Cultural values and voter turnout

The Vietnamese in Denmark

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Abstract

In Danish political and academic circles a high voter turnout among ethnic minorities is seen as a sign of successful integration. The Vietnamese are considered one of the best integrated ethnic groups in Denmark. However, among the most important minority groups in Denmark, the Vietnamese has the lowest voter turnout of all. The low voter turnout challenges the explanatory capabilities of institutional, socio-economic and collective mobilization approaches - all dominant paradigms of political participation. The central argument of the thesis is that the voting behavior of the Vietnamese group cannot be explained without a cultural analysis of a range of values, held by a majority of Vietnamese immigrants, that function as important markers of Vietnamese ethnic identity. These values - a certain understanding of hierarchy and authority, humbleness, and conflict avoidance - happen to discourage involvement in politics and encourage certain resentments against the confrontational form that political debate takes in Denmark, a form that is cherished by most Danes as central for the parliamentary democracy. The positive wish to identify with a Vietnamese ethnicity has an unintended side effect of discouraging involvement and engagement with politics. Theoretically the thesis takes its departure in anti-essentialist approaches to ethnicity and culture (i.e. Fredrik Barth). Methodologically the thesis rests on quantitative survey data, published in depth qualitative data, and semi-structured interviews conducted by the author.

Contents

Introduction

This thesis deal with an apparent paradox: In Danish political and academic circles a high voter turnout among ethnic minorities is seen as a sign of successful integration. The Vietnamese are considered one of the best integrated ethnic groups in the country. In a comprehensive survey (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011a:117), where various ethnic minorities were asked if they felt most Danish or if they felt that they belonged more to the country of origin, the Vietnamese was the one group that declared their Danish identity to a very high degree, compared to other significant minorities. However, in another comprehensive study (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:31), it turns out that among the most important minority groups in Denmark, the Vietnamese had the lowest voter turnout of all.

The main aim of the thesis is to contribute to an explanation of the low voter turnout among Vietnamese immigrants and their descendants in Denmark. Further, it is argued that the empirical fact of this low voter turnout challenges the explanatory capabilities of a range of dominant theories on the issue. I shall return to these theories later in this introduction. It is argued here that the voting behavior among the Vietnamese group cannot be fully explained without a cultural analysis of a range of values held by a majority of Vietnamese immigrants, values that at the same time happen to function as important markers of Vietnamese ethnic identity. These values – a certain understanding of social hierarchy and authority, humbleness, and conflict avoidance – seem to discourage involvement in politics and encourage certain resentment against the confrontational form political debate takes in Denmark. A form cherished by most Danes as central for the parliamentary democracy. So the positive wish to identify with a Vietnamese ethnicity has a concomitant and unintended side effect of discouraging involvement and engagement with politics. I see it as unintended since there are no prohibitions on political engagement, voting or the like, articulated within the group.

Elections in Denmark

The first parliamentary election in Denmark was conducted in 1849 as a majority vote in single-member constituencies, with only 14-15 percent of the population having the right to vote. In 1918 the electoral system was changed to proportional representation. By that time 40 percent of the population had the right to vote and the voter turnout was 75,5 percent. Since 1920 the voter turnout has been stable between 80-90 percent, today with all citizens older than 18 having the right to vote. Compared to other Western European countries this is a relatively high voter turnout for parliamentary elections. Thus, except for Malta and Iceland, it is only countries with compulsory voting such as Belgium and Luxembourg that have a similar or higher voter turnout than Denmark (Elklit et al. 2005:13–30).

Apart from parliamentary elections Denmark has local (municipal) elections, regional elections (which are conducted simultaneously with the local elections), and elections for the European Parliament. As in most other countries the voter turnout is higher for parliamentary elections than the other types of elections. Since the 1980s the voter turnout for local elections has been fluctuating around 70 percent, with the exception of the election in 2001, where the voter turnout was significantly higher because the parliamentary election was conducted on the same day. The voter turnout for European elections has been fluctuating around 50 percent. This might seem low but corresponds to most other countries in the European Union (Elklit et al. 2005:29).

The public elections in Denmark have ever since the first parliamentary election been well-documented in official statistical publications. However, the number of comprehensive academic studies of voter turnout was slim up until the 1990s, where a renewed interest for electoral participation was sparked by decreasing voter turnouts in many of the Western democracies (Elklit et al. 2005:11–14). Therefore, in 1997 the Danish parliament launched a study named *An Analysis of Democracy and Power in Denmark*. The purpose was to assess the Danish democracy in its transition into the twenty-first century. An essential part of the

study was to examine the voter turnout among immigrants[1] in Denmark. This was partly due to the increasing numbers of especially non-Western immigrants and a rising concern among people, media, and politicians with immigration laws and problems with integration of immigrants and their descendants, combined with a growing awareness that immigrants and descendants had a role to play in politics (Togeby 2003:9–12). Traditionally integration of minority groups had focused on integration into the job market but gradually integration had come to mean participation in the society in a wider sense, with electoral participation being one of the central themes (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011b:10).

The publication in 1997 studied the voter turnout in the two largest municipalities in Denmark – Copenhagen and Aarhus – after the local election the same year, and included both election lists and a large and wide-ranging amount of socio-demographic data. The study has since been followed up by publications about the local elections in 2001 (Elklit et al. 2005) and 2009 (Bhatti and Hansen 2010), which steadily have included more and more municipalities and thereby more and more voters. The study of the local election in 2001 included 25 municipalities, while the study of the municipal election in 2009 included 44 out of the 98 municipalities in Denmark (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:8). One might ask why the studies have targeted local elections instead of parliamentary elections, since parliamentary elections are the highest profiled. There are two reasons for this: (1) Local elections have a significant influence on the lives of the citizens. Approximately 27 percent of the Danish GDP is used in the municipalities and when the citizens are in contact with the public sector it is often the municipality which is the supplier, for example in connection to eldercare, childcare, and schools. (2) The local elections are best suited for studies examining voter turnout among immigrants, because immigrants, who have resided in Denmark for three

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[1] An immigrant is a person where both parents are born outside Denmark, and the person himself/herself also is born outside Denmark. A descendant is a person who was born in Denmark, but where the both parents are neither born in Denmark, nor have Danish citizenship (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:28).

years, are permitted to participate in the local elections, though they have not obtained Danish citizenship. For that reason, a much larger group of immigrants can be examined than if the scope is only directed towards immigrants who have obtained Danish citizenship (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:10).

The studies of the immigrant voter turnouts in Denmark have given rise to some concern. For instance, Bhatti and Hansen (2010) found that the voter turnout for immigrants only was 37 percent, while it was as low as 36 percent for descendants. In comparison a significant larger number, 68 percent, of the native Danes voted in the 2009 local election (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:3). However, the broad categories *immigrants* and *descendants* provide a too simple picture. When the voter turnout for each of the immigrant groups are put on display a complex pattern appears. Among the non-Western immigrant groups with Danish citizenship Sri Lankans have the highest voter turnout (57,5 percent), followed by the Turkish immigrant group (50,1 percent). Somewhat lower are the voter turnouts for immigrant groups, such as the Iranians (40,6 percent), Somalis (40,1 percent), and Pakistanis (40 percent). The Vietnamese group has, with a voter turnout of 31,6 percent, the lowest voter turnout of all the most important immigrant groups. It is as much as 36,4 percentage points lower than the native Danish group. The numbers varies a bit for these groups when people without citizenship are added to the equation but the picture stays the same (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:31).

It is interesting that the Vietnamese group in Denmark has the lowest voter turnout for persons with Danish citizenship. Muslim groups in Denmark have often been criticized for not making a proper integration effort. On the other hand, the Vietnamese integration into the Danish society is referred to as a great success. They are frequently used by politicians, as an example, when the politicians want to encourage other immigrant groups to be more active in the Danish society or when they accuse other groups of not "wishing" to be integrated into the Danish society to a sufficient degree (Borup 2011:10). Among the many requirements immigrant groups in Denmark are expected to fulfill in order to be

deemed well-integrated, voter turnout is considered an important factor. So, why is it that the members of the Vietnamese group tend to abstain from participating in Danish public elections when they otherwise are considered so well-integrated into the Danish society?

The argument

In studies of voter turnout, where for example countries or different types of elections are compared, the institutional frame often has great impact on the voter turnout (Elklit et al. 2005:42–46). However, in the public elections in Denmark the same institutional framework applies to all groups and it can therefore not explain the low Vietnamese voter turnout. Instead, it is necessary to focus on explanations concerning the characteristics and resources of the individual voter. Here especially socio-economic theory and social capital theory have been dominating but political culture theory and social integration theory should also be mentioned.

The basic assumption in socio-economic theory is that a high level of socio-economic resources, typically education, employment, income, time, and knowledge, will increase voter turnout because people better can afford the "costs" of voting (Elklit et al. 2005:47). But, as I have already mentioned, the Vietnamese group members possess a relatively high level of socio-economic resources. Social capital theory, on the other hand, argues that voter turnout depends on individual's social capital – primarily social trust but also norms and networks – accumulated through voluntary interaction with others in clubs, organizations, and associations. The idea is that social trust spills over into political trust and thereby increases political participation, including voter turnout (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994:89–99). This approach looks promising when persons with Vietnamese origins are compared to native Danes, but compared to several other immigrant groups, with a higher voter turnout than the Vietnamese group, the Vietnamese group members seem affluent on social capital. The political culture theory was an attempt to create a holistic theory

about the democratic culture statesmen need to cultivate, in order to secure a stable democracy (Almond and Verba 1989a). The attempt largely failed but it put focus on the usefulness of survey analysis in international comparative politics and spawned several variables which are useful when political participation and voter turnout is studied (Almond and Verba 1989b:26), some of which will be referred to later in thesis. Social integration theory assumes that individuals who are well-integrated into a society will take over the norms of that society. In Denmark, it is argued, a strong norm of voting exists and individuals who are well-integrated will therefore vote (Elklit et al. 2005:47–49). Consequently, the low Vietnamese voter turnout should be a result of unsuccessful integration into the Danish society. In addition to the fact that the public opinion appears to be that the Vietnamese in general are well-integrated in Denmark, the social integration theory seem to suffer from problems related to measuring integration. It suggests that integration happens through the work place, education, associations and organizations, as well as through family connections, but on at least the three first aspects Vietnamese do relatively good. As will be clear throughout the thesis, I in a sense agree with the social integration theory, that the Vietnamese group members in general have not internalized the norm of voting. Still, I disagree with the reasons the social integration theory presents.

Lastly, researchers studying voter turnout often speak of collective mobilization. Collective mobilization is often referred to when specific groups have a higher voter turnout than expected, based on the group members' individual resources (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1980). However, the Vietnamese voter turnout is lower than expected, when individual resources are considered. This is the case for most of the other immigrant groups too, though their voter turnouts are higher than the Vietnamese. Therefore, the low Vietnamese voter turnout cannot be explained with the absence collective mobilizations either.

So, the dominant theories of political participation and voter turnout do not seem to be able to explain the low Vietnamese voter turnout. This suggests that alternative explanations are required. As mentioned above, Bhatti and Hansen's

(2010) study builds on a body of work where the purpose is to study the voter turnout among ethnic minority groups in Denmark. The conclusion is that origin has a significant impact on voter turnout (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:41–43). However, it is not discussed what it means to be member of an *ethnic* group. Neither is this explicit in the dominant theories of political participation and voter turnout, with the exception of the social integration theory. I will therefore examine ethnicity's influence on voter turnout.

According to Fredrik Barth (1998), an ethnic group exists and persists, on the one hand, because the members recognize that they share certain understandings or cultural values. In other words, they are united in an ethnic group by the assumption that they are fundamentally "playing the same game". And in an opposite way, a categorization of others as belonging to a different ethnic group implies a recognition of limitations to a shared understanding or cultural values. In this sense, what separates ethnic groups is a limited range of cultural markers, which are more or less agreed upon. It is not a "whole way of life". Ethnic markers can be language, clothes, norms etc. But only a limited range of them function as the differences that make a difference to other groups. Barth's concept of ethnicity is thus not essentialist. In the same line, the concept of "culture" used in this thesis is also anti-essentialist. Culture is thus understood to be a "*pattern of meanings, which are apparent in peoples' actions and interpretations, in social institutions and concrete, generally accessible symbols, objects, concepts, and attitudes*" (Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2011:16). In this way, "ethnicity" or "culture" does not dictate behavior. Culture provides shared frameworks for interpretation. Norms and values that are parts of such frameworks may be fairly continuous through time but are, on the other hand, constantly contested and negotiated, and may be subject to (also sudden) change.

The conclusion of this study is that the Vietnamese voting behavior can (at least partly) be explained by the cultural values that mark off the Vietnamese as an *ethnic* group. In other words, if voting is discrepant with those (cultural) norms and values that function to define the Vietnamese as a group that individuals want

to belong to, then those individuals will not find resonance in the group for political interest, and they will likely lose interest themselves.

Research contribution

The aim of this thesis is to improve the understanding of the Vietnamese group members' voting behavior in connection to Danish public elections. As discussed above, it seems necessary to study how being a member of the Vietnamese *ethnic* group influences voter turnout in Danish public elections. The ambition is not, due to limited time, space, and resources, to conduct a large representative study of the Vietnamese group. Instead, the ambition is a smaller study which can create a basis for further in-depth analysis of the relationship between cultural values connected to ethnic group membership and the group members' voting behavior, in the Vietnamese group as well as in other ethnic groups.

The Vietnamese in Denmark

In 1975 the Vietnam War was won by the communist North. Towards the end of the war and in the period right after a large emigration from Vietnam took place. Among the hundreds of thousands Vietnamese refugees a significant number emigrated to the West, including Denmark (Folke 1991:71–72).

In 1980 there were approximately 1.300 Vietnamese in Denmark. Just two years later the number had doubled. Today the number of persons with Vietnamese background in Denmark is 14.511, of which almost equally many are men and women. 10.167 of these are Danish citizens, 9.074 are immigrants and 5.437 are descendants. All together they make up 2,6 percent of the persons with immigrant background in Denmark, and 3,7 percent of the non-Western immigrants in Denmark (Danmarks Statistik 2013). Half of the Vietnamese immigrants are refugees, while the other half came through family reunification. The average time of residence in Denmark is 17 years (2010), and the majority wish to stay in Denmark the rest of their lives (Borup 2011:9).

In some ways the Vietnamese in Denmark make up a heterogeneous group. The heterogeneity within the group stems from the fact that members came from, or descend from, various parts of the country, equally from rural as well as urban areas, from what in Vietnam was considered different ethnic groups, and that they adhere to various denominations, especially Buddhism and Catholicism with Buddhism as the most prominent. However, since ancient times Confucianism has permeated most Vietnamese groups Confucianism has had tremendous consequences for Vietnamese culture and the organization of the Vietnamese society (Rainey 2010:29), which will also be evident in the analysis below. It is this shared heritage that unites the Vietnamese group in Denmark, and provides some of the cultural values, which in the Danish context function as some of the self-ascribed ethnic markers. According to Marr (2000:774), Confucianism can be understood as a set of rules and doctrines for moral behavior, designed to promote loyalty, respect for authority, and social hierarchy.

Theory: Political participation, voter turnout, and culture analysis

A range of theories are concerned with political participation and voter turnout. In this chapter, it is argued that the empirical fact of the low Vietnamese voter turnout challenges the explanatory capabilities of a number of the dominant theories on the issue, and that a culture analysis should be conducted as a supplementary explanation. The first part of the chapter will critically assess these dominant theories. The second part will introduce the culture analysis approach.

Institutions as explanation for electoral participation

The traditional institutional approach to electoral participation draws on rational choice theory in that it focuses on how the institutional framework influences the facilitation – factors which make it easy to vote or reduce the cost of participating in public elections – and mobilization – factors that encourage voters to vote or increase the benefit of voting – of voters. Facilitation factors, such as voter registration, electoral day, and postal voting, along with mobilization factors such as volunteer or compulsory voting, voting age, electoral procedure, electoral importance, and level of democracy, are all important factors to discuss when it comes to differing levels of electoral participation in different countries or between different political organs in one country. However, the institutional approach cannot explain differences in the level of electoral participation for a certain type of election in a specific country (Elklit et al. 2005:42–46). It can therefore not help us understand why the voter turnout among the members of the Vietnamese group is so low.

Individuals' capabilities as explanation for electoral participation

Theories of electoral participation departing from the individual are numerous. I will here discuss the dominant approaches – socio-economic theory, social integration theory, social capital theory, and political culture theory.

Socio-Economic Theory

The theory of socio-economic resources assumes that individuals vote more if they have more socio-economic resources because it makes it easier to participate in elections. Put in different words, individuals with a high level of socio-economic resources can better afford the costs of voting. The theory does not specify what "socio-economic resources" includes but education, employment, income, time, knowledge, and political interest is among the typical parameters. Characteristics such as age, gender, and ethnicity are not in themselves socio-economic resources but it can be expected that the level of socio-economic resources differ for youths and middle-aged, men and women, and persons with ethnic majority background and ethnic minority background and they are therefore important in the socio-economic theory (Elklit et al. 2005:47).

Thus, according to the socio-economic theory, their level of socio-economic resources can explain the low voter turnout among the members of the Vietnamese group. Bhatti and Hansen's (2010) study of participation in the 2009 local election in Denmark includes a number of socio-demographic variables, such as education, income, citizenship, social marginalization (integration into the job market), age, gender, and country of origin, which they use to make a comparison between Danes and the immigrant groups in Denmark and between the different immigrant groups. Based on the socio-demographic variables Bhatti and Hansen develop an "expected percentage" which indicates the level of socio-economic resources each group possess and thereby the voter turnout one can expect from the groups. This is illustrated in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1: Participation in the 2009 municipal election in Denmark divided on country of origin and citizenship.

Country of origin	Danish Citizens			Foreign Citizens			All voters
	Percent	Ex. Percent	N	Percent	Ex. Percent	N	Percent
Germany	69,4	72,5	4.572	38,8	60,3	7.019	50,9
Denmark	67,6	65,4	2.082.372	48,7	59,2	2.837	67,6
Sweden	66	71,4	2.566	41,2	62,8	6.085	48,6
Norway	62,5	68,8	1.893	42,4	62,3	6.949	46,7
Great Britain	60,8	69,6	1.144	36,9	64,1	5.826	40,8
Sri Lanka	57,5	57,2	2.661	54	52,8	1.048	56,5
Turkey	50,1	50,9	10.638	43,3	51	12.671	46,4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	44,7	58,8	4.168	33,4	57,2	4.789	38,7
Poland	44,7	67	4.188	11,9	54	8.763	22,5
India	42,9	64,7	1.028	22,3	54	1.067	32,4
Philippines	41,7	64,1	1.360	30,5	55,8	1.395	36
Iran	40,6	61,1	5.761	28	51,5	2.322	37
Somalia	40,1	48,9	2.566	34,2	45,3	3.752	36,6
Pakistan	40	55,1	5.444	40,5	52,8	4.578	40,2
China	38	64	1.023	15,6	53,9	2.649	21,9
Iraq	36,4	53,8	5.190	33	47,1	6.724	34,4
Afghanistan	36,3	54,9	1.034	38	48,8	2.622	37,5
Yugoslavia	34,3	57,7	4.348	18,2	56,6	4.395	26,2
Lebanon	33,2	48,9	6.628	20,7	45,2	2.111	30,2
Marocco	32,5	54,7	3.192	25,8	52	1.752	30,1
Vietnam	31,6	57,5	4.117	20,7	53	1.893	28,1
Total	66,6	65,1	2.176.188	31,6	55	139.147	64,5

Note: The "expected percentage" includes age, gender, education, income, and social marginalization. The table only comprises persons with legitimate information about country of origin and citizenship. Only countries of origin with 1000 Danish citizens or more are encompassed (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:31).

Table 2.1 displays, a higher voter turnout can be expected from the Danish group (65,4 and 59,2) than the Vietnamese group (57,5 and 53) – both when the group members have Danish citizenship and when they do not. This is in accordance with theory of socio-economic resources though the gap between the expected percentage and the actual voter turnout (percentage) is much wider for the Vietnamese group (-32,3 and -52,3) than the Danish group (+2,2 and -10,5).

However, the expected percentage for the Vietnamese group members is higher than the expected percentage for the Sri Lankan group (57,2 and 52,8) and the Turkish group (50,9 and 51) but the actual voter turnout is significantly higher among Sri Lankans (57,5 and 54) and Turks (50,1 and 43,3) than among Vietnamese (31,6 and 20,7). It can be discussed how much these result would change if more or different socio-demographic variables were included in Bhatti and Hansen's study, nevertheless, the numbers strongly suggest that other factors than the level of socio-economic resources must be taken into consideration in order to explain the low voter turnout among the members of the Vietnamese group.

Social Capital Theory
Social capital is a widespread concept but Pierre Bourdieu and James Samuel Coleman were the first to introduce the concept systematically. They did so independently of each other although they did it almost simultaneously. Bourdieu presented social capital in his theory of praxis, while Coleman developed a theory of social capital based on rational choice theory. However, in relation to political participation and voter turnout the social capital theory has mainly been associated with Robert D. Putnam's study of democratic institutions in Italy (Häuberer 2010:30–46). Putnam will therefore constitute the foundation for the subsequent discussion of social capital and electoral participation among the members of the Vietnamese group.

Following Coleman's rational choice approach, Putnam argues that every individual will be better off if common goals are achieved through political cooperation. However, individuals' incentive to join in collective action is challenged by the fear of free-riders and opportunists, as described by game theorists under a variety of guises – the tragedy of the commons, public goods, logic of collective action, and the prisoner's dilemma. Nevertheless, Putnam finds in his study of political participation in democratic institutions in Italian regions that uncooperative behavior emerges significantly less than what game theory

predicts and argues that the question which needs to be answered is: Why is this so? (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994:166). Putnam discovers in his analysis that there is a strong correlation between a regions level of "civic-ness" – meaning the level of citizens' voluntary participation in various clubs, organizations, and associations – and the democratic integration of the region's inhabitants (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994:89–99). This leads him to argue that individuals' voluntary membership in clubs, organizations, and associations accumulates social capital which is "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve efficiency by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994:167). Putnam emphasizes social trust as the main factor leading to political participation because it prevents fear of free-riders and opportunists. Thus, Putnam's social capital theory argues that social trust spills over into political trust and thereby increases electoral and political participation.

Bhatti and Hansen's report on voter turnout in the 2009 Danish local election does not include data on native Danes and the immigrant groups' voluntary participation in clubs, organizations, and associations and do therefore not indicate their level of social capital. However, a large survey study of responsible citizenship in Denmark from 2011, initiated by the former Danish Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Integration showed that the members of the Danish group in average are members of 3,1 clubs, organizations, and associations, while the average for the Vietnamese group members is 1,7. Furthermore, 72 percent of all ethnic Danes believe that it is in general possible to trust strangers, while 21 percent believe that strangers are not be trusted. In the Vietnamese group only 45 percent believe that it is in general possible to trust strangers, 32 percent thinks that strangers are not to be trusted (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011a:63, 70).

The difference between the Danish group members' and the Vietnamese group members' average club, organization, and association memberships and general level of social trust compared to their actual voter turnout supports Robert

Putnam's theory of social capital. However, a closer look at the Vietnamese group members compared to the other immigrant group members somewhat blurs the picture. I have illustrated this in Table 2.2 underneath:

Table 2.2: Ethnic minority groups' participation in clubs, organizations, and associations and reported levels of social trust in comparison to voter turnout in the 2009 municipal election in Denmark.

| Country of origine | Participation in clubs, organizations, and associations* | | General level of social trust** | | Voter turnout*** |
	Average number of memberships	Member of at least one club, organization, or association	It is in general possible to trust strangers	Strangers cannot be trusted	Percent
Denmark	3,1	94%	72%	21%	68%
Iraq	1,4	68%	39%	43%	34%
Iran	1,9	80%	50%	34%	37%
Lebanon	1,3	66%	37%	52%	30%
Pakistan	1,6	74%	44%	44%	40%
Turkey	1,7	80%	36%	49%	46%
The Western Balkans	1,7	76%	41%	40%	39%****
Vietnam	1,7	80%	45%	32%	28%

Note:*(The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011:63)
** (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011b:70)
*** (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:31)
**** Percentage of voters with Bosnia and Herzegovina as their country of origin.

Table 2.2 shows that, Putnam's theory of social capital might be able to explain the low voter turnout among Vietnamese if the Vietnamese group and the Danish group were isolated from the other immigrant groups. However, the theory cannot explain why for example the Turkish voter turnout is significantly higher than the Vietnamese voter turnout. Thus, the Turks are in average members of 1,7 associations, which is similar to the Vietnamese, but the Turks general trust in strangers is only 36 percent. Also, 49 percent of the Turks believe that strangers cannot be trusted, where only 32 percent of the Vietnamese believed so. Following the logic of Putnam's theory of social capital the Vietnamese group

should have a higher voter turnout than the Turkish, but the actual voter turnout for the entire Turkish group (46 percent) is 18 percentage points higher than for Vietnamese group. For Turks with Danish citizenship the voter turnout is 18,5 percentage points higher than for Vietnamese with Danish citizenship, while for Turks without Danish citizenship it is 22,7 percentage points higher than for Vietnamese without Danish citizenship (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:31). As with the socio-economic theory there seems to be a gap between the reasons for abstaining social capital theory provides and what really lies behind the low voter turnout among Vietnamese.

Political Culture Theory

Political culture and democratic culture has been discussed for centuries – ever since Plato and Aristotle and even prior to them (Almond and Verba 1989a:360). However, in the book *The Civic Culture* from 1963 Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba attempted to create a more holistic theory of political culture by combining systematic survey analysis with the method of comparative case study. The study was occasioned by a concern for a large number of nations in which the realization of democratic systems was an overt but difficult goal – not only in new nations but also in older nations. Almond and Verba's contention was that statesmen who attempt to create efficient democracies often concentrate upon the creation of a formal set of democratic governmental institutions and the writing of a constitution. However, an efficient democratic system also depends upon peoples' attitudes towards the system – the political culture. Thus, unless the political culture of a nation is able to support a democratic system, the chances for the success of that system is slim (Almond and Verba 1989a:365–366). In connection, Almond and Verba found that the civic culture – which is a pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, and a culture that permits change but moderates it – is the most appropriate to support the development of a stable democratic system (Almond and Verba 1989a:6).

I take a culture analysis approach in my thesis (this will be elaborated later in this chapter). However, it is important not to confuse my culture analysis approach with Almond and Verba's attempt to create a holistic theory of a political culture. While my culture analysis approach is inspired by ethnographic traditions Almond and Verba's political culture approach can be ascribed to a more classical political science tradition. Thus, in their book Almond and Verba make use of a great number of variables, such as political awareness, interest and opinion, the expectation that governments can be influenced by individuals, expectations of treatment by the government and the police, patterns of political communication, a sense of obligation to vote, citizens competence and self-confidence, social trust, and democratic inheritance, which they try to identity the core of a political culture with. This attempt has been subject to much attention and criticism of which the most important has been gathered in the book *The Civic Culture Revisited* from 1980 edited by Almond & Verba themselves. The many criticisms of the political culture theory have led Almond and Verba to conclude that their attempt to create a holistic theory of political culture has failed because the salience each of the variables employed in the study should receive cannot be determined. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the variables are useless and Almond and Verba therefore encourage others to make use of the variables in future construction of theories of political participation and democratic stability (Almond and Verba 1989b:26). My thesis seek to understand how the cultural markers of the Vietnamese group in Denmark or the value standards associated with the Vietnamese group by its members affect electoral participation but I am not attempting to create holistic theory of the political culture within the Vietnamese group in Denmark. My thesis is therefore not based on the variables Almond and Verba suggest, still, some of the variables will be referred to and discussed.

Social Integration Theory

The Theory of Social Integration assumes that individuals who are well-integrated into a society will take over the norms of that society. Thus, the idea is that individuals will vote if they are well-integrated into a society where a strong norm of voting exists (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954:194–199). The social integration of individuals happens, according to the theory, through family, workplace, education, associations and organizations, and activities in the local community. For most people the social integration into a society begins when they are very young and develops throughout their lives, as they become members of associations and organizations, educate themselves, get a job, start a family, etc. It can be difficult to differentiate the social integration theory from the socio-economic theory since there often will be an overlap between individuals with a high level of socio-economic resources and individuals who are well-integrated into the society. However, a person with few socio-economic resources, such as a short education and no job, can be well-integrated into the society and the norm of voting through friends and participation in associations (Elklit et al. 2005:47–48).

According to Elklit et al. (2005), there is a strong norm in the Danish society of voting in public elections. They argue that this is reflected in the high level of participation in Danish public elections, where the voter turnout for parliamentary elections fluctuates around 85 percent and where the voter turnout for local elections has been, until the latest election in 2009, fluctuating around 70 percent. The participation for European parliamentary elections is only fluctuating around 50 percent but this is still higher than many other European countries. Thus, according to the social integration theory the low voter turnout among the Vietnamese group members can be explained by their relatively poor integration into the norm about participating in public elections in Denmark. This is also supported by the fact that only 40 percent of the Vietnamese respondents in the responsible citizenship survey answer that it is of utmost importance to vote in Danish public elections, which is significantly lower than any other immigrant group asked in the survey. Except for the Vietnamese group members, persons with a Western Balkan and Iraqi background are in general those attributing the

least importance to voting in Danish public elections. Still, in both groups 56 percent of the members answer that it is of utmost importance. Danes are the group which members in general finds it most important to vote, 71 percent of the Danes answer that it is of utmost importance to vote in Danish public elections (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011a:31).

The social integration theory argues that the integration into a society's norms, including the voting-norm, primarily happens through the work place, education, and associations and organizations, as well as the family. But as the expected percentage in Bhatti and Hansen (2010:31) report suggests these are places where the members of the Vietnamese group do either better or equally as good as the majority of the other immigrant groups – which has also helped the Vietnamese group members gain a good reputation in the Danish public (Borup 2011:9–11). So, one the one hand the Vietnamese group members have a low voter turnout and attributes little importance to voting, but on the other hand the Vietnamese group members do relatively good on the variables the social integration theory suggests integration should be measured by. This is a contradiction, which I believe occurs because the social integration theory commits a logical fallacy. In a sense, the culture analysis approach of this study suggests, like the social integration theory does, that the low Vietnamese voter turnout can be explained by a poor integration into the norm of voting. But, I believe that the reason why the Vietnamese group members don't internalize the norm of voting has to do with the ethnic markers, the Vietnamese group members "use" to separate themselves from other ethnic groups, rather than the indicators suggested by the social integration theory. It is therefore necessary to conduct a culture analysis as an alternative to the social integration theory.

Collective mobilization as explanation for electoral participation

According to Verba, Nie, and Kim (1980) two different political mobilization processes can be identified – an individual and a collective. The individual mobilization process depends on individual's level of resources and is

characterized by being case neutral, meaning that individual mobilization is not based on particular political interests but a sense of obligation to vote. In contrast, collective mobilization is driven by particular political interests. Collective mobilization is therefore often referred to as an explanation of voter turnout when specific groups have a higher voter turnout than can be expected, based on the group members' individual resources. Further, it is assumed that collective mobilization presupposes a significant level of interaction between individuals with relative similar abilities and political interests. Moreover, different indicators of collective mobilization in groups can be identified. Thus, it can be expected that collective mobilization happens in groups with one or more members nominated as political candidates in contrast to groups with no political candidates. It can also be expected that groups which are well organized and where the members live concentrated in the same neighborhoods have a higher chance of collective mobilization. Finally, collective mobilization is more likely to happen in groups with strong group based organizations (Elklit et al. 2005:56–57).

However, as have been discussed throughout this chapter, the Vietnamese group members vote less than can be expected, based on a number of different indicators of individual capabilities. Collective mobilization is therefore, as such, not relevant to the Vietnamese voter turnout. Nevertheless, one could imagine an argument, saying that the Vietnamese voter turnout is low relative to the other ethnic groups in Denmark because they in general have experienced collective mobilization. However, this does not seem relevant either, since most of the other non-Western ethnic groups also experience lower voter turnouts than can be expected, based on individual capabilities.

The dominant theories of electoral and political participation, I have discussed above, function on different levels and have, naturally, different explanations for different groups varying voter turnouts. However, with the exception of the social

integration theory, these theories fail to incorporate what it means to belong to an ethnic group. This is interesting in connection to the former studies of voter turnout, mentioned in the "Introduction", where ethnic minority groups have been given a privileged position. To improve our understanding of the Vietnamese group members, as well as members of other ethnic groups, voter turnout in Danish public elections I will suggest that it is necessary to study the relationship between ethnicity and voting behavior. This will be elaborated bellow.

An anti-essentialist approach to culture analysis

Traditionally, an ethnic group has been understood as an aggregate of people who essentially shared a common set of cultural values, which were distinct from other sets of cultural values shared by other ethnic groups. This meant that mapping the cultural values of an ethnic group, would allow the researcher to understand the behavior of the individual group members. However, according to Fredrik Barth, this classic approach to ethnicity prevents researchers from explaining how ethnic groups remain intact, though it empirically can be demonstrated that the cultural values of ethnic groups change over time. Another problem for the classic approach to ethnicity was that it could not explain why certain ethnic groups persisted though the group members were spread across diverse ecological territories and their cultural traits differed accordingly (Barth 1998:9–13).

Instead, Barth argues, ethnicity should be understood as a form of social organization, where the critical feature is self-ascription and ascription by others, meaning that people ascribe themselves and are ascribed by others to ethnic groups (Barth 1998:13). The process of ascription is based on dichotomization. Thus, the identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of understandings and criteria for judgment of value and performance (culture). Put differently, within an ethnic group there is an understanding among the members of fundamentally "playing the same game". On the other hand, dichotomization of others as members of another ethnic group implies recognition of limitations on shared understandings and criteria for

judgment of value and performance (Barth 1998:15). This entails that ethnic groups are maintained and persist not because of different sets of unchangeable cultural contents but because the ethnic group members in interaction with members of other ethnic groups continually signal a difference between their own ethnic identity and the others ethnic identity (Barth 1998:15).

In this sense, belonging to an ethnic group implies conforming to certain cultural values and having a basic ethnic identity by which one is judged and judge oneself. Because identities are signaled as well as embraced behavior discrepant with the cultural values of the ethnic group tends to be avoided since it risks being negatively sanctioned by the other ethnic group members. Further, new forms of behavior tend to be dichotomized. Therefore, it can be expected that persons are reluctant to act in new ways from fear that such behavior might be inappropriate for a person of their identity (Barth 1998:18). Thus, a person's ethnic identity constrains that person's behavior according to the cultural values characterizing the person's ethnic group membership (Barth 1998:17). However, it is crucial that the cultural values associated with an ethnic group do not form a descriptive list of features each ethnic group member internalizes. Some cultural values will be emphasized and made social organizationally relevant by the ethnic group members others will not. Or, as Barth formulates it: "*They [the cultural values] may be of great relevance to behavior, but they need not be; they may pervade all social life, or they may be relevant only in limited sectors of activity*" (Barth 1998:14).

Barth's concept of ethnicity is thus not essentialist. In the same line the concept of culture in this thesis is also anti-essentialist. Culture is thus understood to be a "*pattern of meanings, which are apparent in peoples' actions and interpretations, in social institutions and concrete, generally accessible symbols, objects, concepts, and attitudes*" (Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2011:16). In other words, culture can be understood as a shared framework for interpretation that creates recognition and consistency, but which at the same time is open to

negotiation and heterogeneity, among the people sharing the culture, and therefore is ever-changing (Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2011:14).

The assumption that the critical feature of ethnic group formation is self-ascription and ascription by others, leads Barth to suggest, that ethnic group members can cross ethnic boundaries and become members of other ethnic groups, if they ascribe themselves to the new ethnic group and adapt to the cultural values characterizing the group (Barth 1998:21). However, this has been contested by Katherine Verdery. She finds that the empirical data, which Barth construct his argument on, is based on cases from Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, where the nation-states governing the territory historically have been relatively weak compared to Western standards. Verdery's own studies of ethnic group formation in Europe suggests that it is quite difficult for ethnic group members to cross ethnic boundaries, where state formation has had the greatest longevity and has proceeded the furthest (Verdery, Katherine 1994:37).

Verdery argues that the modern nation-state formation process is characterized by at least two tendencies: (1) state-makers' ever-greater efforts to manage and control their populations. In connection, identities are crucial tags which state-makers use to keep track of their political subjects. Also, it is important to notice that a person can only have one identity (Verdery, Katherine 1994:37). (2) A homogenization process producing difference. This homogenization process is a result of state-makers' desire to create a space amendable to management. Thus, they encourage a nationalist story about the similarities people of the nation-state ostensible have in common – most frequently the state subjects are encouraged to have in common a shared culture and "ethnic" origin. The result is that people who fail to be part of the nationalist story or to hold in common their "ethnic" origin are rendered visible and excluded (Verdery, Katherine 1994:45). Together, these two tendencies, Verdery suggests, produce difference and institute it as identities, with ethnicity taking a privileged position (Verdery, Katherine 1994:47).

So, this thesis seeks to understand the low Vietnamese voter turnout in Denmark from an anti-essentialist cultural analysis perspective. As have been discussed, this implies that the Vietnamese group members' voting behavior is influenced, but not dictated, by the cultural values characterizing the Vietnamese group. Put differently, the Vietnamese group members' shared framework for interpretation might encourage or discourage voter turnout but it does permit or prevent it. Thus, the purpose of this study is to show the implicit framework for interpretation, embedded in the Vietnamese group members, and how it influences the Vietnamese voter turnout in Danish public elections.

My cultural analysis approach entails that the one can get to know the cultural values, guiding the ethnic group members' behavior, by describing and interpreting the Vietnamese group members' actions, symbols, and attitudes. In this sense, culture analysis is both a process of uncovering and identifying, and a process of interpretation (Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2011:16). Therefore, it is necessary, in order to understand the electoral behavior of the Vietnamese group members, to uncover their attitudes towards voter turnout and interpret these. In the following chapter I will discuss how this methodologically was approached.

Methodology

The empirical foundation of the study

This study is both motivated by and founded on a number of important materials, concerning voter turnout and the Vietnamese in Denmark. These materials have played an essential role in shaping the theoretical approach of the study and have had great impact on some central methodological choices I have made. I will therefore briefly present and assess these materials here.

As mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, the Danish parliament launched the study *An Analysis of Democracy and Power in Denmark in 1997*. This resulted in several significant publications concerning the voter turnout among immigrant groups in Denmark. Among these publications Togeby (2003), Elklit et al. (2005), and Bhatti and Hansen (2010) have had significant influence on this thesis. The publications are based on unique quantitative data sets, including election lists and state retained register data (socio-demographic data), and have thus provided both an exact and stable foundation for studying the voter turnout among immigrant groups in Denmark. The overview these publications gave helped me see the somewhat surprisingly low Vietnamese voter turnout and was therefore the main reason behind my choice of studying the Vietnamese group.

To become familiar with the Vietnamese group, I have relied heavily on Jørn Borup, professor at the Faculty of Religious Studies and Theology at Aarhus University in Denmark, and his book *Religion, culture, and integration – Vietnamese in Denmark* from 2010, which includes a small survey study with 236 respondents and 27 qualitative research interviews. The book has been an important asset to this study, providing a thorough picture of the members of the Vietnamese group. It deals with the Vietnamese in Denmark's background, history as refugees, and integration into the Danish society. In doing so it discusses identity, culture, and religion. Borup only briefly discuss the subject of voter turnout, but several of his conclusions concerning identity, culture, and

religion have important relevance for the approach adopted in this thesis, which is also evident in the number of references made to Borup (2010). Moreover, I conducted an expert interview with Borup, lasting approximately an hour, in order to clarify a number of questions I had in connection to the Vietnamese group in Denmark.

As Borup himself notes, his small survey study and the qualitative interviews are not representative for the Vietnamese group as a whole. He therefore makes use of a large scale survey – "Values and norms among immigrants and Danes" (the value survey) – initiated by the former Danish Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration in 2007, to support his own findings. It consists of 4.478 phone interviews with Turks, Pakistanis, persons from the West Balkans, Iraq, Iran, Vietnamese, and native Danes, and seeks to clarify to what degree immigrants and descendants endorses fundamental norms and values in Denmark (Think Tank 2007:6). I have also made use of the value survey in this study to support important points and conclusions in my study. Along with the value survey I have used the large scale survey "Responsible Citizenship in Denmark", initiated by the Danish Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration in 2010. The responsible citizenship survey based on responses from 4,633 person with Danish and ethnic minority background, 3,565 of whom were persons with an ethnic minority background, from seven of the ten largest non-Western countries of origin –Turkey, Pakistan, the Western Balkans, Iraq, Lebanon, Vietnam, and Iran. The responsible citizenship survey covers similar areas as the value survey but focuses more on the degree to which immigrants and descendants in Denmark are active citizens in the Danish society, including political participation and voter turnout (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011b:9).

As noted, these materials have been essential to the preparation of my thesis, but they are not in themselves sufficient to conduct a cultural analysis. Additional data of the Vietnamese group members' attitudes towards electoral behavior were therefore collected through qualitative research interviews. The motivation for

choosing qualitative research interviews, as the primary data collection method, will be discussed in the following part of the chapter.

Semi-structured qualitative research interviews

Traditionally, studies of voter turnout in Denmark have relied on three main sources of empirical data. These are electoral lists, socio-economic and demographic register data, and survey studies (Elklit et al. 2005:12). Nevertheless, the two former sources do not provide data on people's attitudes and are therefore not directly useful for a culture analysis, though they are still relevant for this study. Survey studies on the other hand are designed to uncover larger groups of people's attitudes and motives for behaving in a certain manner (Weisberg, Krosnick, and Bowen 1989:4–22). However, survey studies take a relatively closed form, meaning that the survey questionnaires consist of fully formulated questions and prefixed answers. The fact that both questions and answers are formulated by the researcher makes it difficult to gain insight into how the individual perceives and express itself about the world it lives in, which is essential to my theoretical approach (Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2011:84). The data collection can therefore not rely solely on survey studies. Still, the large quantity of data about people's attitudes one can collect through surveys makes it easier to identify general patters, which can be used to explain not only the individual but groups of people's behavior. As a result, two large survey studies have been included into in the analysis of this thesis.

Instead, a common method used in cultural analyses is field studies. Field studies cover a number of different techniques or (sub)methods for data collection, which are often combined in various ways. The fundamental idea these techniques or methods have in common is the assumption that the individual can go beyond the constraints that physically and psychologically bind the individual to the "here" and "now". For that reason we can gain insights into each other's lives through social interaction. Accordingly, the objective in field studies is to come close to

people, their actions, language, and thoughts and perceptions about the world (Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2011:26).

A method which has become almost synonym with field studies is participant observation. It entails that the field worker participates in the social life of the people he/she is studying and at the same time observe and listen to what they are saying. There is no complete recipe for how to conduct a participant observation study. The basic idea is that one, by being there, participating in and observing life up close, can experience and understand how the world looks like from the perspective of the subject. The strength of participant observation is that the researcher has the opportunity to observe the overt cultural traits – actions, symbols, and attitudes – people display in various contexts as well as the routines or the implicit, people often are unaware of, but just do. Further, the participation allows the researcher to feel on his/her own body what it means to perform certain actions, which again can help create an understanding of why people behave in certain ways (Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2011:61–63). As a consequence, participant observation can provide an in-depth knowledge of people actions, use of symbols, and attitudes. In other words, participant observation is an efficient way of getting to know a culture and how it influences people's behavior.

However, the timeframe for this study falls between two elections in Denmark. It would therefore be impossible to participate in and observe the Vietnamese group members' actions, and the symbols and attitudes they display, during the run-up and throughout the actual election. The participant observation would help gain a deeper understanding of the Vietnamese group but it would not as such fulfill its purpose. Considering the time and resources, it would require conduct a participant observation, a different method will be employed. Also, Borup provides an in-depth description of the Vietnamese group in Denmark, which to some degree can be used as a replacement for the participant observation.

A method that is often used in extension to participant observation is qualitative research interviews. Qualitative research interviews come in different forms but the semi-structured interview is especially useful in culture analyses (Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen 2011:76–77). The purpose of the semi-structured qualitative research interview is to "*obtain descriptions of the interviewee's life-world in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena*" (Kvale 1996:19). The "semi-structured" implies that the interview questions are organized according to certain topics or themes the researcher want to examine. At the same time the interviewee has the possibility to emphasize own perspectives and tell spontaneous stories, the researcher later can interpret. The semi-structured qualitative interview does not give access to the actions, symbols, and attitudes the interviewee performs and display to the same extent as participant observation. However, if conducted right, the semi-structured interview can provide the researcher with a significant amount of data of the interviewee's life world. This can then be used to interpret the interviewee's behavior in connection to different phenomena, such as voter turnout (Kvale 1996:21–23). Thus, the semi-structured qualitative research interview can be an efficient method to grasp the life-worlds of the Vietnamese group members and open it to culture analysis. It will therefore be applied in this study.

Before we move on, it is necessary briefly to consider some of the epistemological consequences of conducting qualitative research. The qualitative research interview is a dialog between two people and it is in this dialog knowledge is created. This entails that the researcher takes part in the creation of knowledge, which thereby becomes subjective. This implies that the data subtracted from the interviews cannot be reproduced, making it difficult to validate the data. For that reason, qualitative research was previously frowned upon, but in recent decades, qualitative research has become accepted as both necessary and scientific. Nevertheless, because qualitative data not easily is reproduced and quantified, validation relies on the researcher's ability to describe the choices he/she makes and the reasoning behind his/her later interpretations of the data (Kvale 1996:68–

87). In the remaining parts of this chapter I will turn to the reflections connected to the preparation, conduction, and processing of the qualitative research interviews.

Preparation of interviews

This study includes six semi-structured qualitative research interviews with members of the Vietnamese group in Denmark. The considerations concerning interviewees, the number of interviewees, and what they were asked will be discussed below. Ethical circumstances are dealt with continuously.

Selection criteria for interviewees

In order to raise the quality of the data, which later were subtracted from the interviews, five criteria where established. Thus, the five criteria were meant to secure as unambiguous data as possible as well as give a broad understanding of the Vietnamese in Denmark.

- The first criterion concerned the duration of residency in Denmark. To make sure that the interviewees would have a certain level of understanding of the Danish society, including the Danish democracy and Danish culture, the interviewees were required to have resided ten years or more in Denmark. This was also meant to ensure that interviewees would have had the chance to vote in Danish local elections. The criterion for time of residency was met by all the interviewees except for Chi, who had only resided in Denmark for seven years. Nevertheless, the interview has been included in the analysis, since Chi showed both a good understanding of the Danish democracy and Danish culture. Also because she has resided in Denmark long enough to have had the possibility of voting in the latest local election, which were the reasons to establish the time of residence criterion in the first place.

- The second criterion was that the interviewees should meet a certain level of Danish language proficiency. This criterion was established to ensure useful materials for further analysis. All the interviewees met this criterion, though the Danish language proficiency varied.

- The third criterion was that the interviewees should be thirty years of age or older. The criterion was regarded as a guiding principle but was established because age seems to have a strong impact on the voter turnout among all immigrant groups as well as native Danes. The voter turnout is much lower for persons in their early twenties than for persons close thirty (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:33–35). It would therefore be hard to judge whether abstaining is caused by age or linked to the value standards characterizing the Vietnamese ethnic group. All the interviewees met this criterion expect for Chi, who was 27 years of age. Nevertheless, she was included since the thirty years limit was a guiding principle.

- The fourth criterion concerned gender. According to Borup (2011), the Vietnamese women are often bearers of culture. Gender is not explicitly discussed in the analysis, since it does not appear to have a significant influence on voter turnout (Bhatti and Hansen 2010:21–23), but it is a necessary criterion to include, in order to get a broader understanding of the Vietnamese group. Two out of the six interviewees were women.

- The final criterion was that both Catholics and Buddhists should be represented. The vast majority of Vietnamese in Vietnam are Buddhist, however, in diaspora there is a large minority of Catholics. Denmark is no exception (Borup 2011:92). I therefore sought to include both Buddhist and Catholics in the study. However, as it turned out, five out of my six interviewees were Buddhists, while one was Catholic (Thao). My interviewees are as a result not representative for the Catholic group. Further, the interviewees were contacted through cultural and religious associations – the Vietnamese Cultural Buddhist Association and the Catholic Vietnamese Association in Denmark. This indicates that the Vietnamese ethnic identity might be disproportionally strong. This creates

a bias which needs to be taken into consideration in relation to the results of my study.

The number and status of the interviewees

With few in-depth interviews it becomes possible to closely investigate the relationship between a certain behavior and its context, and to find the logic between the individual and the situation (Kvale 1996:108–109). The ambition of this study is not to make statistical generalizations or definitively falsify a hypothesis. Instead the ambition is to make plausible whether or not there is a link between the low Vietnamese voter turnout and the cultural values characterizing the Vietnamese group. For this, a thorough understanding of the Vietnamese group members' attitudes towards electoral and political participation is required. I therefore decided on few in-depth interviews. Another important factor, concerning the number of interviews, is that I reached a point where more interviews did not appear to add new significant insights, compared to the time and resources at my disposal.

It is not only the number of the interviewees which needs to be addressed. It is also necessary to comment on the role the different interviewees play in the study. Thus, aside from the expert interview conducted with Jørn Borup, my interviewees can be separated into two types –representatives and regular interviewees. Representatives are persons who, through their position within the Vietnamese group, can "speak on behalf" of the members of the Vietnamese group. Thao and Huan function as representatives in this understanding. Thao is secretary for the Catholic Vietnamese Association in Denmark and member of a number of boards and councils, within the Catholic community in Denmark. This puts him in touch with a larger number of Vietnamese in Denmark, some of which he represents within the Danish Catholic Church. Huan is member of the Vietnamese Cultural Buddhist Association where his job is to create a bridge between the Vietnamese and the Danish society. He is, in a sense, the public face of the association. The rest of my interviewees are "regular" persons, who might

have less knowledge of the Vietnamese group in Denmark, but whose attitudes towards electoral participation is the subject of investigation, and therefore are essential to the study. Thao and Huan function as regular interviewees too, but as representatives they also play an extended part in the study.

Presentations of the interviewees

The interviewees are in this section presented to show that they do represent a socially marginalized group. Anonymity was offered my interviewees to ensure that they could speak freely, which helped to increase the quality of the data subtracted from the interviews. All interviewees, except for Thao and Huan who are already "public" figures and who did not request anonymity, have been given fake names. Some of the personal information of the anonymous interviewees has also been omitted from the presentation so that they cannot be identified.

Huan

Huan is in his late 30s and has Danish citizenship. Huan is a Buddhist and does not vote in either local or parliamentary elections. He came to Denmark when he was 9 years old as a refugee with his parents and his younger brother. He has a higher education within computer sciences and works in an umbrella organization for day-care institutions. Huan lives in Copenhagen with his Vietnamese wife. He also works as a volunteer in the Vietnamese Cultural Buddhist association, where he has responsibility for communication.

Thao

Thao is in his late 50s and has Danish citizenship. He is Catholic and votes both in local and parliamentary elections. He came to Denmark when he was around 12 years of age as a refugee with his family. Thao is unskilled and works at a factory.

Thao lives in the Copenhagen area in a single family house with his Vietnamese wife. He has three grown-up sons. Thao is holds the position as secretary for the Catholic Vietnamese Association in Denmark. Moreover, he is member of a number of boards and councils within the Catholic Church in Denmark, and is co-writer on a Catholic Vietnamese magazine.

Mai

Mai is in her late 30s and has Danish citizenship. She is Buddhist, but does not practice her religion. She votes in both local and parliamentary elections. She came to Denmark when she was little. Mai has a higher education in Business and works in a large Danish company. She lives in Copenhagen with her Vietnamese husband and son. She works as a volunteer in the Vietnamese Cultural Buddhist Association, where she mainly comes to maintain her cultural heritage.

Nguyen

Nguyen is in his late 30s and has a Danish citizenship. He is Buddhist, but does regard himself as particularly religious. He used to vote when he was a student, both in local and parliamentary elections, but stopped after he lived in Sweden as few years. He came to Denmark 24 years ago. Nguyen is educated as a pharmacist and has worked at a pharmacy in Denmark for 10 years. He has a Vietnamese wife with Swedish citizenship and a young daughter. He works as a volunteer in the Vietnamese Cultural Buddhist Association.

Chi

Chi is 27 years old and does not have Danish citizenship. She is Buddhist and has not voted in local elections. She came to Denmark 6 years ago. She studies pedagogy and is almost finished with her degree. She lives with her Vietnamese

husband and together they have a son. Chi works as a volunteer in the Vietnamese Cultural Buddhist Association, where she also comes to create a network of persons with a Vietnamese background.

Hoi

Hoi is in his 30s and has a Danish citizenship. He is Buddhist and voted in the latest parliamentary election (2011). He came to Denmark when he was little. Hoi has a shorter education and works as mechanic. He has a Vietnamese wife and a young daughter. He works as a volunteer in the Vietnamese Cultural Buddhist Association.

The interview guide

Each of the six semi-structured qualitative research interviews were based on an interview guide developed prior to the interviews[2]. In this section, the reflections underpinning the interview guide will be presented.

Semi-structured qualitative research interviews seek to cover themes which have been decided upon beforehand, while the interview at the same time is open to change in the sequence as well as in the formulation of the interview questions. This makes it easier to pursue spontaneous answers and histories given by the interviewee (Kvale 1996:133–136). I decided to structure my interview guide in accordance with two themes: "ascription to the Vietnamese group" and "the interviewees' attitudes towards political participation and voter turnout". According to Barth, ethnic group membership is a process of self-ascription and ascription by others. In order to examine the cultural values of the Vietnamese group members and their influence on the group members' voting behavior, it was first necessary to assess whether or not my interviewees ascribe themselves to the

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[2] For the interview guide see Appendix

Vietnamese group. The second theme was chosen in order to examine the interviewees' attitudes towards voter turnout and political participation.

Based on the themes of the interview guide I developed a number of interview question. An important criterion for these questions was that they should take a descriptive form, such as "what" and "how" questions. It was important to avoid too many "why" questions. The choice to avoid "why" questions was made in order to prevent too many speculative answers. Also to prevent creating a feeling among the interviewees that they were being examined, since this would have been likely to lower the quality of the data I could later extract from the interviews (Kvale 1996:148–160). Needless to say, because of their roles as representatives I deliberately asked Thao and Huan more "why" questions.

Another reflection which was emphasized throughout the development of the interview guide was the type of questions which should be asked. Here I made use of James Spradley and the type of questions he refers to as "grand tour" questions. Grand tour questions are meant to simulate a situation where the interviewer would otherwise have had the option of observing the behavior of the interviewees. The essential aspect of grand tour questions is to ask broad questions to the themes which are chosen for the interview guide. The point is that the interviewees this way themselves can highlight significant aspects of the field of research the interviewer is studying (Spradley 1979:87).

Grand tour questions can be separated into different types. The first type I made use of in the interview guide was "typical" grand tour questions. The purpose of the typical grand tour questions is to make the interviewees give a general picture of what is important to them – highlight what they find significant, as mentioned above. The other type of grand tour questions I made use of was "specific" grand tour questions. The specific grand tour questions are designed make the interviewees talk about specific relations. The advantage of the specific grand tour questions is that it often is easier for the interviewees to relate to and tell about specific rather than general relations (Spradley 1979:88).

According to Spradley, it is important to begin interviews with concrete or specific questions the interviewer believes the interviewees can relatively simple to answer. This way it is easier to make the interviewees feel comfortable with the interview situation and get them to open up and speak freely (Spradley 1979:86). I therefore began each of the interviews with asking specific questions about the interviewees' relationship to or role within the associations, through which I came into contact with them. The specific grand tour questions were then followed up typical grand tour questions connected to the two main themes in my interview guide.

The interview guide was ended with the question "is there something we have not talked about you wish to add before we finish the interview?". This was done to make sure that themes, which were important to the interviewees or themes that might have occurred to the interviewee during the interview, would be covered (Kvale 1996:91–115).

Throughout this part, I have discussed my reflections and considerations prior to the interviews. In the following part I will discuss the cause of the interview. This is meant to assess the validity of the collected

The cause of the interviews
The interviews lasted between 45-65 minutes. The atmosphere of the interviews was in general good. The interviewees were willing to share their thoughts about electoral and political participation, without me having to push them or ask questions all the time. Especially, Huan and Nguyen were eager to tell and came with long answers to the interview questions.

Before the actual interviews begun I presented the topic of the study and the purpose of the interviews to the interviewees. This was done to avoid insecurity about what the interviews were going to be used for. After the interviews ended

the purpose of the interviews was repeated to the interviewees. This was done for two reasons: (1) To give the interviewees a change to consent before the interviews were analyzed and made part of the study. In connection to this the interviewees were offered to be provided with a copy of the interviews which they could listen to and comment on. However, none of the interviewees found it necessary. (2) To investigate if the interviewees had any comments about participating in the interviews, so these comments could be considered before the further interviews were conducted.

The knowledge from the interviews was produced through a dialog between me and the interviewees. I have therefore to some extent influenced the answers provided by my interviewees. A few times during the interviews I have unintentionally asked leading questions. This can distort the picture of the interviewees' attitudes (Kvale 1996:156–158) towards political participation and voter turnout. However, it was not a consistent feature of the interviews and, as mentioned above, my interviewees often provided long answers to short and open questions. As described in the previous section I made an effort not to ask my interviewees too many "why" questions, Nevertheless, some "why" questions did occur during all the interviews and the following answers has to varying degrees become speculative. Speculative answers are not necessary an evil that must be avoided. Even so, parts where the interviewees have been too vague and unclear, were left out of the analysis. This was done to ensure the validity of the data collected through the interviews.

I was relative inexperienced as an interviewer prior to the interviews. The lack of experience, especially during the first interview, resulted in too few follow-up questions. This had the natural consequence, that the themes in the interview guide were not covered as thoroughly as in the other interviews. Nevertheless, the themes in the interview guide were in general covered to a satisfactory degree. I will therefore argue, that the level and quality of the data gathered during the interviews corresponds with the ambition prior to the conduction of the

interviews, which again underpins the validity of the collected data (Kirk and Miller 1986:21–32).

Processing and analyzing the interviews

A main criterion for good qualitative research is that the process of analysis is transparent to other researchers. One way to do this is to outline the process with which the collected data has been processed and analyzed (Kvale 1996:202–204). In general, it can be said that I followed an ad hoc model for analysis, inspired by various methods suggested by Michael Huberman and Matthew Miles (1984). Ethical considerations will be emphasized.

Transcription is often the first step in processing interviews because it can help structure and organize the interviews and can make it easier to get an overview of the material. However, transcription of interviews is also a long and time consuming process, which involves a number of problems of interpretation. Transcriptions are not copies or representations of reality, instead, they are decontextualized conversations or abstractions frozen in time and removed from their foundation in social interactions. Before transcription is begun it is therefore necessary to make an assessment of the need to transcribe the interviews in relation to the purpose of the study (Kvale 1996:161–173). I am conducting a culture analysis where the interviews are meant to give a picture of the interviewees' attitudes towards electoral and political participation. I am not making a discourse analysis, which would require that the language the interviewees made use of received much more attention. Therefore, I decided not to transcribe my interviews. It should mentioned, however, where quotes have been used in the analysis, the language have been corrected for mistakes. This was done to avoid stigmatization of the interviewees, given their immigrant background.

The fact that the interviews were not transcribed does not imply that the interviews were not processed. Each of the interviews were after completion

coded according to time and themes, meaning that each interview were divided into small parts based on the topics the interviewees were discussing. These themes were naturally influenced by the interview questions and the themes included in the interview guide. Still, as mentioned previously, the interview questions were designed so the interviewees had a great deal of freedom to emphasize the aspects of electoral and political participation they regard as significant. The themes brought up by the interviewees were has been the starting point of the analysis. Because the themes occurred along the way, as more and more interviews were coded, I often went back and forth between interviews to re-label or re-code bits of the interviews.

Coding is not an objective categorization but part of the process of analyzing the interviews. Thus, coding involves differentiating and combining data collected through the interviews as well as structuring reflections about this information (Huberman and Miles 1984:56). To help in this part of the process of analysis, I made use of marginal remarks. As coding proceeded, new themes were discovered or old themes from other interviews were repeated. This made way for reflections and ideas connected to my theoretical starting point, which then were noted on the coding sheets of each interview. In accordance with the suggestions of Michael Huberman and Matthew Miles (1984:66-69), these marginal remarks or analytical notes were then used to further develop ideas about the connection between cultural values characterizing the Vietnamese group and voter turnout.

The coding process and the writing of marginal remarks provided an extensive amount of data. In order to get a better overview the data was organized in a data matrix. The data matrix resulted in further condensation of the data acquired during the interviews. This made it easier to note patterns in themes brought up by the interviewees, as well as the contrasts and variations among the interviewees, which is important to the culture analysis approach of the study. The data condensation, necessary to develop the data matrix, involved a risk of oversimplification where important details could be lost. The coding sheets with the marginal remarks and analytical notes were therefore kept and used to locate

bits of the interviews, which required extra attention. Thus the analysis of the interviews was a process with constant shifts between condensed data and material rich on details (Huberman and Miles 1984:239–244).

Analysis: Self-ascription, cultural values, and voter turnout

The purpose of this study is to understand how the cultural values characterizing the Vietnamese group influences the Vietnamese voter turnout. My theoretical approach implies that these cultural values can be accessed by describing and interpreting the Vietnamese group members' actions, symbols, and attitudes, towards voter turnout and political participation in general. As discussed in the "Methodology", the empirical material underpinning this study has focused on attitudes. Thus, throughout the analysis these will be described, and interpreted in relation to the cultural background of the Vietnamese, presented in "The Vietnamese in Denmark". However, it is necessary to be careful with an essentialist use of culture as explanation of the Vietnamese group members' voting behavior. There is no one-to-one relationship between historical and traditional norms and values in Vietnam and the behavior of the Vietnamese living in Denmark. Still, the Vietnamese group members' behavior can be interpreted in relation to these.

It is first necessary to examine to what degree the Vietnamese in Denmark ascribe themselves to the Vietnamese ethnic group. As Verdery argues, ethnic affiliation seems to be relatively inflexible in the West compared to many areas in the Third World. Nevertheless, the process of ascription should be discussed. It is essential to understand how closely interrelated the members of the Vietnamese group is in order to assess the validity of culture as explanation for the low Vietnamese voter turnout. If the members of the Vietnamese group do not ascribe themselves to the Vietnamese group but solely are ascribed by others to the Vietnamese group then it is unlikely that a significant part of the Vietnamese group members behave in accordance with the value standards associated with group membership. It will therefore not be relevant to use value standards associated with the Vietnamese group as an explanation for the low voter turnout. The analysis of the Vietnamese group members' ascription will be followed by three parts which focus

specifically on the relationship between Vietnamese value standards and voter turnout. The second part of the analysis will focus the traditional authority understanding in Confucianism and its consequences for the Vietnamese living in Denmark's perception of their role in Danish politics. The third part focuses on the Vietnamese group members understanding of conflict and its impact on their political participation. The final part discusses the concept of humility which often was brought up in connection to political participation in a wider sense.

In the paragraph on "The Vietnamese in Denmark" I have emphasized the Confucian moral system's importance for the Vietnamese society and its widespread influence on Vietnamese peoples. The Vietnamese culture cannot be equated with Confucianism, but Confucianism and Confucian virtues have permeated various Vietnamese groupings, and therefore it appears logical that Confucian values and virtues, in a situation where the various Vietnamese groups share minority status, come to act as ethnic markers, and that internal divisions tend to be muted in the face of the majority. However, the attitudes and cultural values described and discussed here were not picked because they are connected to Confucianism, but because these were the cultural values, my interviewees more or less consciously, expressed during the interviews as having importance for their own and other Vietnamese's voter turnout.

Ascription to the Vietnamese ethnic group

In general my interviewees ascribed themselves to the Vietnamese ethnic group. Thus, five out of my six interviewees described themselves as either Vietnamese or both Vietnamese and Danish. Only Huan described himself as primarily Danish, and he still described himself as having a "leg in each camp" (Huan 2013:1.32). My six interviews are of course not representative for the entire Vietnamese group in Denmark, but the tendency among my interviewees to emphasize a Vietnamese ethnic identity is supported by a smaller survey analysis conducted by Jørn Borup. Out of the 236 respondents participating in the survey, 14 percent answered that they feel most Danish, 26 percent answered that they

feel both Danish and Vietnamese, while 60 percent answered they feel most Vietnamese (Borup 2011:63). This suggests that there among Vietnamese in Denmark exists a strong sense of belonging to a Vietnamese ethnic group. However, just like my interviewees were members of Vietnamese cultural and religious associations, Borup's survey was conducted during Buddhist and Catholic religious and cultural events, where many Vietnamese where expected to show up. The survey is therefore not generally representative for the Vietnamese in Denmark either (Borup 2011:169). In the larger and more representative responsible citizenship survey the numbers are somewhat different. On the question concerning national affiliation, in the responsible citizenship survey, 17 percent of the respondents answered that they are Danish, 51 percent answer that they are both Danish and Vietnamese, 13 percent answer that they are Vietnamese, while 19 percent answer that they are something else or do not know (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011a:117). Thus, in the more representative responsible citizenship survey the emphasis on national affiliation has, compared to Borup's smaller survey, shifted away from primarily Vietnamese to an emphasis on both Vietnamese and Danish national affiliation.

Asking the members of an immigrant group about what they "feel like the most" is one way to study national and ethnic group affiliation. Another could be to study valence of group membership. According to social identity theory, group identity is more likely to persist and be internalized in members' identity if group membership is considered positive. In contrast, the group identity is less certain to be internalized by the group members if group membership is considered negative (Huddy 2001:134-144). Thus, studying the valence of group membership can help clarify if the members of the Vietnamese group imbue their the Vietnamese group membership with meaning.

Neither the value survey and the responsible citizenship survey nor Borup have examined the valence of group membership among the Vietnamese in Denmark, so it is difficult to say something more general about it. Nevertheless, my interviewees, except for Huan, seemed to regard the Vietnamese group

membership as something positive. Thus, Mai thinks that Vietnamese in general have more respect for other people (especially the elders), are more humble, and that they are more grateful than Danes, who she at times experience as brash and overconfident. Nguyen feels that Vietnamese are very helpful and open, while the native Danes can be hard to know. Chi also experiences Vietnamese as helpful and stresses that Vietnamese are warm people and that they keep away from making trouble. Hoi and Thao also describe the Vietnamese group positively. Hoi emphasize that the Vietnamese in his association make much effort to create a good relationship with their neighbors and be open to outsiders. Thao stresses that the Vietnamese members of the Catholic Church in Denmark contributes immensely to the church and its activities, though the Vietnamese group is small. He also states that his family and the other Vietnamese families in the Danish Catholic church receive much attention and praise, from its other members, because their whole families and not only single individuals attend religious services. Huan on the other hand is more reluctant to praise the Vietnamese group. He says that Vietnamese, especially the older generation but also the younger generations, can be both conceit and stubborn. However, he also emphasizes, with some pride, that the Vietnamese in Denmark has done well in the Danish society.

As well as it can be useful to study the valence of group membership, in order to understand whether or not the Vietnamese ethnic group membership is imbued with meaning, it can be valuable to examine the interconnectedness of the Vietnamese group members. If membership is not regularly shared with people in the surroundings, the meaning of group membership and thereby the influence of the cultural values characterizing the group might fade away. It is therefore necessary to examine some of the (external) factors which can help us understand if the Vietnamese ethnic identity is maintained among the Vietnamese group members (Borup 2011:81).

In his study from 2010 Borup examined the density with which the Vietnamese group members live, their choice of spouse, social circle, language, and primary socialization. A large part of the Vietnamese (57 percent) live in neighborhoods

with less than 10 percent native Danes, though this only leaves them in the middle compared to other immigrant groups in Denmark. Both when it comes to choice of spouse and the social circle that the Vietnamese group members surround themselves with, there is a clear tendency to orientate oneself towards the Vietnamese group. Thus, 76 percent of the Vietnamese marry one of the same nationality and 82 percent answer that their friends' parents are Vietnamese of origin. While the data, Borup uses to determine the density of the Vietnamese group members and their choice of spouse, is derived from the value survey, the data he uses to estimate the social circle is subtracted from his own survey study. One should therefore be careful not to jump to conclusions. Nevertheless, my interviewees' friends were also predominantly persons with Vietnamese parents. According to Borup, the two variables – choice of spouse and social circle – create an index of "ethnic affiliation". This shows that whole 84 percent of the Vietnamese group members ascribe themselves to the Vietnamese ethic group. Further, almost all speak Vietnamese with their parents (93 percent) and their spouse (89 percent). The numbers are a little lower when it comes to siblings (61 percent) and their children (72 percent) but it is more than half. On the other hand, 98 percent speak Danish at school and workplace, while 93 percent of the 15-29 year olds speak Danish with their friends. Still, more than half of the Vietnamese say they have difficulties with the Danish language. Finally, the ethnic group, one tends to orientate oneself towards, depends of the country of which one lived as a child. Of the Vietnamese immigrants who came to Denmark after they turned 12 less than a tenth affiliate with the ethnic Danish group, while a third of the immigrants who came to Denmark before they turned 12 affiliates themselves with the Danish group (Borup 2011:64–71).

Borup's study strongly suggests that the Vietnamese group members are very much interconnected, and especially the choice of spouse and friends point towards a tendency among the Vietnamese group members to maintain and cultivate their Vietnamese ethnic identity. This also seems to be confirmed by the valence of group membership my interviewees display. With the exception of

Huan, my interviewees emphasized Vietnamese group membership as something positive. Since valence of group membership was only examined among my interviewees the results are not representative, but they correspond with Borup's study. So, both my interviewees, and the Vietnamese group members in general, predominantly say that they feel Vietnamese as well as Danish. This indicates that the Vietnamese at least to some extent have taken on a Danish national identity. Thus, it might be that the Vietnamese, deliberately or unwittingly, distinguish between a national identity and an ethnic identity. The Vietnamese seem to orientate towards a Danish national identity and at the same time seek to maintain a Vietnamese ethnic identity. This is essential because, as we shall see below, the cultural values characterizing the Vietnamese ethnic identity seem to make the Vietnamese group members reluctant to vote and participate in Danish politics.

Social hierarchy and authority relations

As mentioned previously, it is only Mai and Thao who clearly express voting as a civic duty and endeavor to vote in both local and parliamentary elections. Hoi voted in the last parliamentary election (2011), but he doesn't vote in local elections and it is relatively recent he has begun to see the value of voting. Nguyen used to vote in both local and national elections when he was a student, but has not voted since then. Chi has only resided in Denmark for six years and doesn't have Danish citizenship, which means she can't vote in Danish national elections. Nevertheless, she hasn't voted in local elections either, though she was able to do so in the last local election. Huan does not vote and has only done so once or twice, in spite of the fact that he came to Denmark when he was quite young. Thus, my interviewees voting habits vary but there is a tendency to neglect the importance of voting. Further, during the interviews it became clear that only Thao were under the impression that the majority of his Vietnamese friends vote regularly. The rest of my interviewees expected only a few of their Vietnamese friends or none at all to vote regularly. These answers are in line with the overall

voter turnout among the Vietnamese that Bhatti and Hansen (2010) document in their report.

Among my interviewees there was a wide spread feeling that voting requires a relatively high level of knowledge about Danish politics. This was expressed directly in connection to voter turnout, such as when Chi said: "*I don't think it is possible [to vote], when I don't have so much knowledge [of politics]*" (Chi 2013:19.19), as well as more indirectly when the interviewees were speaking of political participation in a more general sense. Even Thao, who stated that he votes both in parliamentary and local elections, said that it was difficult for him to vote because he did not have a thorough knowledge of Danish politics. Between my interviewees only Mai seemed to feel comfortable with her knowledge of Danish politics. It is of cause possible that the whole interview situation influenced the anxiety my interviewees expressed in connection to their knowledge of Danish politics. Nevertheless, though I made a great effort to explain the interviewees that the interviews were not a test of their knowledge about Danish politics it appeared to be a point of reference they often returned to and used as an excuse for not being more engaging with Danish politics.

However, it is interesting to note that my interviewees appeared to watch the news on Danish television regularly and that they were not ignorant of Danish politics. In connection Hoi stated that it is almost impossible not to hear about Danish politics. Huan also said that the Vietnamese know what is going on in the Danish society and in Danish politics, though they do not talk much about it. Thao also supported this. He said that the Vietnamese know what is going on, but they only speak of Danish politics if the policies directly impact on their everyday lives. The responsible citizenship survey also indicates that the Vietnamese are relatively informed about the Danish society and Danish politics compared to other immigrant groups in the Danish society. Thus, 56 percent of the Vietnamese group members in Denmark answer that they watch Danish news on television every day. In comparison, only 46 percent of the Iraqis and 50 percent of the Turks, who both have a higher voter turnout than the Vietnamese, answer that

they watch Danish news on television every day (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011a:19). When it comes to reading Danish newspapers the Vietnamese group has the lowest amount of readers (14 percent) but it is not significantly lower than for example persons originating from the West Balkans (17 percent) and Lebanon (18 percent) (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011a:21). Further, 31 percent of the Vietnamese group members watch Danish news on the internet, which is the same as for Danes and approximately in the middle of the other immigrant groups represented in the responsible citizenship survey (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011a:22).

When the interviewees' somewhat contradicting statements of political knowledge and the results of the responsible citizenship survey are compared with each other one can get the impression that the general knowledge of Danish politics, expressed among the Vietnamese, is either experienced as less than it actually is, or imagined to be higher among other groups than it is. It is true that the general level of political knowledge appears to be higher among native Danes (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011a:19–22) than among Vietnamese but the difference does not constitute a solid explanation for the low Vietnamese voter turnout. The feeling of not having enough political knowledge to participate in politics and elections seems to reflect a lack of political self-confidence and a sense of not having anything to contribute with, rather than an acute knowledge problem. But where does this feeling of not having the expertise to participate in Danish public elections come from if an actual knowledge gap cannot be identified?

The perhaps most central concept in Confucianism and the Vietnamese culture in a broader sense is filial piety. Filial piety means respect and reverence for one's parents, and implies unconditional obedience. On its most basic level, filial piety refers to the relationship between father and son, but moves outwards in concentric circles to the extended family, the village, and the state (Rainey 2010:29). With its base in filial piety Confucianism has historically been used by

people in power to promote loyalty, respect for authority, and social hierarchy. It does so through the establishment of five relationships (ngu luan): ruler-subject, farther-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend. Only the last holds any egalitarian possibilities, the others being inherently vertical and unequal. (Marr 2000:773–774). Thus, the social hierarchy the five authority relations prescribe tends to order people in different roles which they are expected to live up to and to stay within. Roughly speaking, government and decision-making is within the realm of the ruler while the subjects are expected to be governed and follow the decisions made by the ruler.

This understanding of social hierarchy and authority relations conflicts with the democratic life form Hal Koch (1981 [1945]) in the early post World War era argued should be cultivated to ensure political participation and a stable democracy in Denmark. According to Hal Koch, democracy is a life form which despite many failures have flourished in the West and which deepest political wisdom is that everybody should participate in the government of the state (Koch 1981:33). Thus, he argues, the peoples of a democracy must continually be educated to autonomy (meaning active participation in the democratic system) and this is the most important task in a democracy, more important than what goes on in the parliament (Koch 1981:46-47). Hal Koch's ideas about democracy and the democratic life form does not unambiguously mirror native Danes natural attitude towards democracy. Nevertheless, many of these thoughts are reflected in recent years increased focus on democratic integration of immigrants into the Danish society, which indicates that Hal Koch's ideas still are important to the Danish society.

 As discussed in the theory chapter, the cultural values characterizing an ethnic group changes and are given different salience. Therefore, the Vietnamese in Denmark cannot directly be identified with a classic or essentialist version of Confucianism but values and norms can be seen to have a relation to the history and tradition of the country of origin. Thus, the low political self-confidence, which I have argued is expressed by my interviewees as the feeling of not having

the right level of political knowledge to participate in Danish elections, can be related to a more or less subconscious understanding of being subjects rather than decision-makers. In other words, a large part of the Vietnamese might feel that they do not have a status which provides them with the legitimacy or the obligation to participate in the government of the Danish state, including participation in Danish public elections. This is clearly expressed by Huan who says: "*There are others who are far better than me at expressing their [political] points of view, so I lean back and accept that [politics] are not my cup of tea. I just to have to learn to conform to the things that are decided [by the politicians]*" (Huan 2013:8.48).

My argument, that a Confucian understanding of social hierarchy and authority relations work as an ethnic marker for the Vietnamese ethnic group, is supported by the low interest in Danish politics the Vietnamese group members' display. All the interviewees, with the exception of Mai, showed little interest in Danish politics and they explained that they rarely speak of Danish politics with their friends and family. Further, this appears to characterize the Vietnamese in a more general sense too. Only 8 percent of the Vietnamese answer that they are "very interested" in Danish politics, while 40 percent answer that they only have "little interest" in Danish politics. In contrast, 36 percent of Iranians answer that they are very interested in Danish politics, while 19 percent answer that they only have little interest. For native Danes numbers are 18 percent and 29 percent (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011b:38). Thus, the little interest in Danish politics the Vietnamese display suggests that they do not see it as their job to participate in the decision-making process. Another factor which supports my contention is the fact that only 40 percent of the Vietnamese answer in the responsible citizenship survey that it is essential to vote if you have the right to vote. This is significantly lower than any other ethnic minority group who participated in the survey (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011a:31).

To use Hal Koch's terminology, the Vietnamese might not have been educated to autonomy to the same extent as the native Danes. However, the Confucian understanding of authority relations seem to be a cultural marker which separates the Vietnamese group from other ethnic groups but this does not mean, as I have discussed in the theory chapter, that all Vietnamese in Denmark conform to the Confucian understanding authority relations. Different members emphasize different cultural markers in the process of ascription to ethnic groups. Mai is a good example. She ascribes herself to the Vietnamese ethnic group but she does not seem to conform to the Confucian understanding of authority relations. She sees it as her duty to vote in Danish public elections (participate in the government of the Danish state) and she believes that decisions made by decision-makers, can and should be challenged by everyone if they do not provide solid arguments for their choices (Mai 2013:17.05). In this sense, she expresses an egalitarian view of social hierarchy and authority relations; similar to the one Hal Koch speaks in favor of. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to believe that Mai does not represent the majority of the Vietnamese. The majority of the Vietnamese appear to conform more or less knowingly to the Confucian understanding of authority relations.

The ethnic marker of social hierarchy and authority relations, I argue characterizes the Vietnamese ethnic group, does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of a larger framework for interpretation, were other cultural values are important too. In this connection, my interviewees repeatedly emphasized humbleness. In the next part, I will discuss how a certain understanding of humbleness seems to discourage the Vietnamese group members' involvement in Danish politics.

Humbleness

Throughout the interviews humbleness was mentioned repeatedly by the interviewees as an important virtue and they even emphasized it as something particularly Vietnamese. Humbleness was often used in a manner implying "reverence" or "respect", but it was also emphasized as "do not draw attention to

yourself". My interviewee Mai explains that the Vietnamese appeal to each other in different fashions depending on the age and status. If someone is older than you, one must appeal to that person in manner that shows respect and reverence. This is especially strong within one's family but it applies to strangers as well. It further entails that a person should always start out by being humble and not disrespectful towards others by making demands. In connection, Mai believes that a lot of the Vietnamese in Denmark stay away from politics because they find the way politicians are addressed by the Danish media, and the way the politicians address each other, inappropriate (Mai 2013:17.05).

This is supported by Thao who thinks that the low Vietnamese participation in elections, and politics in a more general sense, has to do with the fact that the Vietnamese group members rather accept the conditions they live under, as long as these are reasonable, than draw attention to themselves by speaking up (Thao 2010:45.28). Nguyen directly states that the Vietnamese in Denmark should be thankful for all they have received from the Danish state and not create problems by demanding more (Nguyen 2013:9.50). Huan also believes that the low Vietnamese voter turnout might have to do with the Vietnamese understanding of humbleness but elaborates the point. He explains that Vietnamese in general speak freely and are active in discussions as long as they are within a close circle of friends or family. However, as soon as the company includes less familiar persons or strangers the Vietnamese will be unwilling to draw attention to themselves. If a person draws too much attention to himself/herself and do not respect the unwritten rules of acting in a humble manner, that person might be subject to much negative talk in the Vietnamese environment and to some degree risk social exclusion (Huan 2013:35.06).

The importance of humbleness among the members of the Vietnamese group can be linked to the cultural heritage of Vietnam in several different ways, but again the Confucian concept of filial piety is essential. First, filial piety prescribes that a son can remonstrate against his father if the father's behavior is immoral, meaning that the father does not act in accordance with the Confucian doctrine. However,

remonstration is only acceptable if executed with the greatest reverence and it most never lead to a confrontation or break with the family. The same moral behavior is prescribed in the relationship between subject and ruler (Rainey 2010:26). In other words, humbleness is always to be displayed in the father-son relation or the ruler-subject relation. Thao illustrates, in the interview, that this understanding of humbleness is present within the Vietnamese group. He argues that the Vietnamese group members silently will accept policies and political decisions unless they are considered almost unacceptable. Thao explains that the strict immigration policies in Denmark and the harsh political tone towards immigrants often have made Vietnamese group members feel ill-treated, though in general they have a good reputation in the Danish society. In this case, the discontent is expressed in the family and among close friends, sometimes through unobtrusive events in the local community, but Thao has never himself, and he has no knowledge of Vietnamese who have, participated in demonstrations in the streets (Thao 2010:37.58).

Secondly, humbleness can be linked to the fact that the individual or self to a large extent is subordinate to group imperatives in Vietnamese culture. "Individual" as a concept did not enter into the Vietnamese language until the first decades of the twentieth century. Western ideas about the individual and self almost surely circulated in Vietnamese culture long before the term "individual" became part of the Vietnamese language, brought about by European Catholic missionaries, but were largely rejected (Marr 2000:769–777). Instead a Confucian understanding of the individual or self was dominant. Here the individual is encouraged to self-cultivation (*tu thân*) by entering into a mental process designed to prepare itself for ethically upright success in human affairs. However, the formula for moral self-cultivation resides in the larger Confucian doctrine designed to promote loyalty, respect for authority, and social hierarchy. Thus, for the self to succeed, it must fragment and function according to the five relationships: ruler-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend (Marr 2000:774). In this sense, the self is formed within and works in relation to

different contexts – the father-son being the most important – and is never "free" to act on its own. Rather, the self is "bound" by unconditional obedience based on filial piety (Rainey 2010:25). Nevertheless, this Confucian sense of the self was challenged towards the beginning of the twentieth century where more and more Vietnamese intellectuals began to incorporate a Western understanding of the self in their works as well as parts of the Vietnamese bourgeoisie, who welcomed the Western ideas of the self the individuals rights to property because the industrial and entrepreneurial prospects looked promising. But, in spite of some success evidenced by the fact that "individual" has become part of the Vietnamese language and individuality can be observed more clearly in some circumstances, the Vietnamese intellectuals' attempt to incorporate a Western understanding of the self into Vietnam and Vietnamese culture largely failed. Thus, the self in Vietnam remains more or less subordinate to group imperatives (Marr 2000:789). According to Borup, this is also the case among the Vietnamese in Denmark, though this seems to change slowly among the younger generations (Borup 2011:77).

Humbleness can be linked to the Confucian perception of emotions. Confucianism holds that human beings have certain irrepressible impulses. These are not in themselves objectionable, but unreflective outbursts driven solely by our emotional responses are a problem because they may cause harm to others. Confucianism therefore emphasize that individuals should be mindful of their impulses and display both reverence and respect (Goldin 2011:78–79). This corresponds well with the points made by Mai above.

It seems that humbleness has different connotations and that these can be derived from different but still closely inter-related aspects of a broader traditional Vietnamese culture. Nevertheless, in connection to political participation in Denmark my interviewees' emphasis on humbleness implies that the Vietnamese group members do not want to attract attention. This is supported by Borup, who argues that there among the Vietnamese group members in Denmark in general are a very strong reluctance towards speaking up (Borup 2013:20.05). This

attention avoidance does not correspond with Danish politics and the media's portrayal of Danish politicians. Thus, it can be debated to what degree and in what contexts but it is in general accepted that Danish politics in recent decades has become increasingly personified (Meyer 2013).

An ethnic marker of the Danish group is that every *individual* have the right to speak up, and *step forward* and present one's point of view. In contrast, an ethnic marker of the Vietnamese group seems to be that one should *avoid drawing attention* to oneself by expressing dissatisfaction. This does not correspond with Danish politics and the Vietnamese group members are therefore reluctant to participate and vote.

Conflict avoidance

The last of the cultural values that has a bearing on the issue of voter turnout, which crystallized from the literature and the interviews relates to conflict, or rather conflict avoidance. When I asked my interviewees why they believe that the Vietnamese voter turnout in Danish public elections is so low, they often answered that it is due to the political heritage of the Communist regime in Vietnam. Thus, Nguyen thinks that the Vietnamese associate politics with conflict and violence and this is why they don't vote (Nguyen 2013:5.25). Huan and Thao also believe that the Communist regime is the reason for the low voter turnout among Vietnamese in Denmark. Huan describes how political opponents to the Communist regime is imprisoned and tortured in Vietnam and says that these experiences has chained the people of Vietnam and that the Vietnamese refugees who came to Denmark has brought this chain with them without being able to get it off (Huan 2013:2.55).

According to the Norwegian professor Tor Bjørklund it is possible that political refugees, like the Vietnamese, become traumatized by their political experiences in the country of origin and that they relate politics in a broader sense to conflict and therefore stay away from it. However, Tor Børklund also argues that being

political refugee can have the exact opposite effect, and make political refugees embrace democracy all the more (Bjørklund 2013). My interviewees regarded the Danish democracy and freedom of speech as essential and universal values. Thus, Nguyen expressed that he was impressed with the Danish democracy and the close relationship between the Danish population and the Danish politicians (Nguyen). The support for the democratic values was often expressed as a critique of the communist regime in Vietnam, which my interviewees described as suppressing and authoritative. Thao said directly that Vietnam had become a bad place after the undemocratic communist party took power after the Vietnam War (Thao 2010:52.48). The support for the Danish democracy and democratic values more generally my interviewees expressed during the interviews is mirrored in the value survey. Thus, 98 percent of the Vietnamese respondents answered that democracy is a good political system, and 81 percent answered that everyone should have the right to gather and express themselves (Think Tank 2007:71). Further, there are fewer Vietnamese than Danes who answer that they would like Denmark to be ruled by a strong leader or experts rather than a democratically elected government (Think Tank 2007:129–130). However, 11 percent of the Vietnamese would be satisfied with the military ruling Denmark, while only 2 percent of Danes think so (Think Tank 2007:131). Nevertheless, there is a widespread support of the Danish democracy and democratic values and rights among the Vietnamese in Denmark.

Though the Vietnamese do not link the Danish democracy with violence they express a strong aversion against participating in politics and emphasize the conflict aspect of politics. According to Huan and Nguyen the conflict avoiding behavior is characteristic for Buddhists. They both emphasize that Buddhists seek harmony with their surroundings (Huan 2013:11.37; Nguyen 2013:8.27). Harmony in this context should be understood as preventing conflict with one's surroundings. Thus, harmony becomes dependent on the collective or inter-social relations between individuals. This is a fundamentally different understanding of harmony than the traditionally more individual Western understanding of

harmony. Here harmony is often understood as coming from inside the individual – the individual is liberated and seek its own goals (Borup 2013:32.54). Five out of my six interviewees are Buddhists and members of the Danish Cultural Buddhist Association and they all use Buddhism as a cultural marker when they describe themselves as Vietnamese, whether they define themselves as religious and practice the Buddhist doctrines or whether they see Buddhism more as a cultural heritage, which link them to other people with a similar background. However, as I have discussed previously the majority of the Vietnamese in Denmark are Buddhist. A majority of the Buddhists are not very aware of the Buddhist practices and doctrines, but the conflict avoidance most of my interviewees express can be interpreted as reflecting that the Buddhist concept of harmony at least to some degree is internalized more or less consciously by the Buddhist members of the Vietnamese group. And that this can help understand why a large part of the members of the Vietnamese group is reluctant to participate in politics, including voter turnout.

However, it is at the same time necessary to acknowledge that Buddhism also have a history of political activity and political violence. Thus, on June the 11th 1963 the Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc sat himself on fire in the streets of Saigon as a political protest against the American supported Catholic regime, which persecuted, imprisoned, and bullied Buddhists. The action of Thich Quang Duc has since been called the beginning of political Buddhism or the socially engaged Buddhism (Borup 2011:51). Further, Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Myanmar have a very violent record. It is too simple to assume that Buddhism automatically prevent political participation. Not just because peoples level of commitment to the Buddhist doctrines vary, as my interviewees are examples of, but also because history has showed that even the Buddhist monks can become political and violent if they think it necessary.

It is necessary to look beyond literal Buddhist doctrines in order to understand what can lead to this conflict avoiding behavior and, in a more general sense makes the Vietnamese group members reluctant to participate in politics,

including elections. Another aspect of Buddhism, which might help us understand the low voter turnout among the Vietnamese group members, is emphasized by Huan. He suggests that conflicts, including political conflicts, not really can be solved through discussion and debate. Instead, he believes, people must learn from Buddhism and begin to look inside themselves. The argument is that people, if they become more aware of themselves and their own boundaries, will be able to put themselves in others' positions and understand their behavior. Not until this is achieved will people be able to solve the more fundamental problems of the societies they live in (Huan 2013:16.55). A similar idea can be found in Confucianism. This is important for the purpose of this thesis because it indicates that this idea exists among other Vietnamese than the Buddhists. As mentioned previously, Catholicism in Vietnam has been characterized as Confucian Catholicism, and since a large minority of the Vietnamese in Denmark is Catholic this is relevant. More specifically, Confucianism prescribes that good governance, which in the end can lead to world peace, only can be achieved through self-cultivation (*Tu thân*) (Goldin 2011:32). Self-cultivation means to build up moral behavior, through studying virtues prescribed by Confucianism. The concept of self-cultivation was very much alive in Vietnam before the Vietnam War and still is in contemporary Vietnam, although the techniques of self-cultivation have not remained static (Marr 2000:795). One of the fundamental virtues is *shu*, which roughly can be translated into "understanding", "sympathy", or "compassion". Shu is essential because it makes us capable of putting ourselves in others place and anticipate what they would like. Thereby we can act on that and avoid conflict (Rainey 2010:32–33). Thus, first, the individual must cultivate itself, then it must spread its morality outwards through the concentric circles - first to the family, then to the village, afterwards to the state, and finally to the rest of the world (Goldin 2011:33).

This is a sympathetic point of view but it does not encourage political participation. Hal Koch argues that to internalize democracy as one's life form means to walk the path of conversation, debate and negotiation, and this in every

social aspect of a person's life – from the narrowest private life, family and friends, to interaction with unknown countrymen and women. Thus, to live the democratic life form is to bring disagreements into the light and find solutions to these through (political) debate and negotiation (Koch 1981:13–29). As mentioned previously, this has had great influence on the Danish democracy. However, in praxis Danish politics is often centered on conflict, not only as result of disagreement, but also as an instrument to mark boundaries between political parties. In this sense, conflicts gain their own life because they are not attempted solved but nourished and cultivated with the purpose of making visible political boundaries (Meyer 2013:6). An ethnic marker of the Danish group seems to be that political *debate is necessary* and that *disagreement should be brought out into the light*. In Danish politics, it appears; *conflict is cultivated* and used as an instrument in the party political struggle. In contrast, an ethnic marker of the Vietnamese ethnic group is that *conflict avoidance*.

I have dealt with three mutually constitutive cultural values that for a large part draw on Confucian (even when presented as Buddhist) symbolism. These values effectively function to keep the ethnic group out of focus with respect to the ongoing debate about minorities in Denmark. Further, the stress on harmony, conflict avoidance etc. may help to contain internal conflicts and unite the group in its (very peaceful) opposition to the majority.

Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to improve the understanding of the Vietnamese voter turnout in Danish public elections. In order to do so a culture analysis approach was chosen. This choice was motivated by the impossibility to explain the low Vietnamese voter turnout using a number of dominant theories of political participation. Culture analyses often involve extensive and detailed field studies. However, this has not been possible with the timeframe and resources available for this project. Instead, six semi-structured qualitative research interviews were conducted with members of the Vietnamese group. In order to strengthen the argument of the thesis, the interviews were supplemented by Jørn Borup's in-depth study of the Vietnamese group in Denmark as well as with two large survey studies initiated by the Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration in 2007 and 2011. It has not been possible to conduct a representative study. Instead the ambition has been to carry out a smaller study, which can create a basis for further in-depth analysis of the relationship between cultural values connected to ethnic group membership and the group members' voting behavior, in the Vietnamese group as well as in other ethnic groups.

Among the most significant ethnic minority groups in Denmark the Vietnamese group was the one group that declared their Danish identity to the highest degree. This indicates that the Vietnamese group members positively orientate themselves towards the Danish society. At the same time, a majority of the Vietnamese group members also display a strong Vietnamese ethnic identity. This is important because some of the cultural values, which function as central markers of the Vietnamese ethnic group, happen to discourage involvement in politics and voter turnout. Thus, this thesis points to social hierarchy and authority, humbleness, and conflict avoidance as important cultural values for the Vietnamese ethnic identity, and it is argued that these values are part of the explanation of the low voter turnout among Vietnamese.

Social hierarchy and authority implies that there is an understanding among the Vietnamese that administration of political affairs, political participation, and voter turnout requires certain skills or knowledge and therefore is restricted to an elite outside the Vietnamese group. Humbleness suggests that there is a dominant norm within the Vietnamese ethnic group that individuals should not attract attention to themselves. This discourages displaying political (op)position outside one's closest social circle. Conflict avoidance does not imply that conflicts do not appear in the Vietnamese group but entails significant resentments against the confrontational form that political debate takes in Denmark. A form that is cherished by most Danes as central for the parliamentary democracy. In connection to these findings, it is important to note that social hierarchy and authority, humbleness, and conflict avoidance seem to be rooted in a common Confucian heritage, that the Vietnamese group members think or feel is what characterize them as an ethnic group separate from other groups. Thus, individuals displaying strong interest in political issues and who maybe hold strong political opinions will not find resonance within the group. Group members are in this way socialized into an apolitical milieu.

So, I argue that it is plausible that the cultural values – social hierarchy and authority, humbleness, and conflict avoidance – characterize the Vietnamese ethnic identity and has a negative influence on the Vietnamese voter turnout in Danish public elections. However, as has been emphasized throughout the study, it is important not to confuse the culture analysis approach, underpinning this study, with an essentialist understanding of culture. Cultural values can vary, be learnt, and change. Thus, the cultural values characterizing the Vietnamese ethnic group do not determine the Vietnamese group members' voting behavior, but they constrain behavior in that it creates resonance for certain behaviors more than others. Or, in the case of the Vietnamese voter turnout, the cultural values appear to make the Vietnamese group members disinterested in politics and thus reluctant to vote. But they do not positively prevent voter turnout.

The strength of Barth's approach to ethnicity is its anti-essentialist nature and its ability to explain why ethnic groups can persist in spite of relatively heterogeneous membership. However, it also implies that behavior cannot be predicted based on culture, since cultural values may be relevant only in limited sectors of activity and social settings. This means that explanations of behavior should seek to include other factors than culture as well – for example class or social capital. Time and resources have not allowed for such an endeavor in this project, but further research should be done that combine culture analysis with socio-economic factors.

A second important critique, in connection to this study, is that only the Vietnamese minority group has been subject to examination. Ethnicity is only relevant in the meeting with other ethnicities and cultures. It would therefore have been interesting to include the Danish majority group into the study. For example, humbleness appears to be a strong marker of the Vietnamese ethnic group in Denmark. Some of my interviewees emphasized humbleness by contrasting it to native Danes' attitudes towards each other and strangers. Thus, by including the Danish majority into the study, it would have been possible to achieve a deeper understanding the processes of how the cultural values connected to the Vietnamese ethnic group become ethnic markers and thereby how these influence the Vietnamese voter turnout.

Proposals for continued research

This study has attempted to answer the question of whether or not the cultural values characterizing the Vietnamese ethnic identity has influenced the low Vietnamese voter turnout. In my attempt to do so new questions have occurred. Some of these will briefly be discussed here.

Though the purpose of this study has not been to assess if the Vietnamese group members in general are well-integrated into the Danish society or not it can be argued that the study is located in the context of integration. As mentioned in the introduction, the Vietnamese group members have often been used as an example of successful integration. Compared to other immigrant groups in Denmark the Vietnamese have a relatively high employment rate, they are well-educated, and they commit little crime (Borup 2011:143–145). Nevertheless, within the last decades Danish politicians have increasingly made efforts to reformulate the meaning of integration to incorporate more than socio-economic factors. Integration is therefore often referred to as responsible citizenship or democratic integration. Responsible citizenship is basically about making all citizens full and equal members of the society, but it also, as the name suggests, involves expectations and responsibilities. Electoral participation has, in connection, come to play an important role because voter turnout signals that the citizens engage with the broader society and do not isolate themselves (The Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants, and Integration 2011:10–28). However, not only is the Vietnamese voter turnout relatively low, but my study suggests that it is due to the Vietnamese group members' general orientation towards cultural values which do not correspond with (at least some of) the ideals of responsible citizenship. In this sense, my study can contribute to the wider debate about the Vietnamese group members' integration into the Danish society.

I have in this study argued that the low Vietnamese voter turnout at least partly can be explained by the cultural values or ethnic markers which separate the Vietnamese group from other ethnic groups. In connection, it would be interesting

to study how the Vietnamese group's position in the public debate in the Danish society influences the Vietnamese voter turnout and political participation in general. The Vietnamese group has often been called "the silent others" because they rarely occur in the Danish media (Borup 2011:10). In contrast Muslim groups in Denmark are often under attack in the media for not conforming to Danish values and virtues. Instead they are seen as sticking to their own cultural values. At the same time, it is evident that the Muslim groups' voter turnout is higher than for the Vietnamese group. According to Borup (2013:30.54), it is reasonable to believe that it is easier for the Vietnamese group members to maintain their cultural values since they, unlike the Muslim groups, are not at the center of attention in the media. This is of course comfortable for the Vietnamese group members who, as discussed in the analysis, make an effort to go unnoticed in the Danish society, but on the other hand it does not challenge or encourage the Vietnamese group members to participate in Danish politics. Thus, in a wider perspective, a suggestion for future research of ethnic minority groups' voter turnout in Danish public could be to concentrate on the positions of these groups in the Danish public debate.

Finally, in this study I have attempted to explain the Vietnamese voter turnout by conducting a culture analysis. However, in order to assess or strengthen the explanatory power of culture in connection to voter turnout it is necessary to conduct comparative studies. It is possible that the ethnic minority groups in Denmark with a low voter turnout share cultural values, which seems to discourage electoral and political participation. If so culture can really be an essential factor in future research connected to voter turnout.

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Appendix

Forskningsspøgsmål	Interviewspørgsmål
Hvilken betydning har interviewpersonens vietnamesiske baggrund for denne?	Kommer du ofte i Den Vietnamesiske Kulturelle Buddhistiske Forening?
	Hvad laver du når du er i foreningen?
	Mødes du med venner og bekendte eller familie i foreningen?
	Mødes du med andre med vietnamesisk baggrund uden for foreningen?
	Hvor mødes I når I mødes - er det privat, på cafe, etc.?
	Hvad snakker I om når i mødes - politik eller noget andet?
	De venner og bekendte med vietnamesisk baggrund du har, er det nogle du er vokset op med?
	Hvordan har det været at vokse op i en vietnamesisk familie?
	Er der nogle særlige ting der er blevet lagt vægt på i din opvækst?
	Det lyder som om din vietnamesiske baggrund er vigtig for dig, kan du uddybe det?
	Oplever du at dine venner og bekendte med vietnamesisk baggrund har nogle andre værdier og normer end danskere uden vietnamesisk baggrund? - f.eks. hvordan man behandler andre mennesker eller løser konflikter med andre?
Hvordan oplever interviewpersonen politik og valgdeltagelse?	Ser du politiske debatter i fjernsynet eller læser du politiske debatter i avisen eller andre steder?
	Oplever du at debatterne er konstruktive, komiske, ubehagelige eller lignende?
	Er du eller har du været politisk aktiv - f.eks. i et politisk parti, en forening , en folkebevægelse (mod EU) eller noget andet sted?
	Er du generelt interesseret i politik på landsplan og folketingsvalg?
	Er du interesseret i kommunalpolitik og i kommunalvalg?

	Stemmer du ved folketingsvalg og kommunalvalg eller en af delene?
	Har du indtryk af om dine venner og bekendte med vietnamesisk baggrund ser politiske debatter og er interesserede i politik?
	Stemmer dine venner og bekendte med vietnamesisk baggrund til folketingsvalg og kommunalvalg? - Hvordan kan det være?