



Social Integration of Syrian Refugees in the Swedish Society, a Plausible Reality or a Far-fetched Dream?

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Abstract: This research was conducted to study the social integration of Syrian refugees in Sweden and their feeling of inclusion in the Swedish society, or exclusion from it. The research also targeted illuminating and analyzing potential reasons for the social exclusion of some Syrian refugees according to first-hand experiences, perspectives, and opinions collected by semi-structured interviews with 10 informants who left Syria due to civil war and sought asylum in Sweden. This paper serves as a platform on which voices and views of Syrian refugees were echoed, and conclusions on their settlement and inclusion in their new country were based on their own feelings, struggles, and matters of their social lives. To achieve that, social, cultural, and human aspects were prioritized over mainstream economic and legal aspects as all informants were documented and integrated into the Swedish labor market or education system.

Nonetheless, the study results have shown a worrying lack of social inclusion that Syrian refugees have experienced so far in their new country, reducing them into underprivileged, ethnic social circles where they had limited access to social networks from different backgrounds, resources, and opportunity. The nature of the Swedish society, as well as the negative image of Syrian refugees, Ethnic-segregated residencies, cultural incompatibility, and racism, were found to be the main reasons behind this phenomenon.

Key words: Syrians refugees, Sweden, Social exclusion, Social inclusion, Social Integration.

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Acknowledgments

When you have been so frequently displaced, the concept of 'home' shrinks into any given element of your past that carries a long-lasting sentimental value. A picture, a person, your childhood football club, an old sweater last washed in Aleppo, a dream or a struggle. Today, I part ways with another piece of my home, my life-long quest for knowledge.

This thesis crowns a 13 years-long journey for tertiary education through the Syrian civil war, terrorism, forced migrations, human trafficking, asylum-seeking, severe depression, and several near-death experiences along the way.

For that, I chose to dedicate my graduation to every child who will never be as privileged as I was to achieve it, to every child who has lost their life or their dreams to war, poverty, child marriage, or child labor. To every immigrant who simply happened to have been on a less fortunate illegal boat than mine. To the memory of every innocent life lost to the Syrian civil war, from every ethnicity, religion, and political divide. From which I mention my never-forgotten friends: Antoine Saade, William Magar, and Nour Asslo. And to the endless hope for the return of my dear missing friend Ahmed Nour Nahhas.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Sweden's primary response to the influx of Syrian refugees produced by the civil war back in 2011 has interpreted the standards for asylum way more liberally than other European countries have. Sweden was one of the major welcoming countries for Syrian refugees, hosting as many as 178,728 newcomers between 2011 and 2019, according to Statistics Sweden (SCB, 2020), and granting them permanent residencies upon arrival. The success of their subsequent integration process, however, has split the consensus of the Swedish public opinion like no other matter did in recent history according to foreign policy (2016), some friendships were lost, some families were divided in opinion over the difference between what "we must" and what "we can't" provide for them.

Despite the remarkable success of many Syrian refugees in the Swedish labor market or the Swedish education system, anti-refugee and anti-migration narratives have surged, demonstrating several economic, social, and security concerns (Foreign Policy, 2016). This notion has shifted the political scene of the country in an unprecedented fashion as far-right Swedish Democrats' popularity has sky-rocketed out of proportion, from 5.7% in 2010 to 21% in 2018 (The Local, 2017). Meanwhile, recent generations of refugees in Sweden were growing more isolated from Swedish life in an increasing number of disadvantaged residential areas with a high density of immigrants, high unemployment, and no access to good schools, serving as incubators of alienation for many new coming refugees. The Swedish government eventually submitted to the mounting pressure to alter its asylum policy when Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of the Social Democrats, historically known as one of the most refugee-friendly parties in Sweden, has declared migrants would no longer be granted permanent asylum and the massive package of social benefits that accompanied it (Foreign Policy, 2016).

1.2 Research aims and questions

The main aim of the research is to shed light on Syrian refugees' social integration in Sweden, and to comprehend their feelings of inclusion in, or exclusion from the Swedish society according to their understanding. The secondary aim is to find any underlying reasons

that Syrian refugees believe have boosted, slowed down, or wholly hampered their social integration despite successfully integrating the Swedish labor market or proceeding with their education.

In brief, my research will answer the following question: *Are Syrian refugees socially integrated in Sweden? Do they feel excluded from Swedish society? If so, to what reasons do they ascribe their feelings toward their new society?*

1.3 Limitations

The research is based on material derived from semi-structured interviews with ten Syrian refugees who sought asylum in Sweden within a timeframe of five years between 2013 and 2018. The informants are aged between twenty-four to forty-four years old. They are split into five females and five males. They come from different regions in their home country, Syria, and they live in different cities around Sweden, mainly Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, and Södertälje.

1.4 Outline

In the second chapter of this thesis, I have narrated the background of the research, including relevant information about Syrian refugees in Sweden, facts about Syria, and a brief timeline of the onset of the Syrian civil war. In chapter 3, I have listed the relevant previous research I have studied and used as support to my findings and described the field's position on the topic of my choice as well as I have explained what I found to lack adequate research and how my thesis can contribute to filling that void. Chapter 4 demonstrates the theoretical framework of my thesis by naming and describing the theories and concepts I used in it and how do they relate to my study and support its results. In chapter 5, I have expounded on my choice of research method, and explained why I found it fitting to the research and discussed the methodological perspective that I have based my research on and explained the source of material I have used. Finally, in chapter 6, I have analyzed the data I had collected through interviews with the informants and come up with the results and findings I have concluded in chapter 7.

2 Background

2.1 Syrian refugees in Sweden

A select privileged sample of Syrian refugees produced by the civil war has managed to find a way to migrate through the borders of the European Union, Australia, or Canada, where they were promised a decent chance for a new life and a new home waiting for them. Approximately one million Syrians crossed the Mediterranean towards the European Union since 2011 (BBC, 2016), most of them through expensive, arduous, and fatal trips onboard illegal boats on the world's deadliest migration route from Turkey, Libya, or Egypt to European shores, where almost 20,000 immigrants, of different citizenships, have drowned since 2014 (IOM, 2020). 178,728 of those Syrian refugees made it through to Sweden, one of the world's most refugee-friendly countries. Nevertheless, the reality of their new lives in Sweden, for many, was not as ideal as projections. Although their living conditions were significantly better than their countrymen in the Syrian periphery, integration in Sweden, as in Europe generally, has proven to be a long, challenging process for most refugees as well as the receiving countries, leaving many of them jobless, hopeless, and sometimes even homeless.

The success of Syrian refugees' integration in Sweden, in general, was heatedly debated in the last few years. Some have positive opinions on the matter based on Syrians' success in the Swedish labor market. Malmö University professor in International Migration, Pieter Bevelander, pointed out that 70% of Syrians who were granted permanent residencies in 2010 have found jobs and expected the same future for the new influx of Syrians (Courthouse News, 2020). Another indication that the integration process has been a success was Sweden's ranking at the first place out of 38 countries on the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) in terms of integration policy success based on 167 different indicators in eight main policy areas like labor market mobility, education, political participation, family reunion, access to nationality, health, long-term residence and anti-discrimination (Swedish Government, 2017). These facts, however, might have developed positively or negatively seven years on.

Opposing opinions argued against the success of Syrian refugees' integration based on several studies. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) criticizes the shortages of accommodations for refugees as factors that slowed down their

integration process and activities. The organization also highlights the Swedish challenges associated with providing activities to help newly arrived women and new arrivals with lower levels of education to integrate into the labor market (Swedish Government, 2019). Other opinions refer to the sharp surge of anti-immigration far-right party, the Swedish Democrats voters from 5,7% in 2010, to 21% in 2018, as an indicator of failure for the integration process, alongside the increase of criminality rates and religious extremism in inner-city suburbs with a high density of immigrants (The Local, 2017).

As of 2020, 193,594 people born in Syria live in Sweden (SCB, 2021). Most of them provided the country with tremendous human capital as 32% of Syrian-born men, and 31% of Syrian-born women in Sweden had tertiary-level education both in universities and vocational schools since 2017 (Population Europe, 2020). Thousands of Syrian refugees who haven't had a tertiary education before their arrival in Sweden found success pursuing that route in their new home country. Syrian-born people formed the second biggest immigrant group in Swedish universities behind the Finnish as over 30% of Syrian refugees who have arrived within the significant influx of 2015 and been granted residency permits in 2016 have been admitted to Swedish universities. As for employment rates, a study by SCB on Syrians arrived in 2015 made at the end of 2017 found that only 4574 out of 40019 Syrians over 15 years already supported themselves, 9970 more are funded by student aid, 18,405 get support from state welfare, and 23444 were still under the financial support of the Swedish Public Employment Service's integration program. Over 70,000 Syrian refugees who have arrived in Sweden after 2011 have already been granted Swedish citizenship (SCB, 2021). However, thousands of Syrian refugees still live with temporary residency permits, as about 40% of the 163456 refugees who sought asylum back in 2015, primarily Syrians, still haven't been granted permanent residencies (Sveriges Radio, 2020).

2.1 Facts About Syria

A Middle-easterner state located on the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean on a 185,80km large land surrounded by Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan and Israel to the south, and Lebanon to the west (Britannica, 2021). Syria was home to 21.39 million citizens back in 2010 (Statista, 2021). The civil war then caused millions of casualties and migrations, shrinking the population to 17,86 million citizens by 2021. Syrians come from various ethnicities like Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Circassians, Turkmen, and others. They also

belong to different religious groups like Sunni-Muslims, Shiite-Muslims, Alawites, Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Druze, and others (Worldometers, 2021).

3 Literature review

In a contemporary world with an ever-increasing number of immigrants around the globe, the importance of their integration only grows in parallel. Several theories, concepts, and researches were thus conducted to track, study, and assess the integration process of millions of immigrants, second-generation and third-generation immigrants in different countries. Scholars have studied integration in all its forms, economic, identity, social, or otherwise. They come up with different outcomes and views of the process depending on different aspects like policies, availability of resources, racism, etc. Social integration, in particular, seemed to be affected by even more aspects that might tamper with the process for particular ethnic, social, or religious groups in countries or societies that are less receptive to them than others, therefore, social integration, in my opinion, needs to be studied more closely and individualistically to understand the process for every migrating folk group in every receiving country.

Syrians today form the largest immigrant group in Sweden with over 158,000 Syrian-born people exceeding the traditionally large Finnish-born population in a historic event (SVD, 2017), nonetheless, there was no specific research conducted to assess their social integration in their new country from their own perspective and based on their personal experiences and feelings. Therefore, I have chosen to conduct my research on this very matter in a quest to shed light on a matter I have personally found to be affecting the lives of many Syrians in Sweden and to dedicate my work to alleviate their struggles by delivering their voices and concerns into the spotlight as well as contribute to the field by providing a genuine, in-depth, and comprehensive study on the social integration of Syrian refugees in Sweden. My research is supported with the following previous researches that successfully explained and studied matters in the same field of integration and social integration of Syrians in Sweden or elsewhere.

3.1 Learning about oneself as an essential process to confront social media propaganda against the resettlement of Syrian refugees

A Doctoral thesis by Prof. Nadia Naffi (2017) at the University of Concordia in Canada proved valuable to my research as it studies Syrian refugees' process of social integration and the effects of anti-immigrant media on them. Despite focusing on Syrian refugees in Canada particularly, the thesis was relevant to my thesis. Prof. Naffi illustrates the outcomes of hardships that Syrian refugees actually suffer from in both Sweden in Canada, in addition to the similarities between the social integration process in the two countries. Naffi addressed the harms of the negative image of Syrian refugees caused by false news, anti-immigrant narratives, stereotypes, etc. That was very relevant to the struggles of my informants as they suffered from this particular phenomenon. Naffi also supported my thesis with helpful definitions, evidence, and causalities of social exclusion, social inclusion, and social integration.

3.2 Tracking the integration process of Syrian Immigrants, who have fled the Syrian Civil War and settled in Södertälje city, Sweden (2011-2017)

Although this research of Sisil Benjaro (2018) is discussing mainstream integration of Syrian refugees beyond the premises of Social Integration, and the limited selection of informant samples to residents of Södertälje, it has been very valuable and relevant to my thesis. What makes Benjaro's research applicable is that it still discusses limiting factors of integration that closely affect the process of social integration as well. Benjaro even digs into social and cultural factors that she finds to be a form of limitation of integration as well, these factors have proven very relevant and supportive to my research. More reasons that link Benjaro's thesis to mine are that her research functions as a case study of the outcomes of ethnically segregated residencies as Södertälje is one of the most high-dense immigrant cities with neighborhoods that house an up to 82% population with an immigrant background like Hovsjö (Legeby, 2010) where several of my informants lived.

3.3 From Housing Segregation to Integration in Public Space

Prof. Ann Legeby (2010) provided my research with some very important and relevant facts about housing segregation in metropolitans and the harms caused by it on residents of high-density immigrant areas of first, second, or even third-generation immigrants, as well as the Swedish society as a whole. The findings of this study have related closely to the responses of informants who live in such residential areas as they complained about the exact same disadvantages Legeby had explained in her research. This has supported one of the main reasons that my informants have complained about as a limitation of their social integration in Sweden. The study having been made on Södertälje, one of Sweden's cities with the highest number of Syrian residents, makes this research even more relevant to my thesis.

3.4 Social exclusion: Meaning, measurement and experience and links to health inequalities

The article of Professor Popay et al. (2008) was the primary source of my understanding of social exclusion. I have learned from this article what I needed for my research on social exclusion, starting with the origins of the concept and the way it has developed in social science to the contemporary meaning of the concept. This paper also provided me with valuable insights on the elements of social exclusion which were colossal to my research, mainly the groups at risk of exclusion, what they are excluded from, the problems associated with social exclusion, the processes driving social exclusion, and the levels at which they operate, and finally, the agents and actors involved in social exclusion.

4 Theoretical Framework

In this section, I will introduce and explain the theories and concepts utilized in my research and illustrate how they relate to my research and support it. Firstly, I have used Peter Blau's theory of Social Integration and Hot-Lundstad, Uchino, and Brissette's definition of it.

Secondly, Pierre Bourdieu's theories of Social Capital and Cultural Capital were integral to my research. Finally, I have also used the definition of Social Exclusion definitions by Levitas, Garcia Roca, and Kronauer.

4.1 Social Integration

As the main focus of this research is to examine the Social Integration of Syrian refugees in Sweden, it is essential to explain the meaning of this term. "Social Integration is a multi-dimensional construct that can be defined as the extent to which individuals participate in a variety of social relationships, including engagement in social activities or relationships and a sense of commonality and identification with one's social roles" (Hot-Lunstad and Uchino, 2015; Brisette et al, 2000). Blau (1960) offers a different definition of Social Integration which is instrumental in describing the required conditions for the success of the process and the obstacles that might hinder it when he explains: "Social integration prevails in a group if bonds of attraction unite its members. Persons interested in becoming integrated members of a group are under pressure to impress the other members that they would make attractive associates, but the resulting competition for popularity gives rise to defensive tactics that block social integration".

4.2 Social Capital

Pierre Bourdieu (1986) describes social capital as "the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, or in other words, membership to a group which provides each of its members the backing of the collectively owned capital." Bourdieu (1986) also explains that social capital is an individual property derived mainly from one's social position and status. It is a tool that enables a person to exert power on the group or individual who mobilizes the resources. Bourdieu (1986) explains that Social Capital, however, is not uniformly available to all members of a group or society but available exclusively to those who provide efforts to acquire it by taking positions of power and status and developing goodwill. He adds, it is irreducibly attached to class and any forms

of stratification that are in turn associated with benefit or advancement. By that, social capital is a self-perpetuating asset for any member of society. This asset grants individuals access to benefit off collective resources that might vary from connections in the labor market, contacts with valuable people, or shortcuts to higher social position or status, to simply gaining more and better personal relationships, which in turn, will increase the individual's social capital and thus provide them with new potential benefits. The inevitable diminishment of one's social capital following migration is at the heart of this research. Syrian refugees who left their streets, homes, and memories back in Syria, have also left most of their social connections back there as many of them stayed in the country, migrated to different countries or cities, or lost their lives. Subsequently, most Syrian refugees, like all immigrants, had to compile a new social, sometimes from scratch. This loss of social capital back home, and the process of restoring it in Sweden, are essential to understand the process of social integration of Syrian refugees in Sweden and to measure its success or failure.

4.3 Cultural Capital

Bourdieu's (1986) definition of the cultural capital concept is a collection of symbolic elements like language, skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials, and others. These elements are obtained by taking part in a particular social class that shares similar forms of cultural capital, for example, the same taste in movies or degree from a high-esteemed school which creates a sense of collective identity and group position. Bourdieu (1986), on the other hand, stresses that cultural capital is a major source of social inequality as some forms of cultural capital are deemed more valuable than others, granting privilege to those with a more favored cultural capital over others exactly as income or wealth would do. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital comes in three forms, the embodied state, which is what we call culture or cultivation, the properties with which we understand the world around us like language, mannerisms, and preferences. Secondly, cultural capital can also be objectified in material objects like cultural artifacts, including media, writings, paintings, books, monuments, instruments, schools, galleries, et cetera. Finally, cultural capital in the institutionalized state is the objectification of cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications like educational credentials or diplomas (Bourdieu, 1986). Just like social capital, cultural capital can be affected by migration, especially in countries with very different cultures. Although cultural capital, unlike social capital, isn't

necessarily lost by migration and still can be relevant and valid within households and immigrant communities, Syrian refugees had to learn the Swedish language and adapt to the Swedish culture in order to integrate into the Swedish labor market and socially integrate on a larger, more diverse scale. Cultural capital is closely related to this research as the amount of cultural capital acquired by each Syrian refugee individually affects the magnitude of their social integration.

4.4 Social Exclusion

There is no universally agreed definition of social exclusion, but most sociologists agree it is the lack of participation in society. Levitas (2007) defines social exclusion as a complex and multi-dimensional process that involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods, and services and the inability to participate in regular relationships and activities available to the majority of people in a particular society. Roca (1998) identifies three dimensions to social exclusion: a structural or economic dimension which refers to a lack of material resources related to exclusion from the labor market, a contextual or social dimension noted in the lack of integration into family life and the community, and finally, a subjective or personal dimension associated with erosion of self-worth and an increased sense of anomie. Kronauer (1998) believes social exclusion arises by combining a marginal economic position and social isolation. He argues that social exclusion is caused by people's relationships with institutions, the labor market, culture, geographical place, and social relationships. Social exclusion functions in this research as a measurement of social integration failure for refugees who feel rather excluded from the Swedish society than included in it.

5 Method and Methodology:

5.1 Method

To conduct my research with the best possible outcome, I have chosen to use a qualitative narrative research approach by conducting semi-structured interviews with ten Syrian refugees to garner authentic first-hand insights. This method was perfect for yielding the qualitative data needed and suited for this research. It also served my need to utilize

particular techniques from both structured and unstructured interviews. This method enabled me to ask particular questions to all ten informants similarly but also discuss their feedback to gain a better understanding of it and expand some areas of discussion where I thought I could find more valuable insights. The open-ended nature of this method has also enabled me to add any follow-up questions that I found beneficial to my research based on their answers that pointed at interesting issues I did not incorporate in my questions as they might be tailored to the personal experiences of a particular informant and irrelevant to others. Finally, the method has also given the informants latitude to expand on the matter of discussion beyond the premises of my questions when they found it fitting and to share their experiences, thoughts, and opinions with their own words and on their own terms, as explained by May (2001, p.123).

5.2 Methodology

For the methodological approach, I chose to base my research on a constructivist methodological approach. According to Moses and Knutsen (2019, p.11), this approach helped me reflect on the interviewees' perspectives on their social integration process. In my study, as constructivists do, I have recognized that people can possibly perceive the same matter differently based on their individual characteristics like age, gender, or race, and social features like era, culture, and language, which can facilitate or obscure these different perceptions. This approach has incorporated the interviewees' perception of their integration process and allowed them the liberty to share their thoughts and expand the premises of the questions they are asked. This methodological approach has also enabled me to explore the interviewee's experiences based on the belief that they are independent, intelligent, and malleable individuals, as Moses and Knutsen (2019, p.10) describe. The foundation is that these individuals have interacted with their surroundings, situations, and circumstances, which formed and shaped their perspective on their integration process. I have delivered their perspective in this study by seeing through their eyes and interpreting their words, albeit possibly with a certain amount of influence that I have had on it.

5.3 Materials

The materials of my study were garnered through semi-structured interviews conducted in Malmö, Sweden during the month of May 2021 with ten Syrian refugees in Sweden, five males and five females (See appx. 1 for more details on the informants). The interview consisted of ten questions asked uniformly to all interviewees (See appx. 2 for the interview questions). The informants I have interviewed assort in the following criteria. All interviewees were adults over eighteen years of age as my research is more focused on the social integration process of adults given that children growing up in Sweden and attending Swedish schools with local students go through different social experiences from grown-ups who take integration program courses exclusively with other immigrants and therefore have less access to communication with locals. All informants are documented with a permanent residency or already granted Swedish citizenship. The reason for this was that I did not intend to address the effects of temporary residences or lack of documentation on the refugees' experiences. Neither did I want these effects to weigh in on the outcome of the research.

The interviewees have been in Sweden for over three years and less than eight years. In other words, I have interviewed Syrians who arrived in Sweden between 2013 and 2018. This criterion aimed to exclude the length of residency in Sweden as a factor of social integration to a certain extent, as those who have arrived in Sweden less than three years ago might not have had enough time to settle in yet, and those who have been there for over eight years could socially integrate over time despite all the difficulties I intended to shed light on. The last criterion has also established that all refugees I interviewed have fled Syria and arrived in Sweden for the same reason, the Syrian civil war, and under similar circumstances, which suggests they share similar backgrounds and have been through the same integration program in Sweden. Interviewed refugees have also been chosen from different age groups, genders, marital statuses, and identities. Finally, the informants come from various Syrian cities or towns and currently live in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, and Södertälje, Sweden.

I have made contact with the informants through personal connections with acquaintances and their acquaintances as well. I have made sure to stay impartial and unbiased toward the informants and their opinions as a pillar of my research integrity, validity, and reliability. For that purpose, I have also preserved the complete anonymity of the informants' identity and personal information and their consent to share their feedback and insights as interpreted and phrased with my own words. I gave the informants a choice to conduct the interviews in

English, Swedish, or Arabic, as to which they found it easier to express themselves more comfortably.

5.4 Weaknesses and strengths

Due to the health restrictions taken to limit the repercussions of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted online instead of personal meetings to refrain from traveling around Sweden or even transporting within Malmö and get in personal touch with informants to reduce the risk of infection spreading. The interviews were conducted, saved, and shared with the informants through voice recordings on Whatsapp messenger which was a primitive but effective and simple way to keep recorded answers of each question of each informant separately. Conducting the interviews online has deprived me of the chance to read the informants' impressions and get more personal contact with their feelings and impressions on the matters we discussed. On the other hand, online interviews saved hours of travel time and allowed me to keep the interviews open for several days in order to retrieve any information I found valuable after the end of the interviews from the informants.

My position as a researcher was a massive aid for me to conduct the research. Being a Syrian refugee myself, who left Syria in similar circumstances as the informants, gone through the same immigration path, and arrived in Sweden within the same timeframe and circumstances has helped me understand the struggles of my informants. The fact that the problems presented by the informants were not entirely alien for me personally made it easier to comprehend and analyze them. My excellent knowledge of the different Syrian cultures and societies has provided me with a perspective on what matters are appropriate or not to incorporate in my discussions with the informants. That also helped me process the issues related to cultural clashes and the cultural capital of Syrians in Sweden. Speaking and understanding Arabic was a major asset for me to conduct the interviews with the informants as most of them felt more comfortable answering and discussing my questions in Arabic rather than English or Swedish. On the other hand, working with people who have gone through the same hardships and traumatic experiences I have suffered from and discussing their social struggles that I, my family, and friends are still living with have made working on this research indeed interesting but also dark and melancholic. Therefore, the personal nature of the research problems I have discussed and their background have slowed down the research process and nearly called it off altogether.

6 Analysis and discussions:

To answer the research question: *Are Syrian refugees socially integrated in Sweden? Do they feel excluded from Swedish society? If so, to what reasons do they ascribe their feelings toward their new society?* I have begun my analysis by studying the informants' social and cultural capitals within my theoretical framework. I have based my analysis on the idea that social and cultural capitals are variables that can be changed by migration to another country where immigrants lose proportions of their old social and cultural capitals and start over in a whole new and different environment. These changes in social and cultural capitals, positively or negatively, are considered in this research as main indicators for the informants' social integration in Sweden, inclusion in the Swedish society, or exclusion from it. The analysis of this research is also based on the theoretical materials on social integration and social exclusion as explained in the theoretical framework chapter. Relevant findings from previous studies on similar matters are also incorporated in the analysis. Lastly, reasons that caused any cases of social exclusion for the informants are also discussed in this chapter.

6.1 Informants' social capital in Sweden

To assess the social capital of my informants in their new country, I chose to begin this analysis by illuminating their feelings toward their social networks and the social positions or statuses they managed to obtain already in Sweden. To achieve that, I have asked the informants about their education, their current and previous occupations in Sweden, and their description of their social lives in their new country. These questions were a basis for understanding the informants' social statuses and their magnitude of participation in their new communities.

The informants' feedback on their social lives was mostly negative. All interviewees expressed they have a lot of respect and admiration for the local people's ethics, hospitality, and open-mindedness. Nonetheless, most feedback on socializing with them was severely negative. The majority of informants have expressed they struggled to make friendships in Sweden, mainly with locals with no immigrant backgrounds, but also with immigrants or their descendants. To most informants, social life was almost non-existent, or at least it doesn't elevate to the level of density they are used to. All informants expressed that their

social needs are not properly fulfilled. They complained about feelings of loneliness and solitude, and most of them did not find a relevant community in which they can find a social structure that can provide them with access to participation in social activities and personal relationships. Some of them have found a haven in immigrant communities with which they did not entirely associate in terms of traditions and even culture, but they presented an opportunity for them to socialize. All informants have agreed that most of their friends and acquaintances are recent fellow immigrants, mostly from Syria.

Informant Fadi, a male who has been in Sweden since 2013 and studied to become a dental hygienist in his new country, explained his social life is involuntarily limited to interaction with people from his own ethnic background. Fadi had the will to make friends with regard to their background and form a diversified social life where he would learn more about his new country and get more involved in its society as he had imagined his life would be before arriving in Sweden. He gave an example of social life at Swedish schools describing it as ‘segregated’ as Swedes tend to isolate themselves in their own bubbles, whether at lunch tables or in study groups. At the same time, immigrants also practice similar behavior as they form their own groups, often based on their own different ethnicities or languages. According to Fadi, this segregation deprived him of access to valuable information on Sweden like rules, rights, and even culture as he states that most of the immigrants he socialized lack these aspects themselves, which is supported by Prof Naffi (2010) as an outcome of lack of contact between immigrants and locals. Fadi’s social capital, thus, was affected by lack of income and diversity as his sources of social ties were limited to individuals that he did not necessarily bond with but had very little choice as he felt that he is not welcome in different ethnic social groups.

Informant Hana, a female living in Sweden since 2015, wife to a Swedish man, mother to one child, and a mathematics student at a Swedish University, also struggled with a similar situation as all her social ties, except for her marriage, is with recent immigrants. Hana also had the intention and took the efforts to have a more diversified social life but her attempts found very little success. She has weighed in on the matter with another opinion, as to her own experience, socializing with locals was only accessible in the form of dating. She has indeed had a positive experience in that field, ending up with marriage to a Swedish man. Nonetheless, she stressed that social relations that are devoid of any sexual interests, in the form of friendships, were almost hopeless. Hana stressed that social struggles do not target

immigrants exclusively but are a general problem in Swedish society regardless of race or origin. She supported her opinion by sharing the struggles of her husband, who has no immigrant background but has, however, moved from his hometown to the Capital Stockholm over ten years ago and is yet to form a healthy social life in the city.

Informant Majed, who has lived in Sweden with his wife and child since 2015, has shared his insights on social life in Sweden. Majed was the informant who spoke the most of these serious, long-term attempts of socially integrating with locals in form of learning their culture and habits, living in areas with a majority of locals, working with locals, etc. Majed, however, still couldn't form the social life he wanted. He thinks there are invisible barriers that blocked him away from locals despite mastering the language to a high level of proficiency, understanding and respecting the locals' norms and traditions, and always living in neighborhoods with a majority of people born in Sweden. He failed to understand the phenomenon as he described his relationship with his neighbors and colleagues to be full of respect and admiration, yet it never mounted to friendship. Reasons preventing the informants from having a better social life in Sweden are analyzed and discussed further in section 6.5.

There was, however, a glimpse of positivity, on the other hand, as two informants have shared slightly brighter experiences of their own social lives in their new country. To them, efforts and initiatives seemed to be rewarding when are correctly done. Informant Sarah, a female who studied at the university level and worked as a designer for two years, has shared her distinguished approach to making friendships in Sweden as she joined activity groups and workshops based on particular hobbies or interests like Meet-ups and the like. To her experience, it was an excellent way to improve her social life in her new country and make some friendships with locals, albeit not as fruitfully as her previous experiences in countries like UAE or Syria despite all the efforts she's taken.

The informants are obviously not satisfied with their social networks and do not get the benefits expected from them like access to social participation, contacts, opportunities, and the like. Deprivation from the benefits of social networks prevented them from improving their social status in their new country, which they described as subpar. The informants have naturally lost most of their social networks migrating to a whole new country, although many of them have connected with immigrant communities they belong to, or at least could thrive in, some others have connected with each other, and with locals, none of them has actually

managed to match the density of social lives they have lived back home. The fact that most of the informants' social bonds were formed with other recent immigrants has limited their access to information, valuable contacts, and high positions in society. Connections with second or third-generation immigrants who live in high-density immigrant neighborhoods were not very beneficial. According to informants John and Fadi, people born in these isolated communities do not have contacts outside of it and do not acquire adequate knowledge of the country's laws and regulations to advise recent immigrants. All the latter serve as damning evidence that the informants suffer from insufficient social capital in their new country.

By consulting Bourdieu's definition of social capital theory (1986), we can understand that this form of capital is advantageous in terms of contacts, employment opportunities, housing, and many more. It is, however, not equally available to all members of any group but can be related to social class and the individual's efforts to enrich their social capital. It was noticed through the insights of the informants most of them are on the low end of this equation, having very little social capital to live by both in their social lives and in terms of the benefits expected from it. The informants clearly stated they suffer from shortages of most elements that social capital consists of, which indicates their social capital is inadequate. Another disadvantage which the informants stated they are experiencing was also explained by Bourdieu's theory as he describes the relationship between forming social networks and acquiring higher positions in society and vice versa. Bourdieu (1986) emphasizes that social capital can be acquired by one's social position and status, which, in turn, allows them to exert power over resources. Subsequently, this leads to an even better social position, indicates lack of social capital is a self-perpetuating condition that functions as an obstacle that prevents those who suffer from it to improve their social capital. This latter finding can be yet another explanation for the informants' lack of social capital.

6.2 Informants' Cultural Capital in Sweden

Another essential pillar to the social integration of immigrants is their cultural capital in their new country. Cultural capital, like social capital, can be diminished or devalued by migrating to a new country with a different culture, where an immigrant's culture can be irrelevant or incompatible with the society of their new country. I have collected data on Syrian refugees' change of cultural capital after moving to Sweden by asking my informants

about their opinions on the outcomes of the differences in cultures and lifestyles between them and local people they met in Sweden. Another question was about their Swedish language skills and their ability to communicate and socialize in the Swedish language. I have also come up with findings on this matter from the previously mentioned questions about the informants' social life in Sweden, where they expanded their answers to explain how cultural differences stood behind some of their social struggles.

Language skills were naturally at the heart of the Syrian refugees' cultural capital shift in Sweden. Bourdieu (1986) names language as one of the primary elements that form a person's cultural capital. However, unlike other elements that might be relevant for some Syrians in Sweden, like movie references or taste in art thanks to the globalized nature of our world, language was a major shift for all Syrians in Sweden who had to learn it from scratch. Sisil Benjaro (2018) has highlighted language and culture as the first factor that limited the integration of her 17 Syrian refugee informants in Södertälje expressing how an insufficient command of the Swedish language can break social ties and hinder integration. All of my informants agreed with Benjaro, and most of them have expressed that they are struggling with the language and uncomfortable speaking Swedish yet, at least not socially. Some informants were very confident of their Swedish academically. Nevertheless, they agreed with the rest of the informants that the academic Swedish they learned at language schools was a significant issue that disturbed their attempts to socialize with locals who speak informal Swedish, a street language that informants struggle to speak or even understand. This matter was also discussed in Benjaro's thesis as she concluded Swedish language courses are too academic and do not serve immigrants' social life or even their interaction in the labor market.

Informant Majed has stated that it has been a challenge for him to socialize with locals when you don't speak their daily language, you don't understand their dialect, and of course, their puns and jokes. Majed thinks people need to have specific linguistic skills and techniques to build a proper conversation, and you don't learn that in language courses. He said he had tried his all to improve his street language, and it was arduous. He had to change his whole world, his TV shows, and his music to allow himself a step closer to Swedish society and to feel at home. He believes, however, that this isn't something all immigrants have the means or even the will to do. Another informant, Becca, a female who moved to Sweden in 2014 and currently studies at the university level, had a very similar view to

Majed's. However, she added that her accent often caused her negative experiences as some people would immediately reply to her in English or steer away from conversing with her altogether. Becca thinks the accent is tough to master, and language schools never help improve it, especially that many language teachers have foreign accents themselves. Fadi ascribed his struggles socializing in Swedish to his residency in a high-density immigrant area where everyone he mingles with is Arabic speaking leaving him with no need to practice the language on a personal level outside of school or work.

On the other hand, there was one informant who had a different view on this matter. Sarah, a woman who has lived in Sweden since 2015 -the only informant to positively answer her comfort socializing in Swedish- said she believes speaking Swedish fluently came in very handy in making local friends. She attributed her fluent Swedish to her fruitful attempts at socializing with locals through hobbies and social clubs. As mentioned before, she was also the only informant who was satisfied with the number of friendships she made with locals. This finding was yet another proof of the relation between mastering Swedish and forming better social networks in Sweden.

Language, of course, was not the only element of cultural capital that the interviewed Syrian refugees stated they had seen a decline in Sweden. Differences in social norms, mannerisms, and lifestyles have played a significant role in diminishing Syrians' cultural capital outside the premises of the Syrian communities and slightly even within them. Some informants have expressed they have experienced difficulties socializing with locals for lack of shared cultural interests like favorite music or movies. However, all informants, even those who haven't suffered from this issue as badly as others due to their interest in Western culture, have stressed the magnitude of this problem that they witnessed first-hand troubling their friends and family members' lives. Salwa, a female who moved to Sweden in 2015, has indicated that her cultural capital was not very relevant in Syrian or Arab communities as she claimed that these communities tend to conserve the traditions they had back home decades ago, which is a very different era and culture from that she was raised to. John thinks that another reason he didn't relate to those communities was the fact that Syria has a variety of cultures, and most of the major convergences of Syrians in Sweden come from conservative communities.

Mohammad, a male, living in Sweden since 2015, stated that liberalism had been another major issue for many conservative or religious Syrians in Sweden, including himself, as those who refuse to participate in gender-mixed activities or attend bars or gatherings where alcoholic drinks are present have had it hard to socialize with locals. Becca expressed that dating life has also been affected by these cultural differences as conservative Syrians were not open to the mainstream Swedish dating life coming from communities where sexual relationships outside of wedlock are not acceptable and even met by ‘honor crimes’ or death sentences. Some Syrians from the relatively open-minded communities of Syria may have to refrain from having romantic relationships with locals, according to Fadi, due to fear of having their social norms broken. Fadi thinks Syrians who believe in a liberal lifestyle can still be captivated by the limitations of their uprising, especially in high-intensity immigrant regions where the conservative cultures rule over people and can meet them with discrimination and shaming had they chosen to live outside the limitations of their social norms.

Hana has shared another story of a cultural collision that she witnessed in a Syrian woman who comes from a relatively open-minded background but lived somewhat isolated in Sweden due to her culture by which it is acceptable for her to be a housewife and live off her husband's earnings. This woman's lifestyle, according to Hana, has deprived her of opportunities to enrich her participation and integration in her society. Instead, she chose to limit her interaction to other unemployed -and often uneducated- women who live in similar circumstances due to the same patriarchal culture. This case exhibits another form of separation between locals and particular Syrian refugees who willingly chose not to socially integrate beyond the boundaries of their culture.

Again, it was transparent through the insights of the informants that they suffer from a lack of relevant cultural capital in their new country. The informants' uprising in Syria means the elements of their cultural capital set by Bourdieu's definition are alien in the general mixed society of Sweden. The differences in cultural elements have made it hard for Syrians to relate socially to their surroundings, as the informants explained, and instead, in many cases, isolate themselves in the small ethnic communities where their cultural capitals are relatively relevant. According to Benjaro (2018), the majority of her informant sample of Syrian refugees living in Södertälje have admitted it was their own choice to keep their social ties exclusively within people from their own background while only 4 out of 17 informants

thought the locals denied a relationship with them. This isolation of Syrians defeats a rich source of improvement to their embodied and objectified cultural capital to fit their new society. As Bourdieu stresses, the elements of this capital can be gained by taking part in a social class that shares similar forms of cultural capital. That social class, in turn, creates a sense of collective identity for individuals participating in it. In the case of Syrians living in ethnic communities, this feeling of identity, hence, seemed to be linking almost exclusively them with people within those communities as the informants have stated they do not share the elements of social capital with the common multi-cultural Swedish society but merely with their ethnic communities and hence it is more likely for them to obtain the identity of those segregated communities instead.

6.3 Are Syrian refugees socially integrated in Sweden?

This section concludes the findings on Syrian refugees' social integration in Sweden according to the informants' input on the matter. I have based this conclusion on my interpretation of the study's findings within its theoretical framework and two additional questions I have asked the informants. The first question related to the informants' feelings of belonging toward Sweden as a home country. The second was whether they see themselves living in Sweden for the rest of their life if they had the option to move once more in a bid to feel more settled back home in Syria or some other country.

All informants have expressed heartfelt feelings toward Sweden. They acknowledge that country has provided a lot to them of precious privileges, even more than what Syria did, according to several of them. They were thankful, had plenty of gratitude, and felt they are in Sweden's dept. They are enjoying their civil rights, their freedom, and their safety. They have, however, stated that they have a different stance on their feeling of belonging to the country, as they all agree they don't feel Swedish yet if they ever will. In other words, there was a significant discrepancy between the informants' feelings of affection toward the country and their feeling of admiration towards life in it. Although all of them said they loved Sweden, most of them didn't seem to like living in it, despite all the positive feelings of gratitude and obligation toward the country. The results found that the informants have the will to migrate somewhere else and start over again. Some informants have expressed they would move if they had a proper job opportunity and the only informant said they would never leave Sweden for any other country.

The findings derived from the informants' opinions on the process of their social integration and their social and cultural capital shortages suggest that they are not as socially integrated as they aspired to be. This conclusion is supported by Hot-lundstad (2015), Uchino (2015), and Brisette (2000) definition of social integration by the extent to which the individuals willing to socially integrate into a particular society can participate in various social relationships like social activities and personal relationships. This definition is an indication that the informants are not entirely integrated into the general multicultural Swedish society as the findings of this study showed the vast majority of the informants have an impoverished social capital in Sweden and seldom get to participate in any social activities or even relationships with people from other cultures or backgrounds whether they were locals or immigrants. There was, however, evidence that some of the Syrian refugees are socially integrated into their respective ethnic communities where their cultural capital is rather relevant, the culture and traditions are familiar, and of course, the language is common.

In addition to the aforementioned repercussions of Syrian refugees' lack of social integration in Sweden, Salam -among others- explains that she has witnessed a trend of reluctance and lack of will to integrate into Swedish society as she has experienced even with her own children. She mentioned some reasons for this phenomenon, like desperation caused by failed attempts to integrate, to missing the social skills and cultural capital to find common interests with locals. She added that some Syrians simply have negative feelings toward the Swedish society, which according to their culture, religions, and moral code, is unethical and obscene. What makes the Swedish society unacceptable for some Syrians is practices like flamboyant display of affections, sexuality, and homosexuality, which some Syrians would not accept as stated by Salam and other informants.

According to Blau (1960), immigrants and locals need to have mutual bonds of attraction for social integration to prevail. This definition underlines the lack of interest from both sides, Syrian refugees and locals, to socialize with each other as an indication that the social integration of Syrian refugees in Sweden has not succeeded as expected. Lack of mutual interest in socializing between Syrian refugees and locals is also studied by Benjaro (2018) as her findings show that 13 out of 17 Syrian refugee informants willingly kept their social interaction with people from their own background. Blau's claim that persons interested in integrating into a society bear the pressure and responsibility to impress other members also

correlates with the findings as it explains the failure of social integration of those who do not acquire the cultural capital elements required to impress and befriend locals. Blau's definition also explains that the lack of effort, the will, or the ability of some Syrian refugees to socialize with locals in Sweden constitutes a case of failure in their social integration and also explains it.

6.4 Do Syrian refugees feel excluded from Swedish society?

In this section, I have come up with a conclusion on my informants' feeling of inclusion in the Swedish society, or exclusion from it within my theoretical framework and based on my previous findings on their social capital and cultural capital in their new country Sweden. The conclusion has also included responses from the informants when asked to express their feelings of inclusion or exclusion from the Swedish society based on their own understandings and perspectives. The conclusion has also incorporated indicators to lack of social inclusion as proof of social exclusion based on the establishment that the concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion are often contrasted (Rawal, 2008) and extreme poles of a continuum O'Reilly (2005) and thus failure in social inclusion effectively indicates social exclusion.

The majority of informants expressed negative feelings toward their position in Swedish society. They explained they have insufficient contacts and even fewer friends. Those who live in high-density immigrant neighborhoods agreed they don't entirely relate to their communities and don't feel they have the chance to change that reality unless they abide by the segregated nature of the society and assimilate into the conservative Syrian communities. On the other hand, most informants expressed that they have tried their best to include themselves in a multicultural, open-minded social structure, but their attempts were often a failure due to rejection, differences, and/or lack of mutual interests. Some informants have already given up on having the social lives they desire and already look for a chance to migrate somewhere new and start over. Some of them have submitted to the reality that they have to live within their respective ethnic communities and under the social norms and traditions they might have rejected even back in Syria.

The insights the informants have shared indicate that the informants' already-poor social capital has taken a further devastating hit during their time in Sweden, pushing them to

a state of social exclusion, which deprived them of the chance to amass a proper social capital in their new country. Consequently, their social capital poverty has, in turn, amplified their cultural capital poverty as the lack of interaction with locals did not help them gaining any elements of the Swedish culture, leaving them stuck in a loop that drove them further and further away from Swedish society. Today, years after moving to Sweden, the informants have almost unanimously agreed they still feel like outsiders or second-level citizens in Sweden, and they are so unsettled and socially unintegrated that most of them dream of a new migration away from Sweden.

There was a general feeling of exclusion from Swedish society among the informants, meaning they don't feel they relate to the nation-wide multicultural society represented in Swedish TV shows, Swedish popular culture, or communities with a majority of ethnic Swedes, or even immigrants with different origins from theirs. The findings, on the other hand, indicated two forms of social inclusion in Sweden. The first refers to inclusion within the Swedish society as a whole, on which most informants have had negative feedback. Despite their ambitious and persistent attempts, there were always lines they couldn't cross, and despite the feeling of mutual respect with Swedes, befriending them seemed next to impossible, and the feeling of being second-level citizens in those circles would not vanish. The other form of inclusion was limited within the informants' respective ethnic communities, which the informants found rather open and accessible but, to their experiences, counter-productive and do not facilitate the future they aspire to have in Sweden.

The results, thus, indicate that Syrian refugees in Sweden are more excluded from the Swedish society than included in it, according to Levitas (2007) definition as she explains the multi-dimensional process of social exclusion can mean the inability to participate in normal relationships and activities available to the majority of people in a particular society. As established in the previous section, Syrian refugees in Sweden have clearly been, for the most part, denied the chance to part-take in possibly every social context outside of their ethnic communities, as they stated. Another definition that refers to the social exclusion of Syrian refugees in Sweden belongs to Kronauer (1998), who stresses that social exclusion is the product of an individual's relation to, among others, culture, geographical place, and social relations. This definition underlines the informants' poor relation to the Swedish culture and lack of social bonds with locals, as they described, to be associated with their poor cultural

and social capitals, as evidence they are actually suffering from social exclusion in their new country.

Only a small proportion of the informants indicated they feel included in society. A very interesting individual experience showed a glimpse of hope that Syrians can actually feel included in their new society, in the form of one single informant. Sarah has had a very different experience than all other informants, which proved that efforts taken in the right direction and manner could be rewarding in the quest for social integration. Nonetheless, it might for many other Syrians cross the line of integration toward assimilation to recreate Sarah's success, as for her, the similarities in lifestyle, mentality, religious views, and liberalism between her and the majority of Swedes, which is unique for people coming from a conservative country like Syria, was the basis of her success. To most, to live what Sarah has lived in Sweden out of her nature and own choice would be unacceptable, controversial, and a rebel against their culture, traditions, and religions. This paradox is a perfect segue to the next chapter, where I will discuss why the informants think they are socially excluded.

6.5 To what do the informants ascribe their social exclusion?

In this section, I have analyzed the reasons which my informants believe excluded them from Swedish society. Having already touched down on some of the reasons mentioned earlier by the informants, I have explored those reasons more in-depth. I have asked the informants about any racial abuse they have been subject to and its effect on their social exclusion. I also asked them about their experiences living in ethnically segregated residency areas and how they factor in their social life outside these communities. In addition, I asked them about the outcome of the lack of initiative or effort taken by immigrants themselves in socially integrate. The last question was about the cultural differences and any other factors they believe have had a role in their feeling of exclusion from Swedish society.

6.5.1 The nature of Swedish society

There was a state of agreement among the informants that the nature of the Swedish society frustrated their attempts to integrate themselves into it. Hana thinks that the unsocial behaviors of local people in Sweden are not necessarily pointed at immigrants but an issue

deeply embedded in the Swedish society and affecting everyone in it regardless of race. She describes the Swedish society as shy and closed toward the other, no matter where they come from. According to the informants, there is a lack of curiosity and interest from the locals' side to meet immigrants and socialize with them, maybe even Xenophobia in some cases. Sarah thinks social integration is a two-way street, and immigrants need to be better presented to the country so locals would know them better and understand there is nothing scary about most immigrants, which can, in the long run, motivate locals to be more open to Syrian refugees or immigrants in general. Becca shared a story that supports the claim that the nature of locals in Sweden hindered the social integration of immigrants, in her first year in Sweden when she and her underage brother were allocated to live with a Swedish family for an entire year, yet they never really got to socialize together as the family was distant and unwilling to socialize with them despite opening their home to them.

These findings indicate that one reason for the Syrian refugees' feeling of exclusion from society is not any demeanors from locals, failing integration programs, nor a lack of will from Syrian refugees to put efforts into the matter. The unpleasant reality found here is that the Swedish society, in its nature, has a different, less potent, or active form of socialization than the standards to which the informants explained they are used. According to Hana, what makes this finding more gloomy is the fact that there is no way that we know of to change the nature of Swedish society. She adds we can't expect an entire society to change overnight to fit our social needs. Swedish people are used to living their lives more calmly. They spend more time on individual activities like reading, meditating, or exercising and crave less social contact than Syrians do, and they devote lesser proportions of their time for that purpose than Syrians according to Hana. She thinks this is an unfortunate reality that Syrians have to adapt to.

6.5.2 Negative image of Syrians

Syrian refugees have been victims of negative propaganda since the onset of the refugee crisis. Prof. Naffi (2017) points at the dissemination of fake news about refugees by Western media and/or politicians as an obstacle to their inclusion as they have been portrayed as a threat to the society in which they are trying to be included. Naffi gives a very closely related example in the form of a tweet by former US President Donald Trump when he referred to Syrian refugees as a "bowl of Skittles" in which there might be no more than three

poisonous units, nonetheless, it would be a fatal danger to take a handful from. Trump used that euphemism to explain the way he sees Syrians as a threat to society, increasing xenophobia against them and inevitably deepening their social exclusion. Naffi has also presented the findings of “Project Syria”, a critical analysis by Ryerson University scholars which found that the Canadian media has helped emphasize the negative image of Syrian refugees, stereotyping them as passive, needy, and a drain on government resources, while Syrian men, additionally, were presented as a security threat. Informant Salam agreed that the negative image of Syrians is amplified and used by anti-immigrant far-right politicians to serve their agendas, causing even more isolation to Syrians and immigrants generally.

Informant Majed believes this negative image of Syrians to be the primary reason for the exclusion of Syrians in Sweden. He thinks the negative image is caused by, among others, misbehaviors and misconducts committed by some Syrians. Examples of those misconducts are crimes, sexual harassment, rape, welfare abuse, domestic abuse, and others. These acts are being generalized, amplified, and used by anti-immigrant agendas to support their narratives and subsequently return exclusion, xenophobia, racism, and others, against all Syrian refugees who pay for the mistakes of those “bad apples”. Majed also thinks Sweden’s migration policy has factored in the situation as it lacks any selectivity compared to the Canadian model, which picks immigrants who have the potential to become positive members of the society and integrate into its values and laws, effectively keeping the “bad apples” away from the basket and preventing them from tarnishing the image of all Syrians. Majed understands this might not be particularly as humane as the current model, but in the long run, the existing policies diminish the status and image of all decent, law-abiding, hard-working immigrants in favor of those who refuse to pay efforts to integrate and get proper jobs and instead abuse well-fare systems or live off criminal activities.

Informant Sarah thinks this negative image of immigrants is also caused by stereotypes, assumptions, and lack of knowledge about Syrians and their culture. She emphasizes once more that there should be a better presentation of immigrants, which would help combat their negative. This claim is also supported by Prof. Naffi (2017) as she explains *lack of contact* between locals (In Canada) and Syrian refugees leaves locals with no personal contact with Syrians vulnerable to anti-immigrant media propaganda and more likely to obtain prejudice against Syrians, whilst locals who get into personal depth with

Syrian refugees are able to verify stereotypes and build a realistic opinion of Syrians based on knowledge and experience.

6.5.3 Cultural differences

The informants did not find Syrian culture and Swedish culture to be a perfect match. They all agree they have been witnessing a grave clash between the ultra-conservative Syrian culture and its ultra-liberal Swedish counterpart, albeit disproportionately. The magnitude of the cultural clash differed among Syrians due to the diverse cultural nature of the Syrian society and based on the community they grew up in, as some Syrians came to Sweden with way more open-mindedness, secularism, and respect to women than others. According to most informants, there was simply a lack of common interests between Syrians and Swedes. For the more conservative Syrians, their reluctance to participate in gender-mixed or alcohol-based activities has drawn yet another barrier between them and the locals, as Mohammad explained. There were, however, different kinds of difficulties for Syrians who are open to drinking and socializing with the opposite sex. For example, Salwa stated that she never actually managed to find common grounds for friendships with local people as she felt too different culturally. She had a whole different sense of humor, different TV references, different hobbies, and activities. Although Salwa agreed with Hana that dating life with locals is possible, cultural differences and lack of common interests ended every relationship she was in, whether romantic or a friendship.

This factor relates directly to Bourdieu (1986)'s cultural capital theory as he describes it as a set of cultural elements mutual between the society and the individual in question. It was already established that Syrian refugees in Sweden suffer from a low cultural capital outside the premises of their ethnic communities, and the findings in the previous section only go to prove it further. It is evident that a core reason for the social exclusion of Syrian refugees in Sweden is the lack of mutual cultural elements and mutual interests. The informants stressed that locals who are not affected by other factors, for example, those who are actually social and do have the time, will, and trust to socialize with Syrians, might not find it enjoyable, as would Syrians too. The reason, of course, is having too few activities they both would find appealing due to cultural and religious reasons, or simply for having a different sense of humor or taste in what they consider fun according to multiple informants.

6.5.4 Ethnic segregation

Another issue that my informants have unanimously agreed upon was the harms of living in the ethnically segregated residency or high-density immigrant neighborhoods or cities like Rosengård, Södertälje, Tensta, and the like. This claim is also supported by Prof. Ann Legeby (2010) as she stresses ethnic segregation is related to unequal living conditions, accessibility, services, and job opportunities. In these areas, most residents are immigrants from the same country, culture, religion, or speak the same language which decreases the need for immigrants to learn the Swedish language and even integrate. The informants who lived in such areas have expressed that recent immigrants often find themselves forced to live there due to a lack of alternatives or affordable alternatives. The informants explained that by the low rents in those disadvantaged, poverty, and crime-struck neighborhoods, which well-off people, immigrants or not, no longer desire as living conditions are way below average according to Legeby (2010). The informants have described these areas as closed environments where parallel identities are formed, isolation from the larger, multicultural society, and hostility towards it grow alongside poverty, criminal activity, and exploitation of recent immigrants. John and Fadi agreed that refugees who lack documentation, knowledge of the rules, or social capital to get proper jobs or often victims to exploitation by residents of those areas, often their countrymen or even kins, according to several informants.

Sarah explained her opinions on this phenomenon with a question: why would immigrants integrate or learn the Swedish language when they live in a closed society where everything is preserved as it was in their home countries and everyone speaks their native language? Mohammad thinks these areas are even harmful to second and third-generation immigrants who are left to live like immigrants in their home country, Sweden, developing a different identity than the rest of Swedes. Majed went forward to describe these areas as parallel societies or countries inside the country, with different values, measures, and even laws that facilitate fewer rights, less safety, and opportunity to their residents who live in a state of public poverty, isolation, and sense of inferiority to the rest of the country which generates negative feelings toward it. He also adds, people usually integrate into their surroundings, but those who live in areas with a vast majority of unintegrated people will probably end up as unintegrated as they are. Finally, Salwa stated that the unacceptable social norms tolerated in these areas, like violence against children and women, produce individuals unable to relate to the values and culture of Sweden and Swedes in the future.

The latter findings raise awareness of a very worrying reality that despite all actions taken to include Syrians in the Swedish society, and governmental approaches to combat housing segregation since the Metropolitan initiative of 1999 that aimed to provide equal living conditions and break ethnic, social, and discriminating segregation which are common in these high-density immigrant neighborhoods (Legeby, 2018). Those residential areas have been serving the contrary purpose. For starters, these underprivileged areas suffer from high unemployment and little access to proper schools and services. Hence, people living in it do not enjoy equal rights. According to Levitas (2007), a lack or denial of resources, rights, and services constitute social exclusion which describes what immigrants suffer from in those neighborhoods. The poor socio-economic nature of these communities also means that other social struggles of Syrians in those areas extend to their social capital. The fact that Syrians do actually have adequate social networks in those neighborhoods, as the informants confirmed, does not necessarily mean they have decent social capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), it is necessary to obtain social ties with people who occupy higher social positions for one's social capital to provide them with the expected collective benefits. The fact that these economically disadvantaged communities lack individuals with high social and economic statuses, which prefer to live in calmer, safer, and better-serviced areas, as the informants expressed, means Syrians who live in those disadvantaged areas suffer moreover from lack of access to connections and opportunity leading to more social exclusion according to Levitas definition above.

6.5.5 Racism

Surprisingly, racism was not highlighted by the informants as the main reason for their feeling of exclusion. Nonetheless, all of them have stated they were subject to subtle, indirect forms of racial abuse, and some have been subjected to mainstream, direct racism by people with or without an immigrant background. All informants agreed they felt socially rejected by locals as aforementioned, yet they have rarely been met by any form of direct racism, hate, or discrimination by them. They have described it as a state of peaceful segregation between immigrants and locals. Zein shared a story of him being accused of sexual harassment by a Swedish-looking woman at a park while simply walking around and speaking on the phone alongside his family. John was told by a local woman to look for someone "of his own kind" at a bar and heard his colleague complain that the company has

hired an immigrant they can barely understand when some Swedes are unemployed. Mohammed was subjected to a form of reversed racism by two second-generation immigrants while working at McDonald's. He was called an "obedient dog" and "husblatte", an offensive Swedish slur that translates to "House immigrant / Pet immigrant" for speaking proper Swedish with a proper accent instead of the slang they speak in their immigrant areas.

This informants' subjection to racism from both locals and older immigrants has caused them a sense of complete loss of identity and rejection from Swedes and other immigrants as they complained. Although racism was not described as the main reason for the informants' social struggles, they have expressed it has been a setback to feel unwanted at times. What was surprising in the findings was that most informants have suffered forms of racism from second or third-generation immigrants, often from their own background. This phenomenon has fostered the informants' feeling of social exclusion as it has, in some cases, deprived them of their motive to include themselves in a society or community in which they don't feel accepted as they explained.

6.5.6 The integration program

Last but not least, the informants have referred to the Swedish integration policy and integration program as a reason for their exclusion from society. Most informants pointed at the first year of their residency in Sweden, waiting for their papers of documentation in conditions of unemployment, poverty, and nothingness. Salwa explained the year she had to spend in a totally new country where everything is entirely different with no friends, no family, and no proper income apart from 1800kr per month, roughly 180€ that she got from the Swedish migration agency, has caused her serious psychological health issues that affected her self-esteem and her self-confidence which in turn, have weighed down her ability to present herself to others and socialize. Zein thinks language courses should have proceeded from the very beginning so refugees would channel their enthusiasm to start a new life into learning the language rather than wasting that time and energy on nothing. These factors caused the informants a slow start to their lives and integration process in Sweden and diminished their enthusiasm and impulsion to learn the language, make new friends, understand the country, and integrate into it.

Most informants have expressed they have had a rocky start to their life in Sweden due to the long unfilled time they spent waiting for documentation. Although the integration process of Syrian refugees might not relate directly to their social exclusion, there is, however, a relation between social exclusion and the psychological struggles caused by loneliness, poverty, and the state of hibernation they had to live through for a year or more according to the informants. Roca (1998) confirms this claim as he states there is a subjective or personal dimension of social exclusion associated with the erosion of self-worth and the sense of anomie which describes what the informants felt during their first months in Sweden according to their testimonies.

7 Conclusion:

In this section, I have sealed this research with a summary of the analysis conclusion. I have additionally suggested further future research on this research topic

7.1 Concluding remarks

The aim of this research was to investigate the social integration of Syrian refugees in Sweden, to comprehend and deliver their feeling of inclusion or exclusion from Swedish society, and finally, to find any reasons that might have excluded some of them from Swedish society. Prior to the conclusion, I found it suiting to repeat the research questions:

Are Syrian refugees socially integrated in Sweden? Do they feel excluded from Swedish society? If so, to what reasons do they ascribe their feelings toward their new society?

Within the theoretical framework outlined in this paper, I have concluded the findings on the Syrian refugees' social integration in Sweden, and their feelings of exclusion from the Swedish society were rather negative according to the informants' insights. Despite the informants' residency in their new country for three to eight years, they are still suffering from poor social capital and don't have enough cultural capital to relate to the society around

them. The informants explained that it has been very tough for them to adapt to an entirely different country in every aspect of life. The language and the culture of Sweden have weighed on the hardships of war they carried on their shoulders all the way from home. The informants explained that forced migration has cost the informants a major share of their social capital as most of their acquaintances remained in Syria, migrated somewhere else, or simply added to the war casualties' toll.

It was evident that the informants felt the doors of society were not entirely open to them, depriving them of the chance to reimburse their social capital with new friendships and denying them the opportunity to accumulate a cultural capital that would help them understand and relate to their new country. As a result, the informants have not been properly integrated into Swedish society, they don't feel Swedish, and they have had so much trouble settling that many of them have already given up and developed future plans to migrate from Sweden, a country they all loved but could not adapt to living in. The informants have complained they feel excluded from Swedish society, they don't feel compatible with it, and they are pushed to isolate themselves in ethnic communities as a desperate solution to fulfill their basic social needs.

The findings were supplemented with theories and concepts while the results were supported by similar studies conducted on the integration and social integration process of Syrian refugees in Sweden, Canada, and elsewhere returning very similar result on several aspects like the cons of living in ethnically segregated residential areas, lack of contact with locals, lack of interest to integrate from the immigrants' end, and of course, discrimination.

7.2 Suggestions for future research

With all the research previously done on integration of refugees in Sweden, I believe more research is needed on social integration of specific ethnic groups of Syrians and/or immigrants from different backgrounds based on their personal opinions and struggles, albeit on a much larger scale than my research. Such studies would be advantageous to the studied groups and to any future social or political discourse that addresses their social integration in Sweden or elsewhere. I suggest more profound research should be focused on the cons of living in ethnically segregated or high-density immigrant residential areas even for third generation immigrants or even locals with no immigrant background living in such areas as

the findings of my study indicate these environments are very damaging to recent immigrants' integration and social integration in Sweden as well as social values and diversity.

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Appendix 1:

In this appendix, I have listed a brief description of the ten informants who provided this research with material based on their experiences and perspectives with consideration to their anonymity.

- 1- Becca: A 25-30 years old woman studying at a Swedish university and working at several organizations and companies since her arrival in the country with her underaged brother back in 2014.
- 2- Fadi: A man aged between 30-35 who arrived in Sweden back in 2013. He learned the language and studied at a Swedish university to become a dental hygienist and proceed to work in that field.
- 3- Hana: A 30-35 years old married woman and a mother of a toddler. She arrived in Sweden in 2015, learned Swedish and several preparatory courses. Now she studies at the university level and works part-time in a restaurant.
- 4- John: a man at 40-45 years of age who arrived in Sweden in 2014 with a bachelor's degree from Syria. He learned Swedish and worked in several companies and factories until the current date.
- 5- Majed: Arrived in Sweden with his wife back in 2015 and had a baby born in Sweden. Now at the age of 40-45, he works at a Swedish radio station after learning the Swedish language.
- 6- Mohammad: A man between 20-25 years of age who studies at a Swedish university and works part-time at a restaurant after completing his Swedish language education. He arrived in Sweden in 2015.
- 7- Salam: A 40-45 years old woman who moved to Sweden with her ex-husband and three children back in 2015. She learned the language and all needed courses to validate her physiotherapy diploma after a year-long education at a Swedish university. Currently, she is employed as a physiotherapist at a Swedish clinic.
- 8- Salwa: a 25-30 years old woman who studies at a Swedish university and has two part-time jobs at a bank and a restaurant. She arrived in Sweden in 2015 and passed language and preparatory courses.

- 9- Samira: A 35-40 years old woman who has been in Sweden since 2015. She has, since her arrival, learned Swedish and completed several courses which prepared her to proceed with her career in graphic design.
- 10- Zeid: A 30-35 years old man who has been going through his integration process since his arrival back in 2018. He has been admitted to a master's degree at a Swedish university.

Appendix 2

In this appendix I have presented the interview questions I have asked and discussed with my informants to conduct this research

Interview questions

Name:

Age:

Sex/Gender:

Marital Status / children:

Year of arrival in Sweden:

Education/occupation before moving to Sweden:

Area of residency in Sweden:

- 1- What is your current occupation and what sort of accommodation do you live in? briefly talk about your life in Sweden so far
- 2- Describe your social life in Sweden? How many acquaintances do you have who are born in Sweden?
- 3- Explain your feeling of social integration in Sweden, in other words, do you feel rather included in, or excluded from the Swedish society? Can you share your own thoughts and experiences on the matter?
- 4- To your experience, how did the differences in culture, traditions between you and local people in Sweden affect your social interaction with them?
- 5- Have you been subject to any racist abuse in Sweden? Please share if possible
- 6- Are you comfortable communicating and socializing in Swedish? If not, how did that affect your social integration in Sweden and what do you think prevented you from improving your Swedish?
- 7- What measures has the Swedish government provided to aid your integration? How do you think that has affected your social integration positively or negatively?
- 8- What individual efforts could or should be taken by immigrants themselves to help the process? Describe your own efforts in this quest

- 9- What is your opinion on the immigrant communities in Sweden? Did you find yourself in one of them? If not, why? And how do you describe their impact on immigrants' social integration?
- 10- How do you describe your feelings toward Sweden as a country years after you moved here compared to your same feelings toward Syria? Do you see yourself living the rest of your life in Sweden?