

University of Twente
Faculty of Behavioral, Management and Social Sciences
1st Supervisor: Dr. M.R.R. Ossewaarde
2nd Supervisor: Dr. G. Dix

Bachelor Thesis

*The Diaspora as a Third Space –
The identity-representation of the Albanian diaspora on social media networks in Germany*

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Elira Halili

Abstract

In this Bachelor Thesis, I identify how second and third-generation diasporic Albanians in Germany from age twenty to thirty represent “identity” through digital social representation on Instagram. Research on this target group's online “identity” representation has been neglected so far, but it is necessary to understand current political activism in Germany.

According to Serge Moscovici (1981), an interpretative approach has been chosen based on the theory of social representation and its model of social memory. Therefore, I conducted a conceptual content analysis and semi-structured interviews with second and third-generational diasporic Albanians in Germany who engage as activists online. Furthermore, the research shows that the "diasporic identity" online is represented by referring to *Academic History*, *Collective Memory*, *Individual Experience*, a Critical Reflection on one's culture and “identity” and by sharing educational content. The online activists create a unique hybrid "identity", differing from previous generations and symbolizing a "third space", which can be used for political matters through this representation.

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1. Introduction

1.1. "Identity" and the Albanian diaspora

Particularly in recent years, online activism and political education has been increasingly taken up by Germans with a migratory background who try to create safe(r) spaces and spread awareness on Instagram against structural discrimination, such as *Helen Fares* or *Hengameh Yaghoobifarah*. Those online activists often create "collective diasporic identities" to mobilize and face current challenges. However, it is striking that very few German Albanians are involved in this socio-political discourse, even though Albanians face various forms of discrimination in Germany such as Islamophobia (Halili, 2021). This might be linked to Albanians being a fragmented and heterogenous group in Germany, still facing problems with members of former Yugoslavian Countries and some Albanians not wanting to represent themselves as "victims" in a public discourse due to the recent war history (Halili, 2021). Still, there are a few Albanian Online Activists of the third and second generation in the German Diaspora, joining the current political activism online and trying to form a political and cultural alliance against discrimination by using their "identity".

Therefore, this thesis aims to understand the "identity" representation of those Albanian online activists, the motivation behind it and how it is used for political matters on Instagram. The concept of "Identity" in the thesis is thereby seen critically and as a "production, which is never complete, always a process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 2015, p. 222).

Hall argues that "identity" is not given, genetically hereditary and unchangeable, but is a construct that is historically and socially produced and reproduced. This continuing politicization of "identity" makes it even more important to understand the current construction and representation of collective identities online – especially in diasporic contexts. Understanding diasporas not as national entities of "identity" such as "Albanian" or "German", but rather as hybrid (Mambrol, 2020) can help to understand the relation between identity politics and the struggle to overcome injustices in a globalized context. One could say that identity politics needs to be analyzed and understood to help navigating policy making to contradict nationalism, discrimination, racism, and many other forms of oppression. By seeing "identity" as a construct, it is important to emphasize that such concepts can always be politically instrumentalized, which makes it even more important to understand "identity" through research.

Considering the long continuity of Albanian migration to Germany, its representation in online discourses of the wider public is rather invisible, especially compared to other diasporic groups in Germany. The mobilization of Albanians in Germany consists of three core phases: After the fall of the communist dictatorship of Enver Hoxha (Adler, 2017; Vullnetari 2013), during the mobilization of guest workers from Kosovo under the Tito regime in the former Yugoslavia, and the third stage was the mobilization of Albanians seeking asylum during the Yugoslav wars and even after the end of the Kosovo war in 1999 (PRO ASYL, 2015). Due to the economic effects of the COVID-19-Pandemic, the recent tensions in the Western

Balkans linked to the Outbreak of the Ukrainian and Russian War, and the Visa Liberalization for Kosovo, further waves of Albanian migration to Germany are to be expected. Given this migratory context, the Albanian diaspora, and their representation of “identity” in political online activism by second and third generations activists needs to be further considered in discourses and policies regarding migration and diaspora.

1.2. Scientific and Societal Relevance

Research on the “identity” representation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany in social media is of high scientific relevance, as it has not been studied before.

The implementation of a digital perspective on “identity” formation and representation is important in the context of globalization through digitalization. The Internet plays an increasingly important role in communication, group formation and alliance building. Examining the construction of “diasporic identities” through a digital lens can help to better understand “identity” as a tool in political activism and why certain. In addition, understanding the importance of online “identity” representation can help shape foreign and domestic policymaking and advance the knowledge of diaspora and migration studies, which is important in a world of constant mobilization and migration. By analyzing the phenomenon of “identity” representation of diasporic groups, it is possible to distinguish these from the identities of the host country and the country of origin, and thus to specify the political work and development in terms of diaspora and migration policy.

1.3. State of Research

As mentioned above, the representation of Albanian diaspora “identity” is relatively invisible in the German online activism - this lack of representation is not only limited to social media representation, but also applies to academic research. Most of the current literature focuses on migration and diaspora in terms of “integration” but does not include the issues of “belonging” of second or third generation migrants facing different struggles than the arrival generations. It can be theorized that these younger groups who are born here are mostly not struggling with language barriers or other typical “integration” issues, but with finding a sense of “belonging” and “community”.

The research gap of non-first-generation diasporic Albanians and their “identity” construction online needs to be understood and analyzed to find out how people identify with more than one culture and to understand the struggles of diasporic Albanians in Germany in current policy making. Thus, there is a need to fill this research gap on the struggles of the second and third generation diaspora.

In addition, there is a clear research gap specific to the Albanian diaspora in Germany. Much of the literature is theoretically based on diaspora and migration, but there is little data on specific diaspora groups. Most of the literature on the Albanian diaspora focuses on the United Kingdom (Hewer & Vitija, 2013) or Italy (King & Mai, 2009), but since the socio-political aspects, such as policy making or discrimination in a host country, can be very different from those in Germany, it is of great importance to understand the online representation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany as a distinct “identity” construction with strategic purposes linked to a German political context.

1.4. The Research Question and Sub-Questions

This thesis attempts to fill the before-mentioned research gap through theory-based knowledge and interviews. This interpretive textual analysis based on content analysis can be placed in the research tradition of interpretivism. Therefore, this thesis focuses on elaborating the significance of the analysis of the Albanian diaspora “identity” representation online in Germany for the research of “identity” politics and diaspora studies to provide a better understanding and possibilities for future inclusive policy making. Due to the lack of research and the politicization of "identity politics" in Germany as a post-migrant society (Foroutan & Schäfer, 2009), the following research question is proposed for the bachelor thesis:

How do second and third generation diasporic Albanians in Germany from the age of twenty to thirty represent identity through digital social representation on Instagram?

With this research question, other sub questions arise:

- a. How do second and third generation diasporic Albanians in Germany use Instagram to represent identity on social media?*
- b. How can digital social representation emerge a sense of “belonging” and “community” within the Albanian diaspora?*
- c. Which issues are important for online identity-representation within the Albanian diaspora?*

In the following, the theoretical framework is elaborated by presenting the concept of diaspora and the theory of social representation. The methodology will be described and, following the analysis of the interviews conducted with online activists of the second and third generation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany, the results of the “identity” representation will be analyzed and further discussed.

2. Theory

In the following Chapter, the theoretical framework for conceptualizing “identity” formation according to Moscovici (1981) will be elaborated in relation to the “identity” representation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany. First, the term "diaspora" is defined to provide an understanding of why the analysis of “identity” representation of diasporic groups is important, but also to clarify the problematic nature of the term. It then elaborates on Moscovici's theory of social representation and his model of social memory to link “identity” formation and representation to the concept of “diaspora” and thus to understand its inherent connection to “identity” politics. Finally, the key insights are outlined, and the theoretical framework related to the Albanian diaspora is linked to social media, specifically the platform Instagram, as a tool for young generations regarding “identity” representation.

2.1. Defining the “Diaspora”

The "Albanian diaspora" lives all over the world, but what is a “diaspora”, how can it be defined? And what are the implications of the representation of "identity" in relation to “diaspora”?

Derived from a meaning that originally described Jews, Greeks and Armenians displaced from their countries of origin, the term is now used much more broadly and in relation to all cultures and ethnicities (Grossman, 2019, p. 1264). Diaspora is defined as an umbrella term referring to communities that have been voluntarily or forcibly displaced from their ancestral homelands and a feeling of not being truly accepted in the country of residence is given. Contemporary understandings of diaspora have broadened the field of analysis to include ethnic minorities, religious communities, immigrants and refugees, and expressions of nationhood from elsewhere (Boichak & Kumar, 2022).

Diasporas exist when networks create and allow a degree of independence from the host society; and when values, norms and practices have developed that distinguish the diaspora from the surrounding majority culture. Additionally, a diaspora is characterized by a dilemma of belonging and a need to be loyal to both the country of origin and the country of residence; and when there's an idealization and a strong need to stand up for of the homeland. Moreover, diasporas show an expectation of solidarity within diasporic networks, and assimilation, which is often expected from the majority culture to the country of residence is difficult (Moosmüller, 2012, p. 60).

Diaspora discourses represent a sense of belonging to an enduring transboundary network that includes dispersed people with a sense of originality and attachment to their heritage. The concept is a social construct based on feelings, memory, mythology, history, meaningful narratives, group “identity”, yearnings, dreams, allegorical and virtual elements, all of which play a role in creating a “diasporic reality”. Thus, the attachment to one's country of origin must be strong enough to withstand forgetting or distancing (Shuval,

2000, p. 43). According to Boichak and Kumar (2022), diasporas are seen as transnational actors who can use social media platforms such as Instagram for mobilization. In contrast to bodies with a clear geographical boundary, diasporas are "deterritorialized socio-political formations" (Boichak & Kumar, 2022, p. 243). They can be defined by their mobilization and their positionality within other networks (Boichak & Kumar, 243).

Given these many characteristics of the diaspora, it's clear why the term is so widely used and that there is no clear definition of it. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the limitations and problems of such a broad construct.

One important aspect that has been criticized about the term diaspora is that its many definitions always include the idea that every diasporic community wants to return to their country of origin, which does not apply to all diasporic groups (Mayer, 2015, p.10). When looking at second and third generation diaspora people who have grown up and were socialized in their host country, it cannot be expected that every person wants to return to their country of origin.

When using the term diaspora, historical perceptions of nationhood and ideologies of belonging must always be considered (Sideri, 2008). According to James Clifford's postcolonial approach (1986), many diasporic communities therefore present themselves less nostalgically, but rather in the form of a socio-cultural and political identification, to hold on to the idea of a "home", without aiming to live in that place (Mayer, 2015, p. 12).

Furthermore, diaspora and identity politics are strategically instrumentalized. Monika Fludernik (2000) speaks of a deliberate shift from an individualistic to a communitarian order and ideology, which determines identity politics worldwide and, especially in the Western capitalist world, not only permits but practically demands a long-distance nationalism (Mayer, 2015, p. 14). In addition, communication tools such as the internet and cheap transport facilitate transnational connections. Globalization manifests itself in worldwide financial, economic, technological, and ecological interdependence, in which goods, capital, knowledge and culture flow across territorial boundaries, which enable immigrants to maintain constant communication and contact with their countries of origin as well as with other people in those countries. While these can bring benefits to diasporas, countervailing forces of nationalism, ethnicity, religious fundamentalism, racism, sexism, and other forms of exclusion are growing and can be used to abuse the power of identity politics (Shuval. 2000, p. 45).

For this thesis, Instagram is seen as an "elastic political space" where the "Albanian diaspora" can mobilize and communicate issues, thus building and supporting a group feeling or "diasporic identity" (Boichak & Kumar, 2022, p. 244). Thus, in the digital age, social media platforms must be considered when talking

about diasporas (Boichak & Kumar, 2022, p. 243), since history, memories and experiences can be easily shared with a large entity of members of a social group (Boichak & Kumar, 2022, p. 245).

Therefore, the core question of this thesis *is how these diasporas create and represent an internal sense of belonging* by using Instagram as a tool. This thesis assumes that the core of a diaspora is inherently connected to the creation and feeling of an essentialist construction of “identity”, which needs to be represented to be able to take political action.

Thus, the term diaspora can be inherently linked to Serge Moscovici's theory of social representation, as it is essential to understand the unique “identity” that diasporas form, especially considering the limited knowledge about the “identity representation” of the second and third generation Albanian diaspora in Germany.

Assuming that identities are constructed (Hall 2015), this chapter shows that the diaspora is also a construction, and that these constructions cannot only be united, but must interact and complement each other.

2.2. Relation between Social Representation Theory and the concept of “Identity”

The theory of social representation emerged from Serge Moscovici's understanding on Durkheim's conception of collective representation. Moscovici defines social representation as:

“a set of concepts, statements and explanations originating in daily life in the course of interindividual communications. They are the equivalent in our society, of the myths and belief systems in traditional societies; they might even be said, the contemporary version of common sense” (Moscovici, 1981, p.181, in: Bar-Tal, 2014).

The theory of social representation implies that collective concepts construct a shared social reality of groups; this social reality can be, for example, “identity”. According to this theory, all nations or ethnic groups need shared narratives about their history and memory (Bar-Tal, 2014). Moscovici notes that not all social groups share the same values, ideologies, or experiences, but all base their understanding of “identity” on these factors. Social representation suggests that social membership in a group not only provides individuals with a sense of “identity”, but also allows individuals and groups to differentiate themselves from "others" (Rateau et. al., 2012, p. 480). The power of this theory lies in its ability to explain the processes of social transformation of knowledge and to explain how and why specific cultures develop their own concepts of “identity” (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 169).

Model of Social Memory

It is from this transformative and constructive quality of the theory of social representation that the model of social memory emerges, in which the essence of the analysis of this thesis will lie, to understand the constitution and function of the online “identity” representation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany (Hewer & Roberts, 2012). The model of social memory refers to the intertwined dynamics between three sources of knowledge, namely *Academic History*, *Collective Memory*, and *Individual Experience*. For the individual, the combination of the three types of knowledge creates a subjective view of reality, i.e., notions of past, present, and future, “identity” and moral values. The result is a set of historical narratives expressed in terms of “identity” purposes (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 172). “Identity” construction is also crucial to the formation of social groups, because to form a group, individuals must identify themselves as members of that group, for example the “Albanian diaspora”. The three sources of knowledge create a basis for a sense of similarity, unity, and coordination, hence – “identity” (Bar-Tal, 2014).

History is not directly involved in “identity” formation, but the provision of objective facts about the past is inherently intertwined with *Collective Memory* and *Individual Experience*.

Academic History is rooted in scientific inquiry, which is achieved through a scientific approach to knowledge of the past. The intention of *Academic History* is to provide an accurate account of the past, with an emphasis on the transformation of knowledge and the revision of previous ideas in the light of new evidence. While history strives to be objective, much of the evidence about historical events must be interpretive and constructivist (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 173). For example, when applied to Albanian history, much information about the Kosovo War was gathered through oral history methods. This limitation can lead to the use of *Academic History* and *Collective Memory* as synonyms, although it is of great importance that these terms are considered separately but intertwined.

While *Academic History* provides the factual basis of a past, *Collective Memory* takes that past and roots it in tradition and storytelling. It creates heroes and political or social narratives and values. *Collective Memory* brings a commemorative voice into the dynamic and acknowledges that any attempt to structure the memory of the past and create a set of foundational beliefs is determined and constrained by cultural norms and beliefs (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 173). Conversely, it can be viewed as stored in a collection of individual memories. *Collective Memory* is not situated spatially at all but is actualized through collective remembering. (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p.174).

Collective Memory, as well as *Academic History*, is intertwined with *Individual Experience*, which is the third dynamic of the model of social memory. Individual knowledge of history, also through experience, adds and stimulates emotions to this dynamic. Notably, the degree of *Individual Experience* can vary from person to person, as not every member of a group has the same experiences (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p.

175). *Individual Experience* remains a popular and important source of knowledge since it creates histories, memories of shared individual experiences and it continues to saturate culture. This furthermore shows that the three dynamics cannot be seen solely separately, but as over lapping dynamics that not only influence each other, but also create each other (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 175).

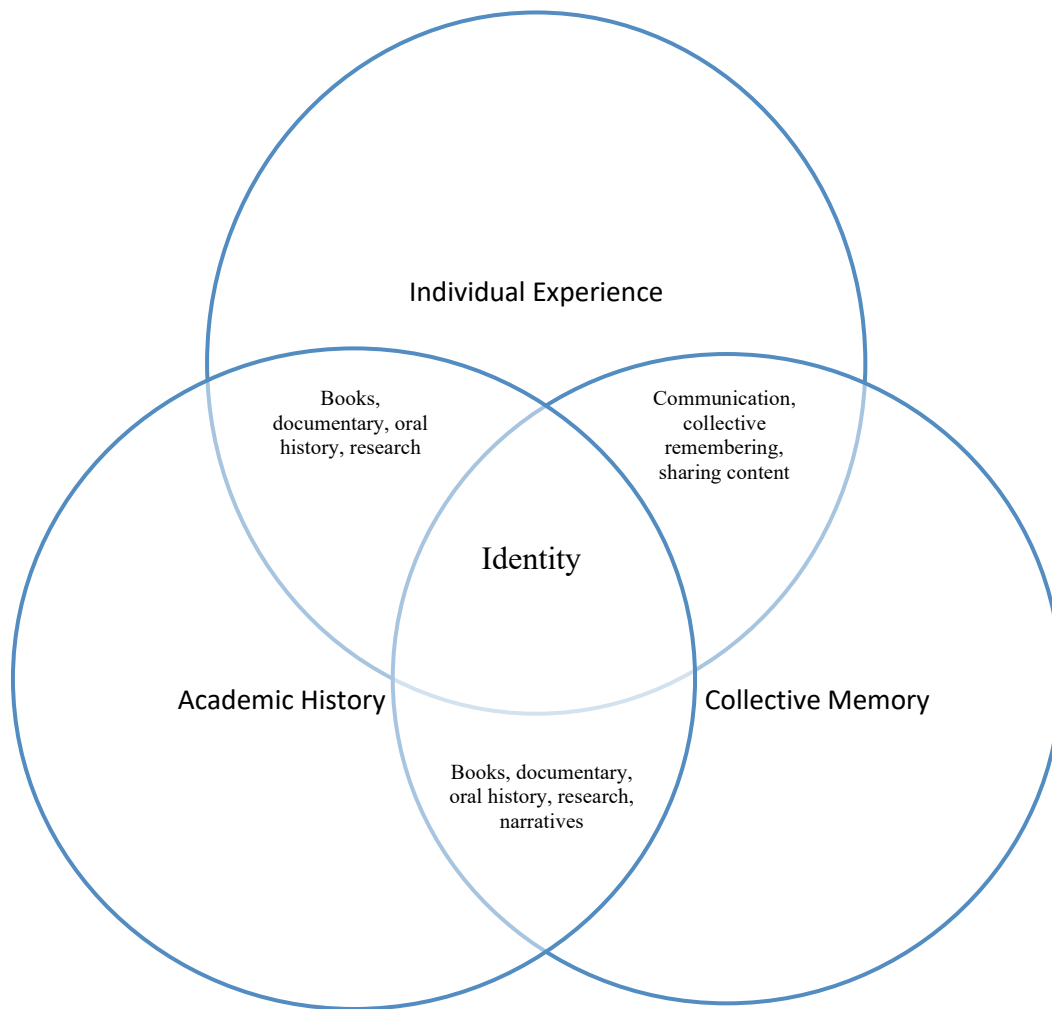


Figure 1: The model of social memory according to Hewer & Roberts, 2012

2.3. Concluding Remarks

The Albanian diaspora in Germany can be analyzed in its “identity representation” on Instagram through the lens of the social representation theory. Since diasporas are a form of social groups, the theory of social representation and its model of social memory are suitable to make not only the formation, but more importantly the representation of “identity” understandable and researchable, which provides a theoretical insight in the “identity representation” of diasporic Albanians in Germany.

If we assume that there is constructed and essentialist understanding of a “German” and “Albanian” identity, then we can also assume that the Albanian diaspora is creating a third “identity” of its own, what Moosmüller (2012) calls a “hybrid culture” (Moosmüller, 2012, p. 55). According to Moosmüller, by being part of this hybrid culture, diasporic Albanians do not look for a purely German or Albanian “identity” but come to terms with discontinuities and multiple belongings and create social spaces across geographical borders and create their own “identity” (Moosmüller, 2012, p. 55). Seeing diasporic “identity” across geographical borders through this theoretical framework, allows the implementation of the digital aspect as Instagram as a tool for “identity representation”. The social representation theory and its model of social memory enables a concentrated view on social media as a place and ground to represent an “identity” within a diaspora (Witteborn, 2009).

After elaborating the theoretical framework, it is expected that members of the Albanian diaspora in Germany show a high amount of content about Albanian and Kosovar *Academic History, Collective Memories* of diasporic Albanians according to communal experiences and historic memorable events, and *Individual Experiences* that other diasporic Albanians might relate to.

Summarizing, this thesis aims to show that diasporas are not only the dislocation of a social group, but that they also create their own “identity” which can be reflected and shared online and analyzed through the theory of social representation. This chapter has shown that both “diasporas” and “identities” are constructed and create realities through history, memories, narratives, and emotions, therefore diasporas create a way of “identity” and can be explained through the social representation theory.

Since different generations of diasporas represent different constructions of “identity”, this thesis is interested in finding out how the second and third generation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany on Instagram represent “identity”, how this is intertwined, and goes beyond the theory of social representation.

3. Methodology

The aim of this study is to understand the “identity” representation of the second and third generation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany and give a transparent process of the methodological approach. Since it was already stated that “identity” is a construction (Hall, 2015), an interpretative approach is the most suitable way to gain knowledge and answer the research question and its sub questions.

First the specific case of “identity” representation on social media of the Albanian diaspora in Germany and the research design will be elaborated, then the method and data collection explained. Lastly, the method of data collection will be presented, and a coding scheme provided.

3.1. Case Description

This thesis seeks to provide knowledge about the representation of “identity” through social representation of second and third generation diasporic Albanians in Germany.

Analyzing the representation of Albanian diasporic “identity“ is highly politically charged. This research needs to be seen in the context of the politically strategic functions of “identity“ and in the field of tension between cultural conditions and power relations (Das, 2020). It is necessary to analyze “representation” in relation to “identity”. Looking at the history of “Albanian culture”, Albanians were oppressed in their “identity“ representation not only during the time of the former Yugoslavia, but also centuries before, during the time of the Ottoman Empire (Hewer & Vitija, 2013, p. 622). Previous research has shown that the constant suppression of cultural representation can lead to uncritical patriotism and nationalism (Hewer & Vitija, 2013, p. 629). This is likely to be reflected, for example, in social networks such as Instagram. Research on Albanian diaspora “identity“ representation can therefore not only contribute to a deeper understanding of the core of Albanian diaspora “identity“, but also explain reasons for and mitigate preventive policies against nationalism and patriotism.

But why is research on the second and third generations of diasporic Albanians so important in this case?

Although born here, young Albanians face discrimination, stereotypes and internal problems growing up between two cultures (Angermüller, 2018). Incorporating these factors into current research can help to understand migrants who have grown up in Germany and struggle with unique aspects that have not yet been widely researched and addressed in politics. These issues can, for example, affect political participation and weaken democracies (Müssing & Worbs, 2012).

Moreover, studies have shown that young people who belong to the so-called “Gen Z”, born between 1997 and 2012, and Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, heavily rely on social media as a source of information and connection (Blandi et al., 2022, p. 1). Therefore, the focus is laid on members of the Albanian diaspora between the age of 20 to 30 to implement generations that are highly affected by

digitalization. Since social media has a big impact on “identity” and group formation and representation, it is highly important to include these in the field of migration and diaspora studies.

Furthermore, the question arises as to why it is so important not to focus solely on Albanians from Albania or Kosovo.

This thesis argues that the Albanian and Kosovar Albanian diasporas are so intertwined in their “identity” and culture that it would be misleading to divide them into two separate groups. Previous research has shown that Albanians from Kosovo and Albania feel historically and culturally connected and part of the same ethnicity, namely that they derive their “ethnic identity” from the Illyrians (Hewer & Vitja 2013, p. 627-628). Therefore, the Albanian diaspora will not be divided in this research paper.

The thesis will attempt to generate how diasporic Albanians use social media, how they represent their “identity” on these platforms, whether “social representation” and the model of social memory create a sense of belonging within the Albanian diaspora, and what issues are important for the representation of “identity” within the Albanian diaspora. Furthermore, it will be examined whether the Albanian diasporic online “identity” in Germany differs from other online diasporic identities. Thus, the research question is interpretative, as this proposal aims to develop an interpretation and understanding of the “identity” representation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany on social representational platforms. Therefore, qualitative research will be conducted, as this research will be based on a textual conduction of information, thus being a textual analysis.

3.2. Data Collection

For the research on the “identity” representation of the Albanian diaspora, the data collection in this interpretive research will be done through an in-depth data analysis. For this purpose, the data analysis will be examined in relation to the theory of social representation in a digital aspect.

As a specific method of data collection, interviews were conducted based on diasporic Albanians who are online activists in the diaspora in Germany, between the ages of 20 and 30.

The interviews are used as a research tool to gather new information from an individual perspective on the collective perception of the “identity representation” of the Albanian diaspora in Germany, which cannot be found elsewhere, as there is no current research on the “identity representation” of the second and third generation Albanian diaspora living in Germany.

Although there is little representation of activist diasporic Albanians in Germany, the researcher was still able to conduct 5 interviews with diasporic activists. A group of five diasporic Albanians, aged between 20 and 30, who grew up in Germany and are active on Instagram as online diaspora activists, and who are either

second or third generation Albanian migrants, were recruited for the study. Furthermore, this study focuses on Instagram as a tool of representation, since all the participants are highly active on this platform to share their activist work.

All participants were anonymized, so no information about their gender, age, location, or occupation will be disclosed. The participants were selected through convenience sampling, as they were all visibly active in talking about issues of the Albanian community on Instagram and were therefore accessible to the researcher. During these semi-structured interviews, the following questions were asked: (1) the meaning of being “Albanian”, (2) the influence of living in Germany on the understanding of being “Albanian”, (3) the presentation of being an diasporic Albanian in Germany on Instagram, (4) the motivation for sharing the “Albanian identity” on Instagram, (5) the perception of the presentation of Albanians online, (6) the current challenges of diasporic Albanians in Germany regarding online-representation, and (7) the way in which online-representation can help to mitigate these challenges.

Participants were interviewed online and were asked to answer questions based on their own interpretation and without prior preparation. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and each participant had the opportunity to speak either English, German or Albanian - however, each interview was conducted in German. To ensure authenticity and a safe environment, participants were able to express their feelings and thoughts in Albanian throughout the German interview. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and the quotes later in the Analysis chapter translated into English.

The interviews were conducted by me, a second-generation diaspora Albanian living in Germany to ensure a sensitive context where the participants were able to express themselves without fear of being misunderstood.

Conducting interviews with an interviewer who has a personal connection to the research topic can raise methodological and ethical issues. There is a risk that a personal connection to the participants and their individual experiences may lead to a biased interpretation of the interviews by the researcher. Although the interviewer was aware of these implications, the interviews were analyzed objectively and thoughtfully from a detached perspective.

3.3. Method of Data Analysis

For this thesis, the most appropriate approach is a conceptual content analysis following Kracauer (1952) (Kuckartz, 2019). Content analysis is a strategy in which qualitative textual data is categorized and grouped into clusters of conceptual categories to identify interpretive patterns or relationships within these categories (Given, 2008, p. 120). The use of content analysis as a methodology can help to identify the presence of concepts within qualitative textual data. In this study the source of data is the interviews conducted.

Furthermore, content analysis can be categorized into conceptual analysis, which examines a selected concept by quantifying its presence in textual data (Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, 2022). For the analysis of Albanian diaspora “identity” representation, this is the most appropriate type as the selected concept to be examined is “identity” representation on social media through social representation theory.

In the analysis, the concepts were coded to make the textual analysis interpretable. Hereby all five interviews were analyzed to find indicators to the online representation of “identity” in diasporic Albanians in Germany. The interviews, which were conducted semi-structured to ensure an open ended, neutral, and clear process and avoided language leading to the underlying theory of social representation, were analyzed through categories and themes based on the theory of social representation to analyze the “identity” representation. During the process of coding the collected data, the content was analyzed through the categories and not specific pre-destined codes. This thesis is an interpretative analysis, in which the participants had the freedom to express themselves very individually. Thus, it was not possible to predetermine codes, as, for example, expressions of individual experiences can be communicated through different wording. This means that the categories were interpreted during the analysis in the transcripts, and example codes emerged from this. The coding scheme carried out using *Atlas.ti* is provided in the Appendix under the section 7.1.

In summary, this thesis uses conceptual content analysis to gather interpretative information on the “identity” representation of the second and third generation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany. The collected semi-structured interviews are interpreted through the lens of social representation theory by coding the transcripts in *Atlas.ti*. This will provide information on the implementation of *Academic History*, *Collective Memory*, and *Individual Experience* in relation to the representation of “identity” and whether any other findings have been made. Through this research method, answers can be found to the “identity representation” of second and third generation diasporic Albanians, how they use Instagram, whether it creates a sense of belonging and community, and to identify challenges when representing “identity” online.

4. Analysis

This chapter is going to take a dive into the content of the collected interviews, to find indicators which show the representation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany on Instagram by applying the underlying theory of social representation. The goal of this section is to express the findings and be able to define the identity and its representation of the second and third generation. Existing literature mainly focuses on first generation migrants, furthermore barely any previous research focused on Albanians in Germany. Therefore, this thesis uses the collected interviews for the analysis to be able to fill the research gap regarding second and third generation Albanians in the diaspora in Germany, between the age of 20 to 30. An interpretative, conceptual content analysis was employed. Hereby, it was possible to interpret the through interviews collected data by using the categories stated in the Coding Scheme. The Categories underlying the theory are the following: *Academic History*, *Collective Memory*, *Individual Experience*, *Representation*, and *Sense of Belonging and Community*.

For the sake of structure, this analysis is divided into different parts constructed out of the theory of social representation. Nonetheless, the three dynamics must be seen as intertwined with each other. They don't work separately; they influence and create each other.

During the coding process through *Atlas.ti*, the following categories emerged beyond the theory of social representation, as they are important for the analysis of the online identity representation of the second and third generation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany: *Critical Perspective*, *Discrimination/Racism*, *Education*, *Identity Diffusion*, and *Nationalism/Patriotism*.

Hereby, *Critical Perspective* and *Education* will be later elaborated more detailed, since they are used as supra-categories like *Academic History*, *Collective Memory*, and *Individual Experience*. *Discrimination/Racism*, *Identity Diffusion*, *Nationalism/Patriotism* and *Sense of Belonging and Community* will not be elaborated in their own sections, but during the process since they must be seen as sub-categories that are a part of the formation of the supra-categories. Through the interpretation of the citations of the collected interviews, the data is analyzed in terms of its content relating to the social representation theory, to find indicators for the identity of the Albanian diaspora and the way it is presented on Instagram.

4.1. Empirical Findings analyzed according to the Social Representation Theory

4.1.1. The representation of the dynamic "Academic History"

Academic History is rooted in scientific facts about the past. It doesn't directly form identity, but it transforms knowledge about the past, which is deeply intertwined with the creation of *Collective Memory* and *Individual Experience* of historical events (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 173).

While existing research has shown that *Academic History* is deeply involved in remembering and creating cultural and identity entities, only three participants made brief comments about historical events in their home countries in relation to their understanding of Albanian identity. In total, out of 99 coded quotes, only 9 were interpreted as *Academic History*.

Participant 1 and Participant 3, in their responses to the question about their understanding of being Albanian, stated that they identified with their personal connection to the Kosovo war:

“For me, to be Albanian means, to be honest, to be proud of something, because my parents fled the war in Kosovo and were also afraid of losing their country, and they didn’t [...], being the child of such parents, is something I can be extremely proud of, because my parents have been through a lot.” (Participant 1, p. 1)

“[...] For me, being Albanian means above all being confronted with the subject of war at a very early age.” (Participant 3, p. 1)

Given that Participant 1 talks about Pride, it can be interpreted that the loss and pain of the first generation of Albanian migrants to Germany still forms an “identity” in terms of *Academic History* and is passed on to the second and third generation of diaspora. This also underlines the connection between *Academic History* and *Collective Memory*, as Participant 1’s perception of history is not explicitly about the Kosovo War itself, but about the experiences of family members in relation to the war. Looking at Participant 3 however, shows that the age when experiencing political events such as the war are important when constructing “identity”

while the war has had a major impact on the identity of the Albanian diaspora, it is very dependent on timing and age.

The quotes suggest that although the dynamic *Academic History* has an impact on the identity of the second and third generations of the Albanian diaspora, it is not as pronounced as in previous generations. None of the interviewees associated any historical event with their own identity other than the Kosovo war. Historical events such as the former Yugoslavia or the totalitarian history of Albania were not mentioned in any interview. None of the interviewees identified with the origin of Albanian culture from the Illyrians, which was often the subject of existing literature that focused on the first generations of Albanian migrants (Hewer & Vitija, 2013, p.7).

Nevertheless, *Academic History* was very much implemented by the participants in their responses regarding representation in relation to identity. When asked about their motivation to represent the Albanian diaspora online, participants 3 and 5 spoke about the importance of representing history by posting about it on Instagram. Especially participant 3 talks about the “*great ignorance*” they face when talking about

historic events like the Balkan wars “*especially with younger people*” (Participant 3, p. 2). The interviewee points out the often-occurring sentence about the Ukraine war being the first war in Europe since WWII, “*which completely excludes and erases what happened on this continent 24 years ago*” and expresses how important it is to create visibility and awareness since the Kosovo war has great importance to German post-war history, being the first mission after WWII (Participant 3, p. 3). The ignorance the participant is facing can be interpreted as *Identity Diffusion*, as the feeling if historic events not being known or not being taken seriously by the host community can invalidate the dynamic *Academic History* and its construction of identity.

Also, participant 5 sees the *Academic History* from great importance. The participant described their motivation to by saying:

“*...I want to put Kosovo on a map. To show people that there is a country and its people that hardly get any attention.*” (Participant 5, p. 1-2).

Interpreting these statements, it can be said that for second and third generation diasporic Albanians in Germany, the representation of *Academic History* is of great importance to give visibility and education, especially towards the host country. By making history visible and "putting Kosovo on a map", a general knowledge is created within the German post-migrant society, which can lead to the recognition of the deep significance of the Albanian diaspora - this can create a *Sense of Belonging and Community* within the Albanian diaspora and offers *Representation*. The statement of Participant 5 also shows an understanding of “moral responsibility” towards discriminated groups in Europe, such as Albanians, which is common for online activists on Instagram.

Nonetheless, the participants did not grow up in Kosovo or Albania, they didn't go to school there or lived their everyday lives, thus their information, on one side of course on research and education, but also highly on narratives and experiences which were passed on by family and others. This leads to the next dynamic, which is deeply intertwined with history: *Collective Memory*.

4.1.2. The representation of the dynamic “Collective Memory”

Collective Memory takes the past but roots it in narratives, unlike *Academic History*, which is rooted in objective facts. Based on existing literature, *Collective Memory* is rooted in tradition, storytelling, national heroes, political and social narratives, and values that create a collective representation of an identity (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 173). It creates foundational beliefs that are shaped by *Academic History*, but also implements myths and norms (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 173).

All five participants included the concept of *Collective Memory* in their responses to the interview questions. Participant 5 has formulated *Collective Memory* according to existing literature by describing it as “... *being connected to family, being hospitable and having a longing for Kosovo and Albania.*” (p. 1).

On the other hand, *Collective Memory* is shown through experiences of exclusion and suppression:

“The realities of life the of Albanians, [...]it is simply massively different, especially with regards to the aspect of class and classism, [...] because things that I could not afford [...] as a teenager in Germany, in contrast to my classmates, have always given me the feeling of: Okay, we don't have too much money, our family can afford less [...] whereas when I travelled to Kosovo, during the summer holidays [...], than that I wore brand-name clothes or just C&A clothes, the simple fact that these things were new already distinguished me from my cousins, [...] who [...] simply wore our old things. In this respect, seen solely in terms of this one notion of class, the reality of life is not the same.” (Participant 3, p. 3).

Interpreting this, one can say that *Collective Memory* in the second and third generations is certainly defined by traditions and the way Albanians see themselves as a heterogenous group, but it is also mainly defined by struggles such as discrimination and classism, which is a unique form of *Collective Memory* to the second and third generation. It does not fit into the picture of *Collective Memory* as defined by the existing literature (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 172), but it includes the awareness of the second and third generation diasporic Albanians about socio-political and socio-economic circumstances. Thus, this discrimination by the host country can lead to a negative connotation of the identity of the Albanians themselves. Nonetheless, the previous stated quote by participant 3 shows the contradictory state of diasporic people by living “poor” in their host country but being perceived as “rich” in the home country. This can also lead to *Identity Diffusion*. Furthermore, it is striking that participants don't only mention discrimination from the host society, but also strongly criticize the oppression and expectations from their families and other Albanians:

“Being Albanian, [...] means for me to live a life with guilt. [...], to live in the feeling of guilt, in relation to the culture, the parents and the relatives.” (Participant 4, p. 1)

“Sometimes there is a lack of mutual understanding of the realities of life, so that when you travel to Kosovo even today, I have the impression that there is little understanding of certain issues, this so-called identity diffusion. How many diasporic children feel that there is hardly any understanding? When I try to explain this to my friends there or to my cousins, they say, why are you complaining? Do you know how privileged you are to be there?” (Participant 3, p. 2).

The participants state that they feel pressure from their Albanian community, which can be interpreted in such a way that in the second and third generation the awareness of difficulties plays a big role in the formation of *Collective Memory*. On the one hand, they feel connected to their Albanian identity, but at the same time they acknowledge that they cannot really grow up like Albanians living in Kosovo and Albania, because they simply do not live there (*Participant 1, p. 6*).

This is also shown in the way the participants perceive the representation of *Collective Memory* on Instagram. They share art like poetry and pictures, but they also share memorial content in connections to Kosovo and Albania. Participant 1 states for example, that reading content like poems on Instagram can create a feeling of being understood and explains the thought process “*we don't know each other at all, but I'm reading this, and somehow we share so much, even though we don't know each other at all.*” (*p. 5*). This feeling of being understood is also represented by participant 3, who stated that the content of others enables diasporic Albanians to “*find words that you might not have had at hand before*” which helps to communicate emotions, process them and construct the diasporic identity through a *Sense of belonging and Community* and having a certain feeling of *Representation* (*p. 6*). Furthermore, participant 3 also remarks that diasporic Albanians share particularly informative posts on anniversary days, such as the massacre in Račac on January 15th, 1999, or the remaining 1620 missing persons since the Kosovo war (Kosovo2.0, 2022) to spread awareness (*p. 4*).

Tradition and the memory of historical events have an impact on the Albanian identity and how it is represented on Instagram, but what makes it diasporic is the awareness and affectedness of inequalities and difficulties, which is very specific to young diasporic people of the second and third generation. What is particularly striking is that it is significant to the participants to see this representation, as it creates a *Sense of Belonging and Community* within the diaspora. Participant 4 even emphasizes the importance of the second and third generation and their representation by referring to them as “*psycho-breakers*”:

“It would always be important to say in the context of the diaspora that the generation, the second and the third generation are [psycho-breaker]s. They are [...] the ones who break the whole cycle and of course finally bring out something new, so that these things are no longer reproduced, oppression, [...] mental health and other things that [...] have this great function.” (Participant 4, p. 4).

Nonetheless, the participants also state that this representation on social media can also have its downsides. For example, participant 3 states that “*that there are of course no control functions [...] in social media, [...] content is shared that has either not been accurately researched or, in some cases, quite radical opinions are formulated [...]*” (*p. 5-6*). There is a consciousness given over the dangers that social media platforms present and therefore support nationalist ideologies.

In these comments on the representation of diasporic content on Instagram, the participants show that the second and third generations see the problems that representation can bring if it is not thoroughly researched and used for education, but to spread patriotic, nationalist, or populist ideologies. This can have a negative influence, especially on young diasporic Albanians, and contradicts the actual goal of diasporic Albanian activists, which is to represent, inform and educate, and thus represent the Albanian diaspora without spreading hatred.

4.1.3. The representation of the dynamic “Individual Experience”

The third dynamic of the model of social memory in the theory of social representation is the dynamic *Individual Experience*. It includes emotions, personal experiences and individual knowledge of history, also through experience into the dynamic. It is a very important source that saturates culture and identity and is deeply intertwined with the other two dynamics, *Academic History* and *Collective Memory* (Hewer & Roberts, 2012, p. 175). Therefore, *Individual Experience* means hereby the narration of experiences within the second and third generation of the Albanian diaspora.

All participants of the interviews included the dynamic of *Individual Experience* in their answers, in fact, it was the most coded instance during the Coding process on *Atlas.ti*. From 99 coded quotes, 46 were coded with *Individual Experience*. Thus, one can interpret that for the second and third generation of diasporic Albanians in Germany, *Individual Experience* has the biggest influence in their identity and how they represent it on Instagram. When asking about their perception of being Albanian and the influence of living in Germany into that perception, all five participants answered with a statement that was connected to their own experiences living in the diaspora:

“My understanding of being Albanian has been shaped by my life in the diaspora, so I had to develop a hybrid understanding of it. Over the years, I learned that I cannot be Albanian enough for Kosovo and for Albania because of my socialization in Germany. However, the feeling of having to hide or suppress certain parts of myself [...] never remained limited to there. Here in Germany, too, I could observe that I disguised and hid myself in the Albanian society living here. My understanding of being Albanian is [...] very much shaped here in Germany by what Albanian society or majority society expects of me.” (Participant 5, p. 1)

All participants especially talked about the unique experience of diasporic Albanians in Germany, to not feeling fully a part of either “German” nor “Albanian” society and culture and even can experience discrimination from “both sides”. Experiencing an *Identity Diffusion* and not feeling entirely a *Sense of Belonging and Community* is a very significant part of their experiences throughout their lives. Participant 2 uses the term “third space” to further explain this phenomenon:

“I believe that where I find myself is a so-called third space. [...] I find myself in a new space that is characterized by perhaps exclusion, but also by belonging to both spaces. So, I'm talking about both, the German space, and the Albanian space. And yes, accordingly I believe that I am now in a diasporic context, in a third space, where I have had to develop my own individual form of individuality and identity, which is Albanian and German or involves the socialization of both cultures.” (Participant 2, p. 2).

This “third space” is significant in the interpretation of the identity of the second and third generation of diasporic Albanians in Germany. It creates, as the quotes show, a place in which neither belonging nor exclusion is fully given, but a mixture of both. From sides of the German majority society, diasporic Albanians are faced with a lot of discrimination sides of people, but furthermore structural racism and discrimination, as participant 2 explains:

“...there is institutional and structural racism [...] in Germany is [...] it is totally difficult for [...] Albanian people, but also migrant people in general, to somehow find access to institutions, no matter what form and what nature.” (Participant 2, p. 5).

Additionally, from sides of the Albanian society, diasporic Albanians are treated unjustly. There is a deep misunderstanding and high expectations towards diasporic Albanians from their relatives and the Albanian society in general. Relatives, but also the broader Albanian community in Germany and in the home countries, expect the Albanians living in Germany to still live according to traditional, conservative structures still upheld in their home countries, reproduce sexist, homophobic, and racist behavior, and put pressure on the participants of the interviews, whereas the interviews made clear that the participants tend to rather live according to liberal, “western” standards (Participant 4, p. 2).

Interpreting these quotes, which create this so-called “third-space” in which diasporic Albanians must live, the participants use exactly that space in the in-between of two cultures, to represent their *Individual Experiences* and create a *Sense of Belonging and Community*. The interviewees therefore share their *Individual Experience* and create therefore Collective Memories through sharing their experiences and communicating, that other diasporic Albanians are not alone in their feelings and their perception of their socio-political surroundings. During the interviews, all participants state that they share their own *Individual Experience*, or the experiences and perceptions of living in the “third space” and share those *Individual Experience* through informational slide-posts or art, like poetry.

There is a strategic dimension behind their sharing activities: The Participants are motivated to post on *Individual Experience* to connect with others experiencing similar difficulties (Participant 2, p. 2) and to reach out Albanians and people interested in the Western Balkans (Participant 5, p.1)

Participant 1 explained that through the love and personal connection to the home country, their motivation is to improve the social and political attitudes of the Albanian society by sharing personal and collective experiences and explaining historical facts. Still, Participant 1 acknowledges “unpleasant sides” of growing up in Albanian families and “to stand up and talk about them” (p. 4-5)

While interpreting the interviews according to the underlying theory of social representation, this part leads to new insights beyond theory. While history, *Collective Memory* and *Individual Experience* have a major impact on Albanian identity and that these dynamics are reflected in representation on Instagram, two other major aspects of identity representation of the diaspora also emerged: the *Critical Perspective* on identity and *Education*, which will be elaborated further in the following section.

4.2. Further Findings

4.2.1. The importance of “Critical Perspective”

Through the theory of social representation, other important aspects of identity formation and representation of the Albanian diaspora were identified by interpreting the interviews. One of these further insights is the *Critical Perspective*. All participants in the interviews reflected in different ways a *Critical Perspective* on the representation on Instagram and the Albanian culture, and the way it is accepted in Germany.

Participant 1 for example states that within the online representation, there are some content creators who promote nationalist, patriotist, and racist ideologies and push a certain picture of what an “real Albanian” should have to look and act like (p. 4). Participant 3 states:

“I notice a lot of [...] national pride, which I also find problematic in some respects [...] that's what I'm missing [...] I see little content that is critical and questions one's own perspective.” (Participant 3, p. 4).

Participant 2 also criticized that not enough in-depth research takes place and that most representation is in sport and pop culture. This representation nonetheless reproduces a heteronormative society (p. 4-5).

Furthermore, participants 2 criticizes the reproduction of stereotypical “primitive” perceptions of Albanian people on Instagram (Participant 2, p. 5).

These quotes show that there is a fixed idea of “identities” that are reproduced through Instagram, but which cannot reflect the diversity of Albanian realities. This is being highly criticized by most participants.

Participant 4 on the other hand follows a different approach: The participant uses stereotypes on Instagram in a comedic matter to change the perception of Albanian people in Germany by “*break[ing] down stereotypes by using them.*” (p. 4).

After looking at these statements, one can interpret that the second and third generation of diasporic Albanians in Germany have a huge focus on criticizing not only the view of the German majority society on the Albanian community, but furthermore the reproductions of socio-political issues of the Albanian community itself. All the participants represent their Albanian identity in a self-reflected perspective and thus criticize the content of other creators and limits of oneself' content on Instagram. This shows another aspect of the identity representation of the second and third generation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany, adding to the theory of social representation and its dynamics *Academic History*, *Collective Memory*, and *Individual Experience*. Beyond this, the dynamic of the *Critical Perspective* takes the three dynamics of the model of social memory into account and interprets them through a progressive, critical lens. Additionally, the interviewees see one solution for the topics they criticized: *Education*.

4.2.2. The meaning of "Education"

From the previous quotations and interpretations, it has often been clear that all the interviewees are doing the same thing with their activist work on Instagram: (Unpaid) educational work. All the problems presented by the participants in the interviews in their critical perspective are based on a lack of education, on the one hand in the German majority society, and on the other hand in Albanian society, which still reproduces "traditional" structures. Whether it is *Education* through sharing *Individual Experience*, *Collective Memory* or sharing historical events on Instagram, all of this is educational work. For the interview partners, this education was also an important aspect of their identity formation representation. All five participants made statements, which can be interpreted in terms of *Education*:

"So, it's very important to educate [...]and, if someone is in the wrong position, to address that [...] but that also takes a lot of time, energy and strength." (Participant 1, p. 6).

Furthermore, participant 5 states the visibility of the growth of educational work of diasporic people of the Albanian diaspora:

"In recent years, however, I notice an increase of Albanians who are on social media. [...] Doing educational work or political education work or generally raising awareness in different areas, for example LGBTQ+, issues and racism. At the same time, celebrities like Dua Lipa from Albania and Kosovo are pushing international attention to our countries of origin, which is helping more and more people to explore and become aware of this." (Participant 5, p. 2)

Hereby it can be interpreted that educational work does not just help to solve problems which Albanian diasporic people are facing, but it furthermore gives *Representation*. Moreover, the *Representation* of Albanian pop culture puts the Albanian community on a stage that allows non-Albanian people to become aware about the Albanian community and the countries of Kosovo and Albania, which can lead people to engage with the identity and culture.

Furthermore, participant 3 states that the importance of intense research and education, to prevent misinformation and the spread of populist ideologies, and hereby criticizes the unreflective statements on Instagram. The participant criticizes that often people don't fact-check information that is spread by creators and dialogue regarding "facts" on the platform is limited (p.7).

It can be concluded that *Education* is an important part of the second and third generation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany, and that *Education* stands especially intertwined with the *Critical Perspective* that is represented. Only through well-researched information, a *Sense of Belonging and Community* can be represented in a way, that does not support nationalist ideologies and therefore be abused by the power of identity-politics.

4.3. Findings and outcomes of the identity representation on Instagram

After interpreting all the collected data, it is now possible to answer the specific sub questions to this thesis, analyzing the identity representation of the second and third generation of the Albanian diaspora in Germany.

Looking at the question of *how second and third generational diasporic Albanians in Germany use Instagram*, the analysis has shown that the target group uses Instagram as a tool to share content that defining their identity. *Academic History* is represented by sharing information about Albanian history, mainly the Kosovo war. It is important to state that most of the second and third generational diasporians did not experience historic events themselves and therefore rely on research and tellings from their family. Through this, it leads to the representation of *Collective Memory*. This is represented through informative posts or art, like poetry and illustrations which have a message about inequalities in resources and possibilities and furthermore talk about experiences of discrimination in Germany. Additionally, the analysis has shown that also a high level of content about pressure from the Albanian community is shared. This is intertwined with the representation of *Individual Experience*, which is online represented through sharing personal stories and the accumulation of various experiences of "not belonging anywhere" form collective experiences, which manifest as *Collective Memory*. Furthermore, the analysis has shown that beyond the social representation theory, the *Critical Perspective* is highly represented on Instagram by criticizing the inequalities they face in Germany, the pressure they feel by the Albanian Community and especially

criticizing the reproduction of stereotypes and nationalist content spread online. The analysis has shown that second and third generational diasporic Albanians see *Education* as a solution to these problems. By sharing educational content like well researched informational posts about historical events, but also the sharing of experiences as an Albanian living in Germany, not only the stated problems can be counteracted, but also representation is given and a *Sense of Belonging and Community* is formed. This leads to the answer to the second sub question of *how digital social representation emerges a Sense of Belonging and Community emerges within the Albanian diaspora*. Through sharing and reading content about the experiences of other Albanians living in Germany, one can identify and feel represented and connect with other diasporic people over Instagram, which creates a *Sense of Belonging and Community*. Especially through art, for example poetry, which is shared on Instagram, people can find content that expresses issues that oneself cannot put into words. These can be for example feelings of exclusion and discrimination, but also a longing for the home country and, contradictory, pressure from society of the Albanian community. These are especially the *important issues for the identity representation of the Albanian diaspora*, which is the answer to the last research question. Additionally, to these personal issues, the analysis showed that the representation of well-researched information is from high importance for the second and third generation of diasporic Albanians in Germany, to ensure diverse and accurate information and counteract nationalist ideologies and the reproduction of stereotypes.

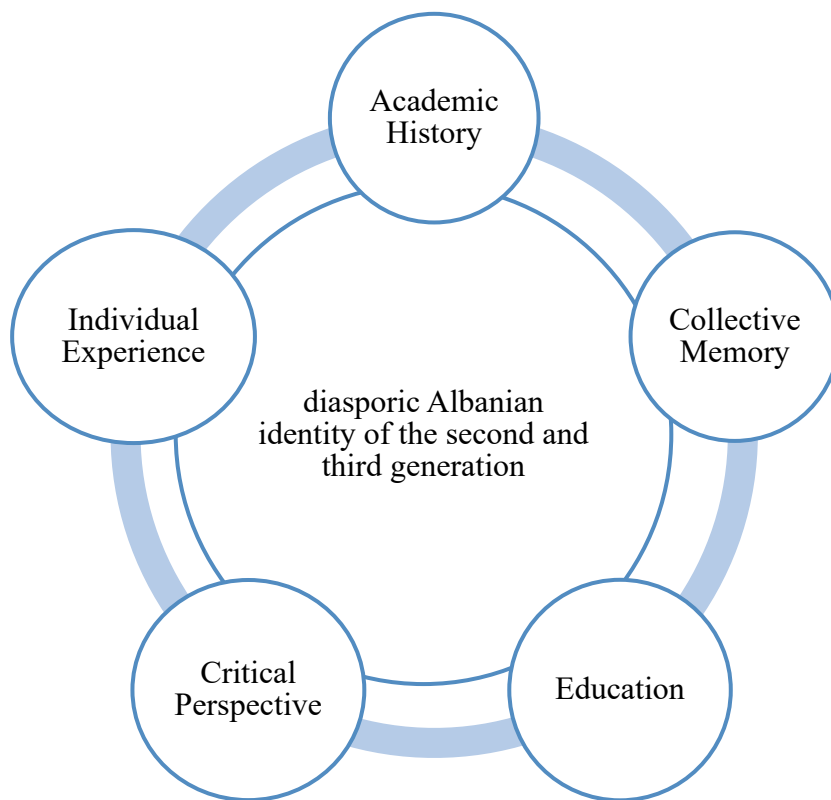


Figure 2: the elaborated model of social memory according to Hewer & Roberts, 2012 and the analysis

5. Conclusion

The analysis showed that the theory of social representation and its model of social memory according to Moscovici (1981) can be applied to the “identity” representation of Albanian online activists. The findings state that the three dynamics *Academic History*, *Collective Memory* and *Individual Experience* are represented in the way second and third generation diasporic Albanians in Germany identify themselves and how “identity” is constructed on Instagram. Moreover, Moscovici’s theory could be extended, by deriving *Critical Perspective* and *Education* as further dynamics from the research conducted on the specific case of Albanian Online Activists.

The methodological approach was fruitful and could help answer the research question of *how second and third generation diasporic Albanians in Germany, aged twenty to thirty, represent their identity through digital social representation on social media platforms like Instagram.*

Academic History is used to construct “identity” by sharing content about historical events such as the Kosovo War, whereby information about the origins of the Albanian people was not present. Furthermore, all participants grew up in Germany and were therefore not socialized in their home country and did not experience historical events such as the former Yugoslavian regime or the Kosovo war themselves. They rely on the narratives of their family or other Albanians and conduct own research on historical events.

The emergence of *Collective Memory* is what makes the constructed “identity” of the Albanian diaspora in Germany particularly unique, as the core of this dynamic is built on collective experiences of social exclusion, oppression, classism, and discrimination, rather than on traditions and narratives of the Albanian community.

The dynamic *Individual Experience* has the greatest impact on the second and third generation of diasporic Albanians in Germany and is represented by sharing art and information about the experiences of Albanians living in Germany. This could be explained by the fact that they feel alone or do not fully belong to a culture in general, which gives more importance to their *Individual Experiences*.

The analysis has shown that there is a certain degree of “identity” diffusion among the second and third generation of diasporic Albanians in Germany, creating a “third space” between countries, cultures, and “identities”. They create a *Sense of Belonging and Community* by sharing the socio-political injustices they experienced as part of their “identity”.

It has been shown that there are factors that influence “identity” formation and its representation beyond the social representation theory. Of high importance is the dynamic of *Critical Perspective* and *Education*, through which diasporic Albanians in Germany focus on criticizing and explaining the problems they experience with the content they share, and place high importance on well-researched content. Through this

well-researched content, *Education* is promoted to ensure a diverse and inclusive representation of “identity” and to counteract nationalist ideologies within the Albanian community.

Although *Education* is a strong argument mentioned by the Participants in the representation of the Albanian diaspora, this aspect must be viewed critically due to ideological implementation of education during the Hoxha Regime in Albania.

Furthermore, when selecting the sample of interviewees, the economic background of the participants was not asked. Due to the intensive engagement of the participants with topics that contribute to education, it can be assumed that all participants have the financial and socio-economic resources to obtain and continue this education. One of the reasons for this phenomenon according to my research could be that many nationalist perspectives are still reproduced, since not everyone has access to academic education in terms of *Academic History* and *Collective Memory*. Therefore, it can be assumed that they largely rely on *Individual Experiences* that have been shaped by discrimination, thus promoting nationalist perspectives and nostalgia for the homeland, as well as failing to fully reflect their constructed “identity” from a *Critical Perspective*.

The five dynamics are interlinked with each other and emerge differently depending on political events.

Instagram can be seen as a platform for “identity” representation, where the interviewed activists are aware of “identities” being constructed (Participant 2, p. 5) and still can be used as political instruments at certain historical points to make inequalities visible and conquer existing power relations (Hall 2015). The exclusion of the Yugoslavian Wars in the collective memory emerging in the context of the Ukrainian war not only highlighted a certain understanding of “Europe” excluding the Western Balkans, but also caused the feeling of injustice to Albanians in the diaspora. These experiences linked to the Ukrainian War became a motivation to represent “Albanian identity” online and educate others.

This can be used as a basis for further research to analyze how the representation of “identity” relates to the political restraint of the Albanian diaspora, which could be hypothesized due to the political oppression experienced by Kosovar Albanians in the former Yugoslavia. In the case of Albania, the “collective identity” was implemented violently and ideologically, which one could assume leads to less diasporic Albanian online activists from Albania using “collective identity representation”.

The thesis has also proved, that the concept of “identity” can be considered as a powerful tool with strategic functions displayed online, such as creating a *Sense of Belonging* and *Agency* for the second and third generation Albanians in the German Diaspora.

By sharing “identity” content on Instagram, there is an opportunity to interact with other Albanians but also people interested in Diasporic Matters and create a “community” where experiences and commonalities can

be shared. Therefore, as participant 2 stated, Instagram is not the solution, but it can be used as a space towards the negotiation of change:

“...I believe that [...] [a different representation] can lead to a change in the image of Albanians on social media and in other media. [...] I only ever believe in construction [...] that's why [...] Instagram [...] can be good for addressing things, discussing things, working through the current discourse. [...] But it's only one tool, and it takes several tools, [...] to make this discussion [...] comprehensive and [...] to imply a sustainable change.” (Participant 2, p. 5)

This thesis has established a scholarly base by filling the research gap and making recommendations for further research. As previous research has mainly focused on the study of first-generation diaspora, this thesis has presented that second and third generation diaspora struggle mainly with forms of oppression from the host community, but also suffer from pressure from the native community. One could assume that the latter also influences the number of Albanian online activists, which is so far manageable. Furthermore, second and third generation Albanians in Germany struggle with a sense of belonging and community and find this belonging in the so-called “third space”. They do not long to return to their homeland, but they also do not feel fully welcome in their host country, Germany.

In addition, this thesis has provided a scholarly foundation for research on the Albanian diaspora in Germany by focusing its sample on Albanians living exclusively in Germany. As the existing literature has mainly focused on the UK or Italy, this thesis has contributed to filling the research gap specifically in Germany. Nevertheless, much more research needs to be done in Germany, as the Albanian diaspora is highly represented in the population, but little knowledge has been generated about it.

In conclusion, this thesis has shown that “identity” representation on Instagram has a strategic function can create a sense of belonging and community in the in-between, within a *‘third space’*, by using Instagram as a platform to represent a collective „Albanian identity”. Although there are many socio-political problems, such as discrimination, lack of access to resources, and pressure not to live according to traditional Albanian worldviews, belonging to a “community” by representing their “identity” online, can create agency regarding political matters.

To not belong here, and not belong there creates eternal challenges for young diasporic Albanians, but nonetheless, the in-between space is shared with many others, facing the same issues. So, this “in-between identities”-identity is at least, not all to lonely. At least, one space for identification is shared:

The third space.

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7. Appendix

7.1. Coding Scheme

All example codes were translated into English. The original transcripts are written in German, since the interviews were conducted in German.

Coding Nr.	Category (and theory of given)	Code Examples (translated into English)
1.	Academic History (Social Representation Theory)	<i>“Being Albanian [...] means confronting the war theme that took place in '98, '99. [...] this subject occupied me very, very early on, as a child of course, but not in the dimension that it occupies me today. But for me, being Albanian means above all being confronted with the subject of war at a very early age.”</i> 3:2 p 1
2.	Collective Memory (Social Representation Theory)	<i>“Okay, we are not in Kosovo now, we are not in Kosovo, we are people who grew up here, who love this [...] the language, our food and our tradition. But we are the way we are. And how could I help it that we were born in Germany?”</i> 1:27 p 6 in Interview Partner 1
3.	Critical perspective	<i>“I think a big challenge for us is that, even more Albanians need to be in the picture, speaking for themselves and for us and challenging and deconstructing the narrative or condemning narratives about being Albanian.”</i> 5:10 p 2 in Interview Partner 5
4.	Discrimination/racism	<i>“...That means first of all bringing another cultural background with you, bringing another language with you, experiencing attribution, experiencing prejudice, especially during your school years.”</i> 3:1 p 1 in interview partner 3
5.	Education	<i>“So, it's very important to raise awareness on all sides and to have the feeling that no one is excluded and, if someone is in the wrong position, to address that publicly, of course, and to simply stand there like that, but that also requires a lot of time, energy and strength.”</i> 1:28 p 6 in Interview Partner 1
6.	Identity Diffusion	<i>“My understanding of being Albanian has been shaped by my life in the diaspora, so I had to develop a hybrid understanding of it. Over the years, I learned that I cannot be Albanian enough for Kosovo and for Albania because of my socialization in Germany. [...]”</i> 5:4 p 1 in Interview Partner 5
7.	Individual Experience (Social Representation Theory)	<i>“To be Albanian [...], means for me to feel a life of guilt [...], to lead in the feeling of guilt, in relation to the culture, the parents and the relatives of course, although I don't really give a shit about them, to be honest, but nevertheless I would define it like this”</i> 4:1 p 1 in interview partner 4
8.	Nationalism/Patriotism	<i>“From Albanians themselves, um, I notice a lot of pride, a lot of national pride, which I also find problematic in some respects.”</i> 3:11 p 4 in Interview Partner 3
9.	Representation (Social Representation Theory)	<i>“Yes, doing educational work or political education or raising awareness in general, in different areas, for example LGBTIQ, issues and racism. At the same time, celebrities like Dua Lipa from Albania and Kosovo are pushing the international attention on our countries of origin, which is helping more and more people to explore and become aware of this.”</i> 5:9 p 2 in Interview Partner 5
10.	Sense of Belonging and Community (Social Representation Theory)	<i>“Educational work is very important, and somehow this certain creativity, such as writing these poems, because that leads to people who have never had anything to do with them, being able to come together [...]”</i> 1:30 p 7 in Interview Partner 1