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# Religiosity and the Development of Ego-Identity

– A sequential mixed-methods study of the enculturation and acculturation process of Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden.

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## Abstract

The purpose of the current sequential mixed-methods study is to bring further knowledge to the field of psychology of religion concerning the role of religion for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden. Guiding the current study are theories concerning enculturation, acculturation, ego-identity, ritualization and *communitas*. The central research question is: What role does religiosity have for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden, concerning the development of ego-identity and the practice of ritualization, within a process of enculturation and acculturation? The quantitative phase of the sequential mixed-methods study uses a sample of 244 participants that were part of a previously conducted study. Descriptive statistics, comparing means, correlations, t-tests, and ANOVA are applied to analyze the data retrieved from the questionnaires. The qualitative phase uses a sample of 12 informants collected by a purposive and snowball sampling technique. The methods of data collection are semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The data collected are analyzed by qualitative content analysis. The results of the quantitative phase show that there is no statistically significant relationship between religiosity and self-perception of ethnicity or self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society. The results, however, show several significant correlations and differences between males and females as well as between generations. Among others, the results show a medium, positive correlation between self-perception of being Assyrian/Syrian and degrees of using the language Suryoyo with friends and family, where a greater degree of self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian is associated with a greater frequency in using the language Suryoyo with friends and family. The results show that there is a negative, medium correlation between perceived discrimination and the perception of being a part of the Swedish society as well as the perceptions concerning the degree that Swedes perceive the participants as being a part of the Swedish society where greater degrees of perceived discrimination are associated with lesser degrees of perception of being a part of the Swedish society. The results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the age groups concerning Mass attendance as well as the degree of self-perception of being religious/spiritual. The results show a statistically significant difference between males and females concerning Mass attendance, frequency of fasting, and self-perception as religious/spiritual; where females have a higher mean score than males on all measures. The results of the data analysis in the qualitative phase indicate that religiosity helps the individual to create and maintain a feeling of being a unique and separate individual either by providing a context for the individual's identity or by being an object from which the informant differentiates. Religiosity provides the individual with the means of learning his or her first culture. The analysis identifies language to be an important component of ego-identity, enculturation, and acculturation. Discrimination, whether within the group Assyrian/Syrian or from outside the group, is seen as an involuntarily differentiation where the informant experiences attempts by others to differentiate him- or herself from the Swedish population. Indications of ritual components and certain life stages are highlighted among the informants. The implications of the study are discussed.

**Key words:** Assyrian, Syrian, Sweden, religiosity, acculturation, enculturation, ego-identity, ritualization, *communitas*, mixed-methods.

## Sammanfattning

Syftet med följande sekventiella mixed-methods studie är att bidra med ytterligare kunskap till det religionspsykologiska fältet angående religionens betydelse för assyrier/syrianer i Sverige. Studien vägleds av teorier om ackulturation, enkulturation, ego-identitet, ritualisering och communitas. Den centrala forskningsfrågan lyder: Vilken roll har religiositet för assyrier/syrianer i Sverige i en process av enkulturation och ackulturation? Den kvantitativa fasen i studien använder sig av ett urval av 244 deltagare från en tidigare genomförd studie. Deskriptiv statistik, jämförelse av medelvärde, korrelation, t-test och ANOVA används för att analysera data i den kvantitativa fasen. Den kvalitativa fasen i studien använder sig av ett urval av tolv deltagare. Deltagarna rekryteras genom ändamålsenlig insamling och snöbollsinsamling. Deltagarna intervjuas med semi-strukturerade intervjuer och en fokusgruppintervju. Insamlat material från intervjuerna analyseras med kvalitativa innehållsanalys. Resultat från den kvantitativa fasen visar att det inte fanns ett statistiskt signifikant samband mellan religiositet, självbild etnicitet och självbild av att vara en del av det svenska samhället. Den kvantitativa fasen visar statistiska signifikanta förhållanden mellan självbild etnicitet och grad av suryoyoanvändning där större grad av självbild etnicitet är associerat med större grad av suryoyoanvändning. Ett statistiskt negativt samband visar sig mellan upplevd diskriminering och självbild av att vara en del av det svenska samhället där större grad av upplevd diskriminering är associerat med mindre grad av självbild av att vara en del av det svenska samhället. En statistiskt signifikant relation hittas mellan åldersgrupper angående grad av deltagande i gudstjänster och självbild av att vara religiös eller andlig. En statistisk signifikant relation hittas även mellan kvinnor och män angående att delta i gudstjänster, frekvens av att fasta och självbild av att vara religiös eller andlig. Kvinnor visar sig ha ett högre medelvärde än män på dessa mått. Resultat från den kvalitativa fasen indikerar att religiositet hjälper individen att skapa och bibehålla en känsla av att vara en unik och separat individ antingen genom att erbjuda en kontext för individens identitet eller genom att vara ett objekt som individen kan differentiera sig ifrån. Religiositet förser individen med medel att lära sig sin första kultur. Den kvalitativa analysen visar även att språk är en viktig komponent av ego-identitet, enkulturation och ackulturation. Diskriminering ses som en ofrivillig differentiering av individen från den svenska befolkningen. Rituella komponenter och utvecklingsstadier identifieras bland deltagarna i den kvalitativa fasen. Studiens inverkan diskuteras. Föräldrarna rekommenderas även att sträva efter en mångfaldig uppväxt som dels inkluderar assyrisk/syrianska, dels svenska traditioner. Föräldrar bör även sträva efter att introducera sitt modersmål för barnen i syfte att premiera flerspråkighet. Flerspråkighet underlättar integration i kulturer. Föräldrar bör också stödja sina barns erfarenheter som etniska minoriteter, t.ex. diskriminering, fördomar, men även barnets vilja att vistas och integreras i det svenska samhället. Institutioner, t.ex. den svenska skolan och den syrisk ortodoxa kyrkan, bör underlätta individens integration i dess etniska och svenska traditioner. Utbildningsmässigt innebär detta att erbjuda språkkurser i individens modersmål, eller första språk. Det svenska språket bör läras ut tillsammans med svenskar för att undvika en åtskillnad. Skolor måste vara öppna för möjligheten att individer kan identifiera sig utifrån etniciteter i jämförelse med nationaliteter.

**Nyckelord:** assyrier, syrian, Sverige, religiositet, ackulturation, enkulturation, ego-identitet, ritualisering, communitas, mixed-methods.

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# Chapter 1 Research Design

## 1.1. Introduction

The focus of the current study is set on religiosity and its central role within the Assyrian/Syrian minority group in Sweden. The Assyrians started to emigrate from the Middle East to Sweden in the 1970's and number to about 70 000 – 80 000 (Cetrez, 2011). Deniz, (1999) states that the emigration to Sweden, and other Western countries, was because of various reasons: massacres during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century; the increased violence in the Middle East during the 1980's; and search of labor. Deniz states that the Syrian Christian Church has had a central role in Assyrian cultural life, being the official representative towards officials in the Middle East. However, Deniz also notes that the role of the church has changed, starting from the post-migration phase from the 1970's, due to the Assyrian population being more organized socially and politically, being more ethno-national aware, receiving higher education, and having greater gender equality. As such, the Syrian Christian Church in Sweden, and in other European countries, has been unable to meet the changing need of its members. Rubenson (as cited in Cetrez, 2011, p. 476) states that this is partly due to the church's Middle Eastern organizational structure. Deniz, (1999), adds that it is also because of patriarchal bonds, clan loyalty, gender segregation, contribution to ethnic-political division within the community and an opposition towards change among the members of the community that the church has experienced difficulty in adapting to the changing need of its members. Deniz states that because the religious worldview has been weakened, the religious collective identity has been losing its social importance. However, Oshana (2004), reports that within the U.S.A., the Syrian Church has been able to remain a central institution in the post-migration process. The situation of the church is indicative of the situation of the Assyrian/Syrian group as a whole in, among other places, Sweden where modernization meets conservatism regarding values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and so on. The church plays an important part for the tradition and the religious life of the Assyrian/Syrian group but it also raises a question concerning the importance of religiosity for the Assyrian/Syrian individual as the role of the church is reduced. Religiosity is indicated, by previously conducted research, to be an important variable, e.g., as part of a meaning system or a means for identity exploration, for the Assyrian individual (Cetrez, 2011; Oshana, 2004; and Deniz, 1999). Previous research has also shown that there is a difference within the group, i.e., between males and females as well as between age groups, regarding the degree of religiosity (Cetrez, 2005; 2011). One way to understand religiosity is to place it in a greater context, i.e., as part of the individual's identity. This underlines religiosity as important for the Assyrian population by being a part of their identification, e.g., a differentiation from other ethnic groups from the Middle East (Cetrez, 2005) or a connection to a historical background that is interconnected with the history of the church that in turn go far back in time to the time of Jesus. Theoretically, religiosity in relation to the development of individual ego-identity plays a key role by being on the one hand a part of the identity and on the other hand by being a facilitator for rituals. Rituals, in turn, ranging from language usage to Mass attendance at church, constitute the identity through ritualization and differentiation. Rituals are present during an individual's lifetime. As such, rituals are also present during the enculturation and the acculturation processes of the individual. No currently located previous research concerning the Assyrian/Syrian group in Sweden has approached religiosity as part of ego-identity development thus identifying the need for inquiry regarding this matter. In addition, previous research studies (Cetrez, 2005, 2011; Collie, Kindon, Liu & Podsiadlowski, 2010; Deniz, 1999; Erikson & Erikson, 2004; Oshana, 2004; Rudmin, 2006, 2009) have also highlighted particular variables, i.e., age, religiosity,

language usage, discrimination, prejudice, and self-perception, in relation to the identity of the individual. These variables can be situated within the theoretical framework which provides an explanation of the importance of and the relationship between the variables. This theoretical framework that consists of theories of enculturation, acculturation, ego-identity development, ritualization and *communitas*, is created in order to further the knowledge of religiosity's role for the Assyrian/Syrian group in Sweden. Religiosity is central to the theoretical framework by being an important part of the development of the ego-identity. But to further understand the development of ego-identity, other variables such as language, age, discrimination, prejudice and self-perception have to be taken into consideration. Not only do these variables play a part in relation to ego-identity but they also facilitate understanding of ego-identity development among Assyrians/Syrians. Religiosity and language are believed to be of particular importance to the cultural learning process due to their role in the development of ego-identity. Language is believed to be a vehicle of culture and a means for the individual to express his or her will during childhood (Oshana, 2004; Erikson & Erikson, 2004). Age determines or indicates where the individual is in the development of his or her identity (Erikson & Erikson, 2004). Discrimination and prejudice might impair the individual's identity exploration (Oshana, 2004). Self-perception provides an indication of the individual's knowledge of knowing who- and what place she or he has in the society (Erikson & Erikson, 2004). These variables, along with religiosity, are situated within a theoretical framework in order to have their roles explained to a greater degree.

The applied theoretical framework in the current study can be summarized by stating that ego-identity and ritualization are situated within a process of enculturation and acculturation. Rituals, being a link between the *ethos* and the identity according to Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), are the medium which the individual utilizes in order to successfully develop according to the life stages, and to interact with power relations. The individual's ego-identity and the rituals that he/she practices are situated within a larger context. This larger context refers to enculturation and acculturation. According to Rudmin (2009), enculturation, or first-culture acquisition, takes place from birth and continues throughout life as long as one has contact with one's first-culture. Acculturation, or second-culture acquisition, refers to the cultural learning of a culture other than that of one's first culture. Rudmin argues that acculturation will influence every aspect of an individual's reality as well as the social reality. According to the theory of ego-identity, epigenesis refers to the psychological developmental process of the individual. The individual undergoes life stages, as he or she develops an identity with the process culminating during adolescence. The identity of the individual is connected to the social context, i.e., the *ethos*. The *ethos* refers to the cultural organization of human beings' interdependence on each other. The relationship between the individual and the society is a constructive one where the individual and the society integrate with each other and form a unity which regulates both. It is through *ritualization*, i.e., an interaction that benefits and supports the individual's investment in the social process, that the individual and the *ethos* are linked together. According to Bell (2009), rituals provide the means for the participant to differentiate him- or herself from others. Because of the connection of the rituals to the social body and the relations of power, rituals have the ability to transform the social. It is in this action that the ability of rituals to differentiate the performer from other performers lies. *Communitas*, according to Driver (as cited in Cetrez, 2005) is the essence of the rituals and the essential bond that keeps the society together. *Communitas* has the ability, through the rituals, to overcome social alienation.

The subsequent definitions present the focus of the theoretical framework. Ego-identity is defined as the development of the knowledge concerning the individual knowing who he or she is and how the individual fits into society. The concept of ego-identity is assessed in the



quantitative phase by analyzing the perceived associations between degree of language usage, self-perceptions concerning: religion, religiosity, ethnicity, and being a part of the Swedish society. In the qualitative phase, besides from applying similar questions as in the quantitative phase, the informants were asked about what importance and what role their parents had during their childhood. In addition, the informants were asked about the experiences related to their aforementioned self-perceptions and language usage during their childhood and adolescence.

Ritualization is defined as a practice that empowers and provides an opportunity for the subject to differentiate him- or herself from others. Ritualization is assessed in the quantitative phase by analyzing the associations between perceived discrimination and self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society. In the qualitative phase, ritualization is assessed by inquiring about the experiences of discrimination, participation in different types of activities, e.g., fasting, Mass attendance, speaking their first language and so on, as well as the informant's perceptions of being different from others. *Communitas* is defined as the essence of the ritual and enables ritual to overcome social alienation. *Communitas* is assessed in the quantitative phase by analyzing the perceived associations between participation in religious activities and self-perceptions of the informant's ethnicity as well as the association between the latter and the usage of Suryoyo. In the qualitative phase, *communitas* is assessed by inquiry into the informants' experience of participation in religious, ethnic and community activities in relation to activities that they associate with their Swedish identification.

Enculturation is defined as first cultural acquisition. Enculturation is assessed indirectly by analyzing in the quantitative phase variables related to the ego-identity development and the ritualization process. In the qualitative phase, enculturation is assessed by investigating the experience of the informants learning their first culture during their childhood and adolescence. Cultural learning refers, among other areas, to engaging in traditions and learning the language. Acculturation is defined as second cultural acquisition. Acculturation is assessed indirectly in the quantitative phase by analyzing variables related to the ego-identity development and the ritualization process. In the qualitative phase, acculturation is assessed by investigating the experience of the informants of learning their second culture during their childhood and their adolescence.

A central question is raised in relation to the theoretical framework: What role does religiosity have for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden, concerning the development of ego-identity and the act of ritualization, within a process of enculturation and acculturation? To answer the research question, informed by the aforementioned theories, a sequential mixed-methods research design is applied. This enables the current study to test hypotheses, by quantitative methods, and to generate hypotheses, by qualitative inquiry. The quantitative methods are statistical analyses, i.e., comparing means, correlation analysis, t-tests, and ANOVA, on data received from questionnaires used in a previously conducted study. The qualitative methods of data collection are semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The qualitative data analysis is done by qualitative content analysis. The combination of different methods enables the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods to be combined. As such, the gaps created by each method's approach can be filled with its counterpart. Previous research studies in this area that apply a mixed-methods research design are represented by Cetrez (2005; 2011) and Oshana (2003).

## 1.2. The Purpose and the Goals of the Current Study

The purpose of the current study is to bring further knowledge to the field of psychology of religion concerning the role of religiosity for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden. This is done by setting the focus of the study on the development of ego-identity and the act of ritualization

where both are situated within a process of enculturation and acculturation. This concerns the perceived associations between variables: age, sex, religiosity, self-perceptions, language usage, and perceived discrimination and prejudice; which are highlighted as important by the theoretical framework of the current study. A sequential mixed-methods approach, that combines deductive and inductive inquiries, is used in order to on the one hand test hypotheses drawn from previously conducted research and on the other hand by generating hypotheses from the results of the current study. The current study begins with a quantitative phase that applies data from questionnaires, used in a previously conducted cross-sectional study. A qualitative phase follows that uses semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview. The balance in the current sequential mixed methods design is tipped in favor of the qualitative phase, where a theoretical explanation is provided for the perceived associations between the highlighted variables.

## **Goals**

The empirical ambition of this study is to build upon previous research (Cetrez, 2005; 2011) and to bring further understanding about Assyrians/Syrians living in Sweden concerning the role of religiosity. The theoretical ambition is to understand and provide a suggestion for how ego-identity is developed within the process of enculturation and acculturation with a focus set on religiosity. The methodological ambition of the current study is to use a mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2009) to produce a nuanced result from several types of inquiry.

### **1.3. The Research Questions of the Current Study**

#### ***The overall central research question is:***

What role does religiosity have for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden, concerning the development of ego-identity and the practice of ritualization, within a process of enculturation and acculturation?

#### ***The research questions for the quantitative phase are:***

##### Associations between and within ego-identity and ritualization

1. Is there a relationship between religiosity, self-perceptions, language use, and perceived discrimination?

##### Differences within the Assyrian/Syrian population concerning ego-identity

2. Is there a difference concerning religiosity and self-perceptions between age groups among Assyrians/Syrians?
3. Is there a difference regarding religiosity and self-perceptions between males and females?

#### ***The research questions for the qualitative phase are:***

4. How are the development of ego-identity and the practice of ritualization related to the enculturation and the acculturation processes of the informants?
  - 4.1. How are religiosity, discrimination, language and self-perceptions related to the ego-identity of the informants?
  - 4.2. How are religiosity and language related to the cultural learning processes?

#### 1.4. The Cultural Context of the Current Study

By using data that was retrieved from the 2005 World Values Survey, Cetrez (2011) provides a description of the characteristics of the Swedish cultural context. According to Pettersson and Esmer, (as cited in Cetrez, 2011, p. 476-477), the characteristics of the Swedish culture are apparent due to its high scores on the index for *Emancipative freedom values*. This index includes among other measurements: horizontal social trust (59.2 % for Sweden), tolerance of social minorities (92.3 %), and strong democratic view (41.2 %). The Swedish cultural context is also characterized by a high score on the index of *Secular-rational and non-traditional values*. This index includes among other values: authorities such as God, family, and nation for which values the Swedish cultural context has a low appreciation. Pettersson and Esmer, (as cited in Cetrez, 2011, p. 477), argue that this can be a general result of globalization and late modernization. Furthermore, Sweden provides low scores for traditional values and religious engagement, i.e., religion as very important (10.7 %), God as very important (11.8 %), church attendance every week (3.7 %), and religion provides good answers to life questions (13.1 %). The Swedish cultural context should be seen in relation to the Assyrian population where the Syriac Orthodox Church has or has had a central role in the Assyrian cultural life.

#### 1.5. The Limitations of the Current Study

The current study does not include a study of particular rituals, i.e., religious and non-religious. Neither does the study apply a gender-influenced theoretical perspective regarding the difference between males and females within the Assyrian/Syrian group in Sweden. Differences, e.g., roles, meaning of rituals, between males and females are present as seen in the previous conducted research and in the current study.

The theoretical framework of the current study is assembled with selected parts from several theories to create a framework suited for the purpose of the current study. Some theories are more prominent than other. The acculturation theory of Rudmin is in here focused on the acculturative motivations and learning while also applying other parts of the model while leaving others, i.e., consequences for the individual. In a similar manner, the theory of ego-identity development as proposed by Erikson is not applied in full since it is a vast theory... The focus of the current study applies concepts such as: ethos, the identity connotations, life stages and ritual components, while leaving out or by providing lesser emphasis on *all* the life stages, epigenesis and so on. In addition certain concepts are used with a limiting approach. Religion is approached foremost as a practical issue that is focused on religious practice, i.e., fasting and Mass attendance. Discrimination is approached as ethnic discrimination.

The current study applies the theoretical concepts of ritualization and communitas. These concepts are used in the same manner as they are applied in Cetrez' dissertation (2005). While this creates a discrepancy between the primary source, i.e., Bell and Driver, and the current study, the applied approach of Cetrez is chosen because of Cetrez' appliance and operationalization of the concepts in a similar population as the current study as well in a similar approach, i.e., to explain the differentiation of the individual.

Although I refer to the Assyrian/Syrian group in Sweden as one group, the current study applies on the one hand a convenience sampled population in the quantitative phase and on the other hand a purposive, snowball sampling population in the qualitative phase. As such, ambitions to generalize the results to the entire group is naturally limited and clearly different from the generalizing possibilities derived from a representative sampling process. .

## 1.6. Definition of Central Concepts

### 1.6.1. The Terms Assyrian and Syrian

There are differences between the terms Assyrian and Syrian. First of all there are ideological differences between the terms. The differences are, in turn, the results of a conflict that started in Sweden a few decades ago. This conflict, in short, concerns the proper name of the ethnic group where there are several options, e.g., Syrian, Assyrian or Aramean. In addition to this difference, there is a problem of translating the Swedish *syrian* to the English Syrian since the latter refers to a nationality. In the current study, I have chosen to apply the term *Assyrian/Syrian* because of its use by the Swedish officials and to avoid being entangled in the inter-group debate. While this term is not approved of by the group or some of the members of its group, I have chosen to use it as a practical tool to handle the diversity within the population. In addition, during the research review, I applied the term Assyrian because of the aforementioned difficulty in using the term Syrian in an international research database. Likewise, the term Assyrian/Syrian language is conflicted and can refer to several languages. When I use the term Assyrian/Syrian language I refer to the modern dialect of Aramaic in relation to the classical version, used during Mass in the Syriac-Orthodox Church. The current approach toward naming the group is a simple approach that reduces the diversity, for better and for worse.

### 1.6.2. The Term Ethnicity

When using the term ethnicity, I refer to the ethnicity of the Assyrian/Syrian group. The term Swedish as in the Swedish population or the Swedish society refers to the larger group that constitutes the country of Sweden. Admittedly, there were times during the current study where the definition was questioned and also whether or not it was necessary to differentiate the Assyrian/Syrian population from the larger Swedish population and society. However, this difference was made not only by myself but also by the informants in the qualitative phase, as they differentiated themselves from the Swedish population by referring to marks of appearance commonly held as typical of the Swedish population, e.g., light skin and hair, blue eyes and so on. In such cases, they refer to the Swedish ethnic group while sometimes differentiating between this ethnicity and the larger society and population where there are other groups, including the Assyrians/Syrians.

### 1.6.3. The terms Religion and Spirituality

Some researchers (e.g., Paloutzian & Park (eds.), 2005), make a distinction between the terms religion and spirituality. In the current study a difference is made between the two terms. Religiosity is approached as an organized manner of belief, e.g., church, religious practice linked to institutions with a religious meaning. Spirituality is approached as belief in a private manner that is not linked to a religious institution. The current study does not assess the actual religious belief. When approaching religion in the current study, the focus is on religion as a cultural phenomenon that is part of the enculturation as well as acculturation and also the identity development of the individual. Belief may play a part in these processes but it is not so much what the individual believes in, but what effect or what role that belief has that is of interest.

#### 1.6.4. Culture

The applied definition of culture is derived from Marsella (2005). The rationale for choosing this particular definition is because of its nature as an all-encompassing concept that on the one hand provides breadth and on the other hand provides depth by stating what culture constitutes. Marsella's definition of culture describes culture as both external and internal. Cultures can be transient and can emerge in all social settings, e.g., schools, hospitals, gangs, and so on. Culture constructs our reality through the shaping of shared meanings and patterns of behavior. These shared realities can be in conflict with each other. According to Marsella, this is seen in that the exportation of Western culture, in the form of clothing, food, and entertainment, to the Middle Eastern cultures becomes a threat to the traditional life that is rooted within a culturally constructed reality. The definition in whole is as follows:

Culture is shared learned behavior and meanings that are socially transferred in various life-activity settings for purposes of individual and collective adjustment and adaptation. Cultures can be (1) transitory (i.e., situational even for a few minutes), (2) enduring (e.g., ethnocultural life styles), and in all instances are (3) dynamic (i.e., constantly subject to change and modification. Cultures are represented (4) internally (i.e., values, beliefs, attitudes, axioms, orientations, epistemologies, consciousness levels, perceptions, expectations, personhood), and (5) externally (i.e., they contribute to our world views, perceptions, orientations) and with this ideas, morals, and preferences. (Marsella, 2005, p. 657.)

I do agree that culture is transferred for purposes of individual and collective adjustment and adaptation but not that it would be the sole purpose of culture. Culture also provides meaning to the individual and to the group by providing aspects, e.g., life styles, values, beliefs, attitudes, world views and so on, which are mentioned in the aforementioned definition. These aspects, in turn, provide meaning (see *search for significance*, Pargament, 1997). The provided definition of culture is operationalized by using it as a meta-term that encompasses theoretical terms or concepts, i.e., enculturation, acculturation and ego-identity of individuals. Culture refers to traditions, norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. These are situated in the included theoretical concepts.

## Chapter 2 Previous Research, and the Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter describes previous research and the theoretical framework of the current study. The theoretical framework guides the current study, i.e., deciding which results are of interest and which methods are to be used. A social-constructive meta-theoretical orientation encloses the theoretical framework and provides the fundamental structure to the applied theories. The meta-theoretical orientation influences how I attempt to answer the stated research questions. I will start this chapter by describing previous research studies and the contribution of these for the current study. This is followed by a presentation of the larger theoretical framework, the theories and the operationalization of the applied theoretical concepts.

### 2.2. Previous Research

#### 2.2.1. Introduction

I will in this section describe the procedure and the results of several conducted literature searches. In order to conduct relevant research, I need to know where the current study is positioned in relation to the larger research field. By doing so, the current study can provide relevant contributions. In addition, the present study might also contribute new empirical findings for the studied population. A parallel aim of the literature review is also to narrow down the research field into a staging point of the current study (Creswell, 2009). I have divided this section into smaller subsections according to emergent themes derived from the reviewed research studies. In each subsection I outline the procedure, the criteria, and the results of each search. At the end of the literature review, I summarize the results and clarify their relation to the current study.

#### 2.2.2. The Procedure of the Conducted Literature Searches

Because this study is conducted within the area of psychology of religion, several literature searches were conducted with the database PsycINFO since this database contains, among other topics, research focused on psychology. However, a search was also conducted with Web of Science (recommended by Bernard, 2006) with the topic *Assyrian* in order to widen the overall literature search. The search with Web of Science generated 67 search hits from various research fields. In order to acquire a more comprehensive view the search was refined by only including articles and research that belonged to behavioral, multidisciplinary, anthropology, psychiatry, psychology experimental or education scientific disciplines. The refined search retrieved 10 hits of which none were of relevance since none dealt with the Assyrian population in contemporary society nor were focused on subjects such as religion or identity. When conducting literature searches with PsycINFO, the focus was primarily set on the Assyrian population in Sweden and worldwide. Accompanied with this focus were concepts regarding identity, religion, discrimination, and language. These variables were divided in separate searches while the keyword Assyrian was constant due to this study's primary focus towards the Assyrian population. The hits from the various searches were included in the literature review if they included the targeted population and any of the subjects regarding religion, identity, discrimination, and language. When the search provided no hits that either were of no relevance or had already been included in previous searches, the search was expanded to include other minorities. As such, the key word *Assyrian* was replaced with the term *minority*. This was done because the Assyrian population is a minority in a state of diaspora (Deniz, 1999; Oshana, 2004).



### 2.2.3. Assyrians and Identity

The first search was focused on Assyrians and identity. The applied keywords were *Assyrian* and *identity*. The search retrieved eight hits and since the hits were in such a small quantity, no action was taken to refine the search.

Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski (in the field of cross-cultural research) (2010) explored how young Assyrian women in New Zealand managed and negotiated identity dilemmas, by applying participatory action research-inspired ethnographic work. A total of 60 young Assyrian women (ages 16-25) were included along with 72 Assyrian adults (53 women and 19 men). Data were collected through focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. The interviews covered three topics: perceptions of school, future aspirations and expectations, and family relationships. Informal conversations helped to build relationships with the participants and to gain an understanding of the everyday experiences. Data were analyzed by a thematic analysis in order to organize and interpret the gathered data. Emergent themes were: 1) Iraq as a beautiful place of happy memories ... and fear and hardship, 2) New Zealand as a place of opportunities ... and discrimination, 3) New Zealand as a threat to the continuity of Assyrian culture. The results showed that the participants felt complex feelings of their attachment to New Zealand, Iraq, and the Assyrian community. The participants attempted to attain optimal inclusion with these groups with the help of mindful identity negotiation. It is suggested by the authors, that double identification was impossible to achieve resulting in that the participants' simultaneous inclusions in each of the groups were not secure. Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski state, in accordance with Hermans, that the acculturation orientation may be better oriented towards a focus on process-oriented acculturation that is able to account for negotiated and contested developmental trajectories, in comparison to developmental end-states, e.g., integration or competence. By drawing inspiration from Ting-Toomey's identity negotiation theory, the authors suggest that the participants engage in mindful identity negotiation. This means that the participants validated their relationships with their family, the members of the Assyrian community, and their peers at school; while at the same time engaging in conversations with the researcher. Furthermore, the young women offered a flexible discourse of their historical experiences from Iraq while employing strategies to support agenda-driven memories, rather than fixed social memories when dealing with their national/ethnic identity. The strategy was a so called social creative strategy that strengthened and redefined the young women's identification with a stigmatized group or to change commitment to other groups in order to maintain a positive self-concept when faced with discrimination.

In her dissertation, Oshana (in the field of research methodology) (2004) conducted a mixed-methods study where the goal was to explore bicultural adolescents' - i.e., Assyrian-Americans from Chicago - cultural identification, linguistic competence, and religious participation and how these constructs influenced the adolescents' ego identity. The quantitative phase used a non-probability sample of 101 first and second generation Assyrian-Americans, 37 males, 64 females; age ranging from 15-20, mean age 17.1 years. Participants completed two self-report surveys, i.e., the Extended Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (EOM-EIS-2) and the MC-IS. Data from the quantitative phase were analyzed, for instance, by descriptive statistics, correlational analysis, and one way ANOVAs. The results of the quantitative phase indicated a statistically significant relationship between cultural identification and identity status. Those participants who identified themselves more as American than Assyrian showed a statistically significant association to moratorium, i.e., in crisis and/or exploration ( $r = -.24, p = .008, n = 97$ ), and diffusion, i.e., lack of commitments and/or exploration ( $r = -.18, p = .035, n = 98$ ). No statistically significant relationship was found between identity status and linguistic competency and/or

religious participation. The results from the EOM-EIS-2 showed that about one third of the Assyrian-American adolescents had undergone little to no exploration of alternatives to occupational, religious, political and philosophical life-styles, values, goals, and standards. Rather, they remained firmly committed to childhood-based values. A quarter of the adolescents were in a crisis, meaning they were unable to make commitments, or that already existing commitments were vaguely formed. The remaining adolescents were in various stages, developing an ideological identity. Furthermore, ethnic heritage, as a social contextual variable, was found to influence identity development. The author concludes that this may be due to an attempt of the adolescent to balance two different cultures, i.e., Assyrian and American. Moreover, the results may indicate, according to the author, that the exploration of identity, interpersonally and ideologically, is not desirable for Assyrian-American adolescents since the ideological and the social roles are defined according to the participants' ethnicity. Commitments without exploration may nurture a greater social recognition within the Assyrian community and impart a sense of well-being. The results from the MC-IS showed that the adolescents identified themselves as extremely Assyrian ( $M=3.19$ ,  $SD = .87$ ) and moderately American ( $M=2.64$ ,  $SD = .95$ ). Of those adolescents who reported conflicts between their Assyrian and American side of their lives, most of these conflicts were situated around the adolescents' parents and issues of dating or friendship with non-Assyrians. However, some of the conflicts were also due to physical appearance. Regarding language competency, 96 % of the adolescents reported that they speak Assyrian, competence ranging from moderate to extreme fluency. Not being able to read in Assyrian was reported by 68 % while not being able to write in Assyrian was reported by 75 %. Responses to measures regarding religious participation showed that 39.4 % of the adolescents went to church almost every Sunday while 25.3 % attended once or twice a month. The results also showed that adolescents, 69.7%, turn to their parents followed by their friends when they have questions regarding their religious beliefs. 28.3 % stated that they turn to church officials. When asked about three major advantages of going to church, three categories, i.e., ideological, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, were outlined. Ideological was the most frequently used response. The response included adolescents' ideas regarding concepts related to religion, e.g., being closer to God; human life, e.g., seeking guidance for living; and culture, e.g., feelings of solidarity with Assyrians. The qualitative phase consisted of case studies with three adolescents, 2 females, ages 15 and 20; and 1 male, age 19. In-depth interviews were used with questions that were focused on family background, gender identity, immigration, language, culture, religion, friends, dating, and marriage. Data from the qualitative phase were analyzed by grounded theory. This meant coding for expressions of ideas that would reflect any of Marcia's four modes of reacting to identity crisis, and coding according to emerging patterns from factors of linguistic competence, religious participation, and cultural identification. The results from the qualitative phase showed that language maintenance and religious participation were important to the adolescents' ego identity.

Mann in the field of psychiatry (2004) conducted a three case-study with the purpose of examining the different experiences of immigrant parents and their children who were in-transit between the ethnic world of the parents, and the American culture. The third case, an 18-year-old male from an Assyrian Iraqi background, i.e., his parents originated from Northern Iraq, reported being depressed. Mann states that a well-consolidated sense of identity is more complicated for multiethnic immigrant families. To handle this stage of turbulent experience, the adolescent is required to rely on his parents' ego functions and their coherent sense of identity. Mann argues that adolescents do not have the inner stability to control their impulses, rather, adolescents turn to their parents in order to be able to control their impulses from getting out of control. However,



the parents are struggling with their own sense of identity formation and are thus not emotionally available to assist their children. Because of that, adolescents' ability to master anxiety through the process of strengthening the ego does not take place. The 18-year-old male, Robert, with an Assyrian Iraqi background, strived to connect with his peer group belonging to another cultural background. Doing so, he was met by criticism from his parents who viewed American culture as too independent and wild. The parents also resented a romantic relationship that their son had with a non-Assyrian. The relationship had the possibility of leading to marriage. Robert speaks English with his parents while they speak an Assyrian dialect. He is able to understand the language but he is not able to speak it. Language, along with parental customs, and dress, resulted in on the one hand a possibility for Robert to be able to identify with the customs of his parents while on the other hand a feeling of ambivalence towards this identification. Mann states that because the parents have experienced impediments and a sense of powerlessness during their integration into the United States, they adhered to an ethnocentric mode of living which resulted in the aforementioned effects for Robert.

Magnusson and Stroud (in the area of linguistics ) (2012) conducted a study among an Assyrian-Syrian population in Sweden by using data, i.e., narratives, that were collected by semi-structured interviews and participant observations from a previous longitudinal study initiated in 2003. The study of Magnusson and Stroud suggested that highly fluent multi-lingual individuals provide strategic data on notions regarding native-likeness and near-native-likeness that are important to understand in relation to the acquisition and the use of language. The narrative accounts of the Assyrian-Syrian population were analyzed regarding the metalinguistic reflexivity in situations when Assyrians/Syrians were classified as nonstandard speakers, i.e., near-natives or learners. The authors suggest that the judgments of native-likeness were accomplished, in an interactional manner, i.e., the categorizations were made on the basis of certain linguistic features relative to certain linguistic markets. Assyrians-Syrians in Sweden, are historically highly multilingual, encompassing different oral languages for use at home and immediate socialization. The languages that the population are attributed to handle are Suryoyo (different version, i.e., Old Suryoyo or Arabic-Suryoyo), Turkish, Arabic, and Swedish. According to the authors, the group engages in multilingual practices, such as speaking differently in regards to who they are speaking with, i.e., Swedes and immigrants. As an example, is the authors described how an Assyrian-Syrian, at work, switched between a more professional version of Swedish when talking to native Swedes and a version that applied more slang when talking to immigrants. The authors described how members, especially young Assyrian-Syrian, were perceived by the majority population of Swedes. Usually the members were stereotyped and stigmatized due to reasons of ethnic and linguistic nature. The authors concluded that language, i.e., articulation and talking, is a means to provide an identity. Those who used a *correct* Swedish were constructed as Swedes while those who were not able, or who did not use this version, were constructed with other social meanings such as *blatte*.

#### **2.2.4. Assyrians and Religion**

A literature search was conducted that was focused on Assyrians and religion. The applied keywords were *Assyrian* and *religion*. The search retrieved eleven hits and since the hits were in such a small quantity no action was taken to refine the search. Articles that were in another language than English, or Swedish, was not included due to my lack of knowledge of other languages. Since only one hit was retrieved (Cetrez, 2011), I decided to widen the search by replacing the key word *Assyrian* with *minority*. The revised search retrieved 786 hits. Because of the quantity of the search result measures were taken to refine the search. This was done by

limiting the search results to linked full texts and peer reviewed sources which resulted in a search result of 227 hits. Additional measures were taken to refine the results. Major subject headings were chosen to include the following subjects: *religion, minority groups, religious beliefs, spirituality, religiosity, religious practices, ethnic identity, immigration, and acculturation*. The search retrieved 142 hits. Additional measures were taken to refine the search. Subjects included in the new search were *religion, minority groups, ethnic identity, religious beliefs, immigration, and religiosity*. The refined search provided 24 hits and no additional measures were taken to refine the search. Hits to be included in the literature review were chosen on the basis of the aforementioned subjects of the present study.

Cetrez (in the field of psychology of religion) (2011) conducted a mixed-methods study with the intent to highlight the role of religiosity in the process of acculturation among a sample of three generations of Assyrians ( $n = 219$ , females 122, males 97; age ranging from 19 to 88), living in a Swedish city. The first generation consisted of 54 individuals (28 females and 26 males, mean age 71.2). The second generation consisted of 56 individuals (27 females and 29 males, mean age 47.9). The third generation consisted of 110 individuals (68 females and 42 males, mean age 21.1). A majority of the participants belonging to the first and second generation were born in Turkey, followed by Syria and Lebanon. A majority of the participants in the third generations were born in Sweden or had immigrated from Turkey, Syria or Lebanon, at an early age. Data in the quantitative phase were analyzed by two way between-groups MANOVA and one-way ANOVA. The results from the MANOVA showed that generation, rather than gender, plays a difference on measures of religiosity; generation,  $F(6, 404) = 12.03$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ; Wilks' Lambda = 0.72; partial eta squared = 0.15; gender,  $F(3, 202) = 3.88$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ; Wilks' Lambda = 0.95; partial eta squared = 0.05. The results from the quantitative phase also showed that there was a significant difference ( $p = 0.001$ ) between the first generation and the other generations on the mean score of feeling religious where the first generations scored ( $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ) in comparison to the second ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ), and the third generation ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ). The first generations differed significantly ( $p = 0.001$ ) in relation to the other generations regarding mean scores for going to church where the first generation scored ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) and the second generation scored ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ) and the third generation scored ( $M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ). Religious fasting showed that the first generation ( $M = 3.39$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) had a significant difference ( $p = 0.005$ ) in relation to the second generation ( $M = 2.40$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) but not in relation to the third generation ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ). There was a significant difference ( $p = 0.005$ ) among males and females where females ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) scored higher on fasting than males ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ). In the qualitative phase, the conducted interviews were analyzed by a template analysis, guided by elaborated themes, or categories, gained from the theoretical approach applied in the study. Those themes were: religious values and practices, systems of meaning, cultural rituals and symbols, and significant others. 12 participants from the third generation, 6 females and 6 males (mean age 20.2), were interviewed. These 12 participants were chosen because of their strong scores on ethnic and religious affiliation. The majority of the interviewed participants showed that religion had been a positive part of their childhood. Apparently, there was a close link between religion and culture at home. Significant others, e.g., family, friends, and priests, had a positive influence on the participants' religiosity. However, there appeared to be issues of trust among the participants toward the Syriac Orthodox Church, which 11 interview participants were members of. With the help of the applied interviews, other systems of meaning were explored. Apparently, in adulthood, other systems of meaning have become a central part while the religious meaning system has declined. Some of the individuals,

however, left the religious meaning system without replacing it, thus leading, along with acculturative stress, to serious health concerns.

### **2.2.5. Assyrians, Minorities and Discrimination**

A search was conducted that was focused on Assyrians and discrimination. The search applied the key words *Assyrian* and *discrimination*. The search retrieved no hits. I decided to widen the search. I replaced the key word *Assyrian* with *minority*. The search retrieved 2 447 hits and since the hits were of such a large quantity, measures were taken to refine the results. At first I limited the hits to only include linked full texts and peer reviewed articles which resulted in 825 hits. Additional measures were taken to refine the search. I chose to focus on subject major headings. The major headings that were included in the search were: *minority group, social discrimination, discrimination, immigration, and acculturation*. The search retrieved 353 hits. Because the search results were still of a large quantity, additional measures were taken to refine the hits by selecting subject headings. As before, the subjects chosen were influenced by the subject of this study. The chosen subjects were: *minority groups, social discrimination, ethnic identity, and immigration*. The search retrieved 48 hits. No additional measures were taken to refine the search results. Hits to be included in the literature review were chosen on the basis of the aforementioned subjects of this study.

Greene, Way and Pahl (in the areas of psychiatry and psychology) (2006) conducted a 3-year longitudinal study with the purpose to measure the growth patterns and correlates of perceived discrimination by peers and adults among a sample of ethnic minority adolescents consisting of Black, Latino, and Asian-American high school students in New York City. A sample of 136 adolescents (51 % female) was used. Mean age ranged from 14.81 to 17.13 depending on what time (six time points in total) the data were collected. The samples consisted of 10 % Black, 2 % West Indian, 33 % Puerto Rican, 7 % Dominican American, 5 % other Latino, 39 % Chinese American and 3 % non-Chinese Asian American. By applying independent *t*-tests and hierarchical linear modeling as methods of analysis, the results showed that perceived discrimination by adults increased over time while perceived discrimination by peers remained stable. Adult and peer discrimination were significantly related with decreased self-esteem and increased depressive symptoms over time. Ethnicity and ethnic identity were found to moderate the relationship between discrimination and variance in psychological well-being over time. Ethnic identity affirmation served as a buffer against the negative effects of perceived discrimination by peers on self-esteem while ethnic identity achievement heightened the negative effects of perceived discrimination by peers on self-esteem. The authors suggest that the effect of discrimination from peers depends on how youths think and feel about their membership of an ethnic group. It is suggested by the authors that the process of exploring one's ethnic identity may create a greater risk of being vulnerable towards discrimination while for those who have achieved a committed sense towards their ethnic identity have a lower risk of vulnerability. No difference was found between boys and girls regarding perceived discrimination by adults. The authors argue for the importance to include perceptions regarding discrimination when studying the well-being and the development of ethnic minority adolescents. Garcia Coll et al., (as cited in Greene, Way and Pahl, 2006, p. 219) conclude that, in relation to previous research, traditional developmental models fail to include an understanding of the influence ethnic and racial discrimination have for the development of ethnic minority adolescents. As such, Garcia Coll et al., propose an alternative perspective that includes factors such as experience of discrimination, racism, and prejudice that, along with various forms of segregation, influence traditional contexts of development such as schools and neighborhoods. This process makes the development among

ethnic minority adolescents different from their white peers. This perspective also holds that characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and social class are important determinants of development and well-being due to their contribution to ethnic minority adolescents' experience of discrimination, prejudice, and racism. Also, Greene, Way and Pahl argue that experiences of discrimination may vary between ethnic minority groups due to different stereotypes related to each ethnic group. Several researchers, among other Erikson (as cited in Greene, Way & Pahl, 2006, p. 220), have highlighted the negative effect of discrimination on psychological well-being and that this effect may be particularly significant during adolescence since this a period of critical importance to the development of identity and self-concept. However, researchers such as Mossakowski and Wong et al., (as cited in Greene, Way & Pahl, 2006, p. 220) have found indication that ethnic identity has a buffering effect against discrimination. As such, there is chance that if an individual feels positive about his or her ethnic group, it may be possible for the individual to focus on these aspects and reduce the effects of discrimination.

### **2.2.6. Assyrians, Minorities and Language**

One of the conducted searches was focused on Assyrians and language. The search applied *Assyrian* and *language* as key words. The search retrieved six hits. No measures were taken to refine the search since the search resulted in so few hits. No new hits were found in relation to previous searches. Thus, I decided to widen the search by replacing the key word *Assyrian* with *minority*. The new search retrieved 2 986 hits. Due to the quantity of hits, I decided to refine the search by limiting the hits to linked full texts and articles that were peer reviewed. The refined search resulted in 898 hits. Measures were taken to refine the search additionally by limiting the search results to the following subject major headings: *minority groups*, *language*, *immigration*, *acculturation*, and *ethnic identity*. The search retrieved 351 hits. Additional measures were taken to refine the search by limiting the hits to the following subjects: *minority groups*, *immigration*, *language*, *native language*, *adolescent development*, and *ethnic identity*. The search retrieved 50 hits. No additional measures were taken to refine the search. The hits that were included in the literature review were chosen according to the aforementioned subjects of this study.

Extra and Yagmur (in the areas of language and cultural studies) (2010) conducted a study to contextualize the status of Turkish and Moroccan communities and their respective language in the Netherlands. By using a sample of young Turkish (n=63, 22 males and 41 females, mean age 15.84) and Moroccan individuals (n=64, 26 males and 38 females, mean age 15.83), the results showed that the pride participants felt towards their socio-cultural and linguistic background was not related to the maintenance of the community language. Arabic and Berber participants reported high attachment to their respective cultural background but their use of their community language were restricted in comparison to their use of Dutch language. Turkish participants, in contrast, reported strong language maintenance while their socio-cultural background was consistent with their use of their language. In comparison to the Moroccan participants, who identified to a greater degree with Islamic practices, the Turkish participants identified strongly with the Turkish language. Extra and Yagmur state that religious attachment does not affect community language but strong identification with the community language contributes to language maintenance. In-group differences were revealed among the Turkish participants. Gender (T(50) = 12.896,  $p = 0.001$ ) and participation in Turkish language classes (T(50) = 7.235,  $p = 0.10$ ) had significant effects on the socio-cultural orientation toward their community.

### **2.2.7. Assyrians and Other Areas of Research**

A search was conducted that was focused on acculturation and the population of Assyrians. Keywords that were used in a basic type of search was *Assyrians* and *acculturation*. The search retrieved 3 hits. Studies were also gathered through the references of retrieved articles.

Deniz (in the area of sociology) (1999) investigated the historical background of Christian Assyrians from the Middle East who, over the centuries, have developed practices to maintain their shared identity. Deniz also investigated Assyrians, who had immigrated to Sweden and adapted to a new context while maintaining and transforming their identity in the process. Deniz did this by constructing a theoretical model that integrated different concepts of ethnic identity. Two assumptions underlined the theoretical model: 1) ethnic identity was maintained and transformed by human agents; and 2) the process of maintaining and transforming took place in specific historical and social conditions. These conditions both helped and restrained the processes. Deniz directs focus towards the following discourses: 1) the myth of ethnic election, 2) ethnohistory, and 3) principles for selective cultural borrowing. Moreover, the following social practices were investigated: 1) practices embodied in social organizations, 2) use of unique language, 3) ritual performances, 4) geographical and social segregation, 5) endogamy, 6) the structure of occupations, 7) economic status, and 8) the organization of clubs. By utilizing biographical data, interviews with individuals from two generations, participant observation, and analysis of written material; the results showed that ethno-religious identities in the original country was transformed to a more ethno-national based identity. The migration to Sweden stressed and deepened this process of transformation.

### **2.2.8. Summary of Previous Research**

The conducted literature searches have been focused toward an Assyrian population and variables concerning religion, identity, language, discrimination and adolescence. Though research regarding the Assyrian population is sparse there are studies that present findings of interest. Cetrez (2011) pointed out that religious values and practices diminished in later generations in a sample of Swedish-Assyrians. Mann (2004) also outlined differences across different generations of Assyrians concerning values. Similarly, Deniz (1999) stated that Assyrian immigrants in Sweden transformed their identity from an ethno-religious to an ethno-national based identity. Markstrom-Adams, Hofstra & Dougher (1994) showed that religious minorities that reported a greater religious participation have a greater commitment and fidelity. Furthermore, religion influenced not just the ideological component of identity but also the interpersonal component, e.g., behavioral norms such as dating. Oshana (2004) underscored the importance of religion and language maintenance for ego – identity development in a sample of Assyrian–American adolescents. Magnusson and Stroud (2012) emphasized the importance of language in relation to the identity. Extra and Yagmur (2010) argued that religious attachment did not affect community language in a sample of Turkish and Moroccan adolescents in the Netherlands. However, a stronger identification with the community language resulted in a greater contribution to language maintenance. Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski (2010) reported, using an Assyrian sample in New Zealand, how young Assyrian women negotiated their identity in relation to the Assyrian community and the society. In this negotiation, different strategies, e.g., commitment to other groups than the own ethnic group, were used in order to manage discrimination. Greene, Way and Pahl (2006) indicated that discrimination had negative effects for self-esteem but that ethnic identity affirmation may have buffered against the effects of discrimination.



### **2.2.9. Conclusion and Consequences of Previous Research for the Current Study**

Religion and language are indicated, by aforementioned research, to be important variables that play a part in ethnic minorities', as well as in Assyrians', identity. Furthermore, generational differences in the Assyrian population regarding values and beliefs seem to describe an ongoing tendency. One way to understand religion, is to place religion in a greater context, i.e., as part of one's identity. This underscores religion as important to the Assyrian population, being a part of their culture and identity (see Cetrez, 2011; Oshana, 2005; Deniz, 1999). This is further described in the theory section. Discrimination has also been perceived to have effects for the identity of ethnic minorities. However, almost all previously conducted research studies that has been reviewed, with exception to Cetrez (2005), has not investigated nor highlighted the role of rituals in the acculturation process nor the potential importance of rituals for the identity. The difference between males and females along with different age groups has only been investigated in two previously conducted studies, i.e., Cetrez (2005; 2011); Oshana (2003). Studies that apply mixed-methods approaches are not as frequent as studies that apply either qualitative or quantitative approaches. Combining the two approaches to a mixed-methods approach enables the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methods to be combined in order to fill in the gaps created by one approach alone. In addition, within the reviewed research studies there is a lack of perspectives that take gender roles and the implications of these into consideration. While the current study does not aim to explain such differences although there are differences between males and females, i.e., the degree of Mass attendance and engaging in fasting, an investigation within those differences could provide insight to the roles related to family life, traditions, norms and values.

Previous research studies (Cetrez, 2005, 2011; Deniz, 1999; Erikson & Erikson, 2004; Oshana, 2004; Rudmin, 2006; 2009) have highlighted variables, i.e., age, religiosity, language usage, discrimination, prejudice, and self-perception, in relation to the identity. These variables can be situated within a theoretical framework that provides an explanation for the importance and the relationship between the variables. This theoretical framework that consists of enculturation, acculturation, ego-identity development, and ritualization, is created in order to further the knowledge of religiosity and its role for the Assyrian/Syrian group in Sweden. Religiosity is central to the theoretical framework by being an important part of the development of ego-identity. But to further understand religiosity, other variables such as language, age, discrimination, prejudice and self-perception have to be taken into consideration. Not only do these variables play a part in relation to ego-identity but they do also help to understand the role of religiosity within the development of ego-identity. The purpose of the current study is to bring further knowledge to the field of psychology of religion concerning the role of religiosity for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden. A sequential mixed-methods approach, that combines deductive and inductive inquiries, is applied in order to on the one hand test hypotheses drawn from previous conducted research and on the other hand to generate hypotheses from the results.

### **2.2.10. Derived Hypothesis from Previous Research**

The following quantitative hypotheses were drawn from the aforementioned research to be applied in this study:

#### ***Religiosity***

- A. There is a statistically significant difference between generations among Assyrians/Syrians concerning the degree of religious participation. (Cetrez, 2011).
- B. There is a statistically significant difference between females and males among Assyrians/Syrians concerning the degree of fasting (Cetrez, 2011).

### ***Discrimination and Ethnicity***

- There is a statistically significant relationship between perceived discrimination and the individual's identification with his or her ethnicity (Collie, Kindon, Liu & Podsiadlowski, 2010; Greene, Way & Pahl, 2006).

### ***Language and Ethnicity***

- There is a statistically significant relationship between language competence and the individual's identification with his or her ethnicity (Extra & Yagmur, 2010).

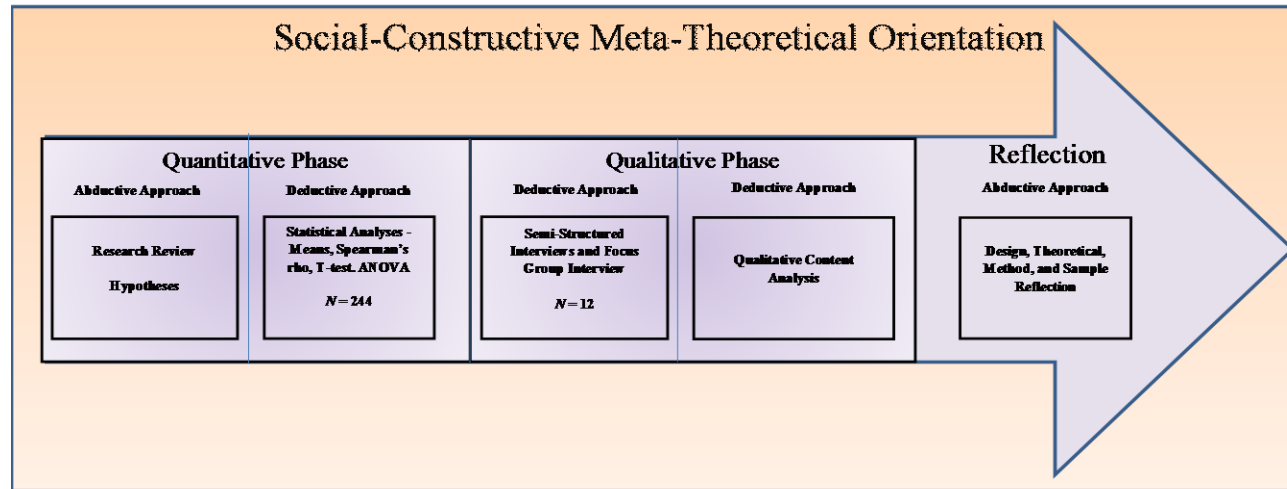
## **2.3. The Theoretical Framework**

This sub-chapter is meant to describe the theoretical framework of the current study. Several hypotheses were drawn from the results of previous conducted studies. The position of these hypotheses within the theoretical context of the current study need to be clarified in order to further position the current study in relation to the larger research field. This is done in the section dedicated to describing the use of theory in the current study. The current study and its theoretical framework are situated within a meta-theoretical context, i.e., a social-constructive approach. The meta-theoretical orientation is operationalized by the theoretical framework. Following that are the theories that constitute the theoretical framework. After that the conducted operationalization of the central theoretical concepts are outlined. The chapter ends with a model over the theoretical framework along with a critical reflection on the framework.

### **2.3.1. The Use of Theory in the Current Study**

In figure 2.3.1., the current study is presented in relation to the appliance of theory. The arrow symbolizes the sequential nature of the applied mixed-methods approach. This arrow is, in turn, situated within a social-constructive meta-theoretical orientation. This orientation determines the theoretical foundation of as well as the purpose and the practical execution of the study. Within the arrow of figure 2.3.1., the theoretical framework of the current study is present. The figure also presents the different phases of the study, constituted by a quantitative and qualitative phase as well as a reflection. Within each of these phases, there are different approaches presented, e.g., inductive, deductive or abductive, to how theory is applied. As is seen in the figure, the central parts of the study are characterized by a deductive approach of theory, i.e., theory guides the inquiry, while the beginning and the end of the study are characterized by an abductive approach, i.e., theory and empiric data, whether from data or previous research, are mixed in order to nuance and broaden the theoretical framework. Within each phase is described the different methods applied as well as the number of participants.

Figure 2.3.1. The Appliance of Theory in the Current Study



Note: N equals the number of participants in each phase.

### 2.3.2. Introduction to the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the current study was constructed following a period of searching for theories that could provide rationales and explanations to the current study. Theories that were influenced by a social approach towards the individual's behavior were among the initial theories of the theoretical framework. Some of those theories were social identity, social influence, social categorization theory, and social validity. At first, these theories were believed to provide a suitable explanation of the connection between the processes of enculturation and acculturation on the one hand and the individual's connection to these processes of cultural learning on the other hand. The theories lacked, however, a broader psychological approach that could connect the cultural and the social processes that the individual was a part of with the inner psychological workings. The focus was therefore changed towards theories that could balance an approach that combined both social and psychological explanations. The social approach was still important in order to connect the psychological dimension to the larger cultural context. The applied theoretical framework came therefore to include the theory of ego-identity since it explained how ego-identity and the identification of the individual were developed in relation to a larger context, i.e., the ethos.



However, the theory of ego-identity could not provide a definition or explanation for how the individual interacts with his or her surroundings and what implication this interaction might have for the process of enculturation, acculturation and ego-identity. Therefore, the theory of ritualization by Bell and the theory of *communitas* by Driver was included in order to provide the connection between the cultural processes and the psychological dimension concerning ego-identity.

Theoretically, religiosity with the development of ego-identity play a key role by being on the one hand a part of the identity and on the other hand by being a facilitator for rituals. Rituals, in turn, ranging from language usage to Mass attendance at church, constitute the identity through ritualization and differentiation. Rituals are present during an individual's lifetime. As such, rituals are also present during the enculturation and the acculturation process of the individual. No currently found previous research study concerning the Assyrian/Syrian group in Sweden has approached religiosity as part of ego-identity development thus advising for a further inquiry regarding the matter. In addition, previous research studies (Cetrez, 2005, 2011; Deniz, 1999; Erikson & Erikson, 2004; Oshana, 2004; Rudmin, 2006; 2009) have also highlighted variables, i.e., age, religiosity, language usage, discrimination, prejudice, and self-perception in relation to the identity. These variables can be situated within the theoretical framework which provides an explanation of the importance and the relationship between the variables. This theoretical framework that consists of theories of enculturation, acculturation, ego-identity development, and ritualization, is created in order to further the knowledge of religiosity's role for the Assyrian/Syrian group in Sweden. Religiosity is central to the theoretical framework by being an important part of the development of ego-identity.

To further understand the development of ego-identity, other variables such as language, age, discrimination, prejudice and self-perception have to be taken into consideration. Not only do these variables play a part in relation to ego-identity but they do also help to understand ego-identity development among Assyrians/Syrians. Language is believed to be a vehicle of culture and a means for the individual to express his or her will during childhood (Oshana, 2004; Erikson & Erikson, 2004). Age determines or indicates where the individual is in the development of his or her identity (Erikson & Erikson, 2004). Discrimination and prejudice might impair the individual's identity exploration (Oshana, 2004). Self-perception provides indication of the individual's knowledge of knowing who the individual is and what place she or he has in society (Erikson & Erikson, 2004). These variables along with religiosity are situated within a theoretical framework in order to have their roles explained to a greater degree.

A central question is raised in relation to the theoretical framework: What role does religiosity have for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden, concerning the development of ego-identity and the act of ritualization, within a process of enculturation and acculturation? The research question summarizes the framework. The theory of ego-identity and the development of ego through the different life stages involves several concepts. There are six central concepts: *epigenesis*, *ethos*, *worldview*, *ritualization*, *identity*, and *the life stages*. The epigenesis refers to the psychological developmental process of the individual and involves the life stages that the individual goes through during his or her life. Through these life stages, the individual develops his or her identity with the process culminating during adolescence. The identity of the individual is connected to the social context, i.e., the *ethos*. The ethos refers to the cultural organization of human beings' interdependence of each other. The relationship between the individual and the society is a constructive one where the two integrate with each other and form a unity which regulates both. Society provides several *worldviews*, i.e., all-encompassing views that are focused on a selection of factors which aid a coherent perspective, and create an ethical feeling of community with a strong engagement in work;

which the individual may integrate. It is through *ritualization*, i.e., an interaction that benefits and supports the individual's investment in the social process, which the individual, more specifically the developing I, and the ethos are linked together.

While there is a connection between the individual and the social context through ritualization, it is necessary to further shed some light on the processes of ritualization. I do this by including the theory of *communitas* and ritualization as described by Driver and Bell. Though there are some similarity between Bell and Erikson, there are some important differences. Perhaps one of the greater differences is the fact that Erikson does not refer to power relations. Bell, in comparison, has suggested a concept of ritualization that is characterized by power relations and negotiation. Ritualization, according to Bell, receives its significance in relation to other practices. As such, rituals provide means for the participant to differentiate him- or herself from others. Rituals has the ability to transform the social reality because of the connection that rituals have to the social body and to the power relations. It is in this action that rituals have the ability to differentiate the performer from others. *Communitas* is the essence of rituals and the essential bond that keeps together society. *Communitas* has the ability, through rituals, to overcome social alienation.

The different approaches to ritual which are provided by Erikson and by Bell are meant to complement each other. Erikson's approach to rituals provides a link between the identity and the ethos, i.e., the social context. Bell's approach to rituals provides an explanation for how the individual can interact with his or her social reality. While there are differences between Erikson and Bell both approaches are important since they bring valuable explanations to the interaction and integration between the individual and the social context.

Ego-identity and rituals are situated within a larger context. This larger context refers to enculturation and acculturation. According to Rudmin, enculturation, or first-culture acquisition, takes part from birth and continues throughout life as long as one maintains contact with one's first-culture. Rudmin states that enculturation involves socialization through natural processes such as imitation but also through schooling, law, and other forms of explicit training. Enculturation takes place during the entire life-span. This is because an individual encounters new aspects, new social roles, new geographic regions and new institutions of the first-culture. In addition, MacLachlan, Smyth, Breen and Madden (as cited in Rudmin, 2009, p. 109) state that cultures are dynamic which result in cultures changing because of innovations and cultural diffusion. Because of that, individuals are continuously learning new aspects of their first-culture, i.e., their first encountered culture. Acculturation, or second-culture acquisition, refers to the cultural learning of a culture other than that of the individual's first culture. The cultural learning is preceded by acculturative motivations. The *motivations* include: 1) cultural attitudes, 2) ethnic identity, 3) reaction to eustress and distress, and 4) utility, i.e., costs and risks of second-cultural acquisition. Acculturative learning includes: information about the second-culture; instruction; imitation of second-culture behavior; and learning of second-culture by mentors. More specifically, information about the second culture refers to a method of second-cultural learning through informal information found in sources such as novels, movies, and music. Instructions refers to a specific method of preparing sojourners for second-culture contact, or interaction. Imitations of second-culture behaviors refer to an individual who imitates behaviors that are found in the second-culture. Learning by mentors refers to learning by people who are competent in the second-culture and are engaged to care and to provide personal support. As acculturative learning of second-culture proceeds, the process leads to changes in the individual. These changes can be aggregated to the group, ranging from smaller to larger groups, e.g., family to minority communities, and results in consequences for success, family, politics and creativity. Rudmin argues that acculturation will influence every aspect of an individual's reality as well as the social reality.

### 2.3.3. Acculturation and Enculturation

#### 2.3.3.1. Introduction

Marsella (2005) defines culture as a shared learned behavior and meanings that are socially transferred in various life-activity settings for purposes of individual and collective adjustment and adaptation. According to Rudmin (2009), enculturation and acculturation are the processes of the individual acquiring his or her first and second culture. The first culture is acquired during childhood and results from a continuous contact with the first culture throughout life by imitation, schooling, laws as well as other forms of overt training. The second culture is acquired later in life by perceiving new practices and behaviors, imitating them, developing new cognitive schema and inhibiting or competing with prior existing schema. Culture change as a result of acquiring a second culture is however not necessary. Rudmin's proposed model of acculturation is large and provides a theoretical framework for acculturation. While the model provides a context for the current study, being enculturation and acculturation, the ambition to encompass the entire model is beyond my ambition. It is therefore necessary to set focus somewhere within the model. The focus is set within acculturative motivations and acculturative learning. While the model describes *what* the acculturation process consists of, it is less clear *how* the process occurs. I will begin this section by describing the theoretical model of acculturation. Following Rudmin's model, I will present the theory of ego-identity, ritualization and *communitas* followed by a section concerned with the operationalization of the central theoretical concepts.

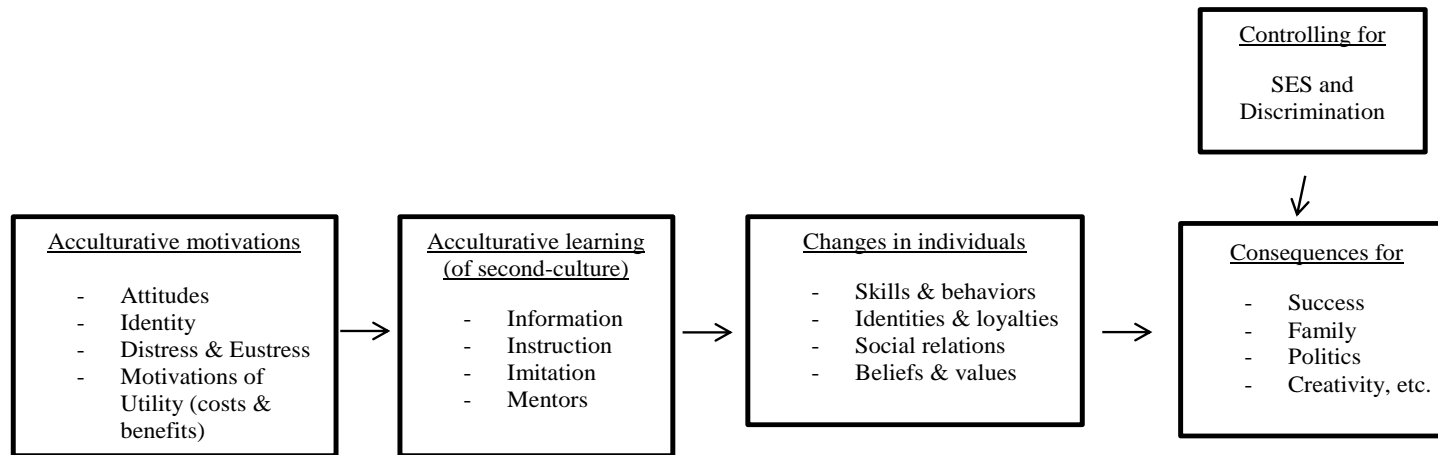
#### 2.3.3.2. Rudmin's Proposed Theoretical Model of Acculturation

Rudmin (2009) proposes that acculturation be defined as *second-culture acquisition*. Enculturation is defined as *first-culture acquisition*. Rudmin argues that culture change need not be a part of acculturation, and emphasizes the importance of assimilation according to the applied definition. Accordingly, it is not the assimilation of the minority group that is the main focus; rather, focus is set on the individual's assimilation of a foreign culture. Furthermore, Rudmin proposes that acculturation should be defined as a cultural learning process. This redefinition would de-stigmatize acculturation and separate the notion from issues regarding stress and pathology since individuals engage in cultural learning regardless if they belong to a minority and/or a majority culture. Rudmin suggests a modified model of acculturation to release the research field of acculturation from previous focus on acculturative stress and health, thus allowing further consideration towards a positive psychology that acknowledges gains received from cross-cultural experiences, such as experiences of freedom, competence, and personal growth. This modified model suggests that *motivations* to acculturate precede *acculturative learning*. Motivations and learning lead to changes with the individual which in turn affects family, politics, creativity, success, etc. Factors such as SES and discrimination are perceived to affect the outcomes of acculturation. Some of the abovementioned concepts are necessary to further outline. *Motivations* include: 1) cultural attitudes, 2) ethnic identity, 3) reaction to eustress and distress, and 4) utility, i.e., costs and risks of second-cultural acquisition. *Acculturative learning* consists of four main methods: 1) information about the second culture. Information refers to a method of second-culture learning through informal information found in sources such as novels, movies, and music. 2) Instructions. Instructions are not outlined by Rudmin more than it refers to a specific method of preparing sojourners for second-culture contact, or interaction. 3) Imitations of second-culture behavior refer to an individual who imitates behaviors that are found in the second-culture. 4) Learning by individuals, i.e., mentors, who are competent in the new culture and are engaged in a manner to care and to provide personal support to the

individuals that are acculturating. As acculturative learning proceeds, the process leads to changes with the individual. These changes, can be aggregated to the group, ranging from smaller to larger groups e.g., family to minority communities.

These changes result in consequences for success, family, politics and even creativity. Rudmin argues that acculturation will influence every aspect of an individual's reality as well as the social reality. The modified model can be summarized in figure 2.3.3.2.

Figure 2.3.3.2. Model of Acculturation as a Three Stage Process (as presented in Rudmin, 2009, p. 118).



To further outline acculturation it is necessary to include the concept *enculturation*. According to Rudmin (2009) enculturation refers to first-culture acquisition. Enculturation starts during childhood and involves continuous contact with the first-culture. Rudmin states that enculturation involves socialization through natural processes such as imitation but also schooling, law, and other forms of explicit training. Enculturation takes place during the entire life-span. This is because an individual encounters new aspects, new social roles, new geographic regions and new institutions of the first-culture. In addition, MacLachlan, Smyth, Breen and Madden (as cited in Rudmin, 2009, p. 109) state that cultures are dynamic which results in that cultures are changing because of innovations and cultural diffusion.

## 2.3.4. The Development of the Ego-Identity

### 2.3.4.1. Introduction

According to Kroger and Marcia (2011), the ego has a primary function, which is to mediate between the individual's internal states (e.g., anxiety) and the demands from the external reality. The purpose of this mediation is for the individual to be able to function effectively in the world. The ego-identity refers to the state and the psychosocial development of the individual knowing who and how he or she fits into society. There are six central concepts: *epigenesis*, *ethos*, *worldview*, *ritualization*, *identity*, and *the life stages*. The epigenesis refers to the psychological developmental process of the individual and involves the life stages that the individual goes through during his or her life. Through these life stages, the individual develops his or her identity with the process culminating during adolescence. The identity of the individual is connected to the social context, i.e., the *ethos*. The ethos refers to the cultural organization of human beings' interdependence. The relationship between the individual and society is a constructive one where both integrate with each other and form a unity which regulates both. Society provides several *worldviews* which the individual may integrate. The worldviews refer to all-encompassing views that are focused on a selection of factors which aid a coherent perspective, and creates an ethical feeling of community with a strong engagement in work. It is through *ritualization*, i.e., an interaction that benefits and supports the individual's investment in the social process, which the individual and society, i.e., the developing I and the ethos, are linked together. Essentially, the task regarding the development of ego identity is one of integration. Identity development is assumed to constitute a stage in the ego growth. Oshana (2004) states, in accordance with Erikson, that the establishment of identity depends on the integrated self-concept. However, the identity is more than a self-concept. The development of identity is a psychosocial task that requires adolescents to combine past experiences with ongoing personal changes along with society's expectations of the individual. According to Erikson, the development of the identity is the acceptance of the self and society. When adolescents struggle to establish their identities, they experience an identity crisis. As such, ego identity refers to knowing who you are and how you fit into society. Erikson, (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), states that the identity development of adolescents, i.e., the fifth stage regarding identity and role confusion, is related not only to the individual's developmental history, but also with the historical period that the individual is a product of. The individual's identity is a combination of both past and future experiences regarding the individual and the society. Oshana states that there are group differences concerning identity development. The identity development is particularly complicated for adolescents that belong to ethnic minorities. Since exploration is a key variable regarding identity development, discrimination is one of the issues that may complicate the identity development of ethnic minorities. Discrimination may result in discouragement from involvement with others who reside outside of the individual's reference group.

### 2.3.4.2. Epigenesis

Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004) refers to the term *epigenesis* as the psychological development of the individual and that this development is synchronized with the development of the bodily organs. Two other organizational processes play an important part for the individual. On the one hand there is the ability for personal experience to be organized in a psychological manner and on the other hand there is the interdependence between human beings organized in a cultural manner. According to Erikson and Erikson (2004), the epigenesis provides the human being, from birth, with a set of rules that creates opportunities for a meaningful interaction with a

growing number of important individuals along with practices that influence them. These rules of development are culturally specific.

#### 2.3.4.3. Ethos

*Ethos* (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), refers to the cultural organization of human beings' interdependence. According to Kroger and Marcia (2011), the relationship between society and the individual is a constructive one. Furthermore, according to Rapaport (as cited in Kroger and Marcia, 2011), the individual does not adapt to society nor does society mold the individual. Rather, society and the individual form a unity where a mutual regulation takes place. The social institutions are pre-conditions for the development of the individual while the individual produces the help that society provides through adult members that are guided by institutions and traditions. Society is the necessary matrix of the development of behavior.

#### 2.3.4.4. Ritualization

Ritualization (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), refers to a dialogue or interaction between the child and the caring parents. This interaction is informal but prescribed between individuals who repeat the dialogue with meaningful intervals and repeating contexts. Such interactions carry an adjustment value for the participants since such interactions benefits and supports the individual's investment in the social process. Ritualization provides a link between the developing I and the ethos that characterizes the society in which the individual lives. Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004) notes that ritualization is characterized by: 1) a careful observation of the form and the details of the ceremony; 2) a feeling of a higher symbolic meaning; 3) an active engagement of all participants; and 4) a feeling of necessity. Rituals benefits all who participate by promoting the growth of the individual's I and by helping the individual to avoid uncontrolled impulsivity and excessive self-control while at the same time enabling a specific interpretation of the human environment. Erikson notes that ritualization is connected to the different life stages. There are positive ritual elements and ritualism, i.e., a pathological counterpart.

There are eight components of ritual that Erikson describes (Erikson & Erikson, 2004). I will describe those components that are of particular importance for the current study. The first of these components is the *numinous* component. The numinous refers to a transcendent presence of something holy. The numinous is not confined to religious settings. Rather, the numinous is present among other settings that involves dedication. The second component of ritual is *discernibility* (omdöme) and refers to the differentiation between right and wrong. It is with this component that a *negative identity* is created, i.e., an image of what the individual is not expected to be that plays an important part in relation to ethnocentrism. At the same time, a *positive identity* is created that informs us what we can be. The third component of ritual is the *dramatic*. The dramatic refers to a theatrical process where human conflicts are played out in custom-made performances. This process achieves an intense cleansing for actors as well as the audience. The fourth component of ritual is the *formal* component. The formal mixes the previously mentioned components and ensures that the ritual is performed with perfection as an ideal. This includes an achieved ability to pay attention to details but not in a sense that the formal element becomes a goal in itself or means for participation in a higher order. The fifth component of ritual is the *ideological* component. The ideological component refers to a worldview that the individual, through rituals, e.g., graduation, enables and is allowed to take part of. The sixth component of ritual is the *uniting* component. The uniting component corresponds to the I-quality that is characterized by intimacy and closeness. It is expressed through factors such as friendship, love, and work. The seventh component is the *passing-along* (traderande) component. This particular

component refers to authoritative roles that individuals take on in their roles as parents, teachers, and medical doctors. These roles demand a confirmation of the successful appearance as numinous models as those who can differentiate evil from good and who can pass-along ideal values to coming generations.

Language (Erikson & Erikson, 2004) is one of the foremost effective ways of ritualization since it expresses both the general human and the cultural specific in those values that are mediated in the ritualized interaction. Oshana (2004) underlines the importance of *language* in relation to the identity by observing that language is the vehicle through which all forms of culture are expressed. Furthermore, Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004) argues that the ability to speak allows the child an individual sense of urgency, i.e., an ability to communicate with others. According to Erikson, speech defines the child and is strategic for the ego development. As with language, religion is important for the ideological identity since religion provides answers to complex issues of existence. Religion can also provide a link between the individual's history and the larger group's history. Hoare (2009) states that Erikson held that religion restored a new sense of wholeness. Wholeness along with coherence and ego vitality are the lifeblood of identity. Hoare states that the sense of self as a spiritual being is a necessary compatriot of adult vitality and of the ethical that is included in a mature identity. Throughout life, the ego holds together the self while in middle and later adulthood the spiritual and the ethical become the core of the ego. Religious belief is identified as a key component of identity among many adults. However, Hoare states that Erikson expressed that once belief was encapsulated within religious institutions, ritualism could arise. Ritualism refers to repetitive, mindless, routinized practices and narrowed thought. According to Erikson, ritualism reduce the thinking adult and may also result in obsessions. Ritualism also makes the individual a captive of those who are in control of the institutions. The consequences of ritualism and religious proscription are guilt, blind obedience, negation, and accusations of the self and others. The essence of an inventive ritual life is, according to Erikson, renewal and rejuvenation. Ritualism threatens this essence. According to Hoare, Erikson argues that there are cohering principles and virtues that hold generations and institutions together. When such virtues and principles are socially weakened, the individual finds these idealistic and lofty. As a consequence, the individual might experience being blocked from pursuing, with agency and personal coherence, his or her identity.

#### 2.3.4.5. Four connotations of identity

Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), refers to identity as having at least four specific connotations. These are: 1) a conscious feeling to be a separate and unique individual; 2) a feeling of inner unity and continuity that also houses a relative insight of unconscious tendencies; 3) the wholeness that is achieved by the silence of the functions of the I; and 4) a feeling of deep solidarity with a group's self-definition and ideal that confirms the individual's own identity.

#### 2.3.4.6. The Life Stages

According to Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), there are nine life, or developmental, stages. The stages correspond to the development of the body according to epigenesis. The individual passes through these stages during the course of life. In each of these life stages there are certain crises that need to be resolved before moving to the next life stage. These crises can either be successfully resolved leading to a fundamental strength or fail to resolve leading to a pathological equivalent. These fundamental strengths are with the individual from birth but require maturation. This maturation takes place during the life course before the strengths can be harvested as a result of a successful resolution of a crisis. The results are somewhere between a



successful and a not successful resolution. Not only are the results in the form of conscious experiences and observable behaviors but also inner, unconscious conditions. I will describe seven of the life stages since they are of particular relevance for the current study. The life stages old age and the end age are excluded from the presentation.

#### 2.3.4.6.1. The first life stage – Infancy

According to Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), *hope* is the fundamental strength of the first life stage, infancy. Hope is the long-term belief of wishes being fulfilled despite of the dangers that characterizes the start of existence. This hope is nurtured by the parents' faith in their actions as being characterized by meaning. This leads the child's experience of hope to be transformed to a mature trust. This trust requires no evidence nor rational arguments in order to be sustained. Religion is mentioned as a traditional distributor of hope and trust by providing a general trust and a conception of what evil is. The individual receives new hope by engaging in common rituals that characterize the community that the individual has a trust for. There is however opportunities for trust besides from religion, these being comradeship, social engagement, productive work or creative art.

#### 2.3.4.6.2. The second life stage – Early Childhood

According to Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), *will* is the result of a successful resolution of the life stage crisis of early childhood. Will is constituted by the undivided choice to take advantage of both free choice and self-control. On an individual level, the will contributes with a foundation to accept, or even to choose, the unavoidable. On a social level, will provides opportunities to show *good will*. The long-term need to anchor and receive affirmation of expressions of will in a social context produces mutual limited privileges and duties which are protected by *the principle of law and order*. The child's faith in its autonomy is supported by the parents' attitude to judicial (rättrådig) dignity and obedience of the law. If the will is left undeveloped, the results of the resolution is compulsiveness or a will-based impulsivity.

#### 2.3.4.6.3. The third life stage – Preschool Age

Ambition, according to Erikson, (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), is the goal of the third life stage. Ambition is the courage to imagine and search for highly treasured goals without being inhibited by infantile fantasies, guilt and fears of punishment and retribution. It is through fantasy that the child learns to deal with failures of the past and at the same time get closer to a future with imaginative goals. The family of the child provides experience and limits to fantasy and play while clarifying the demands from a merciless world and providing examples of ideals for goal-determined actions. Ambition is aided by a social economical order that benefits free entrepreneurship. The opposite of ambition is inhibition.

#### 2.3.4.6.4. The fourth life stage – School Age

According to Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), the fourth stage is characterized by systematic socialization. The child learns to use the practical tools and accessories of the adult world by leaving the environment characterized by the family. The child achieves a feeling of initiative, the I-quality of the stage (jag-kvalitet). If the initiative is rewarded then the child will start to achieve *competence*, this virtue of the life-stage. However, if the child fails these tasks, the result is a feeling of inadequacy or inferiority that leads to idleness.

#### 2.3.4.6.5. The fifth life stage - Adolescence

According to Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004) the individual's development reaches a critical point during the beginning of puberty. The development process enters a process of developing

an *identity*, the I-quality (jag-kvalitet). The cornerstone of identity is *fidelity*, the virtue of the life stage. Fidelity refers to the ability to uphold freely chosen loyalties despite the unavoidable contradictions of the value systems. Fidelity can also be nurtured through the affirmation received from friends and others that are close to the individual. In addition, fidelity can be supported by an ideology, or worldview, that the social context provides. Erikson postulated the psychosocial crisis of late adolescence to be identity versus identity diffusion (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). This crisis refers to the adolescent facing the imminence of adult tasks, e.g., acquiring a job, becoming a citizen, and planning marriage, while at the same time, leaving the childhood position of being ‘given to’ and instead assuming the role of being the ‘giver’. The individual synthesizes his or her childhood identifications in a manner that enables an established reciprocal relationship with society while maintaining a feeling of continuity within him-/herself. In order for the individual to do this, it is required to change one’s worldview while projecting oneself imaginatively to the future by a possible occupation or career. This crisis, if resolved positively, is believed to strengthen the overall ego processes due to the individual’s ability to manage a broader range of developmental tasks. Ego strengthening takes place both on an internal (e.g., delay of impulses) and an external level (e.g., adaption to societal demands).

#### 2.3.4.6.6. The sixth life stage – Early Adulthood

According to Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), when the individual has achieved a basic identity, the individual is ready to engage with other identities. This is done foremost by engaging in close and intimate relationships. The virtue of the sixth life stage is *love*. With the experience of love from previous periods in life, the individual carries an unselfish care for others that is active and self-chosen. Intimacy, the sixth stage’s I-quality, and love are rooted in the social, relation patterns that the social context benefits and defines. The opposite of love and intimacy is exclusivity.

#### 2.3.4.6.7. The seventh life stage – Adulthood

According to Erikson, (Erikson & Erikson, 2004), the I-quality of the seventh life stage is *generativity*. Generativity refers to laying a foundation for, and actually leading, the next generations. This can be done in several ways whether it is done by parenting one’s children or through a generalized productivity and creativity. The virtue of the seventh life stage is *caring*. Caring refers to the expanded engagement for that which was created by love, necessity or that which was created by chance. Distancing is the opposite of generativity and caring.

### 2.3.5. Ritual Theory and Communitas

#### 2.3.5.1. Introduction

The theories of ritualization and communitas are gathered from several sources with an emphasis on the approach applied by Cetrez (2005). This focus is used in the current study since there is a similarity between Cetrez (2005) and the current study, e.g., having a similar population and investigating similar subjects. While there is a risk of an increased distance to the primary theoretical source, the multiple sources are meant to strengthen the approach by providing a nuanced perspective.

In accordance with Bell (2009), *ritualization* is defined as a practice that empowers the subject and provides an opportunity to differentiate him- or herself from others. This is always done in cultural specific ways. It is in relation to other practices that ritualization achieves its significance. Ritual shapes the body of the social agent. As such, ritual, through the body, interacts and shapes the social creation of reality.

According to Driver, (Cetrez, 2005), *communitas* is the essence of the ritual. Society’s

existence is enabled, through rituals, by the human bond that constitutes *communitas*. Due to *communitas*, ritual has the ability to overcome social alienation. Rituals need not be sacred. Rituals can be profane, cultural and/or related to kinship. Whether a ritual is sacred or profane is determined by the ritualization and the symbols.

#### 2.3.5.2. Ritualization

According to Bell (2009), ritualization is first and foremost a strategy for the construction of power relationships that are effective within certain social organizations. It involves the differentiation and the benefitting of certain activities by means of culturally and situational appropriate categories and distinctions. An essential strategy of ritualization is its ability to clarify or blur the distinction of it as a specific way of acting. Ritualization is included in the strategies of an individual that is socialized. Bell states that the deployment of ritualization is a deployment of a particular construction of power relationships. Ritualization may be an effective way of acting in a certain context while in another it might be counterproductive. Ritualization is able to do this through the social body. Bell states that the body, according to Michel Foucault, is where the smallest and local social practices are connected to the larger organizations of power. Ritualization is a central way that power operates by constituting the political technology of the body. This is possible by power being rooted in the network of social relations that go no deeper than the social body. Bell states, in accordance with Foucault, that the individual is the root of the constitution of power. Ritualization has the ability to create social bodies that in turn constitute the relationships of power.

Furthermore, Bell (2009), argues that ritualization can be understood as a practice that receives its significance from its interaction and contrast with other practices. As such, ritualization is not a separate way of acting and it should therefore not be separated from its cultural context when it is being analyzed. Ritualization, according to Bell, is the production of differentiation in various degrees and in various ways from other ways of acting. This differentiation takes place through formalization and periodicity and it is always done in culturally specific ways. Ritualization is how human beings establish and manipulate their own differentiation in cultural specific strategies. Ritual, rather than being a mechanism of social control, constitutes a part of social empowerment. Power refers to a relationship of power that is a mode of action affecting other actions but not the persons themselves. Ritual refers to formalized, routinized, and supervised practices that shape the body. Ritualization involves two dimensions of constituting power relations. The first one is the social body which is done by the social agent who re-embodies the construction of power, produced and objectified through ritualization. The second dimension involves the empowerment of those who at first seem to be controlled by the power relations but which rather illustrates the limitations of ritual practice as a means of domination. It is through ritualization that the ritualized body is created. The ritualized body refers to a body invested with a sense of ritual. This takes place all the time as the body is always conditioned by and responsive to a particular context. The body interacts, through its process of being shaped by power in relation to rituals, with the environment and generates it at the same time as it is being shaped by power. As such, the body has a critical place in the social creation of reality. The body is the place where micro-practices of power are linked to macro-practices of power. As such, the physical body is invested with a special meaning that is linked to power relations. For the immigrant individual, this meaning refers to difference in physical attributes, i.e., black-head. In other words, the physical body constitutes the social body. The interaction between the two takes place through a ritualized body that is invested with a sense of ritual in a structural and structuring environment. The symbols and the rituals are, according to Cetrez (2005), the links

between the body and the philosophy of life. Cetrez provides examples of this by referring to the physical movement of the body when praying, kissing the hand of a priest or an older person, the distinction made between the different spaces of males and females when in church or in social gatherings.

#### 2.3.5.3. *Communitas*

Killinger (in Leeming, Madden, & Marlan, 2010) describes the concept of *communitas* with reference to Victor Turner. Killinger refers to *communitas* as a moment in or out of secular structure. This is done with a renewed vision. The purpose of the visions is to redirect, reframe, and revision the structure in which the individual lives. *Communitas* is cyclic, placed in a dialectic with structure where the revolutionary quality of *communitas* is summoned and engaged with while structures are re-entered and *communitas* are summoned again and again. Structures are pragmatic and worldly while *communitas* is speculative and generates philosophical ideas and imagery. Killinger describes three types of *communitas* that Turner differentiates between. The first of these refers to the existential *communitas*. It refers to a happening or an important event that usually involves a participation by an audience. The second type of *communitas* refers to a normative. This normative occurs when the existential *communitas* is organized into a lasting social system. *Communitas*, however, tend to lose the anti-structural quality as it becomes more organized. The third type of *communitas* refers to an ideological type. It is based on the existential type of *communitas* and can be expressed as an outward form of an inward experience. Life in fringes, interstices, and margins of structural forms provide optimal occasions for *communitas*. In addition, *communitas* can arise from inferiority coming beneath structure. The circumstances for and of *communitas* is provided by giving free rein to imagination, to entertain as well as to hold the doubts, the mysteries and the uncertainties of negative capability. The benefits of *communitas* include joy, healing, mutual help, the experience of religion as religion, and the gift of knowledge. Other benefits include long term connections with others as others. *Communitas*, however, preserves the individual distinctions and does not include a merger as in communion. Rather, *communitas* is more related to synchronicity.

In order to operationalize Bell's notion of ritual systems, Cetrez (2005) adopts the concept of *communitas*. The concept of *communitas*, which the theologian and culture researcher Driver builds upon the discussions of Victor Turner, refers to the soul or the core of the ritual. *Communitas* is the essential and generic human bond that enables the existence of society. As such, *communitas* is the reason, manifested in ritual, for society's existence. *Communitas* is expressed in ritual behavior rather than being of a symbolic nature. Ritual has the possibility, or ability, to overcome social alienation. However, ritual is not immune to alienation itself. Rituals may be manipulated by those who are in power in order to create a sacredness around their privileged positions. As such, rituals lose their ability to be the bearer of *communitas* and liminality. The same *communitas* may also alienate those who are involved with the ethnic and the mainstream world. *Communitas* can be described as having multiple identities that consist of both the ethnic and the mainstream identity, e.g., Suryoyo and Swede. It is this multiple identity that constitutes the generic human bond that, in turn, constitutes *communitas* in the existential cultural dimension.

#### 2.3.5.4. *Differentiation*

Cetrez (2005) states that ritual traditions can differentiate groups of people as well as integrate whole communities. Bell (2009) states that this is because ritualization is a type of social strategy and because of the temporal dimension of ritualization that enables each group to experience

autonomy and dependency within a network of relationships. Ritual systems constitute the systems of social relations. As such, rituals integrate and differentiates the field of social relations. Cetrez points out that the individual, through development, becomes more and more aware of differentiations in relation to his or her identity. On a macro-social level, this differentiation involves the problem of cultural upheaval that the parents of the individual went through by immigration and where the individual, as a result of this, is labelled as an immigrant despite being born in Sweden. In addition, identification is problematic when the individual tries to identify with his, or the parents' country of origin which risks to result in an identification by others as ethnically belonging to a particular country or being identified as a Muslim when referring to a country in the Middle East. In other words, there is a lack of nuance in the views of the other that the individual experiences which results in difficulties in how to identify oneself. Cetrez states that religion, or religious rituals and symbols, as a consequence, becomes a strategy to differentiate oneself from others. Furthermore, Cetrez states that the practice of cultural rituals and symbols indicates an integrating aspect of culture where rituals and symbols are not easily divided between the spheres of kinship and religion. Rather, the symbols and the rituals are intertwined, constructing together, through ritualization, a cultural whole. The rituals and the symbols may be related to either a belief or an ideology that is practiced among individuals in a community while these rituals and symbols may not be related to a belief or an ideology. Cetrez states that there are rituals and symbols that are related to the ethnic Swedish culture. The difference between the rituals and symbols of the two cultures can, according to ritualization, be described as a function of differentiation. These two cultures and their respective symbols and rituals can, as a function of differentiation, be described as binary oppositions, e.g., *us* and *them*. Along with the development of the individual, the ritualization changes in accordance with one of the cultures or both of them creating a stable whole. Cetrez states that these ways of dealing with the different symbols and rituals express the individual's identification with the different cultural and social environments while also marking the relations of power between these. It is through this differentiation of cultural practice that the individual differentiates him- or herself from others and thereby constructing his or her self-image. This differentiation constitutes a ritualization that involves the knowledge regarding the distinctions that are being done between the cultures and how the individual needs to act in order to maintain the micro-relations concerning power. Though some individuals are Swedish citizens, they experience that they are not included as Swedes due to their physical appearance. As a result, this differentiation from mainstream society creates a bond among Assyrians/Syrians. This bond can be referred to as *communitas* since the group is and at the same time is not a part of society. Rather, they have their own rituals and symbols that they use. These rituals and symbols create the bond that constitutes *communitas* among those who are alienated from mainstream society.

*Language* can create unity but it can also differentiate people. The Assyrian/Syrian language plays an important part for several reasons: 1) it is linked to a historical background; 2) it is a strong and positive symbol of community with other Assyrians/Syrians; 3) it is a part of the identity of some of its users; and 4) the classic version of the language is related, through different practices, to the religious sphere. Cetrez mentions, however, that the language can have negative effects as well. On the one hand, these negative effects consist of not understanding the classic version of the language used in the religious services and on the other hand, they consist of a sense of exclusion within the ethnic community due to not being able to understand or to speak the language.

### **2.3.6. The Operationalization of the Central Theoretical Concepts**

The operationalization describes how I go about assessing the empirical data linked to the theoretical concepts. A detailed description of the measures used can be found in the Method chapter and the Appendices. Several theoretical concepts share variables or measures. The current section clarifies how the theories are applied.

#### **2.3.6.1. Ego-Identity**

Ego-identity is defined as the development of the knowledge of who one is and how one fits into society. The concept of ego-identity is assessed in the quantitative phase by analyzing the perceived associations between degrees of language usage, self-perceptions concerning religion, religiosity, ethnicity, and being a part of the Swedish society. In the qualitative phase, similar questions were applied as in the quantitative phase. The informants were asked about the importance and the role their parents had during their childhood as well as their experiences of self-perceptions and degree of language usage during their childhood and adolescence.

#### **2.3.6.2. Ritualization and Communitas**

Ritualization is defined as a practice that empowers and provides an opportunity for the subject to differentiate him- or herself from others. Ritualization is assessed in the quantitative phase by analyzing the associations between perceived discrimination and the self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society. In the qualitative phase, ritualization is assessed by inquiring about the experiences of discrimination, participation in different types of activities, e.g., fasting, Mass attendance, speaking the first language as well as the informant's perceptions of being different from others. Communitas is defined as the essence of the ritual and enables ritual to overcome social alienation. Communitas is assessed in the quantitative phase by analyzing the perceived associations between participation in religious activities and self-perceptions of the informant's ethnicity as well as the association between the latter and the usage of the language Suryoyo. In the qualitative phase, communitas is assessed by inquiring into the informants' experience of participating in religious, ethnic and community activities in relation to activities that they associate with their Swedish identification.

#### **2.3.6.3. Enculturation and Acculturation**

Enculturation is assessed indirectly by analyzing in the quantitative phase variables related to ego-identity development and the ritualization process. In the qualitative phase, enculturation is assessed by investigating the experience of the informants learning their first culture during their childhood and adolescence. Cultural learning refers among other to engaging in traditions and learning the language. Acculturation is defined as second cultural acquisition. Acculturation is in the quantitative phase assessed indirectly by analyzing variables related to ego-identity development and the ritualization process. In the qualitative phase, acculturation is assessed by investigating the informants' experience of learning a second culture during their childhood and their adolescence. In addition to the quantitative phase, the informants are asked to elaborate on their ratings and their experiences.

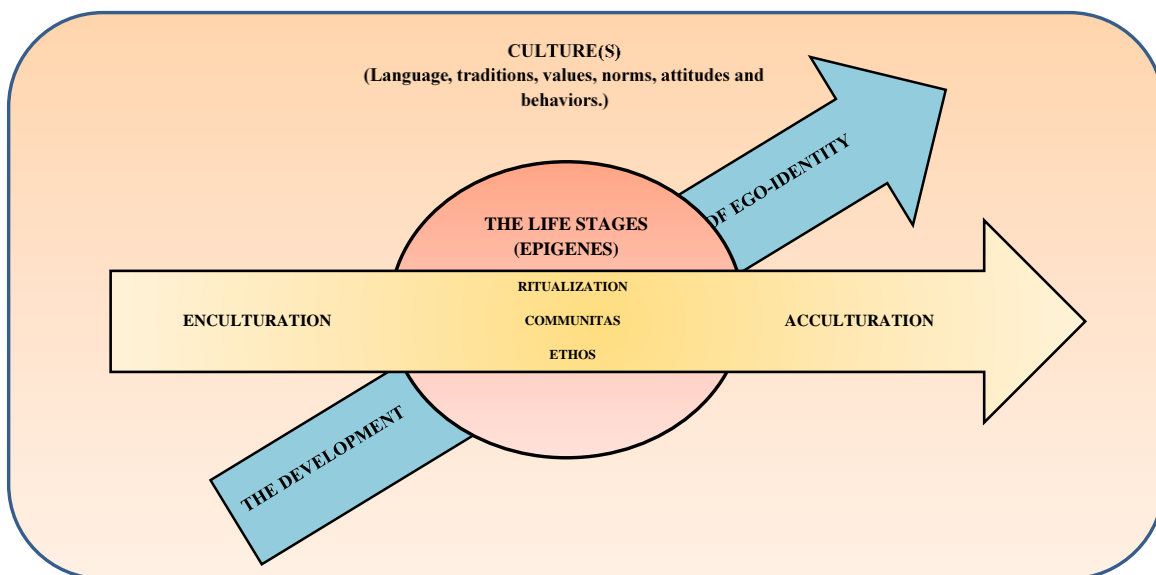
### **2.3.7. The Applied Theoretical Framework**

The theories of acculturation, enculturation, ego-identity, ritualization and communitas are combined to create the theoretical framework, figure 2.3.7. The figure presents two processes, i.e., enculturation and the acculturation processes as well as identity development. These



processes intersect within the life stages. During the life stages, the identity development and the processes of cultural learning interact through ritualization of the ethos and the creation of *communitas*. It is here that the connection lies between the individual and the larger cultural context, where individuals interact with power relations and use rituals to successfully develop according to the life stages. Theoretically, religiosity with the development of ego-identity play a key role for Assyrians/Syrians by being a part of the identity and by being a facilitator for rituals. Rituals ranging from language usage to Mass attendance, constitute the identity through ritualization and differentiation. Rituals are present during an individual’s lifetime. As such, rituals are also present during the enculturation and the acculturation processes of the individual. The highlighted variables, i.e., age, religiosity, language usage, discrimination, prejudice, and self-perceptions, are situated within the theoretical framework in order to provide an explanation of the importance of religiosity for Assyrians/Syrians as well as the relationship between religiosity and the highlighted variables.

Figure 2.3.7. – *The Applied Theoretical Model of the Current Study*



### 2.3.7.1. Critical Reflection on the Theoretical Framework of the Current Study

The theoretical framework enables theories to be present on several levels. The differences between these levels are the abilities of the theories to explain phenomena. The theories of enculturation and acculturation can be described to be on an overall level where they provide explanations for what cultural learning means for the individual. However, in order to explain the processes within enculturation and acculturation, the theory of ego-identity is included. Ego-Identity explains the overall psychology of the individual and can to some extent explain the link between the individual’s psychology and the cultural context. Within ego-identity and the development of ego-identity there are minor theoretical concepts that explain the connection between the cultural context and identity, i.e., the ethos, the life stages, the ritual components; as well as ritualization and *communitas*. These theories are on the lowest level in the framework and they explain the actual acts, feelings, and experiences while connecting these to the other theories, i.e., ego-identity and the processes of enculturation and acculturation. By applying a framework that is active on several levels it is possible to acquire a broader investigation of the

examined phenomenon. However, including several theories might increase the risk of not being able to immerse adequately in an investigated phenomenon or of losing focus. Furthermore, the question has to be raised whether or not, and in what manner, it is possible to use different theories by emphasizing and combining specific theoretical concepts. Using concepts to put together a framework might provide a solution that works in the current context but where does it leave the theories that have been included through particular concepts while leaving out others? The current framework does not take gender roles into consideration in order to provide an explanation for the differences, e.g., degree of Mass attendance, between males and females. While the current study does not aim to explain such differences, a focus towards such differences could provide a more comprehensive explanation to the role of religiosity for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden. I will return to these issues in my chapter dedicated to the discussion and to the reflection on the current study.



## Chapter 3 Method

### 3.1. Introduction

I will in the following chapter describe the method of the current study. The chapter is divided according to the overall research design, being a sequential mixed-methods approach, where the quantitative phase precedes the qualitative phase.

### 3.2. The Quantitative Phase

#### 3.2.1. Procedures

The quantitative phase used data from a research project conducted in 2009. The participants were sampled according to a convenience sampling technique where questionnaires were distributed at activities or locations, i.e., communities, youth groups, churches, and other social activities. A letter along with the questionnaire was given to the participants. The letter presented and explained to the participants the procedure of the study and the rights and the request for agreement to participate as well as the perceived benefits of the study. The questionnaires were filled out at the place of distribution with the help of the researchers or the interviewers, (Ö. A. Cetrez, personal communication, 1<sup>st</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> April, 2013). Since the data of the quantitative phase was from another research project, it was necessary for me to manipulate the data, e.g., turn categorical variables to continuous. This meant me changing the structure of some of the variables, i.e., instead of a variable that organizes the data according to specific ranks; e.g., 10-15, 16-29, 30+ years; it was manipulated to organize according to a continuous count; e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 years. The manipulation was done in order to run certain statistical analyses that require variables that assume certain assumptions about the data.

#### 3.2.2. Ethical Considerations of the Quantitative Phase

The aforementioned research project conducted in 2009 was approved by the ethical board in Uppsala. The data, when received, was already entered into a SPSS data file. I did not have access to the original code sheet and could as such not identify the participants. The data file for SPSS was kept by me in a separate place from where the analysis was conducted.

#### 3.2.3. Measures

The questionnaire consists of questions that encompass values, attitudes, and behaviors of cultural values and attitudes regarding domestic issues among a sample of Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden. The questions are divided according to the following themes: (number of questions) religion (7), ethnicity (8), politics (9), health (20), family (26), alcohol, smoking and other drugs (4), economy (24), gambling habits (8), culture (6), environment (2), language (3), media (4), AIDS/HIV (8), and sexuality (10). The theme regarding sexuality was only applied to the adolescents. There are also questions that assess demographic information. Likert - scales and open-ended questions were used in the questionnaire.

In the quantitative phase of the current study, the following measures of the questionnaires were used: *religious participation* was measured by asking the respondents how often they participated in religious sermons and the frequency they conducted fasting. Answers to how often respondents participated in sermons ranged from scores 1-7, i.e., *practically never/never* to *several times a week*. The question regarding the respondents' frequency of fasting was answered with scores ranging from 1-4, i.e., *never* to *very often*. *Self-perception as religious/spiritual* was investigated by asking respondents to rate in what degree they perceived themselves to be religious/spiritual. Answers ranged from scores 1-4, i.e., *not at all* to *very much*. *Self-perception*

as an Assyrian/Syrian was investigated by asking respondents to rate in what degree they perceived themselves to be Assyrian/Syrians. Answers ranged from scores 1-4, i.e., *not at all* to *very much*. *Language competence* was investigated by two measures on the frequency of language use, i.e., Suryoyo. The two measures were *how often do you speak Suryoyo with your friends and acquaintances* and *how often do you speak Suryoyo with your family and your relatives*. Answers were provided in scores ranging from 1-4, i.e., *seldom or never* to *daily*. *Perceived discrimination* was measured by asking the respondents if they had experienced in Sweden of being discriminated against for being Assyrian/Syrian. Answers were provided in scores ranging from 1-4, i.e., *never* to *often*.

#### 3.2.3.1. Independent and dependent variables

The independent variables of the quantitative phase were age and sex. Age was divided into age groups that consisted of three age spans, i.e., group 1: 16-21 years; group 2: 22-35 years; and group 3: 36-84 years. Sex was divided in two groups, i.e., males and females. The dependent variables were degree of practice in religious activities, i.e., fasting and Mass attendance; self-perception of ethnicity and being religious/spiritual. These independent and dependent variables were used in statistical analyses that compared group means. The statistical analysis that focused on associations between variables had no distinction between independent and dependent variables during the actual analysis.

#### 3.2.4. Statistical Procedures

When conducting the statistical analyses, the computer program SPSS 21.0 was used. When choosing method of analysis for the quantitative phase, guidelines provided by Pallant (2010) was adopted in order to choose tests that were appropriate in order to address the research questions. The methods of analysis of the quantitative phase can be divide in two sections, i.e., analyses focused on relationships between *variables* and relationships between *groups*. The difference between the two types is that analyses focused on the relationships between variables are focused on the entire score of the sample on two or more variables while analyses focused on the relationships between groups are dedicated to the differences between different groups of participants within the sample, i.e., according to age, gender, etc., on one or more variables. The two types of analyses can be divided into additional subgroups, i.e., *parametric* and *nonparametric* statistical tests. The difference of these tests lies in their assumptions regarding the data used for the analysis. The assumptions are requirements that the different statistical tests assume about the data. If the assumptions are not met, the results of the analyses can be misleading. Parametric tests have more assumptions underlying their procedure while nonparametric tests do not have as many assumptions (Pallant, 2010). Siegel and Castellan (1988) state that every statistical test is accompanied by a statistical model, i.e., the manner of sampling and the nature of the population of the study, as well as the requirements regarding the measurement of the variables. As such, a test is only valid if the assumptions are met. Siegel and Castellan state that the fewer or the weaker assumptions that is related to a statistical model, the more general the conclusion is from the test. Therefore, parametric tests are usually more powerful, being able to detect more subtle differences and relationships due to their increased sensitivity to detect probability (significant relationships or differences) in comparison to nonparametric tests (Pallant, 2010). According to Siegel and Castellan, there are some empirical evidence that show that slight deviations from meeting the assumptions result in no radical effect on the probability (significance) levels. However, there is no general agreement to what constitutes *slight* deviations. Also, slight deviations in several assumptions may have major consequences. Siegel and Castellan states in addition that the power, i.e., detecting statistical

significance, of any test can be increased by increasing the sample size. So, while nonparametric tests are not as powerful, i.e., in detecting statistical significance, in comparison to parametric tests, the researcher is able to increase the power by increasing the sample size. According to Siegel and Castellan, the behavioral and social sciences rarely measure data on interval- or ratio-levels. Most of the parametric statistical tests require, however, that the data used in the statistical test is measured on at least an interval-level. By applying parametric tests to data that is measured on a level lesser than interval, the researcher would *add information* to the test which would distort the results.

Siegel and Castellan summarize the advantages and disadvantages of nonparametric tests. The advantages are: 1) nonparametric tests are useful when investigating small samples or when the properties of the sample are not known; 2) nonparametric tests make fewer assumptions about the data used; 3) nonparametric tests are suited for data that are measured on an ordinal-level; 4) nonparametric tests are applicable to data that is measured on a nominal-level, i.e., classification measurement; 5) certain nonparametric tests are able to handle groups of different populations while parametric tests would require further computation; and 6) nonparametric tests, in comparisons with parametric tests, are easier to learn and easier to apply. The disadvantages of the nonparametric tests are that they are not systematic in comparisons to their parametric counterparts.

#### 3.2.4.1. Relationships between Variables

In order to investigate the relationship between variables, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (also referred to as Spearman's *rho*) was applied. Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient is a nonparametric statistical test that measures the correlation, or association, between the values of two variable. Correlation is concerned with the strength and the direction of the relationship between two variables (Pallant, 2010). The strength of a relationship refers to what degree the values of two variables are associated with each other. The greater the strength, the more associated are the values of the two variables. The strength can take on any value between -1 to +1. The direction of a relationship refers to whether the relationship is positive (+) or negative (-). A relationship is positive when the value of variable A increases with the value of variable B and vice versa. A relationship is negative when the value of variable A decreases while the value of variable B increases and vice versa. The parametric version of correlation is Pearson Product Moment Correlation (also called *Pearson r*). As the reader might remember, parametric statistical tests carry a greater degree of assumptions in comparison to nonparametric tests. In order to apply *Pearson r*, a set of assumptions must be met. These assumptions are: 1) a linear relation (a straight regression line) between two variables; 2) homoscedasticity, which refers to the *shape* of the relationship (investigated with a scatterplot) between the variables, preferably the shape should be of a cigar (Pallant, 2010) that follows the regression line; 3) normality, or normal distribution of scores, the majority of the scores should be in the middle with tails in the extremes (lower scores) in the sample. This is investigated by the curve in histograms outlining the scores on chosen variables; 4) the measurement of data should at least be measured on an interval-level (interval-level enables the researcher to tell how much the difference is between two scores on a measure); 5) related pairs which requires that each respondent must have provided a score on variable A and variable B; and 6) independence of observations which refers to the observations and that these must be independent, i.e., no influence, from each other. Due to violations of assumptions concerning linearity, homoscedasticity, normality, and because the measurement of data is on an ordinal level; the chosen method of analysis, for investigating the presence of association between variables, was a

nonparametric, statistical test, i.e., Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient. The assumptions of Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient differ in relation to *Pearson's r* on two issues. Spearman's rho assumes that the measurement of data is done on an ordinal level, i.e., ranked, and the relationship between the values of variables is curvilinear rather than linear (Pallant, 2010).

#### 3.2.4.2. Relationships between Groups

When investigating the relationship between groups in the sample, the chosen methods of analysis were parametric statistical tests, i.e., analysis of variance (ANOVA), i.e., one-way between groups, or subjects. Analysis of variance compares two or more means of a set of chosen variables in order to determine if there are any statistical significant differences between the means as well as evaluate the differences among the means relative to the dispersion in the sampling distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). According to Tabachnick and Fidell, ANOVA is a set of analytical procedures that are based on a comparison of two estimates of variance. One estimate, i.e., random or error variance, comes from differences among scores within each group. The other estimator comes from differences in group means. This estimator is considered to be a reflection of group differences or treatment effects along with error. If these estimators do not differ significantly from each other, the researcher can conclude that the group means come from the same sampling distribution of means and that the minor difference among the group means is due to random error. If, however, there is a greater difference than expected, the researcher can conclude that the group means were drawn from different sampling distributions of means and that the null hypothesis that the means were the same can be rejected. The differences among variances are evaluated as ratios. The variance associated with differences among sample means is in the numerator while the variance associated with error is in the denominator. The ratio between the variances form an *F* distribution. The *F* distribution changes its shape depending on the number of degrees of freedom (*df*) that are present in the numerator and the denominator.

A One-Way Between-Groups, or Subjects ANOVA is chosen for the current study. This type is focused on differences between different groups of respondents on measures from one particular time period (Pallant, 2010). As ANOVA is a parametric statistical text, it carries several assumptions: 1) level of measurement should be at least on an interval-level; 2) the data used for the analysis should be collected through random sampling; 3) the observations in the data should be independent of each other; 4) normality, or normal distribution of scores among variables; and 5) homogeneity of variance, i.e., the variance in the different groups of the design being identical (Pallant, 2010). According to Siegel and Castellan (1988) and Pallant (2010), having a large sample size (*N*) lowers the seriousness of not having a normally distributed population or when the groups do not have the same variance. Furthermore, the data for the quantitative phase of the current study was gathered through convenience sampling and thus violating the assumption of random sampling. However, this violation should only hamper the ability to generalize beyond the sample of the current study and not hamper the analysis itself. In addition, the data used in the quantitative phase was measured on an ordinal level and was thus unfit for a parametric statistical test. However, there seems to be some differing opinions regarding the use of parametric tests on data measured on an ordinal level. While Siegel and Castellan (1988) argue against using parametric tests on ordinal measured data, others, such as Norman (2010), argue that the parametric tests are robust enough to deal with violations of the related assumptions. In comparison to both Siegel and Castellan, and Norman; Garson (2012) points out that it is common in social sciences to use parametric tests when conducting analysis

on ordinal or nominal level measured data. However, Garson also points out that violations concerning data level measurement means that the actual standard error will be greater than the computed error which increases the risk of overestimating the level of significance.

### 3.3. The Qualitative Phase

#### 3.3.1. Sample and Sampling Technique

Participants for the qualitative phase were chosen in accordance with the results of the quantitative data analysis. Thus, a purposive sampling technique was chosen. The particular age span that was chosen as a sampling criterion was age group 1 (16-21 yrs.) since this group in the quantitative phase had the highest mean score regarding participation in sermons and one of the highest mean scores regarding fasting, self-perceptions as religious/spiritual and as Assyrian/Syrian;. The actual sampling was initially conducted by contacting churches in order to get in contact with key people in the field. The initial attempts failed and help was provided by the instructor of the current study who provided key contacts who were willing either to be interviewed, provide interviewees or do both. Apart from the provided contacts, other interviewee's were acquired by snowball-sampling, i.e., interviewees recommending potential candidates. All the interviewees who were chosen were within an age span of 19-30 which was in a similar fashion as age group 1. The qualitative sample consisted of seven males and five females.

#### 3.3.2. Ethical Considerations

The interviewees of the qualitative phase was given a letter of introduction at the time of the interview. The letter held a short presentation of the study as well as the rights of the interviewee in relation to their participation. A form of consent was included which the interviewee signed, agreeing that he or she had taken part of the letter of introduction as well as agreeing that the data from the interview could be used in analyzes and be presented in published articles. The transcribed interview was offered to be sent to the interviewee and that he or she had the opportunity to remove parts of the interview. Only one informant had opinions on the content of the interview. These opinions concerned smaller wordings.

The interviewees were given coded names twice; first, to anonymize the actual data of the interviews and second, to prevent identification of the informants from the presented quotes. In order to do so, a code list was created that only I had access to. The code list consisted of the imaginative names of the informants and their anonymized designation. The list was kept separately from the interview data.

#### 3.3.3. Type of Interview

My rationale for choosing to conduct semi-structured interviews with predetermined themes is to provide a deeper understanding to the results of the quantitative phase. When examining rituals, the use of observations, either participation or non-participation, could be a useful method to provide useful insights to understanding the role of rituals among the chosen population. However, due to the time schedule of the current study, such an endeavor would be possible only if the present schedule would be extended and further resources would be added to the study. Still, I believe that interviews provide an adequate approach towards answering the present set of research questions. The procedure for the interviews was influenced by the phenomenological, life-world interview described in Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). The focus of this approach is set on the interviewee's story and the enabling of the interviewee to tell his or her story. By doing so, the interviewer tries to see the world from the eyes of the interviewee in order to understand the concepts under investigation. However, influence is also drawn from Bernard (2006; see



especially chapters 9 and 10 regarding different forms of interviews) who emphasizes an interaction between the qualitative and the quantitative methods. In the current study, this was done by adopting questions used in the questionnaire in order to compare the informants in the qualitative phase with the participants in the quantitative phase. While this approach enables interesting comparisons, the choice to adopt questions from the questionnaire is also important since the respondents in the interview were not of the same sample as the participants in the quantitative phase.

### **3.3.4. Interview Guide**

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe two dimensions of an interview question: thematic and dynamic. Thematic refers to the *what*, i.e., the theoretical concepts that are to be inquired about in the following analysis. In accordance with the thematic dimension, it is important to know, before conducting the interview, how the dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee will be structured theoretically and analyzed. Dynamic refers to the *how*, i.e., the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee and the form of the questions applied in order for the interaction to produce an environment that enables the interviewee to tell his or her story. In the current study, the thematic questions are the research questions applied for the qualitative phase while the dynamic questions are the actual interview questions.

An interview guide was constructed, drawing inspiration from the interview themes used in Oshana (2004) and the questions used in the questionnaire applied in the quantitative phase. This was done in order to enable comparisons, e.g., means and frequency, between the informants in the qualitative phase and the participants in the quantitative phase. The interviews covered six areas of inquiry: 1) self-perception ethnicity; 2) participation in religious activities (i.e., Mass attendance); 3) self-perception of being religious/spiritual; 4) self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society; and 5) language usage, and 6) perceived discrimination.

### **3.3.5. The Quality of Interviews**

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) propose several criterion for ensuring quality in interviews. The following criterion along with the adopted precautions are applied in the current study: *The degree of spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from the interviewee*, this is ensured by presenting the interviewee with space to tell his or her story while probing, when necessary, for further information; *The majority of the interview is interpreted during the actual interview*, an attentive attitude towards the dialogue will be adopted in order for me to be able to probe adequately and to clarify important meaning in the answers provided by the interviewee; *The interviewer tries to verify his or her interpretations of the interviewee's answers during the interview*, aside from using probe questions, I will listen actively and provide my interpretation of the interviewee's story in order to minimize the chance of misunderstandings later on in the analysis.

### **3.3.6. Focus Groups**

Wibeck (2010) refers to focus groups as group discussions with intra- and interpersonal factors that influence the discussion. Intrapersonal factors refer to the participant's personality and how others, within the group, react to that personality. Wibeck also mentions that physical appearance, e.g., clothes and body; influence the interaction within the group and how the participants act. Interpersonal factors refer to the expectations that the participant brings to the focus group interview. These expectations are expanded during the course of the interview. Apart from the participants, there is a moderator that in varying degree directs the discussion and makes sure that all participants are provided with the opportunity to speak. There are different ways to conduct a

focus group interview, i.e., being less or more structured. A less structured interview enables the participants to speak with each other as well as the moderator without the latter interfering in what subjects are discussed. The purpose is to listen and to study the interaction as well as the subjects that are touched upon during the interview. In the current study, the purpose of the focus group was to ventilate the conclusion or the hypotheses from the semi-structured interviews. The goal was also to gather group reflections on the importance of language, religion as well as contrasts between the ethnic and the Swedish group in relation to the participants' themselves. In a more structured focus group interview, the moderator takes a more active part in the discussion, often by having prepared a guide that involves several questions that the group seeks to answer. While focus group interviews can be used to probe for questions or subjects in the future stages of a research project, the current study used focus group interviews in order to follow up or reflect on some of the subjects that were mentioned in the personal semi-structured interviews. In order for the informants to get an idea of what the focus group interview will be about, the researcher can present a so called stimulus material in order to create inspiration. This was done in the current study by sharing with the participants the questions of the semi-structured interviews as well the introductory letter of the current study. Though the interview guide in whole was not applied in the focus group interview, the questions that were applied were focused on similar themes. A questionnaire was also distributed among the participants. This questionnaire included the same measures as those measures applied in the qualitative and the quantitative phase of self-perceptions, degree of religiosity, language usage, and degree of discrimination. The focus group of the current study was semi-structured by having questions that structured the interview and by me taking on a role as a moderator that was moderately engaged in the discussion. This degree of engagement enabled a discussion among the participants while the subject of the discussion was determined by me. The participants of the focus group interview consisted of two males and one female. The participants knew each other prior to the interview. Admittedly, the focus group interview was not so much a discussion as it was a group interview. On most of the themes, the participants were in accordance with each other. Themes such as discrimination, prejudice, and racism provided different answers from the participants. The focus group interview was analyzed and presented together with the individual semi-structured interviews.

### **3.3.7. My Positioning as a Researcher**

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) discuss issues of conducting interviews over cultural borders. Some of the issues that they mention are: different norms concerning interaction with strangers; forwardness; way of asking; etc. In the current study, there are issues that go beyond cultural borders. I presume that I and the interviewee don't share similar experiences, i.e., the interaction between *us* and *them*. Previous research studies (Deniz, 1999; Oshana, 2004; and Cetrez, 2005, 2011) that have focused on the Assyrian population are of value due to the described background information. In addition, my supervisor is viewed as an insider and an outsider in relation to the population (Cetrez, 2005). The advice received from him is of great value. I must, as my ambition is partly to bridge cultural borders, not forget that I, at some length, should retain distance due to my role as a researcher. I must be able to see the difference between the emic, i.e., the local, and the etic, i.e., the universal, though I feel that there is a greater challenge in capturing the emic than in keeping the emic and the etic apart. However, some of the informants in the interviews believed at first that I shared the same ethnicity. When they were informed that I did not share their ethnicity they were somewhat surprised and at times they had difficulty in pinpointing what my ethnicity was. This was due to me having a slighter darker appearance than



the stereotypical Swede. I couldn't help to swing during the interviews between the position of being a Swede and a person with different ethnic background. This was especially apparent when the informants referred to me as a Swede and themselves as Assyrian/Syrian. There could be more subtle indications of difference between me and the informant such as the informant referring to his or her ethnic group by referring to *our* history or *our* people.

As a second-generation immigrant, born and raised in Sweden with parents that immigrated to Sweden in the 80's, issues regarding immigration and integration have always been relevant for me. Despite my up-bringing, being one of three children of two parents with Hungarian ethnicity, I have always been seen as a Swede rather than someone who has a different ethnicity or a background as an immigrant. My appearance has not been that of a *typical immigrant*, my appearance being dark-haired and having skin that is light-colored. In cases, though few, where there have been a remark on my background is when I share my surname, being Hungarian. I cannot say that I have experienced discrimination though I have experienced racial slurring on a few occasion intended for me. Despite these few occasion, I have identified myself more as a Swede than an immigrant except in cases where racism is apparent, not necessary directed at me. Obviously, I am no exception to being influenced by prejudice as the phrase *typical immigrant* shows. I have chosen to be open, when possible, towards the reader concerning my bias. My ambition in this choice is to provide a transparent view towards the research process so that the reader can follow, not just my decisions, but also the influences on these. I believe this will bring greater value to the validity.

### 3.3.8. Method of Analysis

#### 3.3.8.1. The Rationale for the Choice of Method of Analysis

Because the interviews of the current study are part of a mixed-methods approach; where a quantitative phase has preceded the qualitative phase; the interviews continue where the quantitative analysis ends. The purpose of the interviews is to deepen the results of the quantitative phase. This is done by conducting theoretically guided interviews, adopting themes and questions that are influenced by the statistical results and the chosen theories. The method chosen to analyze the qualitative material is qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis enables a closer relation and comparison to the quantitative material and results.

#### 3.3.8.2. The Applied Procedure of Qualitative Content Analysis

The researchers of information science, White and Marsh (2006), provide a framework, partly built upon Krippendorff (2004), for conducting qualitative content analysis. Krippendorff states that there are four common elements between quantitative and qualitative types of content analysis: 1) sampling of text; 2) unitizing text; 3) contextualizing the texts in relation to the context; and 4) applying research questions. White and Marsh set their focus on what they argue are the significant differences of qualitative content analysis in comparison to its quantitative counterpart.

*Formulating research questions.* The immediate purpose of the qualitative content analysis is not to formulate hypotheses. Instead of hypotheses, there are open questions that guide the researcher and influence the data that are gathered. As such, there is an interest from start that influence the researcher but at the same time, qualitative content analysis enables the researcher to be flexible enough to acknowledge concepts and themes that emerge during the analysis. Krippendorff, (2004), refers to this process as a hermeneutic loop which involves recontextualizing, reinterpreting, and redefining the research until a satisfactory interpretation is achieved. The research questions of the qualitative content analysis are the research questions of

the qualitative phase.

*Sampling.* White and Marsh state that qualitative researchers focus on the uniqueness of and of the multiple interpretations of the text. Due to the need of reiterative analysis, the sample size is limited. White and Marsh argue that the qualitative sampling should be theoretical and purposive. Qualitative researchers do not seek generalizability but rather transferability. Transferability refers to the judgment whether findings from one text are applicable to another text. The current study applied a purposive, snowball technique for recruiting informants to the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interview.

*Coding.* It is the foreshadowing research questions that guide the researcher's focus in qualitative content analysis. As an example, White and Marsh describes a procedure where the researcher starts his or her analysis by reading through the texts while tagging key phrases and text segments that are related to the research questions. At the same time, the researcher might also be looking for other unexpected segments that seem important and that provide interesting similarities regarding a concept. According to White and Marsh, the units of data collection and the units of data analysis vary during the research process. The connection between the texts and the research questions, i.e., the interpretations, is checked continuously during the procedure of analysis. By doing so, the researcher looks for both confirming and disconfirming evidence concerning the results of the analysis. The analyses of the interviews were focused on themes derived from the theoretical framework as well as factors that were not included in the original themes. The themes and the categories were edited according to the codes that were used.

*Method of analysis.* The objective of qualitative content analysis is to depict the big picture that incorporates the context, the population, the situation, and the theoretical construct. When presenting the results of the analysis, the researcher may or may not use numbers to create tabulations or cross-tabulation or simply using a textual presentation of the results, e.g., a narrative of findings. The current study used a textual presentation of the themes and the categories as well as the scores of the self-ratings that the informants presented on the chosen measures of self-perceptions, degree of religiosity, first language usage, and the degree of perceived discrimination. The presentation of the scores was meant to create a comparison between the qualitative sample and the quantitative sample while the textual presentation was meant to provide a deeper understanding of the significant associations of the quantitative phase.

#### 3.3.8.3. The Framework of Content Analysis

Krippendorff (2004) offers a conceptual framework for content analysis. This framework involves requirements of which some are: 1) a body of text which is used as the data the researcher can use in his or her analytical effort; 2) a research question that the content analysis is meant to answer by analyzing the body of text; 3) a context which provides a rationale, or sense, to the body of text; 4) an analytical construct that operationalizes information concerning the context; and, 5) inferences that are meant to answer the research question and which constitutes the result of the analysis.

According to Krippendorff, the *text* results from reading and rearticulation. Rearticulation is the process whereby the reader decomposes the text into meaningful units, highlighting structures, rearticulate the text's understanding, and act on them sensibly. Texts are dependent on the context that they are situated within and they may differ. Texts may also differ in relation to the reader, or to the one who analyzes the text. The texts of the current study consist of the transcribed interviews.

Krippendorff argues that the text becomes data when the text is read in a *context* chosen by the researcher. The context is always someone's construction. In content analysis, the context

provides the explanation of what the researcher is doing to the text. There are two kinds of knowledge regarding the context: 1) context is the theory, or the empirical material, which connects the text to a possible answer to the research question; and 2) conditions, consisting of factors that influence the network of correlation, or connections, that contribute to the analysis. Krippendorff emphasizes that the researcher must make the chosen context explicit in order for the reader to be aware of how, and in what terms, the interpretations were conducted. In the current study, the context consists of the chosen theories along with the results gathered from the quantitative phase.

The purpose of the *analytical constructs*, according to Krippendorff, is to ensure that the texts are processed in reference to the context. The analytical constructs operationalize the researcher's knowledge of the chosen context. Since the type of content analysis is qualitative, the analysis is open to findings from the texts and that which cannot be included in the original theoretical categories. This inductive influenced approach is meant to enrich and bring nuance to the results of the analysis. In comparison to Krippendorff, I combine the reducing of the data with the appliance of the analytical constructs. As such, the reduction is done in accordance with the chosen theories. Though they are referred to as separate parts by Krippendorff, I do not believe the phases to be that different from each other since both are meant to narrow the focus of the analysis through a theoretical lens.

Content analysis uses *abductive inferences*, i.e., going back and forth between theory and data. The current study applies predetermined themes in a similar manner, i.e., the predetermined themes represents the operationalized versions of the chosen theories. They are the operationalized knowledge of the contexts. Inferences are drawn in accordance with the themes. However, because of the qualitative nature of the analysis that draws on an abductive approach, room is provided for creating themes and categories other than the predetermined themes.

#### 3.3.8.4. The Definition of the Themes

I will here present the definition of the themes applied in the analysis. Each theme has categories attached to it. Each category has codes linked to it. The codes are presented in the Results chapter where also a detailed description of the categories are provided.

#### **Ethnic Identification**

The purpose of the theme is to investigate to what degree the interviewee experiences him- or herself as Assyrian/Syrian and what aspects are related to these experiences. In addition, the theme also investigates practice that is related to the experience of being an Assyrian/Syrian. The theories related to the theme are ego-identity, enculturation, ritualization, and *communitas*. The categories included in the theme are: self-perception ethnicity, i.e., the actual perception of being Assyrian/Syrian; cultural identification, i.e., what cultural aspects the individual identifies with; community, i.e., the sense of community and aspects of it; roots, i.e., the ancestors and history of the individual's family and ethnic group; and contrast ethnic group, i.e., the self-perceived difference between the individual and the ethnic group. The codes that describe the nuance within each category are (starting with the category self-perception ethnicity): distance, and commitment; (cultural identification) tradition, respect, honor, and preservation; (community) safety net, and family; (roots) carry on, genocide, historical civilization, old church, and being proud; (contrast ethnic group) openness, individuality, and gender equality.

## **Religion**

The theme *Religion* consists of the interviewee's self-perception of being religious or spiritual, his or her self-perception of engaging in religious activities as well as the role of the Syriac-Orthodox Church. The theme draws theoretical influence from the theories of ego-identity, ritualization, *communitas*, and enculturation. The included categories in the theme are: self-perception religious/spiritual, i.e., the self-perception of the individual concerning his or her self-rating of being religious or spiritual; self-perception religious practice, i.e., the self-perception of the individual concerning his or her degree of Mass attendance; institution, i.e., the role of the Syriac-Orthodox Church in addition to being a religious institution. The included codes within these categories are: (self-perception religious/spiritual) interrelated, separation, spiritual, lack of interest, immerse, and reflection; (self-perception religious practice) lack of comprehension, celebration, and traditional; (institution) meeting place, representative, and foundation.

## **Discrimination and Prejudice**

The theme concerning discrimination and prejudice is focused towards whether or not the interviewee has experienced discrimination because of an ethnic background of being Assyrian/Syrian. The theme also includes actions taken by the interviewee to handle perceived discrimination and prejudice. Theories related to the theme are ritualization, *communitas*, enculturation and acculturation. Categories included in the theme are: perceived discrimination, i.e., the experiences of the individual concerning discrimination or prejudice; appearance, i.e., the physical appearance of the individual; and dealing with discrimination, i.e., the actions taken by the individual when faced with discrimination or prejudice. The codes included in the categories are: (perceived discrimination) joking, not obvious, victimization, overreaction, not acceptable; (appearance) dark eyes, dark hair, dark skin; (dealing discrimination) accepting, standing up, distance to the Swedish population.

## **Swedish Identification**

The theme concerning the interviewee's self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society concerns on the one hand the perception that the individual has regarding how much Swedes view him or her as being a part of the Swedish society. On the other hand, the theme involves the individual's self-perception concerning the degree of experiencing him- or herself to be a part of the Swedish society. The theme is also focused on the contrast the individual experiences between him- or herself and Swedes. The theories that influence this theme are enculturation, acculturation, ritualization, and ego-identity. The categories included in the theme are: self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society; i.e., the self-perception of the individual's own perception of being a part of the Swedish society and the self-perception of what degree the individual believes Swedes see him or her as being a part of the Swedish society; and contrast the Swedish group, i.e., the perceived difference between the individual and the Swedish group due to the ethnicity of the individual.

## **Language**

The theme concerning the interviewee's language refers to his or her first language and Swedish. The theories influencing the theme are ego-identity, ritualization, *communitas*, enculturation and acculturation. The theme consists of one category, i.e., language identification. Language

identification refers to what and how the individual identifies in relation to the first language and Swedish. The codes included in the category are: emotional language, shame due to lack of knowledge, identification, and value.

### **Cultural Learning**

The theme cultural learning is focused on the process of learning one or several culture(s). The theme includes information of the individual's experience of religion, language and identification during childhood and adolescence. The theories that influence the theme are enculturation and acculturation. The categories included in the theme are: childhood identification, i.e., the individual's experience during childhood of what he or she identified with; childhood language, i.e., the experience and use of language during childhood including what language; childhood experience of religion, i.e., the experience and relation to religion during childhood; adolescent identification, i.e., the experience during adolescence of what the individual identified with; and adolescent experience of religion; the individual experience and relation to religion during adolescence.

#### **3.3.9. The Combination of the Particular Approach of Interviews and the Chosen Method of Data Analysis**

The combination of the phenomenological inspired approach with a more theoretical, semi-structured approach that characterizes the interviews and, in turn, the inductive method of analysis do cause some tension. This tension lies with the phenomenological inspired approach that advocates a bracketing of theoretical notions in order to capture the life-world of the interviewee, and the theoretical influenced and semi-structured approach as well as the ambition of comparing the results between the qualitative and the quantitative material. While there might not be one particular solution to this tension, I believe that the phenomenological inspired approach is not limited since the themes and the categories are required in order to provide a framework to the interview. However, the content of these themes and categories is the stories, or the life-world experiences, of the interviewee. As such, the theoretical framework provides the boundary of each investigated theme and category while the experiences of the interviewee provide the content.

### **3.4. Validity**

Validity refers to whether the results of a study is accurate enough to draw meaningful and useful conclusions (Creswell, 2009). Validity can be divided according to the type of approach that is applied, e.g., quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative measures of validity are divided in two, i.e., external and internal validity, while no such distinction is done with qualitative measures.

#### **3.4.1. Validity for the Quantitative Phase - External Validity**

According to Creswell (2009), threats to external validity arise when incorrect interpretations are drawn from the data in order to explain other settings or populations, i.e., to generalize. Creswell states that these threats arise due to the characteristic of the sample, the setting and also the timing of the study. Creswell provides several examples of the threats to external validity. I will outline those particular threats to the current study as well as the measures taken to avoid these. . Interaction of *selection* and treatment: This threat refers to the narrow characteristics of the sample which hampers the ability to generalize beyond the study. Since the current study uses a convenience sample that, my ambition to generalize have little to no prospect even if I chose to interview individuals that were not included in the quantitative phase.

Interaction of *setting* and treatment: This threat refers to the setting of the participant meaning

that the particular setting may hamper the ability to generalize to individuals of other settings. In the current study, my ability to generalize to other settings is limited to other settings in Sweden. However, I am aware that the majority of the sample of the quantitative phase lived in larger Swedish cities. This is worth keeping in mind since Assyrians from smaller cities may differ from the current sample.

### **3.4.2. Validity for the Qualitative Phase**

Creswell (2009) refers to qualitative validity as procedures employed by the researcher to check for the accuracy of the findings from the data collection and the analysis. I will focus on a selection of these and describe how I will apply these in the current study.

**Triangulate:** This procedure refers to combining different data sources to provide coherent justifications for the themes. In the current study, this is done by combining the results of the quantitative phase with the results of the qualitative phase. Thus, the ambition is, by adopting a mixed-methods approach, to use the strength of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to overcome the weakness of each method.

**Rich, thick descriptions:** This procedure involves providing rich, thick descriptions from the findings in order for the reader to acquire a more nuanced and broader perspective. In the current study this is provided by adopting an interview approach that lets the interviewee tell his or her story by asking short and concise questions and receiving long answers filled with information.

**Clarifying the bias:** This procedure involves the researcher to reflect on him- or herself and the possible bias that the researcher brings to the field. This creates reflectivity. I will create reflectivity by on the one hand outlining my ambition and my thoughts on the study and on the other hand by keeping a journal on the side during the procedure to note down my feelings, thoughts and insights that may arise during the research process. When deemed necessary I will use the content of the journal entries to nuance the current study and its procedures.

**Peer debriefing:** This procedure involves having a peer debriefer who reviews and inquires about a study. This is done by having a supervisor read through the report and remark at issues that I need to solve. The supervisor is assigned through the institution where this study was conducted.

## Chapter 4 Results

### 4.1. Introduction

The following chapter presents the result of the current study. The presentation is divided into two larger sections according to the sequential nature of the mixed-methods approach where the quantitative phase precedes the qualitative phase. The presentation of the quantitative phase is done according to the different conducted statistical analyses, starting with basic demographics and continuing to relationships between variables and differences between groups. The presentation of the qualitative phase begins with a description of the basic demographics of the informants and continues to a description of the themes, the categories and the codes of the conducted interviews.

### 4.2. The Results of the Quantitative Phase

#### 4.2.1. The Demographics of the Quantitative Sample

Table 4.2.1. – The Demographics of the Quantitative Sample

<b>Number of Respondents:</b>	244			
<b>Gender:</b>	Males (120)	Females (123)		
<b>Mean Age:</b>	Males: 33.51 (SD = 14.095) Females: 28.44 (SD = 13.01)			
<b>Country of Birth (number of respondents):</b>	Sweden (123)	Turkey (58)	Syria (44)	<b>Other:</b> Lebanon (6); Germany (5); Iraq (5); Assyria (1); Australia (1)
<b>Place of Living:</b>	Stockholm (169)	Södertälje (26)	<b>Other:</b> Norrköping (17); Norsborg (12); Göteborg (7); Solna (1); Tumba (1)	
<b>Nationality:</b>	Swedish (157);	Swedish – Syrian (19);	Syrian (18);	<b>Other:</b> Assyrian (5)
<b>Highest Education:</b>	University or college with degree (51); no degree (44)	Upper Secondary School with focus on higher studies (58); focus on vocational training (32)	Elementary School (46)	<b>Other:</b> No Education (6); Realskola (6)

Note: (With number of respondents for each variable in brackets.)

The data used in the quantitative phase was retrieved from a research project conducted in 2009, led by Önver A. Cetrez at Uppsala University, Faculty of Theology. The research project was designed to investigate cultural values and attitudes regarding domestic issues among a sample of Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden. The population was chosen according to a convenience sample. The population consisted of 244 respondents (123 females and 120 males, 1 missing value), age ranged from 16 to 80 years.



#### 4.2.2. Mean Values for the Measures in the Quantitative Phase

Table 4.2.2. – The Means of the Measures concerning Religiosity, Language Use, Perceived Discrimination and Self-perceptions

Measures	Range of Scores	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Number of Respondents(N)
Degree of Mass attendance	Practically never/never to several times a year (1-7)	4.70	1.18	238
Degree of Fasting	Never to very often (1-4)	2.11	0.97	243
Self-perception as Religious/Spiritual	Not at all to very much (1-4)	2.74	0.77	235
Self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian	Not at all to very much (1-4)	3.55	0.71	242
Language Usage - Friends and Acquaintances	Seldom or never to daily (1-4)	3.19	1.15	236
Language Usage – Family and Relatives	Seldom or never to daily (1-4)	3.42	1.10	236
Perceived Discrimination	Never to often (1-4)	1.94	0.78	238
Self-Perception of Swedes perception of being a part of Swedish Society	Not at all to very much (1-4)	2.62	0.77	237
Self-Perception own belief of being part of Swedish Society	Not at all to very much (1-4)	2.88	0.86	240

*Religious participation* was measured by asking the respondents how often they attended Mass and their frequency of fasting. *Self-perception as religious/spiritual* was investigated by asking the respondents to rate in what degree they perceived themselves as religious/spiritual. *Self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian* was investigated by asking the respondents to rate in what degree they perceived themselves as Assyrian/Syrians. *Language usage* was investigated by two measures on the frequency of language usage, i.e., Suryoyo. The two measures were *how often do you talk Suryoyo with your friends and acquaintances* and *how often you do you talk Suryoyo with your family and your relatives*. *Perceived discrimination* was measured by asking the respondents if they had experienced being discriminated against in Sweden for being Assyrian/Syrian. Self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society was measured by two items. The first item measured the participants' own perception of what degree Swedes perceive the participants as a part of the Swedish society. The second item measured the participants' own belief regarding the degree that they perceived themselves to be a part of the Swedish society.

#### 4.2.3. The Results of the Statistical Analyses

##### **The association between religiosity, self-perception as religious/spiritual, self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian, language use, self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society, and discrimination**

Preliminary analyses were done in order to ensure that no violations were done to the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. However, due to measurements on an ordinal level, violations of assumptions of normality, and a curvilinear shape of relationship; Spearman's Rank Order Correlation ( $\rho$ ) was chosen as a method of analysis. I present the results in table 4.2.3. The results of the analysis showed a medium positive correlation between the self-perception as religious/spiritual and the frequency of Mass attendance,  $\rho = .41$ ,  $n = 232$ ,  $p = .01$ , and fasting,  $\rho = .32$ ,  $n = 235$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater degree of self-perception as religious/spiritual was associated with a greater frequency of Mass attendance and/or fasting. The results also showed a small, positive correlation between the self-perception as religious/spiritual and the self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian,  $\rho = .12$ ,  $n = 234$ , the association was, however, not statistically significant. In addition, the results showed a medium, positive correlation between the self-perception of being Assyrian/Syrian and the degree of using Suryoyo with friends and family,  $\rho = .30$ ,  $n = 236$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater degree of self-perception as

Assyrian/Syrian was associated with a greater frequency in using Suryoyo with friends and family. The results showed a small, negative correlation between language usage with friends and acquaintances and the frequency of Mass attendance,  $\rho = -.18$ ,  $n = 232$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater usage of Suryoyo was associated with a lesser frequency of Mass attendance. The self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian showed a small, positive correlation to the perception of Swedes perceiving the participants as a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = .19$ ,  $n = 237$ ,  $p = .01$ , and the participants' own experience of being a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = .22$ ,  $n = 240$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater degree of perception of being Assyrian/Syrian was associated with a greater degree of perception of being a part of the Swedish society.

The results showed that there was a negative, medium correlation between perceived discrimination and the perception of being a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = -.41$ ,  $n = 236$ ,  $p = .01$ , and the perception concerning the degree that Swedes perceive the participants as a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = -.41$ ,  $n = 234$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater degree of perceived discrimination was associated with a lesser degree of the participants' own perception of being a part of the Swedish society.

Table 4.2.3.Spearman's Correlation of Measures concerning Religiosity, Self-perceptions, Language Use, and Perceived Discrimination.

Items Should be presented in English here!	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Hur mycket religiös/andlig känner du att du själv är?	-	.32**	.41**	.12	-.09	-.03	.09	.06	-.006
2. Hur ofta fastar du?		-	.53**	.1	-.03	.02	.08	.05	-.03
3. Hur ofta besöker du gudstjänster?			-	.004	-.18**	-.08	-.01	-.01	.04
4. Hur mycket assyrier/syrian känner du dig?				-	.30**	.30**	.19**	.22**	-.06
5. Hur ofta använder du suryoyo tillsammans med ... vänner och bekanta?					-	.71**	-.22	.08	.05
6. ... med familj och släkt?						-	-.001	.09	-.01
7. Hur mycket tycker du att svenskar ser dig som en del av det svenska samhället?							-	.58**	-.41**
8. Hur mycket känner du att du är en del av det svenska samhället?								-	-.41**
9. Har du någon upplevt att du blivit diskriminerad i Sverige på grund av att du är Assyrier/Syrian?									-

\*\*  $p < .01$  (2-tailed).

### **The difference between the age groups regarding religiosity, self-perception as religious/spiritual, and self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian**

A one way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of age on measures regarding frequency of Mass attendance and fasting, self-perception as religious/spiritual and self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian. The participants were divided into three groups according to their age: group 1: 16-21 years ( $n = 81$ ); group 2: 22-35 years ( $n = 77$ ); and group 3: 36-84 years ( $n = 75$ ). There was a statistical significant difference at the  $p = .05$  level concerning frequency of Mass attendance for the three age groups:  $F(2, 233) = 3.26$ ,  $p = .04$ . The actual difference in mean scores between the groups was small (eta squared = .027). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Group 1 ( $M = 4.95$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) was significantly different ( $p = .031$ ) from Group 2 ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ). Group 3 ( $M = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ) showed no statistically significant difference from the other groups. In short, the results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the age groups concerning Mass attendance where age group 1 ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = 1.3$ ,  $n = 121$ ) had higher scores than age group 2 ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ,  $n = 62$ ).

## **The difference between males and females regarding religiosity, self-perception as religious, and self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian**

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the means of males and females on religiosity (Mass and fasting), self-perception as religious/spiritual, and self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian. There were significant differences on three measures. Mass attendance (males:  $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ; females:  $M = 4.98$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ;  $t(235) = 3.10$ ,  $p = .002$ , two-tailed). The magnitude of the difference of the mean scores regarding the frequency of Mass attendance (mean difference = .56, 95 % CI: .20 to .92) was small (eta squared = .04). The frequency of fasting (males:  $M = 1.72$ ,  $SD = .85$ ; females:  $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = .92$ ;  $t(240) = 6.87$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed). The magnitude of the difference of the means concerning the frequency of fasting (mean difference = .78, 95 % CI: .56 to 1.01) was large (eta squared = .17). The self-perception as religious/spiritual (males:  $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = .78$ ; females:  $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = .72$ ;  $t(227) = 3.92$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed). The magnitude of the difference of the means concerning the self-perception (mean difference = .39, 95 % CI: .19 to .58) was moderate (eta squared = .06). In short, the results showed a statistically significant difference between males and females concerning frequency of Mass attendance, the frequency of fasting and the self-perception as religious/spiritual; where females had a greater mean score on all measures. The difference between the two groups differed in magnitude where the greatest difference between the groups was the frequency of fasting, i.e., effect size large, and where the least difference between the groups was the frequency of Mass attendance, i.e., effect size small.

### **4.2.4. The Conclusion of the Quantitative Results**

The results showed no statistically significant relationship between religious participation, the self-perception as religious/spiritual, and the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian while religious participation and the self-perception as religious/spiritual showed a medium, positive correlation. Language usage was found to have a medium, positive association with the self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian. The perceived association between the self-perception of being Assyrian/Syrian and perceived discrimination showed no statistically significant association. However, discrimination was found to have a medium, negative correlation to the participants' own perception of being a part of the Swedish society. There was a small, positive correlation between the self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian and the self-perception of what degree Swedes perceive the participant to be a part of the Swedish society as well as the participants own perception of being a part of the Swedish society.

The results of the quantitative phase can be summarized by the following hypotheses.

### **The association between religiosity, self-perception as religious/spiritual, self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian, language use, self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society, and discrimination**

- a. There is a relationship between the degree of first language usage and the degree of self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian.
- b. There is a relationship between experienced discrimination and the degree of self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society and population.
- c. There is a relationship between the self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society and population, and the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian.
- d. There is no relationship between the self-perception as religious or spiritual and the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian.
- e. There is a relationship between the self-perception as religious or spiritual and the degree of religiosity.

**The difference between the age groups regarding religiosity, self-perception as religious/spiritual, and self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian**

- f. There is a difference between generations among Assyrians/Syrians regarding the degree of religiosity.

**The difference between males and females regarding religiosity, self-perception as religious, and self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian**

- g. There is a difference between males and females among Assyrians/Syrians regarding the degree of religiosity.

**4.2.5. The Influence of the Quantitative Phase on the Qualitative Phase**

The results of the quantitative phase influence the qualitative phase by determining the focus of the interviews. The purpose of the quantitative phase was to test hypotheses drawn from previous conducted research and to identify if there were significant associations and differences between a set of variables and between groups. The purpose of the qualitative phase is to address how the variables are related to each other. The focus will be on the following areas: the self-perception as religious/spiritual; religiosity, i.e., Mass attendance; the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian; the use of the first language; the self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society; and discrimination. The areas can be summarized by the following questions that guide the inquiry:

- 4. How are the development of ego-identity and the practice of ritualization related to the enculturation and the acculturation processes of the informants?
  - 4.1. How are religiosity, discrimination, language and self-perceptions related to the ego-identity of the informants?
  - 4.2. How are religiosity, and language related to the cultural learning processes?

**4.3. The Results of the Qualitative Phase**

**4.3.1. The Basic Demographics of the Interview and the Focus Group Sample**

Table 4.3.1. The basic Demographics of the Interview and the Focus Group Sample.

INFORMANT	SEX	AGE	YEAR OF BIRTH	COUNTRY OF BIRTH	AGE AT ARRIVAL IN SWEDEN
AWITA	Female	25	1988	Sweden	
ADAM	Male	28	1985	Syria (raised in Syria)	4
MIKHAEL	Male	29	1984	Sweden	
DAWID	Male	29	1984	Sweden	
NATAN	Male	28	1985	Sweden	
HANO	Female	25	1988	Sweden	
WALITA	Female	30	1983	Sweden	
SARA	Female	21	1992	Syria (raised in Syria)	11
PETROS	Male	27	1986	Sweden	
YUSEF	Male	30	1983	Sweden	
BAREIL	Male	23	1990	Sweden	
KHANNAH	Female	20	1993	Sweden (raised in Syria)	13

**4.3.2. The Presentation of the Themes, the Categories and the Codes**

This section starts with two tables. Table 4.2.3.1., presents the frequency of the categories in the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interviews<sup>1</sup>. The frequency is based

<sup>1</sup> In general, there were two participants of the focus group that provided answers to a greater degree. The third participant provided answers to a lesser degree possibly because his older brother participated in the same focus group.

according to the amount of coded sections in the interviews. Each section consists of a number of sentences. The amount of sections does not take into consideration the length of each section or the number of words included. The frequency of the categories differ where two categories stand out from the rest, i.e., contrast ethnic group and self-perception of being a part of Swedish society. Evidently, these are large categories that contain a great amount of information. During the coding of the interviews, the categories were reviewed and edited in order to achieve consistency among the multiple answers that were provided by the informants.

This meant that the categories were remade, deleted and created in relation to the interviews and the theoretical framework. Some of the categories, especially those categories with a lesser frequency, did not include information from all of the informants. Some of the categories were dominated to a greater degree by certain informants. While the questions of the semi-structured interviews were developed during the course of the study, the informants provided various answers where some provided more insight to a certain theme than others.

Table 4.3.2.1. – The Frequency of the Categories

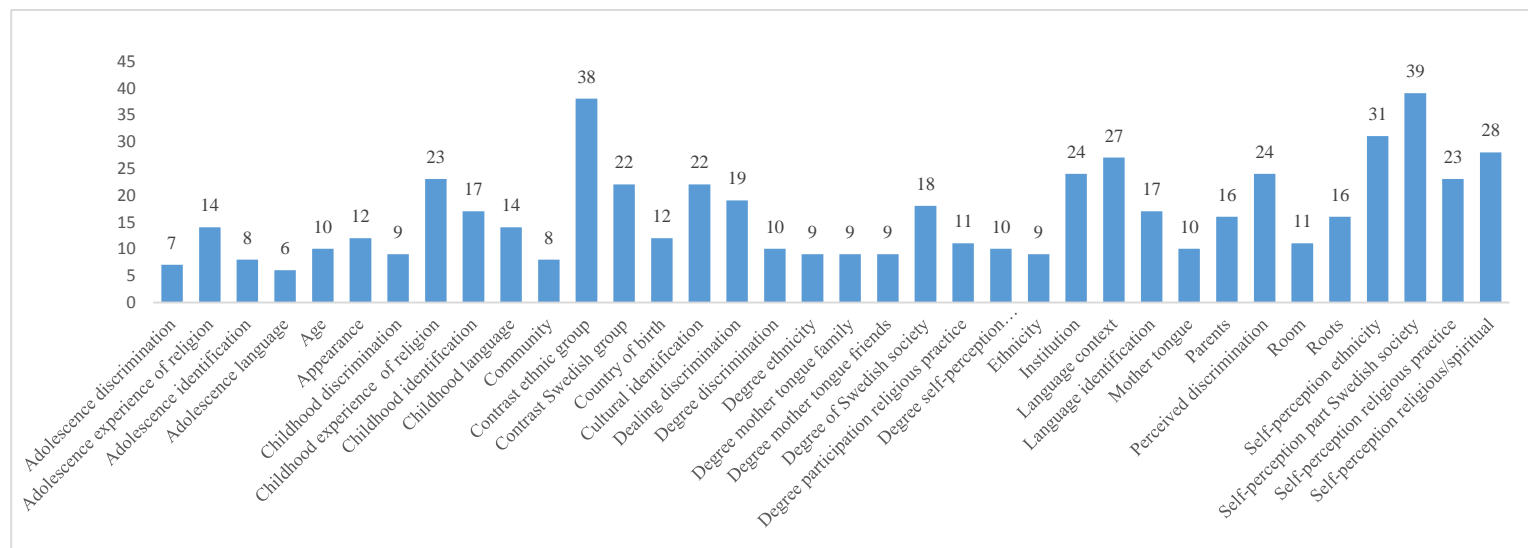




Table 4.3.2.2. – The Overview of the Themes, the Categories and the Codes.

## THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THEMES:	1. Ethnic Identification	2. Religiosity	3. Discrimination and Prejudice	4. Swedish Identification	5. Language	6. Cultural Learning
<b>CATEGORIES:</b>	1.1 Self-perception ethnicity	2.1 Self-perception religious/spiritual	3.1 Perceived discrimination	4.1 Self-perception part of the Swedish society	5.1 Language identification	6.1 Childhood Identification
	1.2 Cultural Identification	2.2 Self-perception religious practice	3.2 Appearance	4.2 Contrast Swedish group		6.2 Childhood language
	1.3 Community	2.3 Institution	3.3 Dealing discrimination			6.3 Childhood experience of religion
	1.4 Roots					6.4 Adolescent Identification
	1.5 Contrast ethnic group					6.5 Adolescent experience of religion
<b>CODES:</b>	1.1.1 Distance, commitment,	2.1.1 Interrelated, separation, spiritual, lack of interest, immerse, reflection,	3.1.1 Joking, not obvious, victimization, overreaction, not acceptable,	4.1.1 Balance, the will to be integrated, context, friends and colleagues,	5.1.1 Emotional language, shame due to lack of knowledge, identification value,	6.1.1 Parents, the term 'Assyrian', Swedish citizen, Christian identification,
	1.2.1 Traditions, respect, honor, preservation,	2.2.1 Lack of comprehension, celebration, traditional,	3.2.1 Dark eyes, dark hair, dark skin	4.2.1 Different celebration of traditions, political correct, sense of community, clarification		6.2.1 First language, context of use
	1.3.1 Safety net, family	2.3.1 Meeting place, representative, foundation	3.3.1 Accepting, standing up, distance Swedish population			6.3.1 Activities at church, not understanding mass, fascination of mass, introduction to religious belief
	1.4.1 Carry on, genocide, historical civilization, old church, being proud,					6.4.1 Reflection ethnicity, influences
	1.5.1 Openness, individuality, gender equality					6.5.1 Reflection religion, religion immersing, distance to religion, embracing spiritual

Note: The presentation of the themes and the categories follow the scheme as in the presented table. Table 4.3.2.2., presents an overview of the themes, the categories and the codes of the interviews as well as the relation between as they are aligned according to their theme, category, and code. At the top of the table is the theoretical framework that is constituted by the theories of acculturation, enculturation, ego-identity development, ritualization and *communitas*. The framework provides the theoretical influence to the following themes. The themes, in turn, are followed by the categories where the theoretical influence mix with the empirical data. The categories are constituted by the codes that present the nuances of the empirical material data within a theoretical context.

#### 4.3.3.1. Ethnic Identification

The theme *Ethnic Identification* refers to what ethnicity the interviewee identifies with and in what degree this identification is present. Ethnicity is approached in a broad fashion that include aspects such as culture, community and the experiences of ethnic identification as a child and as an adolescent. This broad approach helps to create an image of the Assyrian/Syrian identification as it is perceived by the informants.

##### 4.3.3.1.1. Self-perception ethnicity

I will start by describing the informants' own identification concerning their ethnicity. *Self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian* was investigated by asking the informants to rate in what degree they perceived themselves to be Assyrian/Syrian. The answers ranged from scores 1-4, i.e., *not at all* to *very much* ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ,  $n = 13$ ). In the quantitative phase, the participants scored ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ,  $n = 242$ ).

The majority of the informants identified themselves as Assyrian or Syrian as pretty much or very much with the exception of one informant who identified herself as not very much Assyrian/Syrian (2)<sup>2</sup>. When the informants were asked about what ethnicity they identified with some answers were Assyrian or Assyrian-Syrian while others answered Syrian or in two cases Swedish-Assyrian or Swedish and Assyrian. In the focus group, two of the informants, males named Yusef and Bareil, aged 30 and 23, who identified themselves as Syrian, described their dual identification with the Syrian culture and the Swedish culture. This dual-identification was characterized by the informant experiencing him- or herself as a part of the Swedish and the Syrian culture. Most of the informants showed indications on a dual-identification with the Swedish and the Assyrian/Syrian culture. When the informants were asked why they identified as they did, the informants referred to practical things such as being able to speak their first language, to participate in traditions, attend Mass, socialize with other Assyrians/Syrians, and engage in non-profit or youth organizations related to the Assyrian/Syrian community. At the same time, there were some informants who distanced themselves from aspects that the informant identified with his or her ethnicity, i.e., specific traditions. Other informants pointed out that there was a distance between themselves and their identifications as Assyrians/Syrians and as Swedes. The distance towards the informants' ethnic identification was due to the informants comparing themselves to others who had a greater ethnic identification. The informants distanced themselves to some extent from a Swedish identification in order to avoid being Swedish-fied (*försvenskad*) by other Assyrians/Syrians.

While most of the informants were born and raised in Sweden there were some informants who were raised abroad. A female informant, named Sara, age 21, did not identify herself in a similar manner as the other informants. This difference was due to that she was raised in Syria and had moved to Sweden when she was an adolescent. As such, she learned the Swedish

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<sup>2</sup> The score of the informant on the measure.

language while at the same time trying to get to know her peers. She rated herself as *not very much* (2) on the measure of self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian which was lower than the mean value (3.58). In the following quote, the informant describes her childhood and her experience of living in Sweden. In short, she presents a case where she has gone from one identification to another as she moved from Syria to Sweden. At the same time, she did not embrace the Swedish identification in full.

Då var det inte lika mycket fokus på jag kände ingen som pratade syriska assyrianska men det fick man sig när man först kom till Södertälje. Så när jag bodde i Syrien så var det mycket mindre fokus på det här med etnicitet och jag kunde inte ens dem här ringdanserna och när jag var som barn och gick på bröllop i Syrien det var såna danser men inte så här lika avancerade som här i Sverige så jag identifierade mig som ja en i och med att dem sa i skolan att vi är araber, vi är araber, du vet, och vad man läste också när man läste om historia så läste man om arabernas historia. Dem sa ni är araber. Det var som man hjärntvättades att man var arab så jag trodde att jag var kristen arab och när jag kom till Sverige så nej ni är inte araber. Araber kommer från Saudi Arabien då blev man jaha okej så nej jag är syrian-assyr. Man kan inte både vara arab och syrian-assyr. Jaha, okej då är jag inte arab. Jag identifierade mig själv som för jag kunde arabiska och det är ett arabiskt land och jag var så här arab men sen fick man veta att nej vi är inte araber. [...] Alltså just här i Sverige så känns det, jag bor ju i Södertälje och där det är ju mycket, många syrianer och många assyrier och ja, jag gillar inte riktigt alltså deras mentalitet och tankesätt och det fortfarande är där den var för hundra år sen och jag vet inte det känns som att andra ser också på mig som så här minst assyr typ så här eller minst syrian och alltså jag många traditioner tycker jag är så här helt onödiga och löjliga. Jag identifierar mig inte med det mesta dem ((Syrianer och Assyrier)) gör då. Jag tycker det är jättemycket som dem kan ändra. Alltså om jag måste göra det så måste jag göra det så är det den etniciteten ((Syrian-Assyr))<sup>3</sup> jag väljer men nu på sistone har det blivit jag är människa jag är ingenting jag är syrian eller assyr för jag var född i en sån familj men jag behöver inte vara en typisk syrian-assyr och följa alla traditioner, jag känner inte att jag behöver vara fast vid dem. Jag är så här jag är människa och jag tillhör jorden jag tillhör mångkulturen så har det blivit på sistone. Dem senaste två åren så måste jag identifiera mig som nånting så tar jag det ((Syrian-Assyr)) men det är inte så här det är inte starkt om man ska, som den frågan du frågade i början känner du dig, inte alls eller ganska lite eller mycket och så olika grader, så för mig är det lite. (SARA)

#### 4.3.3.1.2. Cultural Identification

The conducted interviews indicate that there is an identification among the informants with the Assyrian/Syrian culture. I will here use the term *cultural identification* since it is in better accordance with the interviewees' relation to their identification. The cultural identification consists of traditions and values. The traditions involve things such as festivities celebrated in a traditional manner with food and dancing, all executed mutually with family and relatives. These festivities include holidays such as Christmas and Easter. It is difficult to say where the cultural identification begins and where it ends. Traditions and values are sometimes intertwined with religion. Many of the values are inherited from the teachings of the Syriac-Orthodox Church. Not all informants agree on that some of the values are specific for Assyrians/Syrians. Rather, these values are shared with other ethnic or national groups from the Middle East. However, there are informants that argue that some of the values are related specifically to the Assyrian/Syrian group. *Respect*, i.e., respect of elders and priests, is a value that seemed to be important to most of the informants. The value refers to showing respect to the elderly and others who hold importance in the Assyrian/Syrian community, e.g., the priests. For some of the informants, there exists a will to preserve traditions. This is described by some of the informants as a type of conservatism. A male informant named Adam, age 28, described this value as a will to preserve

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<sup>3</sup> ((TEXT)) refers to a comment by the author.

rules and traditions that have been in the group for a long time. According to the informant, the will to preserve traditions might lack reflection, i.e., not understanding why the traditions are preserved. *Honor* is another value that is apparent among the informants. Honor refers to the reputation that the informant has through his or her family and through the acts that he or she does. One female informant described honor by referring to her actions being imbued with a meaning that has consequences or costs depending on how she acts or with whom she is with. Honor is related to gender roles. Sara described this by referring to traditional roles and expectations related to these. The informant refers to the difference between her and her friends concerning the roles and the traditions of Assyrians/Syrians.

Ja men alltså om vi ska ta ett exempel. Mina vänner nu som är tjugooett, tjugotvå, dem flesta är ju så här ja men nu ska vi ta examen, nu ska vi max tre fyra år gifta och säkert ha ett barn och jag blir så här va? Men varför? Alltså är det för att man, alltså det här säger man innan man ens har träffat någon, det är alltså på listan, på checklistan hur ditt liv ska se ut. Det är jättemycket så här saker man gör för att man måste för att man förväntas göra det. Om du är såhär trettio och ogift då är det verkligen synd om dig då är det hela släktens uppgift att hitta någon till dig och även om du älskar ditt liv och reser runt och verkligen känner att du håller på att upptäcka dig själv och leva livet. Du måste verkligen gifta dig. (skratt) [...] Nej jag håller inte till dem värderingarna. Alltså sådana här småsaker som att jag flyttade utomlands när jag var arton för jag ville plugga på engelska och det var så här va ska du verkligen lämna dina föräldrar tänk på och det är verkligen jättemycket skuld känslor som att våra liv är förknippade med våra föräldrars liv. Alltså som att allt vi gör. Man gifter sig för att dem ska bli glada. Man gör det här, man får barn för att dem kan vara lyckliga morföräldrar. Alltså det är jättemycket vi gör som är för andra och inte för oss. Man tänker inte på sig själv och vad man själv vill ha. Det handlar inte bara om giftermålet utan det är ju jättemånga som pluggar saker som dem egentligen inte vill plugga till exempel men bara för att deras föräldrar har sagt kom igen du kan bli läkare, kom igen du kan bli ingenjör. Man känner så mycket press och jag tycker det är synd bara att det ska vara så i 2013. (SARA)

#### 4.3.3.1.3. Community

Several informants experienced a sense of community with Assyrians/Syrians. A female informant named Awita, age 25, stated that the feeling referred to a social safety net that existed within the group. According to the informant, few elderly Assyrians/Syrians are left in retirement homes but are instead taken care of by their children. This sense of community might, according to the informant, be due to the fact that Assyrians/Syrians live as an ethnic minority in several countries as well as the fact that the group has survived a genocide during the early twentieth century. A male informant named Mikhael, age 29, described this sense of community further. The community is founded upon the activities and the traditions as well as the manner that these are celebrated in, i.e., often done together with family and relatives. Speaking the same language, behaving in a similar manner and having similar values also constitute this sense of community among Assyrians/Syrians. In contrast, Sara expressed a nuanced view concerning the sense of community and the perceived difference between her and other Assyrians/Syrians.

I: Du känner dig inte utanför den gruppen ((Syrianer och Assyrier)) för du inte håller med värderingarna? IP: Nej alltså jag känner mig inte utanför utan jag är en del av det samhället. Det är bara att jag tycker vissa saker är fel och vågar jag stå för och borde vi ändra på det men det är inte så att de har stött bort mig på grund av deras kultur eller nånting eller diskriminerat mig, inte så. Dem tycker nog bara att jag är konstig att jag tänker konstigt på vissa tillfällen. (SARA)

#### 4.3.3.1.4. Roots

Roots deal with aspects that the informants relate to. Such aspects are the history of the Assyrians/Syrians, the culture, the traditions, the language, the religion, family, relatives. This category is interesting since it provides indications on what the informant identifies with. In

several cases, roots refer to the history of the Assyrian/Syrian people. A male informant named Dawid, age 29, described what he associated with Assyrians, this being the history of his ancestors including inventions ascribed the Assyrian people throughout history. Dawid stated that he feels proud of this legacy. When he was asked about how he was able to experience this historical connection, he answered that some of the traditions and the language are still celebrated or used today. Similar answers are found among some of the other informants. A female informant named Walita, age 30, clarifies that she is proud of her history and believes it is special because it is *her* history. She also believes the history is important for the identification of Assyrians/Syrians since the group exists in several countries as an ethnic minority. A female informant named Hano, age 25, acknowledged the importance of her roots, i.e., language, traditions and culture, referring to her parents and that they shared their roots with her. She also believed that it was important for her to pass along her roots to her future children due to the importance of knowing the history of the Assyrians/Syrians. When she was asked whether the knowledge of the roots had consequences for her identification as an Assyrian, she answered that the lack of knowledge of her roots may result in her losing a part of her ethnicity.

#### 4.3.3.1.5. Contrast ethnic group

The category contrast ethnic group deals with the informants' experience of differing or distancing themselves from the Assyrian/Syrian group. Usually, it is a disagreement about the traditions or the values of the group that the informant distances him- or herself from. For several informants, there is a difference in values and attitudes among the generations, of. In the focus group interview, the informants were asked what characterizes the notion of being Swedish. One of the answers was the difference between the generation of the informants' and the older generations among Assyrians/Syrians. This difference was characterized by a different way of thinking where the younger generation, i.e., the informants, described themselves as more open towards discussion and reflection on domestic issues, such as homosexuality, while the older generation was described as not as open to discussions on similar issues. The informants believe that this difference is due to the different contexts of upbringing between the generations the informants ascribe this openness towards discussion and reflection as an influence from the Swedish culture. One of the informants reflected on the difference between herself and her cousins who she described as not as open as herself. She assigned this difference to the freedom of speech in Sweden. Sara described in the following statement her reflections on her opinions and her questioning of the values among Assyrians/Syrians. She felt as a bad person because she questioned those values but that she found *her* way in due time.

Jag fick bolla med idéer och med tankar och jag vågade för förut var det tabu mellan mig och mig själv också men vad fan A sluta nu alltså du kan inte, varför skulle du ifrågasätta det, varför skulle du kritisera det, det går ändå inte att ändra på det. Nu känns det så här att tycker man nånting så ska man verkligen stå för det. [...] Ja men man känner sig dålig som person om man ska säga så här om man såg sig själv som en jättebra kristen och man bad varje kväll och helt plötsligt ja men jaha gud är inte heller så snäll i vissa situationer. Man fick dåligt samveten men det gäller att komma över den. Den nivån. Det finns en linje där man alltid känner, där man är tveksam. Ska jag verkligen så här go over to the other side eller stanna här och vara som alla andra? Men vad är det som är rätt? Men tänk om dem här har rätt och jag måste bara anpassa mig lite mer och sen går man över eller så stannar man där. Jag tror att alla har varit där i den fasen att man ifrågasätter så här även mellan sig och sig själv är det rätt eller fel. (SARA)

Sara described how certain norms were not compatible with her own worldview. These norms referred to how she should live her life and what is important to accomplish in life. Though she did not show an open dislike towards these norms, she distanced herself from the attitudes by

choosing to live life in her own way. At the same time, Sara has a respect for the norms as she does not wish to openly confront them. Some norms seem to be more serious than others. For an example, it is not allowed for Sara to date whoever she wants and she needs to follow certain procedures and requirements, i.e., her partner needs to have an education and be of the same religious creed.

Adam was asked if there was something particular that makes the feeling of being Swedish more present. He answered that when he visits his relatives in Syria, he is treated differently resulting in that he feels more Swedish. His relatives would react, during these occasions, on his body language. He also stated that he can experience himself more Swedish when he discusses with his brother issues like gender equality. This is also present with among other informants. Mikhael described the difference between him and his relatives abroad. He stated that there is a difference, i.e., he is an Assyrian from Sweden that has different values and attitudes, e.g., an individualistic way of living, than his relatives. .

#### 4.3.3.2. Religiosity

The theme *Religiosity* consists of the categories: self-perception religious/spiritual, self-perception religious practice; and institution. The included codes are: interrelated, separation, spiritual, lack of interest, immerse, reflection, lack of comprehension, celebration, traditional, meeting place, representative, and foundation.

##### 4.3.3.2.1. Self-perception religious/spiritual

As in the quantitative phase the informants were asked similar questions concerning the self-perception of being religious/spiritual. However, in comparison to the quantitative phase, the informants were also asked *why* they perceived themselves to be religious/spiritual. *Self-perception as religious/spiritual* was investigated by asking the informants to rate in what degree they perceived themselves to be religious/spiritual. Answers ranged from scores 1-4, i.e., *not at all* to *very much* (M = 2.58, SD = 0.64, n = 13). In the quantitative phase, participants scored M = 2.74, SD = 0.77, n = 235).

Awita who rated herself as not very much religious/spiritual (2), stated that she had distanced herself from religion since she felt that the messages and traditions had no relevance to her. Still, she celebrates Christmas and Easter but for a traditional reason. This view was quite common among the informants. A female informant from the focus group named Khannah, age 20, who rated herself as very religious/spiritual (4), which was above the mean score (2.58), discussed the importance of religion in relation to her identity as a Syrian. According to her, the term Syrian is directly equated with being a Christian. This is partly explained by the relationship that Syrians have with the Syriac Orthodox Church, deriving their name, *Syrian*, from the church, while the church has also played a vital role in the diaspora and in the history of the people. However, Khannah also stated that not all Syrians see this connection between their religion and their identification as Syrians, i.e., a lesser frequency in attending Mass. The informant rated her degree of Mass attendance as several times a week.

I: Har religionen någon betydelse för att vara syrian? KHANNAH: Ja men definitivt det finns ju inga syrianer som inte är kristna. Alltså man förknippar direkt med syrianer med att man är kristna. Som om jag hör att en person säger att jag är syrian då vet jag att den personen är kristen. Jag kan inte komma med en följdfråga kristen eller muslim så det har definitivt en anknytning och utöver det mycket, mycket. Våra rika kyrkoarv, kyrkohistoria. Man drar på sig allt det där när man säger syrian alltså när man hör ordet syrian så tänker man hur mycket som helst vi kan bolla tankarna fram tills imorgon kanske inte vara klara, det är mycket. [...] Vissa syrianer inte ens kommer till kyrkan, inte ens är aktiva, och inte ens är troende. Jag dömer inte nån men



man ser ju det och så beskriver dem sig själva med kristna syrian och det låter inte rätt i mina öron i alla fall så att man ska vara försiktig med det också när man säger syrian försöker förknippa två olika bilder etnicitet och religion. (KHANNAH in FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW)

Some of the informants described a more distanced identification with the religion and the church. Mikhael, who rated himself as not very much religious/spiritual (2), outlined how religion had affected him and his relationship towards it. According to him, religion was more about values rather than the sacred. He has inherited these values though he is not religious. This is because he does not feel a genuine trust towards religion or the church which he believes is due to his childhood and him never being able to connect to either of these.

#### 4.3.3.2.2. Self-perception religious practice

Leaving self-perception as religious/spiritual, I continue to the informants' degree of engaging in religious practice. *Religious participation* was measured by asking informants how often they attended Mass excluding visits to funerals, weddings and baptism. The answers were provided in the form of scores which ranged from 1-7, i.e., *practically never/never* to *several times a week* (M = 4.33, SD = 1.18, n = 13). In the quantitative phase, the participants scored (M = 4.70, SD = 1.42, n = 238).

A majority of the informants rated their degree of Mass attendance to certain holidays. A minority of the informants stated that they attended Mass in a greater frequency where one individual attended Mass several times a week. Some of the informants stated that the language difficulties, i.e., not understanding Mass, affected their frequency of attendance. Not understanding Mass resulted in perceptions of Mass as boring or that the informant experienced Mass as lengthy. Some of the informants described how they had come to distance themselves from the preaching since the informants did not agree with the preaching. However, some of the informants maintained a meaningful relationship towards Mass. Walita, who rated her attendance at Mass to certain holidays (4), stated that there is an emotional connection to Mass that she experienced as something positive. This emotional connection is related to her experience of Mass and choir singing at church from an early age. She stated that this emotional connection has become apparent for her in later years, possibly because she started to reflect on her religion and her belief. Khannah, who rated her degree of Mass attendance to several times a week (7), which was above the mean score (4.33), described her feelings and experiences of attending Mass. For her, Mass seemed to play an important part in her life. She referred to Mass as a life in itself, a mystery that she celebrates. When she celebrates Mass, she takes it with her during the remainder of the week. Khannah stated that the communion gives her strength and protection.

Gudstjänst för mig är ett liv i sig. Alltså när jag firar gudstjänsten då är det ett mysterium jag firar. Alltså man är ju inte värdig att fira det mysteriet som sker på plats och det förstår inte människor och att vad det har för anknytning till mig det är ett liv i sig och det tar jag med mig hela min vecka säg att jag firar gudstjänsten igår det tar jag med mig under hela veckan. Det blir som mitt skydd och min styrka genom hela veckan just för att jag vet att när jag tog emot Jesus kropp och blod att jag är frälst och fri från mina synder även om jag vet att jag syndar minuten efter det att man tog det men att blir förlåten för sina synder är ett skydd och styrka och glädje och fri. (KHANNAH in FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW)

The reason for attending Mass might not be one reason alone. A male informant, Dawid, age 29, who rated his degree of attending Mass as once every month (5), described his relation to Mass. There appeared to be two different reasons for attending Mass. The first reason was to achieve a piece of mind and the other reason was traditional and related to certain holidays where family and relatives got-together. According to Dawid, attending Mass, at least at certain holidays, is a



deeply imbedded value as he stated that he would attend Mass even if he didn't have a similar relationship with his family and his relatives. When asked about why he did not attend Mass more frequently, Dawid answered that he did not live in the vicinity of the church where he and his parents used to visit. Hano rated her degree of Mass attendance as less often (2) and her self-perception as religious/spiritual as not very much (2). Both ratings were below the mean scores (4.33) and (2.58). Hano, described her feelings toward Mass. She never felt an interest towards the church. She had distanced herself and she had not put in an effort to learn more about the church until recently where she had felt a need to understand from the church. Her choice to distance herself might be explained by the opinion she holds of the church that she expresses in the following quote.

I: Hur kommer det sig att du känner dig ganska lite? IP: För att jag har nog inte intresserat mig eller engagerat mig i det så mycket just därför tror jag. I: Aldrig någonsin i ditt liv? IP: Jo men jag har bara inte ansträngt mig mer, inte ansträngt mig för att vilja förstå eller vilja bli andlig. [...] I: Hur kommer det sig? IP: Alltså under lång tid så har jag varit anti folket som går till kyrkan för jag ansåg att det där inte var Gud eller Jesus ville att vi skulle göra men istället för att distansera mig från dem så valde jag att inte fördjupa mig eller lära mig vad som verkligen var skrivet. Det är väl först nu som jag kom igen nu om du ska ha den där åsikten måste du ändå förstå. [...] IP: Ett ställe en plats där människor samlas för att dela religiösa upplevelser eller vända sig till någon. Det är så mycket bland, det är så mycket bland våra kyrkor och vårt folk det är inte så mycket religiös längre utan det är mer pengar och makt vem som står bakom kyrkan och att man tömmer församlingen på pengar för att det ska gå i ens egna ficka. Det är synd att det har blivit så. (HANO)

#### 4.3.3.2.3. Institution

The current category is concerned with the church and its role in relation to tradition, culture and its role as a social institution. The church refers to the Syriac Orthodox Church. The church has acted as a social institution that has represented the Assyrian/Syrian people throughout history and during the ongoing diaspora. At the same time, the Syriac Orthodox Church is a meeting place for Assyrians/Syrians, especially at certain holidays where family and relatives go to church and get-together for celebration. The church has even played an important role for the identity of some of the informants by being a part of the history of the Assyrian/Syrian people. In the focus group, Yusef and Khannah described the role of the Syriac Orthodox Church. They mentioned the church, its priests and its bishops, as a foundation to turn to when problems turned up. When asked why they turned to their priests and bishops and why the informants had such a respect for them, a female informant answered that the patriarch is seen as their president and the church is like a country for Syrians which they, in turn identified with. The church is also a bearer of tradition and religion which is apparent according to Awita who outlined her relationship to the church and what role it had for her. Awita reflected on the duality of the church being a religious institution and a traditional institution, a keeper of traditions. While she seemed to distance herself from some parts of the religious institution, she acknowledged other parts as well as the traditional roles that involve weddings, baptisms and funerals which she admitted she wanted to take part of.

#### 4.3.3.3. Discrimination and Prejudice

The following theme describes the experiences of the interviewee concerning discrimination and the degree of experienced discrimination not only in present time but also during childhood and adolescence. The current theme also includes methods that are applied by the interviewee in order to deal with the experience of perceived discrimination.

#### 4.3.3.3.1. Perceived discrimination

I will start by presenting the mean score of the informants regarding the degree of perceived discrimination. Scores ranged from 1-4, i.e., *never* to *often* ( $M = 1.75$ ,  $SD = 0.43$ ,  $n = 13$ ). *Perceived discrimination* was measured by asking the informants if they had experienced being discriminated against in Sweden for being Assyrian/Syrian. In the quantitative phase, the participants scored ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ,  $n = 238$ ). There is a small degree of experienced discrimination due to the informants being Assyrian/Syrian where most of the informants had experienced that type of discrimination pretty seldom while others had never experienced it. Neither had the informants experienced discrimination due to the informants having an immigrant background except for a few informants who, through a slight increase, went from *never* to *pretty seldom*. Still being at a lesser degree, some of the informants stated that discrimination is a matter of perception, of what oneself perceives as discrimination. This might explain why the informants did not report a higher degree of perceived discrimination simply because they did not identify certain acts as of a discriminatory nature.

Even though the informants rated their degree of perceived discrimination as low, they still had experience of discrimination and prejudice. What constitutes a discriminatory act is not obvious to the informants. Some of the informants believe that in situations where they have experienced discrimination, they might have overreacted to these situations. When asking an informant if he had experienced discrimination and if so, what type of discrimination it was that he had experienced. After briefly providing me with an account, he was asked what it was that he thought the act of discrimination was due to. In contrast, he believes that he has not been a victim of discrimination. Rather, it is he that has over-interpreted the situations into acts of discrimination. It was apparent that while not all informants had experienced discrimination, most had experienced prejudice, i.e., stereotypes regarding immigrants and/or Assyrian/Syrian in Sweden. In the focus group interview, the participating informants, who all rated their degree of experienced discrimination as pretty seldom, described their perception of being seen as an immigrant in Sweden despite being born in the country. Their experiences involved physical appearance and language where they were judged either as a Swede or as an immigrant based on these two aspects. Perhaps this is best illustrated with Mikhael, who rated his experience of perceived discrimination as less often (2), mean score for the informants were 1.75. He describes his experience of being a part of the Swedish society while at the same time being differentiated by Swedes.

IP: För att jag känner mig som en del av det svenska samhället men och det betyder, det innebär att jag känner mig likvärdigt människovärde som alla svenskar, jag har rätt till i princip samma förmåner som andra svenskar, jag känner mig väldigt välkommen här, jag känner mig som en del av samhället men när det gäller hur man betraktas som andra så känns det som att man har en annan etnisk bakgrund liksom om det är andra generations av vad det nu än är liksom. [...] Om du går på en fest hos någon då kommer du till deras mark och även om du får äta och dricka med alla och dansa, det är ingen som är skeptisk mot dig eller ser dig som sämre eller bättre men man kan känna av att man fortfarande inte är samma som andra. Det finns nån skillnad. Och det är väl lite så att trots att man är född här så har vi samma förmåner som har tillträde till samma arenor visst det kan vara diskriminering, visst, det finns men den har jag inte känt av så mycket utan det är väl främst, det finns en skillnad och det är väl lite så här den här festen, att när man kommer dit, man får göra precis som alla andra och man kan sova där också. Man dansar, man äter, man är välkommen dit, man har fått en inbjudan men det finns ändå skillnad och det är inte samma som dem andra. (MIKHAEL)

#### 4.3.3.3.2. Appearance

The category appearance deals with the physical appearance of the informants and how this, according to themselves, affect the relationship towards society and to those who have a typical

Swedish appearance, i.e., blond hair and light skin. The physical appearance of the informants seem to be a common aspect with Assyrians/Syrians that differentiates them from the Swedish society and obstructs the informants to be perceived as native Swedes. For some of the informants, their appearance summons questions from people they meet; e.g., *where* he or she is from. The question is a differentiation made of the informant by the other as the informant is perceived to have been born outside of Sweden due to his or her physical appearance. Hano, who rated herself as pretty much (3) on the first item concerning Swedes perception, and not very much (2) on the second item regarding her own perception, described how her name and how her appearance had an effect on her interaction with people she has not met before, i.e., being differentiated because of her name and her physical appearance. Awita described her feelings of being asked repeatedly of where she was from. She believed that particular question to be a questioning of her identity as a Swede. When asked if it was a justified question, she answered that it was not since she believed it was connected to her appearance. Appearance, according to Awita, was not related to a particular nationality. This resulted in her feeling frustrated and sometimes angry when she was asked that question. According to her, nationality is about among other things who you are, where you were born, and where you live.

#### 4.3.3.3.3. Dealing with discrimination

The category dealing with discrimination refers to how the informants handle or might handle any experienced discrimination. The category also includes feelings related to how the informants react to discrimination. Some informants reacted by feeling angry and disappointed while also standing up for themselves by saying that it is not accepted. Others can accept the discrimination, or at least understand it, referring to the person who acted discriminatory that he or she have had bad experiences of individuals with an immigrant background. The informants tried sometimes to compensate for the perceived discrimination by increasing their effort at work and convincing the persecutor that he or she was wrong. Mikhael described the effect of discrimination that he had experienced. The experienced affected his belief that he was a part of the Swedish population. It did not, however, affect his perception of his place in the Swedish society.

IP: Och vilken påverkan det fått på mig? Alltså negativ absolut och att det i sin tur förstärker den här, vad ska man säga, alieneringen alltså att man inte känner sig som att man hör hemma. [...] Inte i det svenska samhället, i den svenska befolkningen liksom att man är svensk. Främst det kanske. I vissa fall, i extrema fall, kan man känna sig ovälkommen också men då gör man ju själv fel som generaliserar den specifika individen alla svenskar. Så att i första hand att man inte, att man blir påmind om att jag inte är en del av den här befolkningen inte så mycket i samhället i sig. (MIKHAEL)

#### 4.3.3.4. Swedish Identification

The current theme is focused upon the informant's perception of being a part of the Swedish society and the perception of whether Swedes see the informant as a part of the Swedish society. The current theme also includes the degree of these perceptions as well as the physical appearance and its impact on the self-perceptions of the informants.

##### 4.3.3.4.1. Self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society

The current category is focused on the experienced degree of being a part of the Swedish society and the aspects that characterize this experience. The degree of the self-perception as a part of the Swedish society was measured with two items. The scores for both of the items ranged from 1-4, i.e., *not at all* to *very much*. The first item concerned the informants belief of the degree that Swedes perceive the informants as a part of the Swedish society ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ,  $n = 13$ ).

The second item concerned the informants own perception of themselves to be a part of the Swedish society ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ,  $n = 13$ ). In the quantitative phase, the participants scored ( $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ,  $n = 237$ ) on the first measure. On the second measure, the participants scored ( $M = 2.88$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ,  $n = 240$ ). A majority of the informants rated their perception of Swedes perception of them as a part of the Swedish society as pretty much while one informant rated it to very much. Some of the informants, however, rated this perception as not very much. When asked about in what degree *they* perceived themselves to be a part of the Swedish society, half of the informants answered very much while others answered pretty much. Two of the informants answered not very much. For some of the informants, there seemed to be a choice or a way to moderate how much you choose to be a part of the Swedish society. Being fully assimilated into society was not an obvious choice since some of the informants referred to an unwillingness of being Swedish-fied (*försvenskad*), i.e., fully assimilated. Such a process was associated with fears of losing one's inherited culture. Because of this fear, some of the informants had consciously taken a step away from assimilation in order to create a balance between their own inherited culture and the Swedish culture. Awita, who rated herself as pretty much (3) on both of the items, described her attitude towards integration in relation to her ethnicity. Interestingly, she argued that there needed to exist a motivation in order to be able to integrate with society while at the same time one should not give up one's roots and ethnicity. When referring to herself, she stated that she had taken the better of two cultures and made the two into her own culture. A similar attitude can be seen with, Adam, who rated himself as pretty much (3) on both of the items Adam described his relation to the Swedish society stating that he had a responsibility towards society since it had helped him by providing an education and the necessities for establishing himself. Adam believed that integration revolved around how you behaved and how you perceived yourself. At the same time, he referred to his assimilation as not complete and that this was because he had chosen not to go all the way due to a worry that his language and his history might diminish in the future as a result of the assimilation. Sara states that she had not integrated into the Swedish society until now. Sara, who rated herself as not very much (2) on both of the items, which was below the mean scores of both of the measures, outlined her experience of integrating into the Swedish society. Being born and raised in Syria, moving to Sweden just before adolescence, and spending a couple of years to study abroad had left her feeling that she was perceived as not a very much part of the Swedish society. Now, she felt that she had an opportunity to learn how Swedes are. She referred to Södertälje, i.e., her place of living, as somewhat special in the manner that there are signs in Arabic and that some of the inhabitants did not need to learn Swedish since they are able to get by with other languages.

I och med att jag pluggat utomlands också jag vart borta i tre år. Jag är precis tillbaka och det känns som att jag måste nu jobba mig in i svenska samhället alltså vi har aldrig så här jobbat jag har pluggat jag har läst fram till gymnasiet gick jag i Södertälje det var främst syrianer, jag hade syrianska vänner, jag pratade arabiska hemma så det är nu jag ska börja. Jag har börjat jobba med svenskar och därför får vara del av det svenska samhället på det sättet alltså. [...] Fram till gymnasiet bodde jag i Södertälje och där kan man inte känna sig som en del av det svenska samhället för det känns som en del av sig själv och sen flyttade jag till [...] och jag kom just tillbaka och sen har jag under sommaren varit borta i [...] så det är verkligen nu när jag börjat jobba eller fått praktik här på S. M. där jag känner mig att jag börjar veta mer hur svenskar lever vad dem gör. Förut var det ju mest vad man hörde eller vad man trodde. Det var mycket så här ja men svenskar dricker hela tiden men det gör dem ju inte. Det är ju nu man känner sig att det är ju när man jobbar som man verkligen kommer in i det svenska samhället. (SARA)

In contrast, Natan, who rated himself as very much (4) on both of the measures, which was greater than the mean scores for both of the measures, described his experience of being a part of the Swedish society? He referred to himself as an example of a second generation immigrant that had been successfully integrated into the Swedish society. In addition, Natan referred to his behavior and his ability to speak the language as beneficial aspects to his identification. Natan noted that he had spent his whole life in Sweden and that he did not know of anything else.

IP: Ja. Jag är väl ett exempel på hur nån andra generationens invandrare har integrerats i det svenska samhället. Jag pratar bra svenska. Jag har ju blivit misstagen för att vara svensk ibland också på grund av mitt tal, de har inte märkt på mitt uttal eller nånting att jag är utlänning eller har utländsk härkomst. [...] IP: Jag tycker personligen att jag kan vara ganska svensk i mitt beteende liksom. Jag är, vad ska jag säga, jag klagat inte utan jag går hem och skriver Facebook-status och likar den istället. Liksom det är den där står i kö och tycker att det ska vara lite byråkratiskt så jag tror just att jag har den där mentaliteten också när jag pratar med folk muntligen [...] antingen att dem ser mig som mer svensk eller att dem, jag vet inte. Men det är väl den mentaliteten gör väl en stor del, det är väl något undermedvetet. Och jag kan inte märka att någon bytt åsikt om det. [...] Jag har bott i Sverige hela mitt liv. Jag känner inte till något annat om man säger så. Jag bor här. Jag pratar språket. Jag är svensk helt enkelt. Det är liksom så jag ser på mig själv. (NATAN)

#### 4.3.3.4.2. Contrast Swedish group

The category contrast Swedish group involves the experience of the informants concerning their perceived differentiation from Swedes or the Swedish culture. This can refer to embracing one's own culture, ethnicity or just living in accordance with one's heritage, leaving out the option of assimilation. However, as is pointed out by Adam, who highlighted that it was not obvious that you were different or differentiated from the Swedish culture because you were an Assyrian; it could also be because you were an immigrant. There was a chance of differentiating or being differentiated. This differentiation was both intended and not intended among the informants. Being different from Swedes and the Swedish culture could be due to the informants' inherited culture and the values or it could be because of an active choice taken by the informants in order to differentiate themselves from the Swedish culture. Dawid exemplified by describing the sense of community that he, and other informants, believed to be important to Assyrians. He compared this sense of community among Swedes and Assyrians/Syrians, i.e., taking care of the elderly in contrast to Swedish families where the elderly were left in retirement homes. Another male informant, Petros, differentiated himself, not necessarily consciously, by interacting with the Assyrian culture and embracing its particularities while at the same time acknowledging its difference from the Swedish culture and his Swedish friends' way of spending holidays. This contrast not only differentiated him from the Swedish culture but it enhanced his own culture, making it feel particular Assyrian. Petros reflected on his answer when asked about how much he thinks that Swedes perceive him as a part of the Swedish society, answering pretty much. He referred to him making it clear for Swedes that he was Assyrian and that he was not a very much part of the Swedish society.

#### 4.3.3.5. Language

The theme *Language* is focused on the interviewee's first language, and in what degree the interviewee uses it. The theme also includes a sense of belonging that is related to the first language of the interviewee and the use of the language in particular situations or contexts, e.g., with family or at church at particular holidays. The informants in the qualitative phase provided answers for two measures of language usage. Answers were provided in scores ranging from 1-4, i.e., *seldom or never* to *daily*. The two measures were: 1) *how often do you talk Suryoyo with your friends and acquaintances* (M = 3.42, SD = 0.64, n = 13) and 2) *how often do you talk*



*Suryoyo with your family and your relatives* (M = 3.58, SD = 0.49, n = 13). In the quantitative phase, the participants scored (M = 3.19, SD = 1.15, n = 236) on the measure of *how often do you talk Suryoyo with your friends and acquaintances* and (M = 3.42, SD = 1.10, n = 236) and on the measure of *how often you do you talk Suryoyo with your family and your relatives*.

#### 4.3.3.5.1. Language identification

The category language identification is focused upon the identification that the informants' ascribe to their first language. Though not all informants can recognize such an identification, those who do, describe the language in a positive wording. Hano, who rated her degree of using her first language, i.e., Assyrian, with friends as sometime in a week, and with family as daily, stated that it felt like home. When she heard the language, even though it was strangers speaking it, she experienced a sense of comfort and joy. Mikhael, who rated his degree of using his first language, i.e., Assyrian, with friends as sometime in a week (3), and with family as sometime in a week (3), mentioned that the language had a strong history. He believed it was important to speak the language since it influenced the way you interacted with others. The language was important because it was also a part of his roots; it made him feel Assyrian as he used it. He also mentioned the importance of maintaining the language since it had been with the Assyrian people for a long time that it was a part of group. Language identification could also have a negative effect as some of the informants expressed a frustration or shame if they lacked the ability to speak the language sufficiently. This was enhanced additionally when others pointed out this lack of ability. In the focus group, the informants described the importance of their language, i.e., Arabic, as well as the feelings associated with not being able to speak it adequately. Yusef and Bareil rated their degree of using their first language with their friends as daily (4) while their rating on degree with family differed where Yusef had rated his degree as daily (4) and Bareil as sometime in a week (3). Besides from shame, Bareil mentioned feeling excluded from others, not by other people, but by himself for not being able to speak the language adequately. Bareil referred to his lack of knowledge as losing a bit of his culture since the language was a part of it.

IP 1: Jag kan ju tillägga apropå språket som K sa. Som nu till exempel, jag pratar arabiska men skulle du fråga mig för sju åtta år sen eller skulle du be mig prata arabiska så skulle jag ha jättesvårt och du vet att formulera mig eller förstå mig vad någon annan säger så jag har jag tagit till mig det på senare år har blivit. Så jag vet att känna, att dels känna sig du vet som att förlora ett språk som att tappa lite utav din kultur, jag menar att du kände dig lite, lite utanför. Det är ingen som får dig att känna dig så utan man känner sig så kanske själv. IP 2: Alltså ja, jag kan, jag skulle inte säga att jag kan men jag kan språket men jag är väldigt dålig på det. [...] Och det gör att det ibland när nån pratar med någon och inte förstår så sitter man där och känner sig okej det borde jag förstå det är nästan så att man skäms. [...] Man skäms för att säga att man inte förstår. Men när en människa pratar arabiska jag kan inte svara på honom så jag blir tvungen att säga jag förstår inte och då börjar dem du borde kunna det här och då skäms man ännu mer. Så att. Man blir lite bekväm också när man inte blir tvungen att prata sitt språk. (YUSEF and BAREIL in FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW)

#### 4.3.3.6. Cultural Learning

The theme cultural learning is focused on the process of the individual learning one or several culture(s). The theme includes information of the informants' experience of religion, language and identification during childhood and adolescence. Categories that are included in the theme are: childhood identification, i.e., the informant's experience during childhood of what he or she identified with; childhood language, i.e., the experience and use of language during childhood including what language; childhood experience of religion, i.e., the experience and relation to religion during childhood; adolescent identification, i.e., the experience during adolescence of

what the individual identified with; and adolescent experience of religion; the informant's experience and relation to religion during adolescence.

#### 4.3.3.6.1. Childhood Identification

Related to the informants' self-perception of their ethnic identification is how they identified themselves during their childhood. For most of the informants, there seem to be an identification taken for granted, meaning that the informants did not at the time reflect upon their identification. Dawid described his identification during childhood as obvious, i.e., he was Assyrian. At the same time he did not have a definition of the term, leading to him using both Assyrian and Syrian when describing in his childhood who he was. He arrived at a definition in later years by engaging frequently in a search for an answer by taking part in activities of the ethnic community and immersing himself in literature dealing with the Assyrian term. Still, despite the lack of a definition during childhood, he knew what he belonged to and what he was a part of. For most of the informants who were born and raised in Sweden, the same can be said of their identification with the Swedish culture or the term *Swedish*. Walita, age 30, described that it was obvious that she was Swedish while she was at the same time Assyrian-Syrian. Her parents had told her this and what it meant during childhood. These memories of how the informants identified themselves ranged from their very first memory to adolescence. During their adolescence years, some of the informants came to question and reflect on their identification. In the focus group interview, Khannah stated that she was born in Sweden but that she was raised in Syria. During her childhood, she identified herself as a Christian. When she moved to Sweden, at early adolescence, she started to identify herself as a Syrian since she associated the term Syrian with who she was and what religion she belonged to.

Hur jag som liten brukade identifierade mig när jag brukade säga när jag var i Libanon, jag brukade säga kristen. Jag brukade inte identifiera mig som syrian men det kände jag här i Sverige att jag måste identifiera mig som syrian för det förknippade med vem jag är och vilken religion jag tillhör men när jag var liten och bodde i Libanon så brukade jag alltid säga att jag är kristen. Jag brukade inte säga syrian för just hela området där jag bodde och där jag hade mina släktingar alla var kristna och man kände sig inte utanför på nåt sätt men här känner man en viss skillnad när man träffar katoliker, maroniter. Man känner en skillnad just för att syrianer är, dem är många här i Sverige så att nej det har ändrats sen jag var liten. (KHANNAH in FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW)

A similar point of view is told by Sara who was born and raised in Syria. During her childhood in Syria, she was more inclined to identify herself as a Christian and as an Arab since it was in accordance with whom she socialized with and what she was taught in school. Though later in life, as she moved to Sweden, she never completely identified with the Assyrian-Syrian group. However, this identification became more apparent to her as she moved to Sweden. Regarding the parents of the informants, for some of the informants there was a direct involvement of the parents in the childhood identification through acts, e.g., telling stories about the history of the Assyrian people and by encouraging attendance at language classes that taught Assyrian/Syrian. Other informants could experience that their parents either encouraged by using Assyrian/Syrian at home or expecting that the informants answered in the same language. Awita referred to the emphasis that her parents put toward her and her siblings learning the language while other activities as participating in Sunday school and going away for summer camp was up to her and her siblings to decide. Petros described the indirect influence his father had on his identification as an Assyrian. His father had passed away when Petros was still at an early age. Despite this, Petros could remember that his father had sung Assyrian rhymes and that he emphasized the



importance of seeing and keeping in touch with relatives which led to frequent get-togethers. The language spoken with the relatives at these get-togethers was often Assyrian. When Petros father passed away the frequency of this interaction lessened which made Petros lose an arena to practice Assyrian. Natan described the influence of his parents, especially his father, for his childhood identification not only as an Assyrian but also as a Swede. The encouragement delivered by Natan's parents was through telling stories about why they celebrated some traditions or what it meant to be an Assyrian and the history of the Assyrian people. Natan and his siblings were also encouraged by their parents to be integrated and to interact with Swedes which was obvious to Natan since they lived in an area where a majority were Swedes.

#### 4.3.3.6.2. Childhood language

The category referred to as childhood language is focused on the language that the informants spoke during their childhood. More specifically, it involves what language the first language was that the informants learned and what language was spoken at home. The informants were also asked if there had been any change to what context they applied what language. For most of the informants there had been no change. Petros described his knowledge of the language which he learned during his childhood but which his knowledge of decreased after his father passed away when he was at an early age. He learned Swedish later when he started kindergarten. Swedish became the language which he used with his friends, even with Assyrians because some of his Assyrian friends spoke Arabian which Petros could not speak. The language Assyrian was for him confined to relatives and holidays but spread to other contexts during his adolescence years and later on.

#### 4.3.3.6.3. Childhood experience of religion

Childhood experience of religion deals with the informants' experience of religion during their childhood, what influence they experienced and how they reflected about their belief. The experiences range from personal beliefs to situations that they remember from an early age as they attended Mass. In general, there seems to have been a lack of understanding of the content of Mass while at the same time the memories of the informants are focused on the activities around Mass, e.g., playing with other children, engaging in church activities, and experiencing the atmosphere of Mass. While not necessarily being an inspiration of the informants' belief, the church could inspire to other things. Petros was asked during the interviews if the church had any part in nurturing the faith that he carries today. Petros answered that it had not. Rather, he associated the church with a fascination that he experienced as a child. This fascination was focused upon the large amount of people attending Mass, and the clothing of the priest. The awe that he described himself feeling came in later years and involved not only God but also the respect that he felt towards those who attended Mass. This respect required him to behave in a certain way when he attended Mass. For other informants, attending Mass was, despite the lack of understanding, a joyful event where the informants met friends and could play with each other afterwards. Regarding religious belief, Walita described her belief during childhood. She described it as free in a way that it was not forced upon her by her parents and that the belief itself was characterized by a warm feeling. She also described her belief as a comfort and a safety. In a similar manner, Mikhael described attending Mass as a happy and nice childhood experience that was characterized by a mystery since Mass differed from other contexts. This mystery was not present today. This absence might be explained by the informant that as a child he had a different perspective on reality.

I: Kommer du ihåg hur du upplevde gudstjänster när du var ett barn? IP: Det var kanske mer positivt då. [...] Jag kunde liksom, jag vet inte, jag hade liksom kunde sitta med, det var trevligare att sitta där och sen också det var en väldigt, väldigt mer lyckligare, mystisk, speciell miljö och befinna sig i för den skiljde sig väldigt mycket från övriga samhället och som barn upplevs det som väldigt speciellt på något sätt. (MIKHAEEL)

#### 4.3.3.6.4. Adolescent Identification

The category adolescent identification is related to the informants' self-perception of their identification during adolescence. Some of the informants started to during adolescence to question or reflect on their ethnic identification. For other informants, this reflection came later on when they were in their twenties. Along with the informants' reflection or question of their identification came a search by immersing themselves in literature or activities that might tell them more on their identification as Assyrian or Syrian. Adam, who was born and raised in Syria, described how he went from an identification as a Christian Arab to an identification as an Assyrian. This process involved being affected by the debate in Sweden of the terms Assyrian and Syrian. This influence resulted in an interest to understand each side's argument. Adam delved into the relevant history of the two sides of the conflict. According to the informant, the choice to identify with one side was not just a question of a term and a history but it was also a question of what felt right.

The result of this reflection was that some of the informants took a more firm hold on their identification which did not necessarily mean that it became a rigid hold, rather it became a flexible and/or relaxed hold. Walita outlined how she identified herself as Swedish-Assyrian during adolescence but that it was later on that she took a liking to her identification and found an appropriate distance to it. This liking and the distance to her identification was related to her not being able to conform to some of the traditions or the values, i.e., honor, that set up rules and limits for what was allowed for her to do during her childhood. The identification during adolescence was not easy. Sara told that she identified herself as a Syrian, i.e., as the nationality belonging to the country of Syria, in Swedish *syrier*. Because she came to Sweden at the beginning of adolescence, she had to take a preparatory class in order to learn the Swedish language. As she started school, her class was mostly made up of Syrians (the ethnicity, in Swedish *syrian*), but despite her parents being Syrian and Chaldean, she identified herself with the nationality of Syria since she could not speak the language as her Syrian classmates in Sweden could. It was not until high school that she felt more included when she met other Syrians that were not able to speak the language.

I: Så hur identifierade du dig själv som tonåring? IP: Alltså som en syrier. Jag visste ju att jag inte var arab men jag kände mig inte riktigt för när jag började i skolan. Jag hade gått förberedelseklass där jag fick lära mig svenska och sen fick jag börja i vanlig klass och då kände jag mig utanför även fastän jag hade en mamma som var syrian och en pappa som var kaldéer och liksom jag var tillhörde samma folk som de flesta i klassen men eftersom jag inte kunde syrianska och jag inte hade bott där det var så här under tonåren så jag såg mig ändå som syrier för det gör mycket att man talar samma språk. I: Så dem flesta i din klass var syrianer? IP: Ja. I nian, fram till nian i alla fall, och sen gymnasiet så gick jag engelsklinje där var det svenskar och syrianer också kristna från Irak som inte kunde syrianska eller assyriska men som tillhörde samma folkgrupp som mig. Där kände man sig lite mer inkluderad. (SARA)

Not all of the informants went through such a period of questioning or reflection of their identification. Natan described how he during adolescence was not questioned concerning his identification as a Swedish-Assyrian and that he did not reflect nor search for information on his identification until his mid-twenties when his interest increased concerning the history and the culture of the Assyrian people. He argued that most of his knowledge concerning his Assyrian

identification was received from his home where he learned about the culture and the history related to the Assyrian group.

#### 4.3.3.6.5. Adolescent experience of religion

The following category is concerned with the informants' experience of religion during adolescence. For some of the informants, there was still a lack of understanding concerning Mass and the content of it. While opportunities presented themselves for some of the informants to do some research in order to better understand their religion, others did not engage in such opportunities and started to decrease the frequency in which they would attend Mass. For some of the informants, there would be a period of research concerning one's religion but this would wait until their twenties. Mikhael described how he came in contact with other religious beliefs that were different from that of his own belief. This period was characterized by others questioning him about his belief which created a need for Mikhael to understand why he was a Christian. This was, according to Mikhael, a beginning to understand his religion. In a similar manner, Walita described her doubt about her spirituality and the process that she went through by questioning her belief and finally arriving at a point where she felt that she was able to create a space that could maintain unanswered questions. When referring to this period in her life, she referred to it as a way of growing up where not only her religious belief was questioned. It was a way of figuring out who she was.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

### 5.1. Introduction

The following chapter presents the theoretical analysis. The chapter is divided according to the sequential nature of the mixed-methods approach starting with the quantitative phase followed by the qualitative phase.

### 5.2. The Theoretical Framework in Relation to the Quantitative Phase

#### *The Theoretical Framework regarding the associations between variables*

The results indicated a medium, positive correlation between the self-perception of being religious/spiritual, Mass attendance and fasting where a greater degree of self-perception as religious/spiritual is associated with a greater degree of Mass attendance and fasting. The results of the analysis showed no statistically significant correlation between self-perception as religious/spiritual and self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian. Neither was there a statistically significant correlation between self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian and degree of religious participation, i.e., Mass attendance and/or fasting. From a perspective of *ego-identity* this is interesting since religion is important to ego-identity. The results indicate that there was no association between the religious and the ethnic identification. It is possible to explain the lack of association with that the participants do not experience themselves as religious or spiritual due to a discrepancy between their beliefs and their practice. While there is a degree of religious practice, the participants might not experience themselves as religious or spiritual to a greater degree. A religious and/or spiritual belief was present where 40 % of the participants (N = 234) stated that they believe in a personal god, 16 % stated that they believed in a spirit or a life force, 38 % of the participants stated that they believed in a personal god as well as a spirit or life force. 3 % of the participants stated that they did not believe in a personal god or a spirit/life force while 8 % of the participants stated that they did not know what to believe in. There was a small, positive correlation between the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian and the self-perception of the degree that Swedes perceive the participant to be a part of the Swedish society as well as the participants own perception of the degree he or she is part of the Swedish society. According to Erikson and Oshana, this might be explained by a high successful exploration in one identification might entail a greater exploration with other identifications. In addition, it is possible to argue that both of the cultures, Assyrian/Syrian and Swedish, might be present with the participants from an early age and as such, a part of the enculturation process.

It is possible to infer that religion have an important role to the participants due to the majority of them believing in either a personal god, a spirit or a life force or both. This could be explained by religion as a part of the ethnic ethos, i.e., the social context or the cultural organization of the interdependence between the participants. This may indicate that religion has been a part of the participants' childhood. It is apparent that rituals are present in the lives of the participants and that they fast and attend Mass. It is however unclear what role these rituals have in relation to ego-identity or ritualization.

Both Oshana and Erikson emphasize the importance of language in relation to the identity of the individual. It is therefore interesting to see that there is a medium positive correlation between the self-perception of being Assyrian/Syrian and the degree of language usage. Language, besides from being a tool for communication, is also a ritual in the manner that it provides a strategy for

differentiation that is specific to the particular culture. Using a particular language in specific contexts might enhance the ability to differentiate the individual, consciously and unconsciously, from those that lack the necessary knowledge of the language. By being differentiated, it is possible for the individual to empower him- or herself and strengthen his or her ethnic identification as the individual becomes different from others, e.g., the Swedish population. This can explain why the degree of language usage is positively correlated with the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian. Language is also a historical heritage that is emphasized within the group to be preserved in order to keep tradition and history intact and pass it along to coming generations. The language is an important part of the ethnic ethos that is related to the informants' ethnic identification.

The results showed no statistically significant correlation between the measures of perceived discrimination and self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian. According to Rudmin, discrimination influences the consequences of acculturation. Also, Oshana states that discrimination impairs the ability to establish an identity since exploration is a key variable in the process of identity development. Thus, it is to some surprise to see that there is no association between the two measures. However, I propose that perceived discrimination does not influence the ethnic identification since discrimination is directed towards the perception of the individual as a part of the majority society, i.e., the Swedish society and population. The perceived discrimination has a greater association with the participants' perception of their part in the Swedish society and the participants' perception of what degree they believe Swedes perceive the participants to be a part of the Swedish society. The results confirmed this as there was a medium, negative correlation between perceived discrimination and self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society which meant that a greater degree of perceived discrimination was associated with a lesser degree self-perception as a part of the Swedish society.

The statistical analyses in the quantitative phase presented a mix of significant associations between variables that were of a small or a medium strength. The associations between the variables should be interpreted that there is a complex relationship between the variables that make out ego-identity while at the same time questioning previous believed associations between religion, self-perception of ethnicity and discrimination.

### ***Reflections regarding the differences between groups***

The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference concerning the mean score of Mass attendance where the youngest age group, group 1 (16-21 years) ( $M = 4.95$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ,  $n = 81$ ) had a higher degree than age group 2 (age 22-36 years) ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ,  $n = 77$ ). This difference might be because of the period that the participants might be in their life where the younger age group are at an exploration phase concerning their religious belief or practice and are still forming their identity. As a result, the younger group is engaging to a greater degree religious practice while also perceiving themselves to be religious/spiritual to a greater degree in comparison to the older age group who might have settled their identity exploration. Though the actual difference between the groups was small, the younger age group might engage to a greater degree in *processes of ritualization*. Considering the age of the participants of the first age group, their greater degree of attending Mass can be explained by their process of developing an identity that on the one hand settles that the participants are unique individuals while at the same time emphasizing a solidarity with a group's self-definitions, i.e., the Assyrian/Syrian group. The processes of ritualization aid this identification by differentiating the participants from others that are not engaging in similar practices, thus enhancing the uniqueness of the participants while at

the same time providing a connection to a group's self-definition, i.e., Christians from the Middle East. The increased degree of participation in Mass and fasting could also be explained by the participants' need for *communitas*, i.e., to create and experience a feel of community among individuals with similar backgrounds, ethnically and religiously. It could also be argued that because of their age, most of the participants in the first age group have not distanced themselves from their parents, e.g., moving away from home, and are therefore attending mass in a similar degree as their parents. The participants in the second age group are older and may have distanced themselves from their parents by moving away from home and by doing so, are more able to structure their own time, not prioritizing Mass attendance and fasting.

It is difficult to interpret gender differences since the chosen theories do not take such differences into consideration. Female engage in religious rituals to a greater degree than their male counterparts for various and different reasons.

### 5.3. The Theoretical Analysis of the Qualitative Data

#### 5.3.1. Introduction

The current section presents the theoretical analysis of the qualitative data. The presentation is structured according to the central themes from the interviews, i.e., religiosity, language, the self-perception as a part of the Swedish society, discrimination, and the self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian. The chapter starts with a section dedicated to the relation between the development of ego-identity and the process of cultural learning. This part is meant as a general introduction to the following sections that are focused on the themes.

#### 5.3.2. The Development of the Ego-Identity in Relation to the Process of Cultural Learning

According to Erikson, the ego-identity is a combination of the past and the future experiences of the individual and the society in which he or she lives in. During the process of the identity development, the individual synthesizes his or her childhood identification with present and future experiences as well as the expectations of society on the individual. The individual establishes a reciprocal relationship with society while maintaining a continuity. This is achieved by the individual projecting him- or herself imaginatively to the future by a possible occupation or career.

The informants are situated in a constant cultural development, i.e., enculturation and acculturation, where they themselves are changing in relation to the cultures. Enculturation is the process of first-culture acquisition or learning. Enculturation is constituted by socialization through natural processes such as imitation, schooling and law. It takes place during childhood and the process is active as long as the individual is in contact with his or her first learned culture. Acculturation is proposed by Rudmin to be defined as the process of second-culture acquisition or learning. This process does not necessarily involve culture change in relation to the individual's first-acquisitioned culture. Acculturation involves motivations, learning, changes and consequences. Motivations include cultural attitudes, ethnic identity, reaction to eustress and stress, and utility. Learning is constituted by information about the second culture, instructions, imitations of the second-culture contact, and learning by individuals who are competent in the second culture. Changes can be aggregated from the individual to the larger group, ranging from small groups such as families, to larger groups such as communities. These changes result in consequences for success, family, politics and creativity.

The development of ego-identity as well as the process of cultural learning face a critical stage during adolescence or the informant's adult years when the informants start to reflect and

question their identification. During this process, the informants go from an identification that has been taken for granted to an identification that is reflected on and chosen. The processes of the first and the second cultural learning are similar to each other. Both the Assyrian/Syrian and the Swedish culture are introduced at an early age and are natural parts of the identifications. The parents are important to the informants first and second cultural learning processes by introducing and emphasizing language, traditions, norms, values and terms related to the identifications. These processes are related to the life stages. Erikson proposes that the child and the parent share a special relationship through the numinous in infancy and the creation of a negative identity during early childhood as well as the generativity and passing along during adulthood where parents and adults pass along knowledge to coming generations. Learning the first culture is done by the parents teaching the informants their first language, taking them to Mass, encouraging them to participate in activities related to their ethnic community, and telling stories about their roots and their history as well as introducing the word Assyrian or Syrian. School can also play a part in the socialization by introducing cultural identifications.

While there is an emphasis within the Assyrian/Syrian group to preserve their culture, there is a loyalty towards their Swedish identification. This loyalty is a wish to be a part of the Swedish society in order to fulfill their obligations toward it and earn their civil rights. At the same time, some of the informants state that this is done with a reservation, with a fear of being assimilated and thus losing their Assyrian/Syrian identification. This is related to the costs and the risks of second-cultural acquisition. The informants are between the two cultures of the Assyrian/Syrian group and the Swedish group where balance is sought by the informants between the norms, the values, the beliefs, the traditions, and the behavior. The values and the norms of the different identifications come at times to clash with each other. Such clashes leave the informants to decide in what degree they relate to each identification. Erikson's concept of identity explains this further.

*Identity* has at least four connotations according to Erikson. These are: 1) a conscious feeling of being a separate and a unique individual; 2) a feeling of inner unity and continuity that also houses a relative insight of unconscious tendencies; 3) the wholeness that is achieved by the silence of the functions of the I; and 4) a feeling of deep solidarity with a group's self-definition and ideal that confirms the individual's own identity. The first and the fourth identity connotations are shown in the informants' position between their identification with the Assyrian/Syrian group and the Swedish group. This position is taken because of the informants' distance to each group while at the same time maintaining an identification with the groups. Holding such a position involves for most of the informants a balance to maintain between the two identifications while mixing the two with each other. This creates a feeling of being unique in relation to the two groups since the informants create a relationship to each group that is tailored according to the informants. At the same time, there is an identification with each group that the informants adhere to by engaging in traditions, rituals, norms and values. As such, the informants achieve an identification with a group's self-definition.

*Ritualization*, according to Erikson, provides a link between the ethos and the developing I. Ritualization, according to Bell, is a way of differentiation through cultural specific practices and empowerment. Ritual, through the body, interacts and shapes the social creation of reality. Bell describes ritual as a practice of shaping the body, i.e., the physical body is invested with a meaning that is linked to power relations. Cetrez states that for the immigrant individual, this meaning refers to the difference of the physical appearance. The physical body can through physical acts be related to symbols and rituals. Cetrez describes this by referring to acts such as



kissing the hand of a priest or of an older person, the different spaces of males and females in social gatherings, including the church. Such acts exemplify the connection between the physical body and the philosophy of life. Similar situations can be seen among the informants who ascribes a meaning to their physical appearance, i.e., a difference between them and the Swedish population. They engage in physical activities that differentiates them from the Swedish population such as greeting older persons by kissing the cheek or by using the first language when talking. Besides from strengthening the identification with the Assyrian/Syrian group, these acts concretize the informants' worldview and the values they have learned from their first culture.

Human beings establish and manipulate their differentiation in cultural specific strategies. The ritualization and the consequences of differentiation aids the individual to identify with a group's self-definition and as a unique individual. The reflection done by the informants of their Assyrian/Syrian identification was done in late adolescence or in their adult years. During this period of question and reflection, the informants sometime chose to immerse themselves in their Assyrian/Syrian identification by researching the history related to the Assyrian/Syrian group. This process can result in a standpoint by the informant of his or her Assyrian/Syrian identification and/or religious belief. Ritualization draws influence from the Assyrian/Syrian and the Swedish ethos. *Communitas* bear influence from ritualization. Through the procedures of ritualization, e.g., rituals such as attending Mass or speaking Swedish or Assyrian/Syrian in particular situations; the ethos is made into *communitas* by the informants. Each ethos is filled with things that the informant relates to the two groups, e.g., food, traditions, language, values and norms. When an informant, as an example, attends Mass, she or he is in contact with the Assyrian/Syrian ethos and conducts a ritualization to turn the ethos to a *communitas* that the informant is a part of. While this procedure empowers those who are involved in the ritualization, by strengthening an identification, it alienates those who do not participate. Ritualization is enabled through institutions and practices, i.e., the ethnic communities and the Syriac-Orthodox Church. *Communitas* is not just a sense of belonging that minimizes the threats of social alienation, *communitas* also provides concrete measures, not in a direct manner but in an indirect manner, such as social safety nets and senses of community where vulnerable individuals, i.e., the elderly, are taken care of by their families.

While rituals have the ability to overcome social alienation, they may also have the opposite effect. This occurs when the rituals are manipulated by those who are in power in order to create a sacredness around their privileged position. As a consequence, rituals lose their ability to be the bearer of *communitas* and the liminality associated with rituals. Several informants state that they have distanced themselves from the Syriac-Orthodox Church as a result of the priests and their preaching. The distance that some of the informants have towards the church is because of language difficulties and of the discrepancy between the values, the attitudes and the norms of the informants and the church. This discrepancy can also be related to Erikson and his theory of virtues and cohering principles. Erikson argues that it is the virtues and the cohering principles that are the connection that hold generations and institutions together. If these virtues and principles should be socially weakened, the informants may experience being blocked from pursuing an identification. The rituals related to the church may as a consequence lose their importance to the informants which as a result try to find other contexts for rituals, e.g., the Swedish Church, or the ethnic communities. The virtues and the principles of the Assyrian/Syrian group have, for some of the informants, been socially weakened resulting in a perceived obstacle toward the informants' ability to achieve an identification. This is related to the contrasts that the

informants experience toward their identifications and the distance they take in order to distance themselves from aspects associated with the group, i.e., traditions, norms, values. This is done in order to maintain an identification with the Assyrian/Syrian group.

#### 5.3.2.1. Religiosity

Religion, according to Erikson, is described as having an important role since it has the ability to explain complex issues of existence and connecting the history of the individual with the history of the Assyrian/Syrian group. Religion, or the Syriac-Orthodox Church, acts as a connection between the informants' history and the history of Assyrians/Syrians. According to some of the informants, this is achieved by Christianity, being closely related to the terms Assyrian and Syrian. The church introduces the informants to the traditions, the values and the norms of the ethnic ethos. The church also acts as a rendezvous for friends, family and relatives. The Assyrians/Syrians can engage, at such occasions, in discussions that are related to everyday life while some of the subjects have a specific adherence to the Assyrian/Syrian group, e.g., an Assyrian/Syrian author that has released a book, the situation for Assyrian/Syrians in Syria, particular music related to the Assyrian/Syrian group, and acquaintances within the group. This enhances the church as a bearer of cultural specific practices that aide the process of differentiation that the informants engage in. The church provides a context of values, norms, and traditions, which the informant forms an ethnic identification from. The church, whether as a religious or a traditional institution, has a central part in the enculturation process of the informants. The importance of the church is grounded in the childhood of the informants as they participated or joined their parents at Mass or other get-together at church. According to Erikson, religion acts as a traditional distributor of hope and trust by providing a general trust and a conception of what evil is. The individual receives new hope by engaging in common rituals, e.g., traditions, which characterizes the community that the individual belongs to and experiences trust towards. It is here, through the first life stage, i.e., infancy, which has hope as its fundamental strength that hope is nurtured by the faith of the parents in their actions being characterized by meaning. The child's experience of hope transforms to a mature trust that requires no evidence nor rational arguments. Religion introduces and lays the foundation of belief, tradition and culture with the informants. These are, for some of the informants, key aspects to the identification as an Assyrian/Syrian. By keeping these aspects active, the informants are integrating with their first culture. This is done for their own sake and for the sake of the larger group, i.e., the Assyrian/Syrian community. Some of the informants, as Assyrians/Syrians, feel a need to implement and maintain their traditions and their language in order to achieve a sense of security and continuity as a consequence of the perceived vulnerability of being an ethnic minority.

Religion, as in attending Mass, is a part of the informants' first cultural learning. Attending Mass, is present with all the informants during their childhood, their adolescence or their twenties. During adolescence, or later, some of the informants start to reflect on their religiosity or their religious belief. Some of them chose to delve deeper into their religious belief in order to understand it better and to find a way to believe despite doubt. Other informants chose to distance themselves from the Syriac-Orthodox Church or their religious belief.

Religion helps the individual to create and to maintain a feeling of being unique and separate either by providing a context for the informants' identification or by being an object that the informants compare to or differentiates from. The fourth connotation, i.e., the experience of deep solidarity with a group's self-definition, can be related to the religious identification of being a

Christian and that this, for some of the informants, is equaled to being an Assyrian or a Syrian. This is related to the role of the church as an institution that introduces to the informants the traditions, the values and the norms related to the Assyrian/Syrian ethos. For some of the informants, separating religion from the ethnicity and emphasizing their identification with their ethnicity, provided an opportunity of differentiation from a religious identification.

Attending Mass, contributes to the first cultural learning of the informants and the development of their ego-identity. The traditions, which are constituted by certain rituals, aid in the cultural learning through ritualization where *communitas* are created, i.e., evident in self-referrals such as *our* traditions, *our* history, *our* people. Religion can also be used as a cultural specific strategy for differentiation in relation to the Swedish identification. As some of the informants describe it, what they do during the holidays are different in comparison to what Swedes do. The church enables the informants to create *communitas* through their differentiation by participating in rituals. For some of the informants, this is achieved by strengthening a tradition that has been in the Assyrian/Syrian group for a long time that their ancestors also participated in. By engaging in the traditions, the informants relive and extend the history of the Assyrian/Syrian group as well as strengthening their ethnic identification not only toward the Swedish identification but also toward other ethnic groups, e.g., from the Middle East, where religion can be a distinct identification marker. The roots and the history are an important part of the informants' identification since they provide a historical context to who the informants are, where they are from, what they have done and so on,. The roots and history are also important to the larger group of Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden by connecting the group to a common, shared history that constitutes a foundation for the ethnic ethos from which the *communitas* are established. The roots and the history are transferred through the church and the family of the informants. This is made possible by the rituals that make up the traditions celebrated in church. Within these rituals, there are symbols that the informants react to and relate to the celebration, e.g., the incense, the liturgy, the chants, the singing, the paintings, and the large mass of people. The symbols aid the informants to contextualize the mass and the tradition to a particular moment. This contextualization, i.e., the particularity of the celebration, aids the effort, both consciously and unconsciously, to differentiate the informant from the larger Swedish society and thereby emphasizing the identification and the connection to the Assyrian/Syrian group. By engaging in these activities a place in society is provided for the informants. From this place, a foundation is laid where the informants can build and their identity.

#### 5.3.2.2. Language

Language plays a prominent part in ritualization. Language express the cultural specific in the values that are mediated in the ritualized interaction. The languages of the informants help to establish an identification with the Assyrian/Syrian group and the Swedish group while the languages also help the informants to differentiate and interact in cultural specific strategies. The language is interrelated with the Assyrian/Syrian ethos and provides a way for the ritualization to connect to the ethos and from it create *communitas*. The first language provides a differentiation from the Swedish society, or the Swedish population, since it is different from Swedish and its use is constrained to certain areas of the lives of the informants. This is also true for Swedish in relation to the Assyrian/Syrian group. This differentiation is present from the informants' early childhood as they come in contact with other children that might not share the language of the informants. As such, language is a means of differentiation, consciously and unconsciously, during childhood, adolescence and adulthood. The differentiation through ritualization may not

result in a *communitas* emphasized for Assyrians/Syrians but rather in a *communitas* that is focused on immigrants. While the first language enhances and helps the informants to establish their ethnic identification, Swedish helps the informants' to establish a Swedish identification. The knowledge of Swedish helps the informants to be identified as Swedes despite the difference in physical appearance. Language also helps the informants to differentiate or interact in contexts other than that of the Assyrian/Syrian context. The physical appearance of the informants is an interference to the informants' perception of the degree that they believe Swedes perceives them as a part of the Swedish society. As soon as the informants start to interact and engage in a conversation with a Swede, this interference is removed, as the Swede notices that the informants can speak Swedish without any difficulty. The ability to speak a language fluently with no accent enhances the identification with a group both for the informants and for those who participate in a dialogue with the informants. The informants are dependent on understanding and being able to speak Swedish, in order for the them to engage in acculturative learning. Not being able to understand nor to speak the language do not only hamper the ability to learn the culture but it also hampers the identification as a Swede. The language is connected to the identification of the informants, i.e., both the Assyrian/Syrian and the Swedish identification, not just for the informant but also of the perception that Swedes hold of the informants.

The language is an integrated part of the informants' ethnic identification. The language is ascribed an importance and a meaning related to the occasions that the language is used. Some of the informants describe their first language as being related to certain feelings, i.e., joy or feeling at home. Because of its associated feelings and its contexts of use, the language emphasizes that activities conducted are cultural specific due to the boundaries that the language provides by its associations, i.e., feelings and the ability to understand or to be understood. Some of the informants relate certain ways of behaving or interacting to an identification depending on what language they use. The informants may even feel Assyrian to a greater degree as they use their first language. This indicates a relationship between the language and the identification of the individual. The perceived relationship is explained by Oshana who states that language is the vehicle through which all forms of culture are expressed. Erikson argues that the ability to speak allows the child an individual sense of urgency which is an ability to communicate with others. According to Erikson, speech defines the child and is strategic for ego development. The language and the traditions provide the means for ritualization, i.e., the differentiation, from the larger Swedish society that in turn enhances the, by the informants, created *communitas* and their own identification. The difference from the Swedish culture becomes apparent when some of the informants mention their desire not to be Swedish-fied (*försvenskad*), i.e., being assimilated into the Swedish society. This can explain the importance some of the informants express toward maintaining the language and sharing it to coming generations. The vitality of the created *communitas* is enhanced by the Assyrian/Syrian group being an ethnic minority and having experienced genocide during the last century. In the quantitative data, about 70 % of the participants (N = 241) had a relative that had been killed during the genocide.

Language is emphasized from an early age that it needs to be preserved since it is a part of the individual's as well as the larger group's history, identification and culture. The language, whether it is Arabic or Assyrian/Syrian, is a common nominator, or a symbol that connects or binds the group together and to the larger historical context that is associated with the Assyrians/Syrians. The language is an adequate example of *communitas* by being the bond that the informants share with each other and that which holds together the group. By language being a symbol and by being something more than a means of communication, the language is the red

thread that runs through the group. The language has also a practical importance as a means of communication. This goes especially for the older generation Assyrians/Syrians who might not be as proficient in Swedish as the interviewed informants.

#### 5.3.2.3. The Self-Perception of being a part of the Swedish Society

The *ethos* refers to the cultural organization of human beings' mutual dependence of each other. This refers to the relationship between society and the individual where both are interdependent of each other and where social institutions are the preconditions for the individual's development. The individual produces the help that society provides through adult members who are guided by institutions and traditions. The *ethos*, in the context of the current study, includes the traditions and the institutions that the informants value.

The *traditions* related to the informants' *Swedish identification* are Midsummer's eve and the traditional Swedish Christmas dinner. It seemed from the statement of the informants that they engaged mainly in traditions that were related to Assyrians/Syrians. Some of the informants perceived themselves to be Swedes in a certain degree because of their behavior being Swedish. This observation was also done by the informants' when they were abroad and met relatives who differentiated the informants because of their behavior being characterized as Swedish. The norms and the values associated with the Swedish identification are openness, modernization, and equal rights between males and females. *Institutions* related to the informants' *Swedish identification* were the workplace or the university. These places were of importance since the informants referred to education and having a job as important aspects of their identifications as Swedes. These places provided an arena of interaction with other individuals, Swedes as well as other ethnicities. This kept the acculturation process going.

The informants believed themselves to be a part of the Swedish society since they spoke the language, they behaved in a Swedish manner, they worked, they paid their taxes, they were born and they grew up and they acquired an education. Being a part of the society is not the same thing as being a part of the Swedish population. This identification, i.e., being a part of the population, was not as strong since there was a perceived difference between Assyrians/Syrians and Swedes. This difference was the informants' physical appearance as well as the values, the norms, and the behavior that are associated, not only with Assyrians/Syrians, but also with the perception that the informants are seen as immigrants. Most of the informants admitted that when the barrier of physical appearance was overcome, e.g., by starting a conversation with a Swede, the perceived difference was reduced. This was achieved by the informants acting and behaving in a similar manner as a Swede and speaking Swedish fluently. Language, by enabling an identification with a group by a shared medium, i.e., Swedish, enabled the informants to bridge the difference of physical appearance.

Acculturative learning, i.e., the *imitations of second-culture behavior*, was presumably apparent from an early age for most of the informants since they had interacted in a Swedish context, i.e., grown up in a neighborhood where most of the residents were ethnic Swedes and by attending a school where most of the pupils were Swedes. Being at such an early age, this imitation, or socialization process, would be natural and be done without any greater conscious activity apart from situations where the informants experienced themselves as differentiated, i.e., by discrimination and/or prejudice, from the Swedish students. According to Erikson, the fourth life stage, i.e., the school age, is characterized by a systematic socialization where the individual leaves the environment of the family in order to learn the practical tools and accessories of the adult world. This socialization was apparent during most of the informants' lives since the

learning of their first and second culture continues as the cultures change. It was this socialization that enabled the informants to learn their first and second culture. The socialization also enhanced the learning of the informants of their second culture by exposing them to a greater degree to the Swedish culture. This was especially apparent in the cases of those informants who spent their childhood abroad and who did not experience the Swedish culture until their adolescence. The informants maintained a strong bond with their family and relatives in their adult years. This bond with family and relatives enhanced the learning process of their first culture simply by being in touch with their first culture that their parents and relatives symbolize. The imitations of second-culture behavior seemed to have been a natural process for most of the informants except at situations of discrimination. Attending school seemed to have been an important part of the informants' ability to learn the Swedish ethos, not just because it provided opportunities for imitating a Swedish behavior but also for providing *mentors*, i.e., teachers, that provided the informants with the necessary knowledge to be a part of and to be able to integrate at a greater degree with the Swedish society. While this might be the case for those informants who were born and raised in Sweden, those informants who were raised abroad might have met a greater difficulty with the acculturative learning, e.g., by facing a difficulty in learning Swedish. Learning the second-culture by *instructions* was therefore important. This was done among other by attending classes focused on learning Swedish or simply by interacting from an early age with Swedes or Swedish-speaking individuals. Acculturative learning seemed to be dependent on what context it took place within. Some of the informants stated that they grew up in rather homogenous contexts with mostly ethnic Swedes while other informants stated that they grew up in more diverse contexts that had several ethnicities and cultures present. Depending on the degree that the informants interacted with the Swedish ethos and with other Swedes, the informants' process of learning the second-culture might have differed. A greater interaction may have resulted to a greater degree of learning. One informant who spent her childhood in Syria and her adolescence in Södertälje did experience minority cultures to a larger degree than the Swedish culture. Her internship and her interaction at a Swedish workplace with colleagues that were Swedes would be her process of acculturative learning as she was exposed to the Swedish ethos at her workplace to a greater degree than when she was younger.

Because most of the informants had experienced the Swedish culture and had been interacting with Swedes from an early age, *information about the second-culture* was present among the informants as long as they kept in touch and kept interacting with the culture. *Skills and behaviors* referring to the informants gradually learning the Swedish language and behaviors associated with the Swedish ethos. This was apparent in two cases where the informants and their behavior were in accordance with the behavior of Swedes. Examples of such behavior are being calm, being politically correct, adapting to the situation, and not making a fuss.

It was difficult to assess in what manner or in what degree change as a result of the acculturation process had occurred to the informants who were born and raised in Sweden. However, Rudmin states that culture change need not be a part of the definition of acculturation. The difficulty in observing a change among the informants was presumably due to the close interaction between the informants' learning of the Assyrian/Syrian culture and the Swedish culture. The informants experienced their second culture at an early age close to their first interaction with their first culture. The difference in time between the contact with the first and the second culture was so small that it might be more adequate to see the two cultures as part of the same learning process rather than two separate processes. This is not to say that there was no difference between the cultures, the processes of learning them or the identifications that

followed. For those informants who arrived in Sweden at a later age, i.e., early adolescence, cultural changes were more apparent. These changes were alternated identifications, e.g., from an identification as a Christian Arab to an identification as an Assyrian/Syrian, or that new languages were learned, e.g., Swedish or Assyrian/Syrian.

*Identities and loyalties* refer to the loyalty and the identifications that the informants experienced toward the Assyrian/Syrian and the Swedish identification. There was a fear, among the informants, of being assimilated with the Swedish society. Therefore most of the informants developed practices and relationships toward the society in order to avoid the risk of being assimilated. While there was an emphasis within the Assyrian/Syrian culture to preserve traditions and culture there was also a wish by the informants to be a part of the society in order to fulfill their obligations towards it and to earn their civil rights. This was apparent from an early childhood where most of the parents emphasized that the informants were a part of the society and that they were free to engage with Swedes as they wish. The informants believed it to be important to learn the language and to acquire an education in order to be able integrate successfully with the Swedish society. At the same time, some of the informants stated that this was done with a reservation, i.e., with a fear of being assimilated and losing their ethnic identification. It was therefore important to keep culture and traditions alive not just for the individual but for Assyrians/Syrians in general. This was related to *the utility, i.e., the costs and the risks of second-cultural acquisition*.

The loyalty towards the Swedish identification were the informants' self-perceived obligations toward society in order to earn their rights. The informants' have identifications toward Assyrians/Syrians and Swedes but their identifications vary in degree. There were aspects that the informants' associated to each identification. Traditions, culture, language, norms, and values were such aspects. This was related to the *beliefs and values* of Rudmin's model of acculturation. The values and the norms came at times to clash with each other. The informants were to decide at such moments in what degree they adhered to them. An example would be what some of the informants associated with Assyrians/Syrians, i.e., conservatism, and with Swedes, i.e., modernization. The change of the informants regarding their beliefs and their values was explained by the theory of ego-identity development. The fifth life stage, i.e., adolescence, was characterized by the development of an identity. Fidelity was referred to as the cornerstone of the identity and the virtue of the life stage. Fidelity also referred to the ability to uphold freely chosen loyalties despite contradictions of the value system. Several of the informants differentiated themselves from Assyrians/Syrians and Swedes in relation to the values, the norms, the behaviors, and the traditions. The reasons for doing so were several, i.e., fear of assimilation and for not agreeing with specific values. At the same time, an identification was present with both of the groups despite discrepancies between the values and the norms, e.g., gender equality and honor. Most of the informants stated that they were both Swedish and Assyrian/Syrian. This suggested that the informants have gained fidelity in order to keep loyalties toward both of the identifications. In addition, the differentiation from Assyrians/Syrians and Swedes strengthens the identification towards another group. When the informants felt differentiated from Swedes group, they could perceive themselves as Assyrians/Syrians or as immigrants to a greater degree. The same could be said when the informants felt differentiated from Assyrians/Syrians and as a result perceived themselves as Swedes to a greater degree. The differences could also strengthen or create sub-differences such as identifications as Swedish-Assyrians in comparison to Assyrians from Syria or Germany.



#### 5.3.2.4. Discrimination

Oshana highlights *discrimination* as a provider of potential complications for the identity development of ethnic minorities. This is because exploration is a key variable in the development process and discrimination impairs the exploration, i.e., leading the individual to be discouraged from involving him- or herself with others who reside within or outside of the individual's reference group. In addition, Rudmin identifies discrimination as a variable that influence the consequences of acculturation.

Discrimination and prejudice had various effects on the identification of the informants. In the qualitative phase, discrimination and/or prejudice could be seen as an involuntary differentiation where the informants experienced attempts of others to differentiate the informants from the larger population, e.g., Swedes. Most of the informants stated that their experience of discrimination did not make them question their identification as Swedes or as being a part of the Swedish population. The question that was left unanswered was why some of the informants chose to acknowledge and compensate for others' beliefs when faced with discrimination and prejudice while others confronted and resisted the discrimination and prejudice. Perhaps, from a perspective of Erikson, those who resisted had completed their exploration to a greater degree than those who chose to compensate. I reflect on this in my section dedicated to the reflection of the theoretical framework.

#### 5.3.2.5. The Self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian

The first culture was for most of the informants the Assyrian/Syrian culture. For the informants who spent their childhood abroad, the first culture was the national identification of being an Arab or the religious identification as a Christian. For some of the informants, their relationship toward their first culture changed from childhood where some of the informants chose to immerse themselves while others distanced themselves from certain aspects of their culture, e.g., attending Mass. Some of the informants seemed to move from a provided definition, received during their childhood, of what it meant to be an Assyrian/Syrian to applying their own definition which they had developed during the course of their lives. Several factors influenced this cultural learning process. For an example, the debate of the terms Assyrian and Syrian have played a part in the development of the informants' identification. The informants came in contact with this debate at an early age by other children questioning why the informants used a particular term as a self-reference. The informants could, as a result, go from a term or an event whose meaning was taken for granted to reflect and chose a term on their own. The informants did not only identify with the term itself but also with the aspects that were related to the term, e.g., the history and the ideology. These processes of the informants immersing themselves resulted in clarifications of the identification of the informants.

The *traditions* of the *ethnic identification* included attending Mass at Christmas and Easter as well as having dinner with family and relatives. The *culture* included the values, the norms and the behavior that were associated with Assyrians/Syrians, e.g., the way you greeted and addressed the elderly, the importance of family and relatives, the sense of community, and the preservation of the traditions and the language. The primary institution related to the identification of Assyrians/Syrians was the Syriac-Orthodox Church. Other important institutions were the ethnic communities that arranged activities such as courses in cooking traditional Assyrian/Syrian dishes and arranging summer camps or other get-togethers. Similar to the institutions that were related to the informants' Swedish identification, the ethnic communities were places where the informants gathered to interact with each other, where they could share a cultural community and

where they could use and practice their language skills. These activities were seen as cultural specific practices. They were the processes of ritualization that the informant applied in order to differentiate from their Swedish identification and thereby strengthening their Assyrian/Syrian identification.

Related to the informants' Assyrian/Syrian identification were also aspects such as socializing with other Assyrians/Syrians and engaging in organizations related to the Assyrian/Syrian group. Rituals that were related to the community were having dinner with family and relatives, greeting each other by kissing each other on the cheek, and traditional dancing done at various festivities. The rituals received their particular meaning in relation to cultural practices related to other cultures. It seemed that the special nature of these activities, e.g., the dancing, the holidays, the music, attending football games, helped to create a feeling or an experience of being different from those that did not engage in these activities. What made them particular were that these acts or activities were shared within the group and that the activities had been experienced by the informants from an early age. The rituals were important because of their internalizing nature where they became a part of what the informants did, how they acted, and how they thought. The informants learned these rituals from an early age, through the process of enculturation, by the parents bringing the informants along to the rituals, e.g., Mass. Sharing a common history enhanced the ability to create *communitas* at rituals. The history was connected to the language, and the traditions; providing these with a historical context, enhancing the importance of these for the identification of the informants.

The parents, by introducing and emphasizing in varying degree language, traditions, norms, values and terms, were important to the informants' first and second cultural learning processes. These processes were related to the life stages, as described by Erikson. Erikson proposed that the child and the parent shared a special relationship through the numinous during infancy, the creation of a negative identity during early childhood and the generativity during adulthood where parents and adults passed on knowledge to coming generations. The parents of the informants had either in a direct or in an indirect manner emphasized the importance of the informants' ethnic identification by telling stories to them concerning the history of Assyrians/Syrians, relating to ancestors; emphasizing the importance of knowing and speaking the language Assyrian/Syrian in certain contexts, e.g., at home or with family and relatives; bringing the children to Mass and introducing them to traditions and holidays and also how these traditions were celebrated. The parents had also played a part in the process of learning cultures other than that of Assyrians/Syrians such as the Swedish culture by emphasizing the importance of learning the Swedish language and the interaction with Swedes. According to Erikson, the judicial ritual component that is connected to the second life stage, i.e., early childhood, refers to the differentiation between right and wrong. It is here that the individual creates a *negative identity*, i.e., a picture of what the individual is *not* expected to be. This negative identity was related to the informants' identification as Swedish and/or Assyrian/Syrian. Most of the informants were influenced by their parents in their identification which lead them to learning and practicing the language, celebrating the traditions and attending Mass. A negative identity was created by emphasizing that the informants were able to speak the language, to respect the traditions and the values, to uphold the culture and to avoid complete assimilation. This negative identity might be weakened or strengthened later in life as the development of the informants go on. A similar negative identity was created in relation to the informant's Swedish identification where the informant learned to act in a Swedish manner, e.g., behavior, values, norms, in a Swedish context. This meant that the informant learned how to not act in certain situations. The

seventh ritual component, i.e., passing along, is related to the seventh life stage, i.e., adult age. Passing alone refers to passing along knowledge through authoritative roles, e.g., parent, teacher, doctors. By doing so, the roles take on numinous models, i.e., those who differentiate between good and evil as well as pass-along ideal values to coming generations, and demand confirmation of their successful appearance as numinous models. This ritual component was present in two ways. The first referred to the childhood of the informants as they grew up and experienced an influence from their parents. This influence could be described as the learned and practiced language, the participation in rituals and traditions, the behavior, the norms and the values. This influence was experienced as a direct and an indirect influence from the parents. The parents took on the role of numinous models from which the informants received a sense of right and wrong. The second referred to the informants' own role as numinous models that they will take on in due time. Although most of the informants had no children, they described the importance of passing along the history, the traditions, the norms and the values to their future children. The seventh life stage, i.e., adult age, is characterized by generativity. Generativity refers to laying a foundation and leading the next generation. This can be done by parenting or through a generalized productivity and creativity. These ritual components and the generativity of adult age explain the importance and the role of the parents as well as the relationship between the child and the parent. While the child perceives his or her parents as numinous models, the parents pass on and guide their children to becoming a part of the new generation that will continue, or discontinue; the language the values, the traditions, the norms, the history. This could explained the importance that some of the informants ascribed to their parents and the importance they felt towards preserving their tradition and their language for coming generations.

### 5.3.3. The Research Questions of the Study

I will in this section return and address the research questions of the current study.

#### 5.3.3.1. The Research Questions of the Quantitative Phase

1. Is there a relationship between religiosity, self-perceptions, language use, and perceived discrimination?

The results of the analysis showed a medium positive correlation between the self-perception as religious/spiritual and the degree of attending Mass,  $\rho = .41$ ,  $n = 232$ ,  $p = .01$ , and fasting,  $\rho = .32$ ,  $n = 235$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater degree of self-perception as religious/spiritual was associated with a greater frequency of attending Mass and/or fasting. The results also showed a small, positive correlation between the self-perception as religious/spiritual and the self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian,  $\rho = .12$ ,  $n = 234$ . However, the association was not statistically significant. In addition, the results showed a medium, positive correlation between the self-perception as an Assyrian/Syrian and the degree of using Suryoyo with friends and family,  $\rho = .30$ ,  $n = 236$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater degree of self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian was associated with a greater frequency of using Suryoyo with friends and family. The results showed a small, negative correlation between language usage with friends and acquaintances and the frequency of attending Mass,  $\rho = -.18$ ,  $n = 232$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater usage of the Suryoyo language was associated with a lesser degree of attending Mass. The self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian also showed a small, positive correlation to the perception of Swedes perceiving the participants as a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = .19$ ,  $n = 237$ ,  $p = .01$ , and the perception of the informants' as a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = .22$ ,  $n = 240$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater

degree of perception as Assyrian/Syrian was associated with a greater degree of perception as a part of the Swedish society. The results showed that there was a negative, medium correlation between perceived discrimination and the perception of being a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = -.41$ ,  $n = 236$ ,  $p = .01$ , and the perceptions of the degree that Swedes perceive the participants as a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = -.41$ ,  $n = 234$ ,  $p = .01$ , where greater degrees of perceived discrimination were associated with a lesser degree of the perception as a part of the Swedish society.

2. Is there a difference concerning religiosity and self-perceptions between age groups among Assyrians/Syrians?

The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference of attending Mass between the age groups and the degree of self-perception as religious/spiritual. There was a statistically significant difference on the degree of religious practice and the self-perception as religious/spiritual where age group 1 ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = 1.3$ ,  $n = 121$ ) had higher scores than age group 2 ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ,  $n = 62$ ).

3. Is there a difference regarding religiosity and self-perceptions between males and females?

The results showed a statistically significant difference between males and females regarding the frequency of attending Mass, the frequency of fasting and the self-perception as religious/spiritual; where the females had a greater mean score on all measures in comparison to the males. The difference between the two groups differed in magnitude where the greatest difference between the groups was fasting (males:  $M = 1.72$ ,  $SD = .85$ ; females:  $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = .92$ ;  $t(240) = 6.87$ ,  $p = .000$ , two-tailed), i.e., large, and the smallest difference between the groups was the measure of attending Mass (males:  $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ; females:  $M = 4.98$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ;  $t(235) = 3.10$ ,  $p = .002$ , two-tailed), i.e., small.

#### 5.3.3.2. The Research Questions of the Qualitative Phase

The following presentation is based on the theoretical analysis of the data gathered from the interviews. The presentation is structured according to the research questions of the qualitative phase. The answers present a constructed description of the population.

4. How are the development of ego-identity and the practice of ritualization related to the enculturation and the acculturation processes of the informants?

- 4.1. How are religiosity, discrimination, language and self-perceptions related to the ego-identity of the informants?

The Assyrian/Syrian ethos; consisting of the church, the religion, the language and the traditions; has played an important part in the development of the ego-identity of the informants. Religion helps the individual to create and maintain a feeling of being unique either by providing a context to the identity of the informants or by being an object that the informants differentiate from. The context consists of the beliefs, the values, the norms, and the behaviors associated with religion or with being a Christian. Being a Christian, is for some of the informants, closely related to the terms Assyrian or Syrian due to the close relation between the religion and the history of Assyrians/Syrians. From an early age, the church introduces, together with the parents, the

history, the values and the norms related to the Assyrian/Syrian ethos. Through the life stages, the informants acquire hope, develop a sense of their parents and the church as numinous models that are passed on to the informants themselves as they become older. This is seen in the importance that the informants ascribe to maintaining some of the traditions, the values and the language of Assyrians/Syrians to coming generations. The fourth connotation of identity, i.e., the experience of a deep solidarity with a group's self-definition, is related to the religious identification of being a Christian and that this, for some of the informants, is equaled to being an Assyrian or a Syrian.

The church as a meeting point, enables the informants to create *communitas* through their differentiation by participating in rituals. This enhances the church as being a bearer of cultural specific practices, enabling the processes of differentiation that the informants engage in. The importance of the church is initiated from an early age when the informants are still children and participate or join their parents at Mass or other get-togethers at church. The church maintains an important role despite the difficulty of most of the informants in understanding the language that Mass is conducted in as well as the discrepancy between the values of the informants and those of the church.

A critical point of the development of ego-identity is reached during adolescence, or later, when the informants start to reflect on their identification. This results in a choice to delve deeper into either the Assyrian/Syrian ethos, the Swedish ethos or perhaps both. Most of the informants take a decision to differentiate themselves from certain parts of their Assyrian/Syrian ethos, e.g., the church. While the church may lose its role as a religious institution, it still keeps its place as a traditional institution despite the opinions that the informants may have of the church and its values. The traditions of Christmas and Easter are described as important because the traditions carry a historical and a cultural weight that is a part of the informants' identification as Assyrian/Syrian. These traditions bring friends and families together and take on the role as natural meeting points throughout the lives of the informants.

The rituals that are related to the Assyrian/Syrian ethos, outside of a religious context, are dinner with family and relatives, greeting each other by kissing each other on the cheek, and traditional dancing done at various festivities. The rituals receive their particular meaning in relation to other cultural practices though not necessarily belonging to the Assyrian/Syrian culture but rather practices that are related to other cultures. It seems that the special nature of these activities, e.g., the dancing, the holidays, the music, and attending football games, helps to create a feeling or an experience of being different from those that do not engage in these activities. What makes it special is that these acts or activities are shared within the group and have been so from an early age of the informants. The informants learn of activities from an early age, through the process of enculturation, by the parents, bringing the informants along to the events, e.g., attending Mass. Sharing a common history enhances the ability to create *communitas* at rituals. The history is connected with the language, the traditions and the culture, providing these with a historical context, enhancing the importance of these for the identification of the informants.

The ritualization and the consequences of differentiation helps the informants to identify with a group's self-definition as well as to identify as a unique individual. In comparison to the identity development, as described by Erikson, the reflection or the questioning by the informants concerning their Assyrian/Syrian identification was done in their late adolescence or their twenties. During this period of questioning and reflection, the informants sometime chose to immerse themselves in their ethnic identification. This process of immersing is an example of how the informants try to combine the past experiences of enculturation, i.e., the first culture, and

their experiences of acculturation, i.e., the second culture, or the experiences of childhood and adolescence. Childhood and adolescence are not necessarily the same thing as enculturation and acculturation. The first connotation of Erikson's concept of identity refers to the informants' position between the identifications with Assyrians/Syrians and Swedes. This position between the groups is made up of the informants' distance to each group while the informants at the same time maintain an identification with both Swedes and Assyrians/Syrians. Holding such a position involves for most of the informants a balance to maintain between the two identifications while they are mixed with each other. This creates a feeling of being unique in relation to the two groups since the informants create a relationship to each group according to the informants' own preference.

The physical body of the informants is a difference between them and the Swedish population. The informants engage in activities with their bodies that differentiates them from the Swedish population, i.e., greeting older persons by kissing the cheek or by using their first language when in dialogue with other Assyrians/Syrians. Besides from strengthening the ethnic identification, these acts concretize the informants' worldview and the values that they have learned from their first culture. At the same time as the informants perceive themselves to be a part of the Swedish society, they differentiate themselves from the same population by referring to differences regarding their physical appearance, their values, their norms, and their behavior. Most of the informants admit that when the barrier of physical appearance is overcome, e.g., by starting a conversation with a Swede, the perceived difference is diminished by the informant acting and behaving in a similar manner as a Swede. The language plays an important part in this act because it enables the informants to bridge the difference of physical appearance.

The informants believe themselves to be a part of the Swedish society since they were born and grew up in the society, they speak Swedish and they behave in a Swedish manner. While being a part of the society is not necessarily the same thing as being a part of the Swedish population, this latter identification is not as strong as the former since there is a difference in physical appearance between the informants and the ethnic Swedes. The difference between the informants and the Swedes is also due to the identification of the informants where they distance themselves consciously as well as unconsciously, from Swedes by not engaging in some of the traditions or with certain values.

The language is the vessel of communication and culture as well as an early indication to the child that it is different from others and similar to some. The language emphasizes that certain activities are cultural specific due to the boundaries that language provides by its associated feelings and its context of use. The language is interrelated with the ethos and provides means for ritualization to connect to the ethos and to create *communitas* from it. The first language might, depending on what language it is, provide a distinction from Swedes since it is different from Swedish. The use of the first language is constrained to certain areas of the lives of the informants. This is present from early childhood as the informants come in contact with other children that do not share a similar first language. The language, whether it is Arabic or Assyrian/Syrian, is a common nominator, or symbol, that connects or binds a group together and to the larger historical context that is associated with Assyrians/Syrians. The language is the red thread that runs through the group and helps the informants to on the one hand establish an identification with Assyrians/Syrians and Swedes while language on the other hand helps to differentiate the informants and to interact in cultural specific strategies.

Oshana highlights *discrimination* as a potential disturbance to the identity development of ethnic minorities. This is because exploration is a key variable in the development process and

discrimination impairs exploration, leading the informants to be discouraged from involving themselves with others who reside within or outside of the reference group of the informants. Discrimination and prejudice have various effects on the identifications. Discrimination and/or prejudice can be seen as a form of differentiation where the informants experience attempts of others to differentiate them from a Swedish identification. Most of the informants, however, state that their experience of discrimination do not make them question their identification as Swedes.

#### 4.2. How are religiosity and language related to the cultural learning processes?

Religion, as in attending Mass, contributes to the first cultural learning of the informants and the development of ego-identity whether it is the informants' religious or ethnic identification. The traditions that are constituted by specific rituals aid in this process through ritualization where *communitas* are created, e.g., self-referrals such as *our* traditions, *our* history, and *our* people. Religion can also be used as a cultural specific strategy for differentiation in relation to the Swedish identification. For some of the informants, this is achieved by strengthening a particular tradition that has been among Assyrians/Syrians for many years which their ancestors also participated in. By engaging in the traditions, the informants relive and extend the history of Assyrians/Syrians as well as strengthening the identification with the group not only towards their Swedish identification but also towards other ethnic groups. This is made possible by the rituals that make up the traditions celebrated in church, e.g., attending Mass at Christmas and Easter. There are symbols during these occasions that the informants react to and relate to the celebration, e.g., the incense, the liturgy, the chants, the singing, the paintings, and the large mass of people. The symbols aid the informants to contextualize the Mass and the tradition to that particular moment. This contextualization, i.e., the particularity of the celebration, aids the effort, both consciously and unconsciously, to differentiate the informants from the larger Swedish society and thereby emphasizing their Assyrian/Syrian identification. By engaging in these activities, and thereby differentiating the informants from the greater part of society, a place is provided for the informants. From this place, a foundation is created where the informants can build and develop their identity.

From the perspective of enculturation, attending Mass is a part of learning the first culture. The church whether as a religious or a traditional institution have a central part in the informants' enculturation process since religion introduces and lays the foundation of belief and tradition with the informants. The traditions and the language are key aspects of the identification as Assyrian/Syrian. By keeping the traditions and the language active, the informants are integrating with their first culture. Religiosity, i.e., attending Mass, is present with the informants from their childhood until their adolescence or their twenties when they start to reflect on their practice or their beliefs.

The importance of language for the processes of cultural learning is emphasized by Oshana and Erikson. Oshana states that language is the vehicle through which all forms of culture are expressed. Erikson argues that the ability to speak allows the child an individual sense of urgency which is an ability to communicate with others. Speech, according to Erikson, defines the child and is strategic for ego development. The ability to speak a language fluently enhances the identification with a group both for the informants and for the other who participates in a dialogue with the informants. The informants are dependent on understanding and being able to speak a language in order for the informants to engage in cultural learning. Not being able to understand nor to speak a language does not only hamper the ability to learn a culture but it also



hampers the identification with a group. The language is connected to the identification of the informants, i.e., as Assyrians/Syrians and as Swedes, not only for the informants but also for the perception that Swedes hold. While the first language is presumed to enhance and help the informants to establish an Assyrian/Syrian identification, Swedish helps in a similar manner but with the informants' Swedish identification. Knowledge of Swedish helps the informants to be identified as Swedes despite a difference in physical appearances. Language also helps the informants to differentiate or interact in contexts other than that of their ethnic context. Some of the informants relate certain ways of behaving or interacting to an identification depending on what language they use, e.g., feeling Assyrian/Syrian when speaking Suryoyo.

#### **5.3.4. The Derived Quantitative Hypotheses and Qualitative Working Hypotheses from the Results and the Analysis of the Current Study**

The derived hypotheses are based on the answer to the research questions. The hypotheses are divided according to what type of study they are predicted to be applied within. The design of the hypotheses is influenced by Cetrez (2005) and Creswell (2009).

##### **Hypotheses for a Quantitative Study**

- h. There is a statistically significant relationship between the degree of first language usage and the degree of self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian.
- i. There is a statistically significant relationship between experienced discrimination and the degree of self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society and population.
- j. There is a statistically significant relationship between the self-perception of being a part of the Swedish society and population, and the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian.
- k. There is no statistically significant relationship between the self-perception as religious or spiritual and the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian.
- l. There is a statistically significant relationship between the self-perception as religious or spiritual and the degree of religiosity.
- m. There is a statistically significant difference between generations among Assyrians/Syrians regarding the degree of religiosity.
- n. There is a statistically significant difference between males and females among Assyrian/Syrian regarding the degree of religiosity.

##### **Working Hypotheses regarding theory application for an enlarged Qualitative Study**

- o. The theory of ego-identity development is a useful approach as a theoretical explanation of the role of religiosity in the cultural learning processes of young adult Assyrians/Syrians, age 18-30, in Sweden.
- p. The theory of ritualization and *communitas* provides a relevant description of the identification done by young adult Assyrians/Syrians in relation to the Assyrian/Syrian group and the Swedish society and population.

## Chapter 6 Discussion

### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section is focused on the comparison between the results of the current study in relation to previous research that was reviewed in the chapter *Previous Research, and the Theoretical Framework*. The next section is dedicated to the contributions to the field of psychology of religion. A section follows that is focused on the characteristics of the current study. The section deals with a reflection on the theoretical framework, the particular theories of the framework, the criterion of validity, the methods and the methodological approach that is applied. Following those reflections is a section that is focused on the ethical reflections of the study. The chapter ends with two sections dedicated to the implications and the suggestions for future research.

### 6.2. The Results of the Current Study in Relation to Previous Research

#### 6.2.1. Previous Research – Assyrians and Identity

The study conducted by Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski (2010) provided similar results as the current study. Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski found that the Assyrian women were in a similar situation as the informants of my study. The Assyrian women negotiated their identities, moving between the Assyrian and the New Zealand culture. The ambivalent relationships toward the participants' ethnic group was apparent in Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski and among the Assyrians/Syrians of Sweden. A fear of being assimilated was apparent in both of the studies. The Assyrian community and culture in New Zealand seemed to be a strong support for the Assyrian women as was found in the present study where several of the informants referred to their culture and community as characterized by a community feeling and a sense of social support. The effects of discrimination and prejudice had similar outcomes in both of the studies, i.e., making pre-emptive assertions in order to differentiate themselves from stereotypes by emphasizing their ethnicity and aspects related to it, i.e., a Christian identification. In relation to the derived hypothesis, the present study found no association, between perceived discrimination and the informants' identification with their ethnicity. However, perceived discrimination was found to have a negative association with the informants' self-perceptions as a part of the Swedish society. This can be explained by the differentiating effect that discrimination and prejudice might have for the informants through their identification with the majority culture. There was a positive association between the self-perceptions as Assyrian/Syrian and as a part of the Swedish society. This positive association might point towards a relationship between the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian and the self-perception as a member of the majority culture. Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski applied focus group and interviews with a sample of about 130 participants, mostly females. The present study applied similar methods and statistical analyses of the questionnaires. Theoretically, there are similarities between both of the studies, i.e., both investigated an ethnic minority and their process of acculturation in relation to their identity. Underlining this suggestion are the similar results produced by both of the studies. The main difference between the studies is the current study's closer investigation of the perceived relationships between identification, religion, ethnicity, and discrimination. Furthermore, the difference also concerns sample characteristic where the present study used mainly informants that had spent most of their life time in Sweden while Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski focused on Assyrian refugees in New Zealand. Third, the population used in Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski consisted mostly of females. The difference highlighted in the present study

and in Cetrez (2005; 2011) between males and females concerning religiosity and identity development could perhaps be explained by Collie, Kindon, Liu and Podsiadlowski. The study could shed light on a gender perspective on the identity development although from a different theoretical perspective.

There are some similarities between Oshana's dissertation (2004) and the current study. Both of the studies apply Erikson's theory of ego-identity although in a different manner and in different contexts but with a similar population. The results from Oshana's study showed that there were no significant statistical relationship between the identity statuses and linguistic competency as well as religious participation. Though my study measured these constructs differently in relation to Oshana, the results of the present study showed that there was positive significant association between language competence and the degree of self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian. However, in accordance with Oshana, religiosity and self-perception as religious/spiritual were not statistically significantly associated with the degree of self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian. In Oshana's qualitative phase, preserving traditions and language was seen as important by the informant as well as the identification in relation to the history and the culture of Assyrians in the U.S.A. There also seemed to be some distance towards the American culture by some of the informants in Oshana's study as these informants were afraid of assimilation, i.e., losing their language and culture. The cultural context, e.g., socialization environment, mentors, information, plays an important part to the informants of both of the studies and their relationship toward Assyrians/Syrians and Americans/Swedes. A theoretical perspective of enculturation and acculturation could assist the theoretical perspective of Erikson and Marcia in Oshana's study by providing an additional theoretical context to the identity development, i.e., to understand the epigenesis in relation to different cultures. In addition, ritualization, by both Bell and Erikson, could help explain the bridge between ego-identity and the culture. The present study lacks a developed approach towards the theoretical framework of Erikson while Oshana applies the approach of Marcia thereby providing an opportunity for transferability, reliability and comparison with other studies.

Mann's study (2004) ascribes an importance to the parents and presents a second dimension other from the integration process of the immigrant youth, namely the integration process of the parents. The results of Mann's study and the results of the present study suggest that the relationship between the youth and his or her parents is relevant to a theoretical perspective of ego-identity, enculturation and acculturation. The parent has a vital role in relation to his or her child and thus, the parents' process of enculturation, acculturation as well as the identity development will affect their child. This relationship is fruitful for further investigation since it might bring another dimension to the process of enculturation by including not just the informant but the parent of the informant.

The study of Magnusson and Stroud (2012) underlines the importance of language in relation to providing an identity. Magnusson and Stroud exemplifies this with a group of Assyrian-Syrian who are constructed depending on what type of Swedish they apply when they are in a dialogue with Swedes. The ability to handle and speak a correct Swedish was partly what made the informants of the present study believe that they were perceived as a part of the Swedish society and the population. The ability to overcome the difference of the informants' physical appearance, i.e., dark hair, dark skin, dark eyes and so on, was done through the use of a correct version of Swedish resulting in the informants being identified by their Swedish peers as Swedes. At the same, the language also helped the informant to identify with his or her ethnic group. While the study of Magnusson and Stroud is focused on how the informants *are constructed*, the

current study is focused on how the informants' identify. The results of both studies suggest that language plays a part in the identification of the individual both in the eyes of the individual and in the eyes of others. While the study of Magnusson and Stroud does not approach language as a bearer of a symbolic meaning, e.g., having a history, being a heritage, as it is done in the current study, the importance of the relationship that language has to the individual's identification is underlined. This emphasizes the statements of Oshana and Erikson that language is important in relation to ego-identity and the culture of the informants.

### **6.2.2. Previous Research – Assyrians and Religion**

The results from Cetrez' study (2011) of three generations of Assyrians in Sweden showed that generation rather than gender plays a difference on measures of religiosity. In addition, religious values and practices were found to be stronger among the first generation in relation to the second and third generation. Females were found to score higher than males on the degree of fasting. The present study found similar results where females of the quantitative phase were found to have a greater degree of activity with religious practice in comparison to males. However, the age group 16-21 years had a greater degree of religiosity in relation to the second age group 22-35 years which in contrast to Cetrez study where degree of religious values and practice diminished among younger generations. This difference might be explained by that the older generations have established their ego-identity and are not in need of any greater exploration in relation to the younger generations who have not and/or might be in a process of establishing their ego-identity and as such have a greater degree of exploration towards religiosity. It might not necessarily mean that there is a difference in degree of religiosity but that the forms of practice are different among the generations. In Cetrez study, the consequences of leaving religion as a meaning system are investigated where Cetrez states that the consequences for not replacing religion as a meaning system can lead to serious health concerns. Such consequences were not found nor directly investigated in the current study. Rather, those who had differentiated themselves from religion, or rather the Syriac-Orthodox Church, had removed the sacred content of the religion. Perhaps this change of meaning system describes how the informants of the present study use other arenas during their process of ego-identity development where the life stages and the ritual components are influenced by other means than religion. In relation to Cetrez' study, it is also interesting to see the importance that significant others, e.g., parents, have for the individual's childhood relation to religion. This is also found in the current study. This importance signifies the process of first cultural learning and that religion is a part of this process. Furthermore, language difficulties were found in both of the studies. These difficulties of not being able to understand Mass.

### **6.2.3. Assyrians, Minorities and Discrimination**

The study of Greene, Way and Pahl (2006) suggests that adult and peer discrimination among ethnic minorities of the U.S. are related to decreased levels of self-esteem and increased levels of depressive symptoms over time. Ethnicity and ethnic identity was found to moderate the relationship between discrimination and variance in psychological well-being. The results of the study are interesting in relation to the current study where no association was found between self-perception ethnicity and perceived discrimination. Thus, the derived hypothesis from Greene, Way and Pahl was proven false. The sample used in aforementioned study consisted of several ethnic minorities while the present study used a sample of one ethnic minority. A medium negative association was found between perceived discrimination and the self-perception as a part of the Swedish society and the population. The results suggest that discrimination has no

association with the ethnic identification of the informant. Rather, discrimination has an association with the identification with the Swedish society or population. The study of Greene, Way and Pahl suggests that the individual, when exploring his or her ethnic identity, creates a greater risk of being more vulnerable in relation to the individual having a committed sense towards his or her ethnic identity. This can be related to the components of ego-identity as described by Oshana, i.e., it is the identity exploration that is hampered by the experiences of discrimination. The study of Greene, Way and Pahl has a broader approach to discrimination by including factors such as gender and social class that might contribute to the individual's experience of discrimination as well as the possibilities for differentiation. This broader perspective might help to better understand discrimination and its influence on the identity development.

#### **6.2.4. Assyrians, Minorities and Language**

Extra and Yagmur (2010) suggested that religious attachment does not affect community language. Rather, a strong identification with the community language contributes to language maintenance. In the present study, language usage and self-perception as ethnicity was positively associated with one another. In the qualitative phase, language, whether it was Assyrian or Swedish, was according to some of the informants related to the identification, i.e., the ethnic and the Swedish. The derived hypotheses from Extra and Yagmur that language competence had an effect on the informants' identification with their ethnicity was indicated to be true. According to Erikson and Oshana, language is important to the development of ego-identity because language is the vessel that culture is transported by. The study of Extra and Yagmur is interesting in that pride towards sociocultural and linguistic background was not associated with the maintenance of the community language. In the current study, this seemed to be the opposite, i.e., pride in sociocultural and language background was related to the community language. The difference between the current study and Extra and Yagmur might be that the Assyrian/Syrian population is in a state of diaspora and as such the importance of language maintenance along with pride towards the language is greater among Assyrians/Syrians in relation to other ethnic minorities that have a country.

#### **6.2.5. Assyrians and Other Areas of Research**

Deniz (1999) conducted a study of Christian Assyrians in Sweden. Deniz states that this group has moved from an ethno-religious identity that was present during their years in their original country to an ethno-national identity. The migration to Sweden stressed and deepened this process of transformation. A similar transformation can be witnessed among the informants of the present study. However, while some of the informants chose an ethno-national based identification, others chose an ethno-religious based identification. This is not to say that the informants' identification was only based on their ethnicity or their nationality, a Swedish identification was also present among the informants. Some of the informants had taken a distance to their ethnic group as well as the Syriac-Orthodox Church. Perhaps it is this distance towards values and norms associated with Assyrians/Syrians that characterizes the transformation process described by Deniz. Furthermore, Erikson states that cohering principles and virtues hold together generations and institutions. If these principles and virtues are socially weakened they appear lofty and idealistic as well an obstacle for the individual to achieve their identity. Perhaps it is this that makes the individual transform from an ethno-religious based identification towards an ethno-national identification instead. This transformation might be more apparent among younger than among older generations of Assyrian/Syrians. The younger generation is in an

exploration phase of their identity and have not yet internalized the meaning and the value of traditions and institutions. Some of the informants perceive the church, as well as the religion, as important to their identification. Perhaps there are more steps in the transformation where some of the informants choose to immerse and develop their religious identification while others distance themselves and instead develop their ethnic identification without a religious aspect. Yet others differentiate themselves from a sole identification as Assyrians/Syrians and do not identify themselves only as Swedish nor as Assyrian/Syrians. In this latter case, it is not a case of identity diffusion or marginalization. It is rather a mixture of identifications that have been incorporated with the individual.

### 6.3. Contributions to the Field of Psychology of Religion

The results of the current study bring further knowledge regarding the role of religiosity in relation to the identity development of Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden that are within processes of enculturation and acculturation. The results show that religiosity was for the informants a part of their childhood and have been so throughout their lives although in a varying degree. Religiosity, i.e., attending mass, is also a part of the cultural learning process. Religiosity provides the means for the informants' differentiation as well as a context for the child and the parents regarding the life stages and the related roles as numinous models, the created negative identity as well as the generativity.

### 6.4. Reflection on the Characteristics of the Study

#### 6.4.1. Reflection on the Purpose and the Goals of the Study

The empirical ambition of the current study was to build upon previous research (e.g., Cetrez, 2005; 2011) and to bring further understanding of Assyrians/Syrians living in Sweden. This was partially done by the acquired sample and the focus of the study consisting of and being directed towards Assyrians/Syrians. The ambition could have been achieved to a greater degree if the study had used a representative sample from which it had been possible to draw conclusions that could be generalized to the larger population. The theoretical ambition was to understand the processes of enculturation and acculturation in relation to ego-identity. The theories were not applied in a stringent manner, e.g., by using a developed instrument. While this might bring disadvantages to the transferability of the results; the less stringent approach of theory provides flexibility towards the inquiry, the interpretation of the data and the results as well as toward the population being an ethnic minority.

The methodological ambition was to adopt a sequential mixed-methods approach. The current study used data that was gathered through different methods, i.e., questionnaires, focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews. This ensures a broad approach of data collection and analysis. The several methods enables the data and the conclusion drawn from the data to be validated by each other, i.e., by cross-reference or triangulation.

#### 6.4.2. Theoretical Reflection

##### 6.4.2.1. Overall Reflection of Theoretical Framework

The meta-theoretical context of the current study is social constructionism. The theory of ritualization, derived from Bell, and the theory of *communitas* are social constructive in nature. However, the theory of the development of ego-identity has epigenesis as its core principle. The epigenesis brings a broader approach to social constructionism since it carries a biological approach that incorporates a social constructive view, i.e., the development of the identity in



relation to the society and the bodily organs. This combination strengthens the theoretical framework by combining the individual and the social with the biological development. Doing so includes a third dimension, i.e., biology, apart from the dimensions of the group and the individual.

Earlier, the question was raised regarding whether or not, and in what manner, it is possible to use different theories by emphasizing and combining specific theoretical concepts. While using bits and pieces to put together a theoretical framework might provide a framework that seem to work in the context of the study, where does that leave the theories that are represented in the framework by particular concepts while leaving out other concepts? Perhaps it is not so much a question of whether it is possible or not but rather it is a question of what manner it is done. Marcia has shown that it is possible to take a part of a theory and from it create a modified theoretical concept applied in research as a working theory. In addition, critique has been raised towards Erikson's theory of ego-identity development for being difficult to apply in research (Erikson & Erikson, 2004).

I believe that it is possible to combine different theoretical concepts from different theories as long as the researcher follows the following criterion: 1) clarifying the underlying meta-theoretical notion of the theories and the study; 2) clarifying how the combination is done by pointing out what parts of the theories are emphasized and how these are related to each other while also addressing present issues of combining the theories; and 3) by providing a clear description of the operationalization of the theoretical concepts. I believe I have done so. Admittedly, some of the theories are more rigid in their appliance than others. The theories that are applied that are open in their description, leaving room for the researcher's interpretation. The creation of a theoretical framework, with several theories, is done in order to create a broader approach toward the investigate issue.

The advantage of the theoretical framework is that the theories that are included are present on several theoretical levels. The difference between the theoretical levels is their detail of description and their ability to explain various phenomenon. The theories of enculturation and acculturation can be described to be on an overall level where they include theories that are on a lower level. As such, enculturation and acculturation describe the context of the other theories and the cultural processes that the informants are situated within. The theory of ego-identity is situated within enculturation and acculturation and is as such on a lower level. Ego-identity explains the overall psychology of the individual. Within ego-identity there are the ethos, the life stages, the ritual components; as well as ritualization and *communitas*. These theories are on the lowest level in the theoretical framework and explain the actual acts, feelings, experiences and so on of the informants while connecting these to the larger framework. By applying a theoretical framework that is active on several levels, it is possible to acquire a broader investigation of the examined phenomenon. However, including several theories in a framework might increase the risk of not being able to immerse adequately in an investigated phenomenon. Discrimination, as an example, can be approached not only as ethnic discrimination but also discrimination related to social class, religion and race.

I experienced difficulty with the theoretical framework to account for the differences between males and females regarding the differences of religiosity. It is also difficult to explain the role of males and females within the traditions, the values, the norms and the beliefs as well as the implications of these for ego-identity development among Assyrians/Syrians. The current study as well as previously conducted research show that there are differences between males and females among Assyrians/Syrians while not offering explanations to the implications of such



differences. This is a suitable starting point for future research that could provide further knowledge to the role of religiosity for Assyrians/Syrians within a context of enculturation and acculturation.

#### 6.4.2.2. Acculturation and Enculturation

The theory of acculturation seems to be aligned towards being a process that the individual engages in during adolescence or adulthood while enculturation is proposed to take place during childhood. The other cultures being learned by the individual must be differentiated from the first culture learned since there is a difference to cultural learning if there is a culture with the individual and if there is not. Is it possible that enculturation might include more than one culture or that acculturation takes place before adolescence or adulthood? The first suggestion presumes that significant others, e.g., parents, would represent more than one culture. The second suggestion is divided in three. First, in what degree can the acculturative motivations; i.e., attitudes, identity, distress and eustress, motivations of utility; be apparent during childhood as the individual has not yet fully developed an identity or concept of their ethnic identification? Second, what implications has the concept of change within the proposed model of acculturation? Third, in what manner can the individual experience changes concerning his identity, loyalties, beliefs and values?

It is somewhat difficult to determine where the process of acculturation starts for the informants who were born and raised in Sweden, if the process starts at all. This is related to the definition of acculturation as second-cultural acquisition. According to the statements of the informants, the process would have started shortly after they started to learn their first culture. If acculturation starts during childhood it is difficult to ascertain if *attitudes* or *ethnic identity*, as is mentioned in Rudmin's model of acculturation, are a part of or what role they have in the process of acculturation. Most of the informants state that the Swedish culture and the language were a natural part of their childhood as they grew up in a Swedish context and attended school, interacting with other Swedes, participating in traditions, and imitating Swedish behavior. Perhaps it is more adequate to refer to the process of learning the Swedish culture as enculturation. The reason for this is that it is a natural process and because of it being engaged by the informants at an early age similar to their process of learning the Assyrian/Syrian culture. Or perhaps it is because there is no clear distinction between the cultures where instead of a clear line there is a vague fusion. As such, the definitions of enculturation and acculturation as first- and second-cultural acquisition might be wrongly approached since they presuppose that the first and second culture are distinct from each other. Cultures, as fusions instead of distinctions, demand a different approach that can take into account the versatile merger of two or more cultures that may be present in a context that the individual is present within. As such, aspects related to a culture, i.e., cultural specific practices, traditions, norms, and values, might not be attributed to one culture or be seen as a product of one culture but rather be viewed within a context that consists of several merged cultures. I believe this to be in accordance with Marsella's (2005) proposed definition of culture as a shared learned behavior and meanings. The results of the current study show that it is apparent that more than one culture is present among the informants from an early age.

The operationalization of a theoretical concept determines what information is gathered or what approach is taken in order to investigate a concept. In addition, some of the concepts that were not found could be explained by a lack of a systematic measurement. There did not seem to be any direct *reactions to distress and eustress*. On the one the hand this could be true. There was

no apparent indication of such a reaction. On the other hand, no indication might be due to the lack of a systematic measurement, e.g., an instrument focused on stress and health.

#### 6.4.2.3. Ego-Identity

Most of the informants of the qualitative phase stated that they had reflected and/or questioned the degree of their ethnic identification. The informants' process of questioning or reflecting on their identification took place during late adolescence or their twenties which would be in contrast to Erikson's concept of the life stages where the identity crisis takes place during adolescence. Oshana has reflected on the difficulty an ethnic minority could have in relation to the development of ego-identity. Oshana states that ethnic minority adolescents might be aligned toward foreclosure (Marcia, 1966) since they are provided with an identification during their childhood due to the emphasis that is laid by some Assyrians/Syrians on preserving traditions, language and values. While this might not answer the question *when* an identity crisis occurs, it might indicate that the identity development of ethnic minority adolescents do not follow a similar projected trajectory as of majority adolescents. The process for ethnic minorities might be more complicated due to factors such as discrimination.

Why is it that some of the informants choose to acknowledge and compensate when faced with discrimination and prejudice while others confront and resist? Perhaps, from a perspective of Erikson, those who resisted had completed their exploration to a greater degree than those who chose to compensate. The theory of Marcia (1966) can bring further clarification. Marcia proposes that Erikson's theory of ego-identity development can be operationalized by four so called identity status, i.e., identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity diffusion. These statuses are measured by degree of commitment and exploration, or crisis. Commitment refers to the degree of personal investment that the individual displays. Exploration, or crisis, refers to the engagement in choosing among meaningful alternatives. What differentiates the statuses from each other is the degree of commitment and exploration. Marcia states that those who have a high degree of exploration and commitment, i.e., identity achievement, is not easily overwhelmed by sudden shifts in their environment in comparison to those who have a lesser degree of commitment, i.e., identity diffusion or moratorium, the latter being more susceptible to external influence, i.e., discrimination and prejudice. Similar results were found in previous conducted research. For an example, the study by Way and Pahl (2006) suggests that the process of exploring one's ethnic identity may create a greater risk of being vulnerable towards discrimination while for those who have achieved a committed sense toward their ethnic identity have a lower risk of this vulnerability.

The current study applied an open approach toward ego-identity, using a self-composed operationalization with inspiration, i.e., what variables to investigate, received from previously conducted research. This may have hampered the ability for generalization in comparison to applying validated measurements, e.g., Marcia (1966), of ego-identity. However, an open approach, not only toward ego-identity development, might be preferred when dealing with an ethnic minority since validated instruments are based on majority populations. Ethnic minorities prove different challenges in relation to majority populations. See the discussion on validity for more input on this issue.

#### 6.4.2.4. Ritualization and Communitas

The appliance of ritualization and communitas are difficult to follow-up let alone transfer to another context. This difficulty lies in their original state of being, i.e., not being operationalized. I had Cetrez' dissertation (2005) that provided useful insight to the mechanisms of ritualization

and *communitas* in relation to Assyrians/Syrians. Still, the theories leave much up to the researcher to operationalize. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage by providing flexibility towards the context but impairing the ability to transfer and validate the results of the study to other contexts. The operationalization of the concept ritualization is wide. Ritualization, according to Bell, is focused on cultural specific practices. Earlier, I highlighted the issue of cultures not necessarily being distinct things from each other, i.e., cultures are fused to some degree with one another. Following such an approach, would it still be possible to speak of cultural specific practices or is that the applied approach towards differentiation through cultural specific practices is wrong? While the current study indicates that the distinctions between two cultures might not be as clear as it might seem theoretically, the practices within the cultures have to be specific, at least in a varying degree. With specific, I refer to practices that are to a greater degree than another set of practices limited to a particular context, e.g., attending Mass in the Syriac-Orthodox Church. Though others than Assyrian/Syrian are welcome to attend Mass at church, the practice is dominated by the particular setting and a specific group.

### **6.4.3. Validity**

The present study adopted several criteria of validity as presented by Creswell (2009). While there is an emphasis to take cultural differences into consideration when conducting research across cultural borders (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), there is also an emphasis among researchers that validity criterion is different depending on what population is sampled, e.g., (Sue, 1999; Knight, Roosa, & Umaña-Taylor, 2009; and Font & Méndez (eds.), 2009). Sue (1999) states that because much of the psychological and social science research are not based on ethnic minority populations, it is unclear whether theories from these fields are applicable to different ethnic groups or whether a question or measurement have the same meaning between different ethnic groups. Sue underlines that generalization between groups has to be empirically tested before assumptions of generality can be made. This raises questions whether or not it is possible for me to apply general criterion for internal and external validity and to draw hypotheses for the current study from previous research that is focused on other ethnic minority groups.

First, the current study applied methods that had criterion to follow in order to maintain a degree of quality. This was specifically for the internal validity. The generalizability that is linked to the external validity is complicated. There is the particularity of an ethnic minority group and there is the similar situation that different ethnic minority groups are situated within, e.g., the sense of belonging, the preservation of culture, or the perceived outside-positioning in relation to society. If the research field shows that there are similarities between ethnic minority groups then this threat should be less serious. Second, is it possible to draw hypotheses from previous conducted research focused on the same as well as other ethnic groups? These issues are related to the ability to transfer and to generalize the results from one study to another depending on factors such as the population and the applied theories. Theoretically, there is an issue when applying theories that are based on non-ethnic minority groups to ethnic minority groups. Methodologically, measures can be interpreted differently between different groups of people. To avoid this, a transparent as well as a reflective procedure must be present within a study. This also includes a critical stance towards the produced results. The current study combines both theories that are constructed on non-ethnic minority groups and builds upon previous research that includes studies that are based on different ethnic minority groups. I believe this to enrich the current study by combining different influences and by requiring me as a researcher to have a critical stance toward the chosen theoretical framework and the produced results.

#### 6.4.3.1. External Validity

According to Creswell (2009), threats to external validity arise when incorrect interpretations are drawn from the data in order to explain other settings or populations. *Triangulation* refers to combining different data sources to provide coherent justification for themes. This was achieved in the current study, by combining the results of the quantitative phase with the results of qualitative phase as well as using focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews in the qualitative phase. *Rich, thick descriptions* from the findings were provided in order for the researcher and the reader to acquire a more nuanced and broader perspective of the findings. This was achieved through the quotes presented from the qualitative results. The presented quotes were focused on those informants whose answer differed from the larger group. *Clarifying the bias* referred to the researcher reflecting on him- or herself and the possible bias that he or she brought to the study. This creates reflectivity towards the study. This was achieved by outlining my ambition and my thoughts of the study and by keeping a journal during the research procedure to note down my feelings, thoughts and insights that were raised during the research process. I described my interaction with the informants where issues were raised of my position as an insider and as an outsider. My position was somewhere between these two where I had a distance as an outsider by not sharing a similar ethnic and cultural background, by being a researcher that asked questions while where I had a position as an insider by having parents that had immigrated to Sweden and the fact that I could relate to some degree to the stories and experiences of the informants and their relation to the Swedish society and population. *Peer debriefing* referred to having a peer debriefer who reviews and inquires about the study. This was achieved by having a supervisor who examined the study throughout the research process.

The data of the quantitative phase was acquired using a convenience sampling technique from participants who participated in a research project from 2009. Being a convenience sampling impaired the ability to generalize to other contexts with the same population. It was also possible that only those who were active within a particular organization were represented with the sample.

Interaction of *selection* and treatment: This threat refers to the narrow characteristics of the sample which hampers the ability to generalize beyond the study. Because the current study used a convenience sample that was narrow by focusing on one ethnic minority, my ambition to generalize had little prospect even though I chose to interview individuals that were not included in the quantitative data.

Interaction of *setting* and treatment refer to the setting of the participants meaning that the particular setting may hamper the ability to generalize to other participants of other settings. My ability to generalize to other settings was limited to other settings in Sweden. However, I am aware that the majority of the participants lived in larger Swedish cities. This is worth keeping in mind since Assyrians from smaller cities, or towns, may differ from the current sample.

The informants of the qualitative phase were chosen in accordance with the results of the quantitative data analysis. A purposive sampling technique as well as a snowball technique were used in the qualitative phase. While the snowball-technique provided interviewees, it may have also provided for unaccounted factors that I may find difficult to account for. This might have provided a biased sample. However, all interviewees who was chosen was within an age span of 19-30.

## 6.4.4. Method and Methodological Reflections

### 6.4.4.1. Reflection on the Research Design

This study used a sequential mixed-methods approach where a quantitative phase preceded a qualitative phase. The balance between the quantitative and the qualitative phase was tipped towards the latter. The quantitative phase provided a background to the inquiry in the qualitative phase where statistically significant associations were further investigated in order to better understand the cultural learning and ego-identity development of Assyrians/Syrians. Could more emphasis have been put toward the quantitative phase? Yes, but the nature of the collected data fulfilled a limited amount of assumptions related to the available statistical analyses. The risk for error in the analyses were determined as too great in order to proceed with further analyses. This argument could be limited to the choice of applying parametric methods while nonparametric methods would have lesser specific assumptions and be more robust to violations of assumptions. However, the majority of the previous conducted research used parametric methods which hampered the ability by using nonparametric to compare the present study with the larger research field.

The advantages with a qualitative inquiry that followed a quantitative approach was to explore the relationships found in the quantitative data, e.g., investigating potential outliers, understanding the relations between variables; and to provide a context of the results drawn from the data, e.g., by providing a voice or a story to the population. Furthermore, the advantages of a mixed-methods approach were the possibility for comprehensive data gathering and analysis where different approaches and methods could complement each other. A mixed-methods approach requires a great deal of time and work because the researcher conducts two studies within the content of one. This could have the disadvantage of not providing enough depth in comparison to conducting a study that applied one methods approach. In addition, there was the work of synchronizing and making the two approaches work with each other. This was a considerable challenge because of the difference in quantitative and qualitative approaches, e.g., how theory was used.

The population of the qualitative phase was not the same as the participants of the quantitative data. Thus, the connection between the results of the quantitative phase and the qualitative phase may not be comparable. At the same time, not using the same population in the different phases may bring a greater diversity to the study and enrich the results.

### 6.4.4.2. Reflection on the Methods of the Current Study

The methods of the quantitative phase were statistical analyses, i.e., correlation, ANOVA, t-tests. The qualitative phase applied semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews that were analyzed by qualitative content analysis.

The choice of methods of analysis for the quantitative phase relied on the nature of the data. This was related to the assumptions that parametric and non-parametric statistical analyses assume about the data. As such, the range of methods were limited to a greater degree than in the qualitative phase. In the present study, non-parametric methods were applied to a greater degree than parametric. This may have resulted in a lesser sensitivity in the analyses and as a result, significant relationships or differences may have gone unnoticed. Powerful statistical analyses were not used because of their parametric nature in relation to the data; leaving out analyses such as multiple regression analysis.

The theoretical framework also influenced what methods that were better suited for the study.



Childhood and adolescence experiences, self-perceptions, identifications and experiences of discrimination were all aspects that were of importance according to the framework. In order to investigate these aspects semi-structured interviews were more adequate than participant observations. This issue was also related to in what manner the different methods provided possibilities for the operationalized theoretical concepts to be applied. No theory was applied in a direct manner in the sense that an instrument was applied. The theories were applied as an influence and guide to what variables were chosen to be focused upon in the questionnaires and what questions were to be posed when conducting the interviews as well as what to look for in the data analysis. While this might have provided a flexibility toward the inquiry and the analysis, it also created a possible discrepancy between the theories, the data collection and the analysis. This kind of inquiry, while influenced by theory and previous research, distances the results of the study from the larger research field by not applying to a greater degree developed instruments or operationalization's of theoretical concepts. This impairs the transferability of the results to other studies or other contexts. The choice of methods must also be seen in relation to the chosen research design. The research design determines the greater strategy for inquiry in the study where a chosen method must be aligned with the other methods chosen in order for the design to be effective. The choice of semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were believed to be the best complement to the statistical analyses because of their ability to incorporate questions from the questionnaires, the ability to focus on the individual and to in an in-depth manner examine different areas of inquiry.

In relation to the results; other methods could have shed further light to some of the issues that were found. For an example, applying a discourse analysis could bring valuable insight on how the informants referred to their history and their ethnic group as *our* history, *our* people and *our* traditions as well as the difference made between being a Swede and not being a Swede, i.e., self-referrals such as *us* and *them*.

The semi-structured interviews and the focus group interviews had different approaches and provided different kinds of data. The semi-structured interviews enabled an in-depth approach to the informants and their relationship to the operationalized theoretical concepts. The focus was set on the informants and their story. In contrast, the focus group interviews had also their focus set on the informants but on a group level where several informants could discuss with each other. While the purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to focus on the individual, the focus group was intended to capture group level discussions where issues that emerged from the semi-structured interviews could be presented for discussion. The semi-structured interviews provided data that was great in detail and that had a great depth. The focus group interviews provided data that broadened and confirmed the findings of the semi-structured interviews.

## 6.5. Ethical Reflections

During the write-up of the current study, done after the data had been collected and coded, I struggled with maintaining the voice of the informants and the participants while keeping my own voice separate. It was a balance that needed to be kept in order to preserve the originality of the informants and to avoid a diffusion of who was speaking. This influences the interpretation, i.e., where does the voice of the informants start and when do theory start. I have tried to present the voice of informants in the as vivid as possible by providing long quotes as well as using the words that the informants used themselves. When drawing theoretical interpretations, I have thought of the informants, the participants and reflected whether my interpretations might be valid or not. Since some of the informants of the qualitative phase have asked to receive a copy of

the thesis after its completion, I will receive feedback on the results whether they might be valid or not. I do not assume that the informants will cohere to the interpretations I have drawn from the theoretical framework as the framework and its theories might be foreign to the informants, creating a distance between them and theoretical interpretation. A more open, less developed approach enabled the informants to be open and to contribute to a greater degree by telling their story in their preferred way and ensuring that it was the views of the informants that were described.

## 6.6. Implications of the Current Study

The current study has shown that individuals within the Assyrian/Syrian group in Sweden go through processes of enculturation and acculturation as they develop their identity. Religiosity and language have central roles within the cultural learning processes. The suggested actions are based on the results of the current study.

### **Family**

An openness is recommended towards the influence of the family on the cultural learning processes. This openness is suggested mainly to the parents since they have an exceptional influence on the identity development and the cultural learning processes of the children. The openness refers discussing issues related to traditions, norms, values and beliefs. Such an issue would be honor and the roles related to females and males. Families should not only acknowledge such roles and values but they should also be open to discuss why there are values and roles related to honor and gender. The balanced approach with an openness towards the mentioned issues might aid the individual's identity exploration and commitment. If the exploration of the identity is enhanced it is likely that the process of cultural learning will include several cultures rather than one. This could help the individual's perception of sharing a group's self-definition as well as the perception of being a unique individual. The parents should continue to teach their children the culture of Assyrians/Syrians. At the same time, the parents should encourage a diverse upbringing where the children take part in the Swedish culture as well as other cultures. This encouragement involves supporting the experiences, e.g., discrimination, prejudice, engagement in different activities, of the children by being open and attentive. The children will one day grow up, realize and reflect on their place within society as well their relation to their ethnicity. The encouragement has to be executed as a balanced effort, e.g., by using their first language. Too much emphasis might result in the child distancing him- or herself from a culture. The children must also be free to pursue their own goal during their adolescence or early adulthood.

### **Institutions**

Institutions such as school or the church should provide the means for the individual to integrate his or her Assyrian/Syrian and Swedish culture. Educationally, this refers to offering courses in the children's first language. The school is an arena where several ethnicities meet and interact. As such, the school has to take into consideration the fact that there are ethnic groups present that do not have a country of origin but have a complex background where nationality is not necessarily equaled with ethnicity, as is the case of Assyrians/Syrians. This consideration will aid the identification with an ethnic group in addition to an identification with a nationality, i.e., Sweden or the country where the parents were born. The identification depends on age and the opportunity that the individual has been provided to achieve an identification. The individual



might prefer an identification related to a nationality because of an emphasis from his or her parents. Later in life, the individual may come to emphasize an ethnic identification. The church as a religious and a social institution is an important part of Assyrians/Syrians. It provides a historical context to the individual as well as the rituals that the individual uses during the development of ego-identity. The church has acted as a social institution that has represented Assyrians/Syrians through the ages and during the ongoing state of diaspora. At the same time, the Syriac Orthodox Church is also a gathering place for Assyrians/Syrians, especially at holidays where family and relatives attend church and later get-together for celebration within the families. The church has a responsibility to listen and to follow its members, e.g., by also providing Mass in a language that a majority can understand, in order to keep members interested and engaged in the activities. The church should also provide for a context where issues related to norms, values, beliefs and attitudes are discussed in order to enable a dynamic relation between Assyrians/Syrians and their culture. This is also true for the Assyrian/Syrian communities. If the individuals cannot connect to the church or the communities, they will lose these contexts as provider of rituals. The church and the communities provide the contexts for the individual to develop their identity and to differentiate as well as identify themselves with other Assyrians/Syrians through the rituals that are provided within these contexts. It is therefore important for the individual to return to these contexts and for these contexts, in turn, to be open to the individual.

### 6.7. Suggestions for Future Research

The suggestions for future research are derived from the theoretical reflection of the current study. The theoretical framework had difficulty in explaining gender differences of the enculturation and acculturation processes as well as the development of ego-identity. Future research should include theories that provide explanations for differences between males and females. Doing so could explain why women have a greater degree of religiosity and what implication this might have for enculturation, acculturation and identity development. This is relevant for populations if there are norms, values and traditions related to gender roles.

As was pointed out earlier in the theoretical reflection, some issues regarding the theoretical framework became apparent during the study. These issues were related to the relationship between enculturation and acculturation, i.e., the time of the processes and the number of cultures involved in the learning processes. The questions were 1) whether it was possible that enculturation included more than one culture, and 2) if acculturation could take place before adolescence or adulthood. Addressing these questions might provide new insights to the processes of enculturation and acculturation as well as the identity development.

Concerning the research design and the methods applied, future research should continue to apply mixed-methods approaches in order to draw the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as to complement the weaknesses of the two approaches. Future research should also strive to design the quantitative phase in relation to the theoretical framework in order to draw advantage of an approach that enables transferability and generalization with a representative sample, difficult as the latter may be with an ethnic minority. By having a stringent theoretical appliance in the quantitative phase along with data that enable the use of parametric statistics, the qualitative phase can provide further insight to any discovered relationships between variables.

## Chapter 7 Summary

The purpose of the current sequential mixed-methods study was to bring further knowledge to the field of psychology of religion of the role of religiosity for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden. Guiding the current study were theories of enculturation, acculturation, ego-identity, ritualization and *communitas*. The central research question was: What role does religiosity have for Assyrians/Syrians in Sweden, concerning the development of ego-identity and the practice of ritualization, within a process of enculturation and acculturation? The quantitative phase used a sample of 244 participants that were part of a previous conducted study. The data were collected through questionnaires. Descriptive statistics, comparing means, correlations, t-tests, and ANOVA; were applied to analyze the data. The variables that were investigated were: age, gender, and self-perception ethnicity, and self-perception religious/spiritual, self-perception being a part of the Swedish society, perceived discrimination, language usage, and religious participation. The qualitative phase used a sample of 12 informants collected by purposive and snowball sampling. The methods of data collection were semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews. The data collected were analyzed by qualitative content analysis. The focus was set in the qualitative phase on relationships that were found to be statistically significant in the quantitative phase, i.e., self-perceptions regarding religious/spiritual, ethnicity, and being a part of the Swedish society, perceived discrimination, and language usage.

The results from the statistical analyses showed a medium positive correlation between the self-perception as religious/spiritual and the frequency of attending Mass,  $\rho = .41$ ,  $n = 232$ ,  $p = .01$ , and fasting,  $\rho = .32$ ,  $n = 235$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater degree of self-perception as religious/spiritual was associated with a greater frequency in attending Mass and/or fasting. In addition, the results showed a medium, positive correlation between the self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian and degrees of using Suryoyo with friends and family,  $\rho = .30$ ,  $n = 236$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater degree of self-perception as Assyrian/Syrian was associated with a greater frequency in using Suryoyo with friends and family. The results showed that there was a negative, medium correlation between perceived discrimination and the perception as a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = -.41$ ,  $n = 236$ ,  $p = .01$ , and the perceptions of the degree that Swedes perceive the participants as a part of the Swedish society,  $\rho = -.41$ ,  $n = 234$ ,  $p = .01$ , where a greater degree of perceived discrimination was associated with a lesser degree of the perception as a part of the Swedish society. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the age groups of attending Mass and the degree of self-perception as religious/spiritual. There was a statistically significant difference on the degree of religious practice and the self-perception as religious/spiritual where age group 1 ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = 1.3$ ,  $n = 121$ ) had higher scores than age group 2 ( $M = 4.19$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ,  $n = 62$ ). The results showed a statistically significant difference between males and females concerning the degree of attending Mass, the frequency of fasting and the self-perception as religious/spiritual; where females had a higher mean score than males on all measures. The difference between the two groups differed in magnitude where fasting had the greatest difference between the groups, i.e., the effect size was large, and the smallest difference between the groups was the degree of attending Mass, i.e., the effect size was small.

The results of the data analysis from the qualitative phase showed that the informants were socialized into their first culture from birth. The first culture was for most of the informants the Assyrian/Syrian culture except for some cases when the informants spent their childhood in another country than Sweden. The analysis also showed that *the cultural attitudes* towards

acculturation seemed to be positive. While there was an emphasis among Assyrians/Syrians to preserve tradition and culture there was also a wish to be a part of society in order to fulfill the obligations towards it and earn the rights for being a part of the Swedish society. At the same time, some of the informants state that this was done with a reservation, with a fear of being assimilated and as a result losing the ethnic identification. The analysis showed that the informants positioned themselves between their ethnic and their Swedish identification. This position between the groups was taken because of the informants distance to each group while at the same time maintaining an identification to each group. This created a feeling of being unique in relation to the groups since the informants created a relationship to each group that was tailored according to the informants. The analysis showed that ritualization and the consequences of differentiation played a part in the process of identity development by aiding the individual to identify with a group's self-definition and to identify as a unique individual. The analysis identified language to be an important component of ego-identity and enculturation. Language is the vessel of communication and culture as well as an early indication to the child that it is different from others and similar to some. Religiosity was found in the analysis to help the individual to create and maintain a feeling of being unique and separate either by providing a context for one's identity or by being an object that the informant took distance from. The informants believed themselves to be a part of the Swedish society since they spoke the language, they behaved in a Swedish manner, they worked, they were born, they grew up and they received their education in the society,. While being a part of the society was not necessarily the same thing as being a part of the Swedish population, this latter identification was not as strong as the former since there was a difference of physical appearance between the informants and the Swedes. Discrimination, whether within Assyrians/Syrians or from others, was determined as an involuntarily differentiation where the informants experienced attempts by others to differentiate them from the Swedish population. Some of the informants chose to handle discrimination or prejudice by compensating for their background, e.g., working harder at their workplace, in order to prove that the reason for discrimination and prejudice was ill-informed.

Future research should include theories that provide explanations for differences between males and females. Doing so could explain why women have a greater degree of religiosity than males and what implications this might have for enculturation, acculturation and identity development. This might be especially relevant for populations if there are norms, values and traditions related to gender roles. Future research should continue to apply mixed-methods approaches in order to draw the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as complement the weaknesses of the two types of inquiries. Future research should also strive to design their quantitative phase in relation to the theoretical framework to draw advantage of an approach that enables transferability and generalization with a representative sample, hard as the latter may be with an ethnic minority. By having a stringent theoretical appliance in the quantitative phase along with data that enables the use of parametric statistics, the qualitative phase can provide further insight to discovered relations between variables.

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# Appendices

## A. Used Measures from Questionnaire applied in 2009

### B. Jag har fått enkäten tilldelat:

- 1 Via kyrkan
- 2 Via föreningen
- 3 Ingen av dessa, utan genom (ange vem): .....

### 1. Är du kvinna eller man?

- 1 Kvinna
- 2 Man

### 4. Vilket år är du född? 19\_\_\_\_

5. Vad är din nationalitet? (Nationalitet = vilket/vilka pass du har) : \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. I vilket land och stad är du född?

Land: \_\_\_\_\_

Stad: \_\_\_\_\_

### 7. Hur länge har du bott i Sverige? Antal år: \_\_\_\_\_

### 8. Vilken är din högsta utbildning?

- 1 Ingen formell skolutbildning överhuvudtaget
- 2 Grundskola/Folkskola
- 3 Folkhögskola eller realhögskola
- 4 Gymnasium: Praktisk yrkesförberedande
- 5 Gymnasium: Studieförberedande
- 6 Universitet, högskola: ej examen
- 7 Universitet, högskola: med examen

### 11. Hur ofta besöker Du gudstjänster med undantag av bröllop, begravningar och dop? *välj bara ett alternativ*

- 1 Flera gånger i veckan
- 2 Varje vecka
- 3 Varje månad
- 4 Vid speciella helgdagar
- 5 Någon gång om året
- 6 Mindre ofta
- 7 Praktiskt taget aldrig/aldrig
- 8 Vet ej

Aldrig

Ganska sällan

Ganska ofta

Mycket  
ofta

### 12. Hur ofta fastar du?

1

2

3

4

### 14. Hur mycket religiös/andlig känner du att du själv är?

1  Inte alls 2  Ganska Lite 3  Ganska Mycket 4  Mycket

**15. Frågor kring etnicitet:**

	<b>Inte alls</b>	<b>Ganska Lite</b>	<b>Ganska Mycket</b>	<b>Mycket</b>
A. Hur mycket assyrier känner du dig?	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
B. Hur mycket tycker du att svenskar ser dig som en del av det svenska samhället?	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>
C. Hur mycket känner du att du är en del av det svenska samhället?	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>

**16. Har du någon gång upplevt att du blivit diskriminerad i Sverige, pga att du är assyrier (t.ex. orättvist, negativt behandlad, eller ej önskad i det svenska samhället)?**

1  Aldrig 2  Ganska sällan 3  Ganska ofta 4  Mycket

**73. Hur ofta använder du suryoyo-språket**

**... tillsammans med vänner och bekanta?**

- 1 Dagligen
- 2 Någon gång i veckan
- 3 Någon gång i månaden
- 4 Sällan eller aldrig

**74. ... tillsammans med familj eller släkt?**

- 1 Dagligen
- 2 Någon gång i veckan
- 3 Någon gång i månaden
- 4 Sällan eller aldrig



## B. Introduction Letter of Qualitative Phase

### **Kära deltagare**

Denna studie omfattar kultur och etnicitet. Syftet med studien är att bättre förstå vilken roll kultur och etnicitet har för ens egen identitet samt hur identiteten förändras, eller inte förändras, med tiden. Studien kommer att bidra till att bättre förstå identiteten hos människor och hur identiteten agerar med kultur och etnicitet.

Bakgrunden till denna studie är att det idag lever många människor i länder som de har invandrat till, eller har föräldrar som är födda i ett annat land. Tidigare forskning visar att en människas identitet påverkas annorlunda beroende bl.a. på hur gammal man är, ens omgivning och ens bakgrund. I denna intervjustudie är jag intresserad av att veta hur Du förhåller Dig till Din kultur, etnicitet och det svenska samhället.

Denna studie genomförs av mig, Victor Dudas, student vid Uppsala universitet, mastersprogrammet i religionsbeteende vid teologiska institutionen. Intervjustudien är en del av min examensuppsats. Min handledare är Önver Cetrez, universitetslektor i religionspsykologi vid teologiska institutionen, Uppsala universitet.

### **Hur går studien till?**

Vi, Du och jag, träffas på en gemensamt överenskommen tid och plats. Jag berättar om intervjustudien och besvarar frågor Du har. Om Du samtycker till att delta i studien, intervjuas Du. Intervjuen spelas in verbalt och transkriberas sedan för att kunna analyseras. Själva intervjun tar ca 2 h. Det finns även möjlighet för att ha intervjun över telefon om vi inte kan träffas.

### **Frivillighet, hantering av data och sekretess**

Ditt deltagande i denna forskning är frivilligt. Dina svar är betydelsefulla och din anonymitet bevaras så långt som möjligt. Du kan när som helst avbryta Din medverkan i denna intervjustudie utan att det innebär några nackdelar för Dig. Ditt beslut kommer att respekteras utan någon påtryckning från min sida. Det är endast jag och min handledare som har tillgång till intervjumaterialet.

### **Förfrågan om deltagande och samtycke**

I samband med detta brev informeras också om samtycke. Undertecknad, huvudforskaren, åtar sig det vetenskapliga ansvaret för undersökningen och förbinder sig att fullgöra de uppgifter som ankommer en vetenskapsundersökning. I samband med att Du deltar i intervjun samtycker Du till att insamlat material får användas för analyser, för framställning i vetenskapliga artiklar och rapporter samt för presentation vid seminarier, konferenser och populärvetenskapliga sammanhang.

### **Ansvarig och kontaktperson**

Om Du har frågor, kontakta mig per telefon (+46-(0)73 50 45 713) så får Du hjälp. Du kan också kontakta mig skriftligen via e-mail: [victor.dudas.0687@student.uu.se](mailto:victor.dudas.0687@student.uu.se).

Tack för att Du tar Dig tid att delta i denna intervjustudie!

Victor Dudas

Mastersstudent, Uppsala universitet

Uppsala 2013-09-12

## C. Interview Guide of the Qualitative Phase

### 1. Demografi

- 1.1. Hur gammal är du?
- 1.2. I vilket land är du född?
- 1.2.1. (Om född utomlands) Hur länge har du bott i Sverige?
- 1.2.2. Vilken etnicitet identifierar du dig med? 3 min

### 2. Vilken roll spelar åskådningar om att vara assyrier/syrian (Suroyo) för unga assyriska/syrianska män och kvinnor?

- Självbild Assyrier/Syrian 28 min
- 2.1. Jag kommer att ställa dig en fråga och sedan läsa upp svarsalternativ. Ange det alternativ som passar dig bäst. Har du förstått? Fråga gärna om jag är otydlig.
    - Hur mycket assyrier/syrian känner du dig?  
(*Inte alls, Ganska Lite, Ganska Mycket, Mycket*) 2 min (Ego-identity - identity)
  - 2.2. Vill du utveckla kring den uppfattningen? 4 min (Ego-identity - identity)
  - 2.3. Tack. Är det något specifikt du förknippar med assyrier/syrian? (T.ex. mat, gemenskap, språk, religion, heder, självrespekt, respekt). 4 min (Ego-identity – etos och symboler)
  - 2.4. Finns det någon särskild aktivitet som gör att känslan av att vara assyrier/syrian är mer påtaglig? (Aktivitet i förening, middag och träff med släkt etc.) (Vad gör du? Vad händer? Varför känner du så just då? Vad tror du det beror på?) 6 min (Ritualization)
  - 2.5. Hur identifierade du dig som barn? (Familj betydelse) (Etnicitet och svensk) (Enculturation) 6 min
  - 2.6. Hur identifierade du dig som tonåring? (6 min)

### 3. Vilka konsekvenser har användningen av språket suryoyo för unga assyriska män och kvinnor?

- Språkkompetens modersmål (t.ex. Suryoyo) 32 min
- 3.1. Vilket är ditt modersmål? 2 min
  - 3.2. Likt tidigare kommer jag nu att ställa dig en fråga och sedan läsa upp svarsalternativ. Ange det alternativ som passar dig bäst. Har du förstått? Fråga gärna om jag är otydlig.
    - Hur ofta använder du ditt *modersmål* (t.ex. suryoyo-språket) tillsammans med vänner och bekanta? 2 min (Ego-identity - ritualization)  
(*Dagligen, Någon gång i veckan, Någon gång i månaden, Sällan eller aldrig*)
    - Vill du utveckla? 4 min (Ego-identity - ritualization)
  - 3.3. Likt tidigare kommer jag nu att ställa dig en fråga och sedan läsa upp svarsalternativ. Ange det alternativ som passar dig bäst. Har du förstått? Fråga gärna om jag är otydlig.
    - Hur ofta använder du ditt *modersmål* (t.ex. suryoyo-språket) tillsammans med familj eller släkt? 2 min (Ego-identity - ritualization)  
(*Dagligen, Någon gång i veckan, Någon gång i månaden, Sällan eller aldrig*)
    - Vill du utveckla? 4 min (Ego-identity - ritualization)
  - 3.4. Tack. Är det något specifikt du förknippar med ditt *modersmål*? (T.ex. identitet, samhörighet, fortlevnad). 4 min (Ego-identity - etos och symboler)
  - 3.5. Kunde du tala ditt modersmål som barn? (Familj betydelse) (Enculturation) 4 min
  - 3.6. Är det en skillnad mellan nu och barndomen i vilka situationer du använder vilket språk (modersmål/suryoyo och svenska)? (När lärde du dig svenska?) (Näm en specifik. Varför just detta?) 4 min (Acculturation, enculturation och ritualization)
  - 3.7. Hur använde du språket i tonåren? (6 min)

Självbild Svensk 22 min

4. **Vilken roll spelar uppfattningar om att vara en del av det svenska samhället för unga assyriska/syrianska män och kvinnor?**
- 4.1. Likt tidigare kommer jag nu att ställa dig en fråga och sedan läsa upp svarsalternativ. Ange det alternativ som passar dig bäst. Har du förstått? Fråga gärna om jag är otydlig.  
Hur mycket tycker du att svenskar ser dig som en del av det svenska samhället? (Inte alls; Ganska lite; Ganska mycket; Mycket) 2 min (Ego-identity - identity)
- 4.2. Vill du utveckla? 4 min (Ego-identity - identity)
- 4.3. Likt tidigare kommer jag nu att ställa dig en fråga och sedan läsa upp svarsalternativ. Ange det alternativ som passar dig bäst. Har du förstått? Fråga gärna om jag är otydlig.  
Hur mycket känner du att du är en del av det svenska samhället? (Inte alls; Ganska lite; Ganska mycket; Mycket) 2 min (Ego-identity - identity)
- 4.4. Hur kommer det sig? 4 min (Ego-identity - identity)
- 4.5. Finns det något särskilt som gör att känslan av att vara svensk är mer påtaglig? (Umgås med vänner, resa utomlands, nationalsången etc.) (Vad gör du? Vad händer? Varför känner du så just då? Vad tror du det beror på?) 6 min (Ritualization)

#### Diskriminering 20 min

5. Likt tidigare kommer jag nu att ställa dig en fråga och sedan läsa upp svarsalternativ. Ange det alternativ som passar dig bäst. Har du förstått? Fråga gärna om jag är otydlig.  
Har du någon gång upplevt att du blivit diskriminerad i Sverige, pga att du är assyrier/syrian (t.ex. orättvist, negativt behandlad, eller ej önskad i det svenska samhället)?  
(Aldrig; Ganska sällan; Ganska ofta; Mycket) 2 min (Ego-identity - identity)
- På grund av att du har en invandrarbakgrund?
- 5.1. Vill du utveckla? 4 min (Ego-identity - identity)
- 5.2. Hur brukar du hantera diskriminering? (Vad gör du? Vad händer? Varför känner du så just då? Vad tror du det beror på?) (6 min) (Ritualization)
- 5.3. Har du upplevt diskriminering i din barndom? (Enculturation or acculturation) 4 min
- 5.4. Har du upplevt diskriminering i tonåren? (4 min)

6. **Vilken roll spelar åskådningar om att vara religiös/spirituell för unga assyriska/syrianska män och kvinnor?**

#### Självbild religiös/spirituell 14 min

- 6.1. Jag kommer nu att ställa dig en fråga och sedan läsa upp svarsalternativ. Ange det alternativ som passar dig bäst. Har du förstått? Fråga gärna om jag är otydlig.  
- Hur mycket religiös/andlig känner du att du själv är?  
(Inte alls, Ganska Lite, Ganska Mycket, Mycket) 2 min (Ego-identity - identity)
- Menar du religiös eller andlig?
- 6.2. Hur kommer det sig? 4 min (Ego-identity - identity) (Ej om tron i sig.)
- 6.3. Kände du likadant när du var ett barn? (Familj betydelse) (Enculturation) 4 min
- 6.4. Kände du likadant i tonåren? 4 min

#### Kyrkan/Rum (10 min)

Finns det något särskilt rum som gör att känslan av att vara religiös/andlig är mer påtaglig? (Kyrkan). (Vad gör du? Vad händer? Varför känner du så just då? Vad tror du det beror på?) 6 min (Ritualization)

Vilken roll har kyrkan för dig? (4 min)

Upplever du att namnkonflikten mellan assyrier och syrianer försvinner i kyrkan under gudstjänster?

7. **Vilken roll spelar ritualer, d.v.s. gudstjänster, för unga assyriska/syrianska män och kvinnor?**

Gudstjänster 18 min

- 7.1. Jag kommer nu att ställa dig en fråga och sedan läsa upp svarsalternativ. Ange det alternativ som passar dig bäst. Det är ett par alternativ så säg till om du inte uppfattar allt jag säger. Har du förstått?
- Hur ofta brukar du besöka gudstjänster om du bortser från bröllop, begravningar och dop?  
(*Flera gånger i veckan; Varje vecka; Varje månad; Vid speciella helgdagar; Någon gång om året; Mindre ofta; Praktiskt taget aldrig/aldrig; Vet ej*) 2 min (Ego-identity - ritualization)
- 7.2. Hur kommer det sig att du besöker gudstjänster i den frekvensen du gör? (Roll (*funktion*)) 4 min (Ego-identity - ritualization) (Ej om tron i sig.)
- 7.3. Hur upplever du gudstjänster? (Roll (*funktion*)) 4 min (Ego-identity - ritualization)
- 7.4. Hur upplevde du gudstjänster när du var ett barn? (Familj betydelse) (Enculturation) 4 min
- 7.5. Hur upplevde du gudstjänster i tonåren? (4 min)

Avslutning 10 min

8. Är det något du vill dela med dig av som vi inte redan har berört?

(Vet du någon annan som skulle kunna tänka sig att ställa upp på intervju? )

Tack för att Du tog dig tid till att vara med i denna intervjustudie.

Beräknad åtgång av tid: 154 min.

## D. Focus Group Guide of the Qualitative Phase

### **Inledning**

Välkomna ska ni vara hit. Kul att ni kunde ta er tid att delta i denna studie. Tanken är att vi ska behandla ett par frågor idag och diskutera dessa. Vanligtvis kommer det att gå till på så sätt att jag ställer en fråga till er och så får ni besvara frågan eller diskutera svaret. Jag har ett par frågor som jag vill behandla men om ni vill ta upp något så känn er fria till att göra det. Efteråt skulle jag vilja be er att fylla i en enkät som jag har med mig, det vore jätte uppskattat. Har ni några frågor?

### **Öppningsfrågor**

#### **Demografi**

Hur känner ni varandra?

Hur gamla är **ni**?

I vilket land är **ni** födda i?

(Om född utomlands) Hur länge har du/ni bott i Sverige?

Vilken etnicitet identifierar **ni er** med? 3 min

#### **Introduktionsfrågor – identifikation**

Vad är förknippat med att vara assyrier enligt er?

Vad innebär det att vara assyrier tror ni?

Vad är förknippat med att vara svensk enligt er?

#### **Övergångsfrågor – identifikation**

Varför känner ni just så? (Specifikt för respektive)

#### **Nyckelfrågor – identifikation**

Finns det en skillnad mellan er och assyrier i Södertälje?

Vilken betydelse har ert utseende för hur ni (blir) identifierar er?

Tror ni att diskriminering påverkar er identifikation som svenskar?

#### **Introduktionsfrågor – språk**

Vilket är ert respektive modersmål?

#### **Nyckelfråga – språk**

Har modersmålet någon betydelse för er etnicitet tror ni?

#### **Introduktionsfrågor – religion/andlighet**

Har religionen någon betydelse för att vara assyrier?

Vilken roll har kyrkan för er?

**Övergångsfråga – religion/andlighet**

Hur kommer det sig?

**Nyckelfrågor – religion/andlighet**

Upplever ni att namnkonflikten mellan assyrier och syrianer försvinner i kyrkan under gudstjänster?

Vilken roll har gudstjänster för assyrier utifrån ert eget perspektiv?

**Avslutande frågor**

Är det något du vill dela med dig av som vi inte redan har berört?

Jag skulle vilja be er att fylla i en enkät innan vi går skilda vägar.

