This type of identification highlights similarities and differences and follows Jenkins definition of identification:

“To say who I am is to say who or what I am not, but it is also to say with whom I have things in common” (Jenkins 2008a:21).

The reason Aferdita and Ana do not fully identify as Albanian or Swedish is because they believe to have many differences with the people from both countries. This finding recalls Portes &Rumbaut
(2001:150) explanation of the self-identification to be more complex among the descendants of immigrants and their attachments to the different reference groups. This kind of identification, hard to make from Ana, Adelina, Flora, Arta and Aferdita was in line with the finding of Katartzi in his research, where identification was a mixture of ethnicity, culture, language and historical experience (Katartzi 2017:38).

“I feel that “identity crisis” now. I am ethnic Albanian, but I don’t feel like Albanian. It will be maybe easier for my children to identify themselves as Swedish, but I grew up with my parents who have tried to live as if they were in Kosovo so for me its many impressions hard to define. It becomes complicated, you know? However, I feel a lot more Swedish” (Aferdita 23).

Aferdita is confused about her identity, however she feels more Swedish than Albanian. She was the youngest interviewee and it is interesting how she explicitly states that “identity crisis” feeling, mentioned by Erikson (1968a:11).

However, Eda was clear and confident about her self-identity:

“My identity is formed through my origin. Even though I was a kid when I came to Sweden it is never nice to forget who I really am, and I am Kosovan. When I was at school, my teachers always used to ask me if I felt Albanian or Swedish and I could never answer that I felt Swedish. Maybe because my parents have raised us with these ideas, always talking about Kosovo and taking us there every summer” (Eda 30).

With this statement, Eda shows a primordialist view of her ethnicity as she identifies herself with the ethnicity of her parents, and she believes that her identity is formed through the origin and therefore is something stable that cannot change. She highlights the influence of her parents, raising Eda and her siblings with a taste of Kosovo. She seems to have an achieved identity, as she shows to have internalised the ethnicity of her parents (Phinney 1988:12-13). This was also what Katartzi found in his research; identification as ethnic descent, as a result of identification with a group, able to provide feelings of love and belonging (2017:38).

6.2 Cultural differences and stereotypes as perceived by the participants
The cultural differences were considered relevant, as the interviewees persisted in highlighting the several differences that would influence their sense of belonging and self-identification.

Adelina, Aferdita and Flora had the tendency to frame the Swedish culture as distant, “cold” and not so warm and close as the Albanian one. This was referring to the family values and relationships
which were considered very different from each other. Their perception of family in Sweden regarded according to Adelina, only husband, wife and children, while in Kosovo it would include parents and relatives.

“I don’t want to generalize but I think, we Albanians, have a closer relationship with our parents. We have no problems to live with them and ask their opinions whenever we need them. To me family is divine, and even now that I am married with kids they have a great role in my life. Here in Sweden, when people fill 18 they get to decide for themselves, and this is something I don’t share. Or maybe both parents and adult children want to be independent, I don’t know. I don’t see it as something bad, but I just see it in a different way’” (Adelina 27).

Also, Ana has a similar view of Swedish people being somehow “cold” and she is assuming that maybe they have some stereotypes when it comes to Muslims, as she was trying to give an explanation of the difficulties she could notice in building a friendship with the Swedish people in the “Albanian” way.

“I find Swedish people ‘cold’ and difficult to build a friendship in the Albanian way. I am not sure if they have their boundaries, or maybe they have some bad experience with the immigrants and they just decide to distance themselves from us. Or maybe it is for the fact that I am a Muslim, and usually Muslim girls are not allowed to speak with boys, and they might assume I have a typical Muslim behaviour, but in my family, religion is just formal, and I don’t have any problems to speak with the boys”. (Ana 24).

Adelina, sounds very clear in explicitly stating what she does not share with each of the cultures and describes her culture as something new and unique, created as a mixture of the best traits of Albanian and Swedish culture.

“I don’t share their mentality (Kosovo). Many times, I ask myself why things are as they are if it does not feel right. There was an example when my family had to go to a wedding, and unexpectedly we had some guests, who did not notify before coming, so my mother decided to not tell anything about the wedding and we became late. I could not understand why was it a problem to tell our unexpected guests the truth. My mother explained that we would be rude if we did so and it was better to ruin our plans rather than sound disrespectful to our guests. On the other hand, we would be disrespectful towards the wedding couple, which fortunately were not close family, and in such big occasions it is more difficult to notice the absence of a few persons. Moreover, people usually communicate a starting time of the weddings which is hardly respected. While here in Sweden we are used to never show up somewhere without planning it first” (Adelina 27).
Flora makes an interesting comparison between the Swedish and Albanians, so she has also acquired some features from the Swedish lifestyle. She considers Kosovo Albanians as being “too close to each other” and she needs to remind herself of how they are, in order to adapt herself when she is in Kosovo, but on the other hand she describes Sweden as being distant. So, Flora seems to be in between of these two cultures, taking some characteristics from Kosovo and others from Sweden.

“What bothers me most, is the gender inequality. Women are treated differently. I don’t like it. But if I compare it to Sweden, I think we are a bit more careful regarding our relationship within the families. I mean the big families. I feel Sweden is quite individual and distant but on the other hand, when I am in Kosovo, I have to remind myself that Albanians are closer to each other, and if I don’t give them hugs and kisses, I will be seen as a ‘cold’ person. So, I need to learn to express myself like them, to be able to follow their rhythms” (Flora, 27).

“There are a lot of problems in Kosovo. Among the many beautiful things, I think people lack development. I don’t know why, but I think it is hard to become open minded if you are surrounded only by people who share your “closed” mentality and in Kosovo and unfortunately, this is so far from the Swedish mentality I am used to see here. However, I feel the Albanians are more linked to each other, and the Swedish people are more careful in terms of respecting and evaluating the other. They leave space to the other people, to live in their own way without judging. The Albanians on the other hand, care a lot about others’ peoples business” (Aferdita 23).

From these comments we can mention Rumbauts’ thoughts about the descendants of immigrants finding themselves in complex situations when it comes to adapting in the new country, while carrying the family culture and the new culture (1994:753). We can see how the participants are comparing the two cultures, labelling them as different, mentioning pros and cons from each one, and stating what is acceptable or not to their viewpoint, so it is hard for them to identify with only one of these two cultures. It is easier, as Adelina mentions, to say that she has some unique culture, as a result of picking and mixing the best characteristics from each culture. The Swedish influence on gender equality, was evident on Floras’ and Aferditas’ comments who seem bothered by the Albanian inequality. On the other hand, Flora also highlights the close relationship that Kosovo Albanians have with the families. They demand, according to her, those features which they have inherited from their families, which are deemed very important for a Kosovan family, and they have seen and heard this behaviour in their ethnic environments. Eda was a good example of carrying Albanian values trying to adapt with the family of her husband, who had lived in Kosovo before getting married, so she always tried to be the “perfect” daughter in law, making an effort to cancel her Swedish influences while in Kosovo. She had the same behaviour with her relatives living in Kosovo. This is also how
Arce defines an established ethnic identity, through developing a sense of belonging with a group, by adapting the behaviour with the mainstream society in order to be included (Arce 1981:186, and this is what Eda did.

"I wanted to marry a Kosovan man, therefore now, I also care to be the “perfect” daughter in law, as if I didn’t live in Sweden at all, so the parents of my husband feel I am respecting them as a normal Kosovan daughter in law does. I usually use to call my relatives and my “in laws” as I care about them and I don’t want to be classified as a “cold” person” (Eda, 30).

6.3 Belonging
The question related to the sense of belonging, together with the self-identification were found to be among the most complicated ones, meaning that it was difficult to get clear answers. I realised that the interviewees had difficulties to understand their sense of belonging, which was even providing Adelina with a sense of guilt for not being able to feel that sense of belonging to Kosovo, and for not feeling completely Kosovo Albanian, but she did not have the same feelings for not belonging to Sweden. Also, Arta had similar feelings, and both Adelina and Arta mentioned the fact that they felt “the outsiders” both in Kosovo and in Sweden. This is in line with what Probyn and Yuval-Davis discuss related to belonging and identity. “Belonging is not an individual matter” (Probyn 1996:13), as well as “identity is never an individual matter” (Yuval-Davis 2011:20). These two authors highlight the influence of the society in framing the sense of belonging which can be noticed in the participants feelings of “otherness” in both related countries, which also directly influences their self-identification. In this context, belonging is similar to identity, as they are talking about place belongingness as group belongingness, associating their sense of belonging with the relative reference group of people, and this is what Arta does when she starts to speak about her belonging. She interchanges it with identity and her experience of exclusion. They want to find attachments with the different groups of people, to build a relationship between personal identity and collective identity. So, to define their belonging they need to meet the values and aims of the relative collective (Jones & Kzrzyzanowski 2008:40) At the same time, Yuval-Davis et al, describe the complexity of belonging among the descendants of immigrants, as being partly generated through experiences of exclusion rather than inclusion (2005:526).

“It is complicated for me, above all, to understand where I belong. When I am in Kosovo, I am Swedish for the Kosovans and I am Albanian for the Swedish people. I have been living outside of these two countries for some time, and now that I think about it, I always identified myself as Swedish
to the other people. Maybe because it was easier for me to say like that, rather than explaining that I am from Kosovo, but I was born in Sweden. Just to keep it simple” (Arta 25).

Adelina has a similar view as Arta about her sense of belonging,

“I feel I belong to Sweden, but when sometimes people categorize me as a foreigner I feel weird. It is hard to explain. When in Kosovo they call me ausländer, which means foreign in German language and I have that feeling of being “the other” wherever I go. It is also painful and creates me a sense of guilt for not feeling completely Kosovan” (Adelina 27).

We can notice the experience of exclusion in the case of Arta and Adelina, whose sense of belonging is somehow influenced by the others. In Kosovo, they are called foreigners and they have the same feeling in Sweden, so this makes it more complicated for them to understand where they belong. However, there is a difference between Arta and Adelina, as Arta identified herself as Swedish when she was living in another country, while Adelina has a sense of guilt for not being able to feel completely Kosovan. It looks like she is struggling to belong to Kosovo, and she is being rejected from the Kosovan society living in Kosovo, and she also feels she belongs to Sweden, but the sense of being framed as a foreigner even in Sweden makes it complex for her to have a clear picture of her sense of belonging. Pressure from the two different communities, experienced by these women, contribute unwittingly to a sense of marginality, which makes belonging hard to define (Portes & Rumbaut 2001:151).

Adelina’s experiences of guilt for not feeling completely Kosovan, as she explains, come from outside, where she is viewed as “the other” for having influences from two different cultures. Therefore, she is different from the Swedish and different from the Kosovans, which causes some confusion when it comes to identification and belonging.

When it comes to Ana and Aferdita they were aligned with Yuval- Davis’ (2006: 197) and Antonischs’ (2010:1) view that belonging is about emotional attachments, a sense of feeling “at home” and feeling secure, and this is how they understand their sense of belonging:

“I belong to Sweden. Here I feel better and I would not live in Kosovo. I used to go there very often, but now it has been three years since I have not travelled there. I miss it, but I also get bored after three or four days once I am there. I don’t feel I belong there and I don’t feel safe there. There are many issues I can’t tolerate. Too much inequality” (Aferdita, 23).

Foreigner in German language (https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/german-english/auslander)
“It is hard for me to think of Kosovo as my home. I was born and grown up here (Sweden), and I feel safer and more confident here. I love to travel to Kosovo and Albania, but it it doesn’t feel as my place” (Ana, 24).

Emotions related to safety and rights are according to Yuval-Davis (2011:155) endemic to belonging. People have different feelings in different times and contexts because the collectivity constructs boundaries for them creating these kinds of confused feelings. This explains the participants’ feelings of “otherness” in this study.

Belonging, in the case of Aferdita, is influenced by the negative feelings that Kosovo generates to her. She does not feel herself and not even secure when in Kosovo. Inequality is mentioned as a main issue, hard to accept. Aferdita is making a comparison between the two countries and highlighting the main political issues of Kosovo, which directly influence her sense of belonging. She has acquired the Swedish mentality and mentioning these differences she cannot tolerate, explains her Swedish lifestyle. Aferdita also talks about safety and as Ignateff puts it “where you belong is where you are safe, and where you are safe is where you belong” (Ignateff 1995:25, Yuval-Davis 2011:18).

In Antonischs’ words these situations interpret the sense of belonging as an “elective belonging” where the place of residence corresponds with one’s life story (Antonisch 2010:649, Yuval-Davis 2011:18). We can see that being born and growing up in Sweden, has made Aferdita acquire the Swedish way of living. Flora has a similar perception associating the sense of belonging with her life story in Sweden where she grew up and where her home is.

“Sweden is where I belong. Here is my family, my home and here is where I grew up. I feel good when I am in Kosovo, but I cannot think of living there. Besides they have a lot of economic and political problems,” (Flora, 27).

When Eda was talking about her childhood memories, back in time when she used to travel every year to Kosovo, I could notice in her way of talking how much enthusiastic she was about her country. She seemed very nostalgic about Kosovo, describing how much she enjoyed being there. When I asked her if she could ever go back to live in Kosovo she told me she already had tried to, but for several reasons her life would be more difficult there. There are a lot of political and economic problems and she wants the best for her family, so Sweden is, according to her, the right place to live.
“I used to count down the days, when my parents told me that they had prepared a ticket for me to fly to Kosovo. When I am in Kosovo, where I travel at least once per year, I feel inspired, I can breathe heavily, and I feel that is where I belong” (Eda, 30).

What I find interesting in the sense of belonging of the participants, is that Eda, which is the one who has spent more years in Kosovo, respectively three, compared to Adelina and Flora who also were born in Kosovo but moved to Sweden before the age of one, has a strong and clearly defined sense of belonging to Kosovo. Ana, Aferdita and Arta, who were born in Sweden, together with Flora, were explicitly affirming to belong to Sweden. While for Adelina, there was some confusion and disappointment for the reasons explained above.

6.4 Sense of categorization as perceived by the interviewees

Jenkins holds that “there are no groups, ethnic or otherwise without social categorization” (2008b:170). The same statement is valid for the existence of collectivities without the individuals and vice versa. Since childhood, ethnic identification begins from categorization, by the others telling us who we are, and it continues during adult life. Being categorised is essential for the individual development and the production of group identification (Jenkins 2008b:170).

“My looks is not so different from the Swedish, and my Swedish is perfect so people are surprised when they hear my name which is Albanian. Many times, they tell me that I am just like them, and when I want to know why, they tell me ‘Because you have a Swedish attitude, you are calm and nice’. I don’t like this because I want to show them that even Albanians are good people. I want to change their perceptions of the Kosovo Albanian stereotypes. Even in those cases where I feel more Swedish, I will not show it as I just want Swedish people to know how we Albanians are” (Adelina 27).

Self-identification in this case is related to the multiple reference groups, the two countries and the two languages, carrying the sense of categorization by the `Swedish community (Portes & Rumbaut 2001:150). This influence of the Swedish society, in telling Adelina she looks like Swedish, causes confusion as she is struggling to belong to Kosovo, without being able to be accepted.

“When I was at school, I felt I needed to do extra work to show them about my abilities. Teachers thought I did not deserve a good grade because I was foreign, and usually foreign people did not speak perfect Swedish, but I did. Therefore, I had to work hard to prove myself to them that it was possible to speak perfectly two languages at the same time” (Adelina 27).
She has this feeling of having been categorized during school time as “not good enough” only because she was not Swedish. Aferdita expresses herself like this:

“I am not Swedish, and I know Swedish people don’t view me as one. Even though many people tell me that I am Swedish because I was born here, I know they don’t really believe it. Anyway, this does not change the fact that I do feel Swedish also” (Aferdita, 23).

Ethnic identification starts with an internal comparison with the surrounding society, the participants are comparing themselves with the Swedish peers, and creating an idea of who ‘we’ and ‘they’ are (Portes & Rumbaut 2001:152). Ana and Flora highlight their positive experience of growing up in Sweden, through self-categorization and being self-conscious about the differences and contrasts they have noticed between them and their peers during school time, without ever labelling these differences negatively.

“I only have positive experience when it comes to my person within the Swedish society. People usually have certain expectations from the foreigners, but I have managed to overcome them by being well prepared and studying hard, so I have had a good experience of proving myself to them. We are as good as them” (Ana, 24).

“I don’t have negative experiences when it comes to the Swedish people. I have reached my goals here and it has been relatively easy. Since I was a child, I knew I came from another place, but I never thought of myself as being inferior. I was just different. It was funny in school, whenever we were mentioning the Balkans, I was the one who was supposed to talk. And these things would make me reflect on the fact that I represent something different than the rest of my classmates, otherwise I wouldn’t have even thought of it” (Flora, 27).

6.5 The role of the heritage language in negotiating identity

Sweden was according to the interviewees, a country that has promoted and supported the native languages of the immigrants organising courses with mother tongue teachers during school time. They had no feelings of discrimination when it comes to the language, so they felt also pushed by the community to know the language of their parents. I noticed the participants were very proud of knowing the Albanian language, however they were more proficient in Swedish and Arta told me “...if the interview was in Swedish I would be able to express myself better.” (Arta 25).

There was a high tendency and insistence from the parents of the participants to learn and use the Albanian language while at home and whenever between Albanians. They were controlling over the
language and encouraging them to speak Albanian since the participants were in an early age and this resulted in them having a relatively good command of Albanian. It was not only a matter of language, but also, a matter of “living with Kosovo” and hearing about it every day. There were several strategies used by the parents to keep the Albanian language alive within their family such as through exclusive use in the home environment, frequent visits to Kosovo during the early age of the participants, with not less than once or twice per year, the use of television as well as reading Albanian books. So together with the language the participants would receive the cultural values of Kosovo. Li (1999:113) holds that the family context is the most influential in someone’s life, so the parents’ insistence in teaching their language to the participants had the scope not only to inherit the language but developing the national pride together with it. As Eda puts it:

“My parents have made me fall in love with Kosovo and everything related to it. They didn’t just want my siblings and me to know the language, but also everything related to Kosovo, history, geography and actualities. They have been talking about Kosovo the whole time and I consider Albanian my mother tongue. I am proud of knowing it, as I was a kid when I came to Sweden, as well as for teaching it to my children. I know they will thank me one day, just as I am thankful to my parents now” (Eda, 30)

The participants had a good command of the Albanian language, with small difficulties related to technical and specific language, as a result of getting the main linguistic knowledge from practicing at home and less from school. I noticed a strong desire to speak Albanian among the interviewees, even though, except of Flora and Eda, the other informants stated to have some difficulties with the Albanian language, whenever related to specific topics. Their Swedish proficiency, however, was not to be questioned. When asked about the importance of the Albanian language Flora answered:

“The Albanian language is very important for me. If one does not speak his mother tongue he will not be able to learn a new language. I have to think in my own language and have it as a basis to develop the other languages. I speak Albanian with friends and family. Only when I need to talk about specific arguments, I need to use some Swedish words, but at home I can say we use 99% of Albanian language. I love to speak Albanian, it’s part of my culture and identity and I am very proud of it. I cannot imagine being Albanian without speaking the language” (Flora 27).

Flora emphasizes the importance of mother tongue as the most important language. She was born in Kosovo and came to Sweden around the age of one, however she considers Albanian to be her mother tongue, and she directly refers to the language as a part of her identity. The language is for Norton not only a tool to exchange information, but most importantly is a tool that organises the sense of self in one person as well as determines how one relates in the social world (Norton 2013:4). Flora’s and Eda’s statements are consistent with Norton’s thoughts about their self-definition as Albanians.
In Eda and Flora, I could notice, together with the Albanian language efficiency, their prouderess of being Albanians and knowing the language. Eda feels 100% Albanian and Flora also identifies herself as ethnic Albanian. They represent a stronger commitment to the Albanian culture and a stronger sense of ethnic pride, compared to the other four participants (Cho 2000:333).

Aferdita also considers Albanian language to be an important feature of her identity relating it to her roots instead:

“The Albanian language is very important as I have Albanian origin. It is a relevant part of my culture and my family, so I need to know it. Of course, I was born and raised in Sweden therefore I have to know Swedish as well”. (Aferdita, 23).

Adelina has a different view regarding her linguistic knowledge:

“I started evaluating the Albanian language from the moment that I became aware of what it means to have an extra language in your background and speak it fluently. Now I am grateful to my mother for being like a cop with me and my siblings every time she would hear us speak Swedish. She used to ask for special permission to the library when we were travelling to Kosovo, so that we could be able to keep the books after the expiry date. We read a lot of Albanian books when we were kids. Of course, I cannot speak it at the same level as I speak Swedish, and sometimes when there is something that I do not know, I ask my husband to help me” (Adelina 28).

Adelina highlights her mother being insistent so that they spoke only Albanian while home and she is thankful to her for the language heritage. She is evaluating the Albanian language in terms of human capital, stating that she has one more language in her background. This is how Leeman also puts it, when mentioning the instrumental value of the heritage language development as a relevant job skill, highly evaluated in the job market, therefore the language here is viewed as investment she made by committing herself to learn it and which is now providing symbolic resources to Adelina (Leeman 2015:105).

Arta as well explicitly states that Albanian is a second language for her, so she is more comfortable speaking Swedish.

“Honestly, Albanian language is very important for me. I like to speak it and I would love to know it better as I just learned it at home with my family, while watching television as well as talking with my relatives when I went on vacation to Kosovo. My parents were always insisting that we spoke only Albanian at home because we had very few language lessons at school, maybe once a week. Anyway, Albanian is like a second language that I force myself to speak, as I think in Swedish and then translate it in Albanian”. (Arta, 25).
Ana and Aferdita are the youngest participants of this study and it is interesting how it can be noticed a higher tendency towards the usage of the Swedish language even among Kosovar Albanian friends.

“I speak Albanian with my friends, as they happen to be Albanians. It is so natural for me to link with Albanians, I can feel it. My father was very strict with me and my siblings when were kids in terms of language and we were allowed to speak only Albanian at home. I was very happy to participate in the Albanian courses during school time, but besides that, sometimes with my friends from Kosovo we mix the language. There are a lot of words we never heard or used in Albanian, so we mix it with some Swedish” (Ana, 24)

“I speak Albanian, Swedish and English. I mostly use Albanian at home, even though many times I speak Swedish as it is easier for me and my siblings. The reason behind is because I think Swedish, and when I have to speak Albanian I have to translate it in my mind, and it becomes complicated. With Albanian friends here in Sweden, for example, I speak Swedish. I learned Albanian at home, and I don’t have problems to chat, but If I need to explain complex things I get stuck. Of course, it’s important for me to know Albanian but it is also important to adapt myself as much as possible with the Swedish culture and language as I am living here” (Aferdita 23).

In Leeman’s words there is a long-held assumption that the heritage language learners usually claim their ethnic identity through language study (2015:100). This statement is in line with Flora and Eda who were born in Kosovo and highlight their ethnic self-identity as Albanian and see the language as their own. While Ana, Arta and Aferdita state to have difficulties with the Albanian language when it comes to specific arguments, however they love to speak it. For Arta Albanian is like a second language and Aferdita needs to first translate it in her mind from Swedish to Albanian. If I relate all this to the participants perspective related to their feelings of visiting Kosovo there was a significant difference between them. Eda felt “she could breathe heavily when she was in Kosovo”, and she was travelling at least once per year to Kosovo, while Arta explains that she likes to be there, (but not forever) and hear people speak Albanian. Aferdita likes to go there as she likes the positive energy that Kosovo transmits to her but wants to be back to Sweden after three or four days as she cannot tolerate the many problems related to the country. Flora likes to visit Kosovo, but she would not like to live there, because of the different lifestyle and the issues related to Kosovo. She identifies herself as an ethnic Albanian but culturally she has a mixed identity between Swedish and Albanian. While for Ana is always nice to be in Kosovo for a short period of time during summer.
7. Conclusions and suggestions for further research

This thesis started with the idea to investigate on identity and belonging of the descendants of Kosovo Albanians in Sweden. In order to support this study, I used some concepts that were in line with my aim and research questions as well as with some previous similar research. I used the concepts of identity in several dimensions such as personal, collective and ethnic identity together with the sense of belonging which were very useful to guide me through the research. The concept of identity is very wide, so I limited this theoretical part only with what was considered the most important for this study.

So, to answer the first research question: How do the descendants of Kosovo Albanian immigrants identify themselves, I can say that in the investigated group there are different answers.

If I use the question of Portes and Rumbaut “Where do I come from” related to ethnic identity which they hold, is partly what ethnic identity means (2001:161) the participants of this study answer with Kosovo. But when I asked them how do they identify themselves it becomes more complicated and hard to choose an identity. Eda had a clear cut primordial view about her self-identification and she was the one who had spent more years in Kosovo compared to the other interviewees. Arta identified herself according to the context, sometimes as Albanian and other times as Swedish, for example when outside of Sweden. But when in Sweden, she carries pride of her roots, and likes to identify as Albanian, however she is still confused. The sense of pride was a common feature among the participants. Adelina also proudly says she is Albanian whenever asked, even though she feels excluded when she is in Kosovo, which causes a lot of confusion on her self-identification. The same feelings were expressed by Aferdita, Ana and Flora who also had difficulties when it comes to self-identification for the several differences they have with both collectivities, Swedish and Kosovan. Except for Eda they seemed to have difficulties to develop an identity, because of the lack of support provided from the collectivities (Phinney 1988:3).

To answer the second research question related to the sense of belonging the answers were quite similar to self-identification. Eda is once again confident and clear in herself belonging to Kosovo, and this was easy to perceive by her answers and understand how much she is in love with Kosovo. For Arta it was complicated, and she expresses the same feelings that Adelina has, creating a sense of marginality when it comes to belonging, and this is the outcome of the sense of categorization experienced in both countries, “being the other here and there”. Aferdita, Ana and Flora have also clear thoughts about their sense of belonging to Sweden. These feelings of belonging were the outcome of several influential experiences during their life, such as sense of categorization in both
countries for the cultural differences, parents who were encouraging the Albanian culture, traditions and language through different channels and their experience of inclusion/exclusion in certain cases.

In conclusion, I can say that regarding this sample interviewed I could notice more confidence in Eda’s, Aferdita’s and Ana’s answers about their sense of belonging. Regarding self-identification the answers were somehow blurry. Only Eda was completely identifying with her parents’ country and culture, and she had spent three years in Kosovo, while Aferdita and Ana, who were the youngest ones, were also firm about belonging to Sweden but not about their self-identification. Adelina, had more confusion both related to self-identity and sense of belonging and it was easier to identify with something that was a mixture between Sweden and Kosovo, or only with one of them in different contexts. Arta is also switching her identity according to the context even though she likes to say she is Albanian.

When it comes to belonging, Eda was the only participant who has the sense of belonging to Kosovo. It is interesting how her first years of life make the difference compared with the other participants. Adelina, that was a few months old when she came to Sweden, is confused about her sense of belonging as she is feeling excluded from the Albanian community labelling her as “the other”, while Ana, Aferdita, Arta and Flora have no doubts about their sense of belonging to Sweden. In this sample, the three years of life in the case of Eda, make the difference compared to Ana, Aferdita and Arta who were born in Sweden. Adelina was also very young, when she came to Sweden and she carries love for Kosovo, this is why she seems not satisfied for not belonging to Kosovo. Flora came to Sweden even younger than Adelina, but she is confident about her sense of belonging as much as the participants that were born in Sweden. Age of migration as well as birthplace seems to matter in the investigated sample, with Eda being the most confident about identity and belonging, and also the place of birth was significant for Arta Ana and Aferdita, being born in Sweden and having a sense of belonging to Sweden. When it comes to identification instead, among the confusion, except for Eda, the tendency of the participants was to identify according to the context and the interests. So, once again, the three years of Eda spent in Kosovo, make a difference compared to the other interviewees.

During this research, there were many topics I was unable to cover. I have been using Albania and Kosovo as synonyms during the whole paper, because I was referring to the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo, so the initial idea of this paper was to investigate on the ethnic Albanians in Sweden, but after starting to look for the interested sample I realised it was hard and quite a not homogeneous group, mainly because of the different periods of migrating to Sweden. So, for further research I would like to suggest a similar study on ethnic Albanians in Sweden, during that period when having a homogeneous sample will be possible. What would have been also interesting was to compare these
participants with the first generation of Kosovo Albanians in Sweden and see if there are any relevant differences about the self-identity and sense of belonging. It would be interesting to investigate on their perspectives on what is shaping and mostly influencing self-identification and sense of belonging of them and their descendants. Lastly, the interviewees of this paper were all female, so a suggestion could be to explore both genders and point out probable differences, if any.
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Appendix

Questionnaire for the interviews

Questions related to general information

1. Tell me something yourself.
2. Where do you live, with whom?
3. Where do you work?
4. When and why did your parents move to Sweden?

Questions related to language and origin

5. What languages do you speak and with whom do you speak them?
6. How important is the Albanian language for you?
7. Is there something unacceptable for you because of having origins from Kosovo?
8. Have you ever been in a difficult situation because of having Albanian origins?

Questions related to identity and belonging

9. How do you identify yourself in terms of nationality?
10. To which nation do you belong?
11. With which group of people do you think you have more things in common?
12. Do you think you need to be born Swedish or you can become?
13. Which is, according to you, the best way to preserve identity?
14. Where do you find yourself better?
15. What about your parents and siblings? How do you think they identify themselves?
16. How do you think the Swedish people see you?
17. Do you feel different in Sweden?
18. Who are your friends? Where are they from?

Questions related to Kosovo and Albania:

19. How often do you meet Albanian people?
20. How often do you travel to Kosovo and for what reasons?
21. What kind of TV programs do you watch? Albanian or Swedish?
22. Which are the main characteristics of Kosovo according to you?
23. What comes into your mind when you think about Kosovo?

Additional information

24. How was your childhood in Sweden?
25. How did you meet your partner?
26. How would you prefer your husband to be?
27. In what kind of celebrations do you participate?
28. Do you have anything to add?