

EXAMINING SWEDEN'S INTEGRATION STRATEGY OF SELF-IDENTIFYING
MUSLIM ASYLUM-SEEKERS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST NORTH AFRICA
REGION AND IDENTIFYING THE PRIMARY FACTORS NEEDED TO
FACILITATE THEIR INTEGRATION INTO SWEDISH SOCIETY

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Examining Sweden's Integration Strategy of Self-Identifying Muslim Asylum-Seekers
from the Middle East North Africa Region and Identifying the Primary Factors Needed to
Facilitate Their Integration into Swedish Society

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degrees of Master of
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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my wonderful husband who has been there for me in every way, my incredibly strong and inspiring mother, who I would not be here without, and all the people who have given me inspiration and hope.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
List of Abbreviations	x
Abstract	xi
Chapter One – Terminology usage	1
1.1 Defining the Population of Interest	2
1.1.1 Defining Middle East North Africa (MENA).....	2
1.1.2 Defining Muslims	3
1.1.3 Defining Asylum-Seeker	4
1.1.3.1 In-Depth Discussion of Use of Term Asylum-Seeker	4
1.2 Differentiating Among Related Terms.....	7
1.2.1 Defining Migrant	7
1.2.3 Defining Immigration	8
1.2.4 Defining Emigration	9
1.2.5 Discussion of Above Defined Migratory Terms	9
1.2.6 Defining Humanitarian Migrant	10
1.2.7 Defining Labor Migration and Economic Immigrant.....	11
1.2.8 Defining Asylum	12
1.2.9 Defining Subsidiary Protection	12
1.2.10 Defining Refugee	13
1.2.11 Defining Integration	14
1.2.12 Defining Assimilation	16
1.2.13 Defining Multiculturalism.....	17
1.2.14 Defining Employment.....	18
1.2.15 Defining “hen”	18
Chapter Two – Introduction.....	20

Historical Context	21
Research Focus.....	23
Methodology	25
Confidentiality and Anonymity.....	30
Current Situation and Context.....	31
Chapter Three — Integration	38
A Short History of Sweden’s Integration Strategies	38
Exploring What Integration Is.....	39
Some Groups May Be Perceived as Less “Integratable”	44
Swedish [Non]Religiosity and Self-Identifying Muslim Asylum-Seekers	45
Chapter 4 — Swedish asylum policy.....	49
Applying for Asylum in Sweden.....	49
The Swedish Migration Agency on Asylum	50
Recent Changes in Swedish Policy	54
Sweden’s Policies Vary	55
Protection for Some, Forced Return for Others	59
Chapter Five—The main facets that help facilitate integration	65
Employment	65
Benefits of Paid Employment	68
Sweden’s Labor Market	71
Sweden’s Assessment of Foreign Education and Training.....	72
Language and Job Training.....	73
Sweden’s Introductory Program.....	76
Housing	83
Residential Integration	86
Chapter Six—Other factors influencing integration	89
Reason for Immigrating	89
Identity	91
Discrimination.....	93
Employment Discrimination	97
Chapter Seven—Gender and women’s employment.....	102
Importance of Equality in Gender Employment in Swedish Society.....	104

Women’s Rights According to Islam	104
History in Brief of Women’s Participation Swedish Labor Market	107
Chapter Eight—Policy recommendations and conclusion	111
Policy Recommendations	111
Limitations	113
Reflection	115
Benefits.....	116
Conclusion.....	117
References.....	120

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1 Unemployment [table from image file]	72

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The Process of Applying for Asylum in Sweden	50
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

European Union	EU
Middle East North Africa.....	MENA
Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.....	OECD
United Nations Agency for Refugees	UNHCR

ABSTRACT

EXAMINING SWEDEN'S INTEGRATION STRATEGY OF SELF-IDENTIFYING MUSLIM ASYLUM-SEEKERS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST NORTH AFRICA REGION AND IDENTIFYING THE PRIMARY FACTORS NEEDED TO FACILITATE THEIR INTEGRATION INTO SWEDISH SOCIETY

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This thesis examines the nationwide past and present integration strategy of immigrants that Sweden uses, focusing specifically on the integration of self-identifying Muslim asylum-seekers from the Middle East North Africa region. Over the centuries, people have immigrated to Sweden for a variety of reasons, seeking asylum being among the motivations. Many of the immigrants originated from the MENA region and former Yugoslavia. Over the last fifteen years, the majority of the immigrants coming to Sweden have been done so on humanitarian grounds, and came to Sweden to seek asylum. Sweden has generally been characterized as a generous and tolerant country, and has frequently been a destination country, with many asylum-seekers traveling across much of Europe to reach Sweden. Recently, however, with the immense wave of asylum-seekers who came to Sweden in 2015, most of them originating from the MENA region and being self-identifying Muslims, there is concern about how to integrate so many

people, as well as regarding religious beliefs and culture, which seems to be on the rise in Sweden, as well as throughout much of Europe. This thesis explores Sweden's integration strategy and has identified what have emerged from this research as the key components to integration of self-identifying Muslim asylum-seekers from the MENA region, into Swedish society.

Keywords: immigrant, Muslim, Middle East North Africa, asylum-seeker, Sweden, integration, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Arab, migrant, refugee, identity

CHAPTER ONE – TERMINOLOGY USAGE

As there are a number of variations of the definitions of the terms I have used throughout this document, it is important to clarify exactly what I mean by these terms. While I have striven to be very clear in terminology use, sometimes there may unfortunately be overlap, as some terms do fall under several categories. For example, an immigrant may be an asylum-seeker, and an asylum-seeker may be a refugee, but an asylum-seeker is not always categorized as a refugee. It is important to articulate exactly what is meant by each term. During interviews with local experts, I found that even they sometimes used certain terminology interchangeably. I have striven to not interpret the meaning of the terminology they used inaccurately, though this matter has been slightly problematic when analyzing their responses. As previously mentioned, much of the terminology is very closely related, and sometimes sources lump certain groups together in their data output. Thus, to avoid confusion, below I have described what the meaning of the most relevant terms is, as they are used throughout this thesis. When terminology is at times incorrectly or ambiguously used by the interviewees, in my analysis of their comments, I have taken effort to point out this inconsistency and provided a brief discussion on what I believe they meant, as well as what would be the most precise term, according to official definitions, though some definitions vary from organization to organization.

1.1 Defining the Population of Interest

Because there are multiple identities within the population of interest, self-identifying asylum-seekers from the MENA region, boundaries of this population have been difficult to define. It is important to not characterize this diverse group as homogeneous, while still categorizing to a degree, for the sake of being able to perform research that involves this population. Considering this challenge, in both the terminology section and the discussion section about the terminology which follows, I have tried to define the parameters of the population of interest as clearly as possible. While there are commonalities in this group, it is important to keep in mind that this group is not a homogenous group. There are over fifteen countries in the MENA region and there are different sects of Islam, as well as different interpretations of Islam and various levels of adherence. There are also a number of categories of asylum-seeker that are included in my usage of the term “asylum-seeker,” which will be conferred in more detail in a following section.

1.1.1 Defining Middle East North Africa (MENA)

The Middle East, according to the World Bank, includes the countries of Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Omar, Qatar Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Included in the North Africa region are the countries of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and Western Sahara (“Middle East and North Africa Overview,” 2016). For the purposes of this thesis, I am including all the predominantly Arabic-speaking countries in the MENA region, which includes all

of the countries listed by the World Bank to be in the MENA region, except for Israel. I chose not to include the country of Israel, as while geographically in the Middle Eastern region, citizens of Israel are generally not self-identifying Muslims, but I am however, including the state of Palestine, as Palestine is both in the Middle Eastern region and is considered a predominantly Muslim country. Additionally, while not labeled as part of the MENA region, due to the countries' geographic locations, as well as the substantial number of asylum-seekers Sweden has received from Afghanistan over the past fifteen years, and Iran over the past several decades, when I refer to the MENA region, I am also including the countries of Afghanistan and Iran.

1.1.2 Defining Muslims

Sav, Harris, and Sebar (2013), state that in its simplest definition, "A Muslim is a person who accepts the religion of Islam, or is born into a Muslim family, and believes in one God and the finality of the Prophet Muhammad" (p. 672). This definition makes no distinction among the different sects of Muslims, nor to the variants of adherence. However, this definition is sufficient for this context, as it provides a base to the reader to understand what is met by the term "Muslim" when used in this paper. It should be dully noted that the researcher understands that Muslims are in no way a monolithic group, and should not be characterized as such. Most the research found regarding Muslim asylum-seekers spoke minimally or not at all about the sect of Islam or adherence, and how this impacted integration. However, I believe that for a future study, this would most certainly be interesting to explore, and could yield important insights.

1.1.3 Defining Asylum-Seeker

Who is considered an asylum-seeker has been defined in a number of ways by various organizations. The Swedish Migration Agency defines an asylum seeker as “a person who makes their way to Sweden and applies for protection (asylum) here, but whose application has not yet been considered (“Asylum regulations - Swedish Migration Agency,” July 20 2016). This closely mirrors the UNHCR’s definition which is that “An asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed,” (Refugees, n.d.). As this term has been defined as describing a person who applies for protection but is waiting to be processed, utilizing this term can be problematic. However, this is the best term I have found to exist to describe the following who are included within the population of interest: Those who are still awaiting an asylum decision; those who are denied asylum and remain in the country; and those who have been granted asylum. To provide further reasoning for why I have chosen to use this term, a paragraph will soon follow, describing why “asylum-seeker” best describes the entire population of interest

1.1.3.1 In-Depth Discussion of Use of Term Asylum-Seeker

As noted in the terminology section above, it is important to use a more specific term than a broad term such as “immigrant”, since, as has been discussed, there are several classifications of immigrants. However, utilizing the term refugee also does not adequately describe the population of interest, since many asylum-seekers receive some

sort of protective status other than refugee status. There was also the possibility of using a phrase such as people who have received asylum. This, however, left out a significant portion of the population as well, excluding those still awaiting an asylum decision, and those who have been denied.

One of the interviewees found my usage of the term “asylum-seeker” to be quite problematic. When I queried further as to why hen believed this was not a good term to use, hen stated that I should not use the term asylum-seekers, because immigrants who have received international protection are very different than asylum-seekers. Hen stated that “Asylum-seeker is a status that means you have no status in the country and are residing in Sweden illegally...if they do not return voluntarily, you can be forcefully returned” (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Hen further asserted that there are no policies for integration of this group, [those residing in Sweden illegally] because they are supposed to return to their country. Hen continued that if the police find them, they can be put in detention camps or forcefully returned, as they are living here illegally. Hen stated that they are often referred to as undocumented immigrants or irregular immigrants. Hen described refugees as having been accepted as in need of protection. When I asked Interviewee 1 if hen had a recommendation hen believed to be better suiting, hen responded that the correct terminology to use would be “asylum-seekers who have been granted international protection” (Personal interview, July 7, 2016).

Unquestionably, Interviewee 1 is right that it is crucial to always use the most accurate terminology, and per hen’s comments, it is certainly true that the situation for those still seeking protection and awaiting an asylum decision is very different from the

situation of those whose applications have been accepted and have been granted some form of protection. Interviewee 6 also made the point that asylum-seekers are people who are still awaiting an asylum decision. However, when I described the population that is the focus of this research, hen understood why it is so challenging to find the perfect term.

While it would perhaps make research simpler, the problem with using a phrase such “asylum-seekers who have been granted international protection,” is that as stated above, providing discussion only about this population would exclude a significant number of asylum-seekers who currently reside in Sweden. As one of the experts interviewed contended, simply using a phrase such as “people who have received asylum” excludes many people, since this phrase is only representative of discussion of those whose applications have been accepted and who have been given some form of protection in Sweden. However, using the term “asylum-seeker”, to imply only those awaiting an asylum decision would be generally being inaccurate also, as there is no expectation of integration of people who are not yet given asylum, or if they are denied asylum. Even if one only considers the applicants in 2015, who are awaiting an asylum decision, there are many asylum-seekers residing in Sweden still waiting for an asylum decision, and still some others who have been denied, yet remain in Sweden. As there is clearly no perfect term to describe the entire population of interest, the term I have made the decision to employ the term “asylum-seeker” to include all of those who: a) have applied for asylum and are awaiting a decision; or b) have applied for asylum and have been given a positive decision and some form of protection and residence; or c) have

applied for asylum and have been denied any form of protection or residence, yet remain in Sweden.

1.2 Differentiating Among Related Terms

Some of the terminology describing or surrounding the term asylum-seekers, as used by academia, non-government and government agencies, media, and even some official policy publications, has some overlap. As such, it is crucial to clearly articulate what is meant by each term, as is used in this work.

1.2.1 Defining Migrant

In the view of OECD, the term ‘migrant’

Corresponds to a generic term for anyone moving to another country with the intention to stay for a minimum period of time (i.e. it excludes tourists and business visitors). It includes both permanent and temporary migrants with a valid residence permit or visa, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants who do not belong to any of the three mentioned groups. (September 2015, p. 4)

According to the UNHCR,

Migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons. Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home,

migrants face no such impediment to return. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of their government. (Edwards, 2016)

The OECD believes that migrants can be distinguished into four broad categories: long-term migrants with a free mobility zone; family migrants; labor migrants; and humanitarian migrants (OECD, September 2015). As will be discussed in more detail below, legally recognized status plays an important role. If, for example, an immigrant seeks asylum in Sweden and claims he/she is a refugee, Sweden may reject the asylum-seeker's request for protection, thus meaning that the asylum-seeker's status would be considered as irregular or illegal migrant/immigrant.

1.2.3 Defining Immigration

Immigration, not to be confused with the term “emigration,” has been defined by the International Migration Organization as “A process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement” (“Key Migration Terms,” 2015). The EU Commission, speaking specifically about way this term is applied within the EU context, states that “The action by which a person from a non-EU country establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of an EU country for a period that is, or is expected to be, at least twelve months” (“EU Immigration Portal - Glossary - European Commission,” 2016). For the purposes of this paper, a combination of these two definitions are employed to describe immigration.

1.2.4 Defining Emigration

The International Migration Organization defines emigration as “The act of departing or exiting from one State with a view to settling in another” (“Key Migration Terms,” 2015). Thus, in the rare cases the term is used in this document, the term “emigrant” will be used to signify the movement of people from their home country, whereas immigration is used to mean people coming to a country (the country of Sweden).

1.2.5 Discussion of Above Defined Migratory Terms

I have observed that in recent years, the terms “migrant” and “migration” are emerging as more commonly used terminology, in place of the words “immigrant, emigrant, immigration, or emigration”. While choosing to use the shorter words “migrant” or “migration” would perhaps be more convenient, I believe it is important to strive to be very accurate in terminology and clear about what I am referring to, and have thus chosen to use the more specific terminology of “immigrant, emigrant, emigration,” and “immigration”.

Finding the most appropriate and accurate terminology to describe the population of interest was rather challenging. As mentioned previously, part of the challenge is that the definitions of terms vary from organization to organization, and sometimes even the way a term is described varies within individual organizational publications. I will discuss this in more detail later. I knew that for this specific study, using the term migrant

was insufficient, the reason being that the term migrant is too broad, as it includes both emigrants and immigrants. Because of the focus of my study, the problem with the term “immigrant” is that it also is still much too broad, as “immigrant” can be used to indicate a number of types of immigrants, such as economic or labor immigrants, humanitarian immigrants, or refugees. As such, it is important to clarify exactly what type of immigrants are being referred to in this document. Most frequently, in this thesis, the classification of immigrants referred to are asylum-seekers. Even with asylum-seekers, as will be discussed in greater detail soon, there are many people who can be classified under this term.

1.2.6 Defining Humanitarian Migrant

In their article “Is This Humanitarian Migration Crisis Different?” the OECD describes humanitarian migrants as “persons who have completed the asylum procedure with a positive outcome and have been granted some sort of protection (refugee status or another form of protection) or have been resettled through programmes outside the asylum procedure” (September 2015, p. 4). The OECD stipulates that for the sake of simplicity, they generally include all recipients of protection—refugee status, subsidiary protection, temporary protection, etc. to be some form of humanitarian migrants (September 2015). Like the term asylum-seeker, this term is inclusive only to people who have been given a positive decision and granted some type of protection.

1.2.7 Defining Labor Migration and Economic Immigrant

Labor migration has been defined by the International Migration Organization as the “movement of persons from one State to another, or within their own country of residence, for the purpose of employment” (“Key Migration Terms,” 2015). According to the EU Immigration Portal, labor immigration is “cross-border movement of people for the purpose of employment in a foreign country” (“EU Immigration Portal - Glossary - European Commission,” 2016). An economic migrant, according to the European Commission, is “A person who leaves his or her country of origin purely for economic reasons” (“EU Immigration Portal - Glossary - European Commission,” 2016).

Economic migrant and labor migrant are two terms that were sometimes used interchangeably by the experts interviewed. For the context of this study, labor immigrants generally imply immigrants coming to Sweden specifically for paid employment, and are typically invited by an employer in Sweden to regularly immigrate to Sweden for such reasons. The term economic migrant, on the other hand, as also generally inferred by the expert interviewees, is more used to refer to people who have immigrated to Sweden seeking better opportunities, but have not necessarily been elicited for a specific job. As can be seen below, however, clearly differentiation between these terms can be challenging, both because the terms are sometimes used interchangeably and because the people those terms are used to describe sometimes are sometimes relabeled as falling under a different category, such as for example, an asylum-seeker becoming redefined as a labor immigrant, as Interviewee 5 mentioned, which is discussed in greater detail in a following chapter. If we understand the terms, “labor migrant” and

“economic migrant” as they are defined above, this would also mean that since the evidence illustrates that paid employment is an important contributor to integration, it is also likely that an economic migrant would generally have a greater challenge integrating into Swedish society than a labor migrant.

1.2.8 Defining Asylum

While many, if not all immigration organizations discuss asylum, very few define what asylum itself is. This document utilizes the term asylum in accordance with the first definition of asylum as listed by the Merriam-Webster dictionary website, which is: “Protection given by a government to someone who has left another country in order to escape being harmed” (Retrieved September 17, 2016).

1.2.9 Defining Subsidiary Protection

There are different kinds of protection. Similar to many of the terms used in this paper, “subsidiary protection” is a term that organizations often use without stating exactly what they mean when they use this term. According to Gil-Bazo, what the UNHCR means by ‘subsidiary protection status’ is “the recognition by a Member State of a third country national or a stateless person as a person eligible for subsidiary protection’ (2006, p. 8). At the end of 2013, The European Union provided a new statutory instrument, (S.I. No. 426 of 2013), for the investigation of and determination of

subsidiary protection. According to this statute, “Subsidiary protection is a complementary form of protection, which may apply to those who would be at risk of serious harm if returned to their home country, but who do not fit the strict definition of a refugee” (Mitrow, 2013). In short, if one is ineligible for refugee status, however they are considered by the migration authority to be at risk of serious harm if they return to their home country, subsidiary protection may be given.

1.2.10 Defining Refugee

The term refugee is often used loosely in media publication, and even some academic publications, thus to find the exact meaning of who is a refugee, it is important to go to the original source. The original source that is very often cited and utilized is the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and this definition will be described shortly. The UNHCR published a statement in July 2016 that described refugees as “persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution” (Edwards, 2016). Over the years however, the UNHCR has published a number of papers describing who may be defined as a refugee, all based from the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967. According Grech and Wohlfeld (2014), in their book *Migration in the Mediterranean: Human rights, Security, and Development Perspectives*, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967 define refugee as any person who is ““Outside their country of origin and unable or unwilling to return there or avail themselves of its protection, on account of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons

of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or political opinion” (Grech & Wohlfeld, 2014, p. 41). Regarding wording, a significant point provided by Costa (2006), in “Legal and Protection Policy Research Series: Rights of Refugees in the Context of Integration: Legal Standards and Recommendations”, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees does not explicitly mention the terms “asylum-seeker” or “recognized refugees,” and instead the uses the general term “refugee.”

The definition of refugee which this paper utilizes is the definition from the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as quoted above by Grech and Wohlfeld. Throughout this document, the use of the term refugee, unless otherwise indicated otherwise, always denotes the legally recognized status as a refugee.

1.2.11 Defining Integration

Integration has been defined in a number of ways. One of the definitions of integration is from the UNHCR. They define what Costa (2006) refers to as “local integration”. Costa states that according to the UNHCR,

Local integration in the refugee context is the end product of a multi-faceted and on-going process, of which self-reliance is but one part. Integration requires a preparedness on the part of the refugees to adapt to the host society, without having to forego their own cultural identity. From the host society, it requires communities that are welcoming and responsive to refugees, and public institutions that are able to meet the needs of a diverse population. (2006, p. 8)

Jacobsen, in “Local Integration: The Forgotten Solution,” defines “local integration” and “full integration”. She stated that local integration “May take place when it is not safe for refugees to return home after a prolonged period in exile. In such cases, a host government may decide to allow refugees to integrate locally, in the first-asylum country” (Jacobsen, 2003, para 4). She highlighted that local integration may or may not lead to permanent residence and eventual citizenship (Jacobsen, 2003). This is a useful definition, however one problem with this interpretation of local integration is that without permanent residence, as the experts interviewed pointed out, integration is not really achievable. Temporary residence or no residence would imply that the asylum-seekers are not staying, thus they cannot be fully integrated into society, that is, unless, they have paid employment, and having employment and being able financially sustain oneself leads to one being integrated, as Interviewee 4 posited, which will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter. “Full integration” then, according to Jacobsen,

Refers to refugees who are granted asylum, residency, and full and permanent membership status by the host government. Under these circumstances, refugees acquire the protection of the host state and enjoy the full range of economic, social, and civil rights accorded to permanent legal residents, including access to citizenship under the same terms as others (2003, para 5).

The main problem with this definition, and another problem with Jacobsen’s definition of local integration, is that it only takes into account refugees. Not all asylum-seekers receive refugee status. According to Interviewee 1, only 1/3 of asylum-seekers receive refugee status (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). The rest of the asylum-seekers receive

some other form of asylum (protection) or are denied asylum and expected to return home.

Penninx, with the Migration Policy Institute, believes that integration is the process by which, as both individuals and groups, immigrants become accepted into society. This definition, Penninx acknowledges, is a definition with openness, as the particular requirements for the acceptance by a receiving society varies from country to country (Penninx, 2003).

Integration, in the context of this paper, refers to a combination of the above descriptions as well as descriptions by other sources. Integration is a multi-faceted and gradual process that entails legal, economic, and social-cultural dimensions, and is a dynamic, two-way process on the part of both those seeking asylum in the host country and the host society.

1.2.12 Defining Assimilation

While at times the boundaries between integration and assimilation can at times become blurred, both in policy and in practice, assimilationism can be defined as “unidirectional integration of the immigrant in the host society while focusing primarily on the socio-cultural domain of migrant integration” (Dekker, et al., 2015) p. 639). Dekker, et al. assert that assimilationist policies encourage adaptation of migrants to dominant cultural norms, values, and behaviors (2015).

The International Organization for Migration defines assimilation as the following:

Adaptation of one ethnic or social group – usually a minority – to another.

Assimilation involves the subsuming of language, traditions, values, mores and behaviour or even fundamental vital interests. Although the traditional cultural practices of the group are unlikely to be completely abandoned, on the whole assimilation will lead one group to be socially indistinguishable from other members of the society. (“Key Migration Terms,” 2015)

A key difference between assimilation and integration is that assimilation is unidirectional and the immigrant is expected to change to the host society’s norms and values, while integration is a multi-faceted, two-directional process that involves both the immigrant and the host society adapting to and accepting each other. For the purposes of this paper, assimilation means the unidirectional integration of a population. It entails the immigrant adopting the host country’s culture, language, and values, as well as an eventual overall loss of their native language, culture, and values.

1.2.13 Defining Multiculturalism

Similar to assimilation, multiculturalism also focuses on the socio-cultural domain, however, multiculturalism puts more stress on cultural pluralism and “encourages the emancipation of migrant groups while recognizing and institutionalizing specific group identities” (Dekker, et al., 2015, p. 639). Arasaratnam (2014) uses a definition from Dolce (1973), which describes multiculturalism as “A reflection of a value system which emphasizes acceptance of behavioural differences deriving from

differing cultural systems and an active support of the right of such differences to exist” (Arasaratnam, 2014, p. 4).

Multiculturalism, for the purposes of this paper, implies cultural pluralism and encourages an overall freedom to retain one’s beliefs and cultural identify. It encourages diversity and is accepting of differences.

1.2.14 Defining Employment

When the term “employment” is used in this document, it always signifies paid employment. The definition that this paper utilizes is the one provided by Burton and Waddell (2006). They state that employment is:

A job typically takes the form of a contractual relationship between the individual worker and an employer over time for financial (and other) remuneration, as a socially acceptable means of earning a living. It involves a specific set of technical and social tasks located within a certain physical and social context (Burton & Waddell, 2006).

Further, when using the term employment, this document does not imply either volunteer or household labor. It specifically implies paid legal labor through an employer.

1.2.15 Defining “hen”

In place of using terms that would signify the gender pronoun of him or her when referring to the interviewees, the gender-neutral pronoun of “hen” will be used in place.

The term “hen” is a Swedish term that can be used when one is unsure of gender or if one wishes to not specify a person as a he or she.

CHAPTER TWO – INTRODUCTION

In what has been referred to by some as a “migrant or refugee crisis,” there has been a mass migration over the past few years, with well over one million asylum-seekers and other immigrants in 2015 alone, into Europe (UNHCR, December 2015). In 2015, many EU countries as well as Sweden received an inordinately large number of applications for asylum, especially considering Sweden’s population, of 9,801,616 people, as estimated by The World Fact Book (2016). In 2015 alone, Sweden received 168,877 people applying for asylum (“Statistics - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016). The Swedish government (Regeringskansliet) described the situation at the end of 2015 as “The worst refugee situation since the Second World War” (Regeringskansliet, 2015). Data from 2015 reports demonstrates that per capita, Sweden ranked as receiving the greatest number asylum-seekers in the entire EU (Traub, J, 2016 February 10).

Last year, Sweden was a destination for many asylum-seekers and immigrants entering the EU irregularly (BBC News, 2016, January 28). Unlike some of the other countries who have received very large numbers of asylum-seekers in 2015, such as transit countries like Greece or Italy, (ReliefWeb, 2016, March 24) where asylum-seekers do not necessarily plan to stay long-term, the clear majority of asylum-seekers coming to Sweden view Sweden as a destination country, and plan to stay there, which means they will likely need long-term employment, to learn Swedish, obtain housing, as well as a

number of other important obtainments. Many of the local experts interviewed pointed out that in 2015, along with other years, many of the asylum-seekers were traveling across much of Europe to get to Sweden. With the arrival of so many asylum-seekers also calls into question the idea of integration. Integration can be a challenge in any country, and with such a high number of recent asylum-seekers, there is a need for coordinated facilitation of integration, which according to the UNHCR is based on the assumption that refugees will remain in their country of asylum permanently (Costa, 2006).

Historical Context

Migration is not new to Sweden; for centuries, there have been various waves of immigration as well as emigration, of different proportionalities and backgrounds (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016). People from many different regions, of various nationalities and identities, have immigrated to Sweden for a broad array of reasons—some people immigrate to Sweden seeking work and better economic opportunities, while others have come seeking protection from persecution in their country. Some examples of historic immigration include Finnish and Romani people in the 1500s, Jews and French artists and intellectuals in the 1700s, and Italians skilled in stuccowork in the 1800s (“History - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016). From the mid-1800s up until 1930 though, there was a great emigration out of Sweden. Nearly 1.3 million Swedes emigrated from the country, namely to Australia, Canada, South America, and the United States, for a variety of reasons, from escaping poverty or religious persecution, lack of

political freedom, a pessimistic future, or a sense of adventure and various gold rushes. (Grech & Wohlfeld, 2014 and The Swedish Migration Agency, 2016).

The Swedish Migration Agency describes the most prominent immigrations to Sweden over the last five decades. Starting in the 1950s and 1960s, Sweden turned around from being a country of emigration to a country of immigration. Refugees from Germany, the neighboring Nordic countries, and the Baltics came to Sweden during this time. Some returned home, while others remained, among them the Balts. On July 1, 1969, the Swedish Immigration Board, now called the Swedish Migration Agency, was created. At the end of the 1960s, immigration regulation was introduced. Those who wanted to come to Sweden to work had to have proof of both employment offers as well as housing. The Immigration Board would perform an assessment based on labor market considerations, and only if foreign labor was needed would a permit be granted. If there were unemployed people in Sweden who could perform the job, then no permit would be given. However, no labor market assessment was carried out for the following groups: refugees, citizens of the Nordic countries, (Denmark, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, and their neighboring islands of Åland and the Faroe Islands) who have since 1951 had the right to settle and work in Sweden without special permits, and bring family members who wanted to unite or reunite in Sweden (“History - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016).

Later waves of immigrations to Sweden included immigrants coming from Greece, Italy, Scandinavia, and Turkey, among others in the 1970s, to obtain employment in Sweden; in the 1980s immigrants from various previous Eastern bloc countries and

from Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, among other countries, were immigrating to many parts of Western Europe to seek asylum, especially to Sweden (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016). So many people immigrated to Sweden to seek asylum during this timeframe that the Swedish Migration Agency nicknamed this period “The decade of asylum-seekers,” (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016). The most prominent groups of immigrants in the 1990s were asylum-seekers from former Yugoslavia. Once the wars began in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 2000s, some of the asylum-seekers the war created came to Sweden. Each wave of immigration to Sweden has presented different challenges as well as opportunities to the country. The immigration to Sweden over the last decade has presented challenges, namely because most the people immigrating have been asylum-seekers, and thus are have come to Sweden seeking asylum and by default, residence and a significant amount of assistance.

Research Focus

The focus of this research is to examine Sweden’s integration strategy of asylum-seekers from the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region who self-identify as Muslim into Malmö, Sweden, and identify the primary agents that influence their integration into Swedish society. This thesis explores the relevance and some of the challenges of obtainment of what the local experts I interviewed believe are elements crucial to successful integration: employment, language competency, education, and housing. Less concrete and more less easily-measured socio-cultural factors mentioned by the

interviewees, such as identity, gender issues, religion, and culture will be discussed as well, as it does seem these elements may influence the likelihood of integration and acceptance from Swedish society. Throughout this document, Swedish society and self-identifying Muslim asylum-seekers from the MENA region, are used to generally categorize two broad populations, that contain within them a great amount of variance and diversity. It is important to bear in mind that neither of these groups are homogenous or monolithic, and are not being classified as such. This research is exploratory and while the broader focus is on the whole country of Sweden, as the immigration policies are the same throughout, this study specifically focuses on the case of Malmö, the third-largest city in Sweden. Malmö has a population of approximately 306,000 people (Scuzzarello, 2015) and is a popular destination for asylum-seekers from MENA, and a city that is residence to many of the recently arrived asylum-seekers.

Most the population of interest adhere to one of two main sects of Islam, Sunni or Shiite, though there are varying levels of religious adherence, though this is not a central point in this thesis. I believe this point deserves some discussion, as it may be relevant in Swedish perception, however, the similarities and differences in beliefs between the two sects will not be discussed, as neither the sect of Islam nor the level of religious adherence is the focus of this paper. Rather, the goal is to more generally examine the relevance that being a self-identifying Muslim asylum-seeker from the MENA region, Afghanistan or Iran, may have in the process of integrating into Sweden, both from the side of the asylum-seeker and from the side of the Swedish citizen. What emerges from the analysis of the existing research on this topic and the qualitative interviews is that

while there are several components influencing integration in any context, the data that has emerged from this study illustrate that the leading elements that influence integration are: employment, language competency, education, and housing.

Methodology

Location

When determining the location in Sweden to conduct an evaluative case study, I considered the three most populated cities, as more in the suburbs of the three major cities is where immigrants most often live, and where most the population of interest lives. The cities in Sweden with the largest populations are Gothenburg, Malmö, and Stockholm. Any one of these three cities would have likely been adequate sites to examine the effectiveness of Sweden's integration strategy and identify the primary agents that influence their integration into Swedish society. I decided to choose the third-most populated city, Malmö (The Swedish Migration Agency, 2016), for a few reasons. The first reason I chose Malmö, rather than Stockholm or Gothenburg, is Malmö's proximity to Copenhagen, Denmark. When people are traveling to Malmö, it is common to travel through Copenhagen to get to their destination city, Malmö, since besides air or sea, the only way to travel from Copenhagen to Malmö is to cross the Oresund Bridge, that connects the two cities, and until a recent policy change in November 2015, that required travels to show border patrol identification, it was a relatively easy first Swedish city to get to, after crossing the Oresund Bridge from Copenhagen. Another reason is that as there are already many people residing in Malmö from the MENA region, this can be

correlated to greater ease in communication, as many of the asylum-seekers from the MENA region speak Arabic or Farsi. A third reason to focus on Malmö is that Malmö seems to be a popular destination city for immigrants from the MENA region also because it is the southern-most major city in Sweden, making it less cold, and more light than cities further north.

Data collection

This study comprises three main steps in data collection and analysis. There were two steps that did not involve human subjects. The first step entailed content analysis of the reports published by government agencies, reports published by NGOs, reports published by international organizations, and academic literature to identify the specific approach to integration Sweden has taken over the years and what their current integration strategy is. The second step consisted of analysis of published articles and policy papers on the asylum policies and Swedish integration initiatives, to understand what policies are in place, which ones have recently been changed, and why those policies have been modified. This allowed me to develop an understanding of the reasons behind the approach to integration of asylum-seekers has changed. Literature acquisition extended from March 2016-September 2016. The third form of data collection consisted of conducting interviews with six locally-based experts (aid workers, activist organizations, policy-makers, academic researchers, and other government and non-government experts), to elicit their views on the successfulness of Sweden's current integration approach, and to understand where they see it can be improved. I used snow-

ball and purposive sampling to identify local experts, based on their expertise and familiarity with the topic, with an emphasis on individuals who have been based in Sweden for four years or more, and who have actively participated in designing the integration strategies for this population or have actively facilitated their integration in Malmö and are knowledgeable about the current situation in Malmö. The criteria I used to identify potential interviewees from the candidate pool was adults, irrespective of gender (though I did hope to have a relatively equal gender participation, which there was), who have an expertise on immigration (migration organizations); people who have worked on integration strategy (NGO's who help make policy or who work to facilitate integration); and experts who understand the human rights and cultural context of this population (such as human rights advocates and religious scholars).

I sent approximately fifty recruitment emails over the months of June and July, as well as additional follow-up emails and phone calls, and when possible, also made a few visits to the organizations where I gave an invitation in person to elicit participation. Of these communications, I received a response rate of approximately 13%, and a positive interest rate of around 7%. After careful consideration of the above-mentioned criteria, I determined that six individuals met the conditions of expertise desired. All the experts I interviewed have worked or conducted research in their respective fields for at least four years, and are either native-born in Sweden or have lived and worked in the Malmö area for four years or more. Nearly all of the participants have lived in Sweden all or the vast

majority of their lives and have studied or worked on issues regarding immigrants for longer than four years.

Using a semi-structured qualitative style provided adequate structure to the interviews while still providing an openness to the participants, ensuring the interviewees had ample opportunity to answer questions and to qualitatively express their views. The interviews took place at times most convenient for the participants, and in locations they felt most comfortable. Some participants preferred to be interviewed in their offices, while others were most comfortable meeting at a local café or their home. The interview times ranged from 1 hour and fifteen minutes to 3 hours, averaging 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Who the Interviewees are

As will be discussed below, confidentiality and anonymity were important to most of the participants. As such, I have taken specific measures to assure they cannot be identified. While taking special effort to ensure confidentiality and anonymity to the participants, I also wish to relay credibility of the experts to the reader. It is important, I believe, to include a basic description of the interviewee and/or the type of work they currently conduct that vastly contributes to their expertise. Thus, with permission from the participants, a brief description of each of the interviewees is provided here.

Interviewee 1: Expert in international migration and labor market integration

Interviewee 2: Expert in religion, focusing on perceptions Islam

Interviewee 3: Human rights advocate and founder of NGO

Interviewee 4: Expert in employment of immigrants, with a focus on asylum-seekers

Interviewee 5: Expert in labor migration and market integration

Interviewee 6: Expert in employment of asylum-seekers (who have been granted asylum)

Throughout this paper, each of the interviewees will be referred to by their above numerically-assigned pseudonym.

Timing

The timing of the interviews was a challenge. While my availability to conduct interviews began during the summer, for most of the potential interviewees this was the beginning of summer vacation. The vast number of people I invited for an interview were not interested since summer is a holiday for them. Still others found my research topic to be too delicate of a subject, as there would be some discussion of religion and because my research involved evaluation of Sweden's policies. Most of the participants I could elicit for an interview were hesitant to discuss religion and were also cautious about saying something critical about the Swedish government. While I do think that perhaps the interviewees held back to some degree, whether it was because of their positions either with the government, non-government agencies, or the universities, or somehow due to the cultural etiquette in Sweden, or some other reason, I believe this did not hamper my overall findings. Because I could analyze their responses, in addition to the vast existing academic literature, and because there was much overlap in the interviewees' responses, I found that the information they provided me was sufficient

enough to be able to gain a valuable understanding of the current situation. I was able to draw some general conclusions based from the information they shared, in combination with the literature review I conducted prior to interviewing these experts.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

In accordance with HSRB guidelines, I provided the each of the interviewees with an informed consent form, which they signed before I began the interviews, to ensure that the data was collected only with interviewees' knowledge and consent. Prior to beginning recruitment of potential interviewees, I had already specified that no potential identifiers, including participants' names or their organization's names would be included when I referred to them in the final thesis. Knowing that this thesis would contain no individually identifiable information, and that pseudonyms would be inserted for the interviewees' names, the organization they are employed with would not be included, and that only their titles will be presented in this document, were details I found to be of importance to most interviewees. As such, I have chosen to take an additional step in ensuring confidentiality. To refrain from naming participants' gender, as I believe including gender of the participants is unnecessary and could aid readers in identifying participants, I have chosen to use the Swedish gender neutral personal pronoun, "hen" in place of using the words he/she or him/her, his/her. I did choose to still include a partial description of job titles of the interviewees, however, as I believe this is an important factor for sake of credibility.

Current Situation and Context

In recent years, since the Arab Revolution in 2011, there have been people of various MENA nationalities seeking asylum in Sweden. In particular, since the civil war began in Syria, there have been many Syrians coming to Sweden, with the numbers increasing with each year since 2012 (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016). In 2013, the Swedish Migration Agency stated that they granted permanent residents to all Syrian and stateless persons who arrived from war-torn Syria. In 2015, however, the number of asylum-seekers from Syria, among Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries, who came to Sweden was significantly greater than the previous years. A total of 168,877 people, according to the Migrationsverket (Swedish Migration Agency), sought asylum in Sweden (“Statistics - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016). According to Migrationsverket, the Swedish Migration Agency’s statistics, many of the asylum applications received last year were from Syrians (“Statistics - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016) While Sweden has generally showed an openness to accept asylum-seekers, the arrival of 168,877 people in 2015 alone, was a very large number of people and in a very short timeframe. An interesting point Interviewee 5 made is that the first wave of Syrians who came to Sweden were highly educated, and then towards the end of that wave, there were more less-educated Syrians coming to Sweden. Hen further stated “...of course if you have a higher education, it means you often have a better job, have

more money, [and] it's easier for you to get out of the country fast, than those who have lower levels of education and income" (Personal interview, August 10, 2016).

Per capita, in 2015, Sweden received the most asylum-seekers of any other country in the EU (Traub, 2016). According to the UNHCR, the majority of these asylum-seekers are self-identifying Muslim asylum-seekers, from the Middle East and North Africa region (December 2015). The experts interviewed said that immigrants often settle in the larger cities. Malmö, the third largest city, is the southern-most city in Sweden and connects to Copenhagen, Denmark via the Oresund Bridge, the only road connecting the two countries.

In early January 2016, just months after the biggest wave of asylum-seekers to Sweden in 2015 arrived in the fall, "Refugees Welcome" signs could be seen posted in the city of Malmö. Six months later, most of the paper signs had either weathered and fallen off or been purposely torn off. This may have been related to the sheer overwhelming number of asylum-seekers in 2015, and potentially due to the growing anti-immigrant sentiment. Interviewee 6 stated that "If you look at the political scene of Europe and the U.S. right now, it's moving more towards xenophobia and nationalism, and if everyone is not exactly like us, they should not be here, and the Swedish government, although being Social Democrats, have moved with this strange shift in perception of "us" (Personal interview, August 17, 2016). The anti-immigrant sentiment does seem towards certain groups more than others, especially towards asylum-seekers perceived as Muslim from the MENA region.

Sweden has been described as a multicultural country by a number of analysts, including Akesson (2011) and Wickstrom (2015). Looking more specifically at the city of Malmö, this city can be described as very multicultural. Malmö prides itself as being residence to people of from 177 different countries, the (“Facts about Malmö | Press,” n.d.). About 30% of Malmö’s residents were born abroad, and the majority of them are from the countries of them (at least prior to 2015), are said to be from Iraq, Denmark, and former Yugoslavia, followed by Poland and Bosnia. (“Facts about Malmö | Press,” n.d.). Scuzzarello describes Malmö as having “adopting cultural pluralist or multicultural approaches towards migrant integration,” 2015, p. 1221). Some researchers, however, are more critical than Scuzzarello about Malmö’s multicultural approach and about how integrated the foreign-born are.

Radinovic-Lukic (2015) describes Malmö as a city believed to be extremely segregated. Radinovic-Lukic, upon finishing an intercultural dialogue project in Malmö, concluded that Malmö simply does not have the structures in place for successful integration and intercultural dialogue (2015). While it is officially said that Malmö does not do a census on religion, some outlets say that Muslims make up 20% of the local population, which is one of the highest percentages in all Scandinavian cities (“The World Factbook — Central Intelligence Agency,” 2016). Syrians, Turkish, Iraqis, Moroccans, Libyans, Afghanis, and Iranians are just a few of the nationalities that those living in Malmö who self-identify as Muslim comprise. There is some debate among analysts and policy-makers about the socio-cultural integration of immigrants, particularly those of Muslim background (Diehl, Lubbers, Muhlau, & Platt, 2016).

According to the local experts interviewed, anti-immigrant sentiment is increasing, particularly towards asylum-seekers from the MENA region who are perceived as Muslim. They also conveyed that the anti-immigrant political party, the Sweden Democrat Party has been gaining popularity (Foreign Policy, 2016, February 10). Interviewee 3 voiced her concern about the big rise of the right-wing political party in Sweden and as well as in all of Europe. (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). Interviewee 5 mentioned some of the comments that are made by groups such as the Social Democrats and their supporters: “They take all the jobs; they take our wives; they steal our cars...” “These are just arguments you hear all the time from right-wing parties, which is really terrible, I think” (Interviewee 5, Personal interview, August 10, 2016). I asked Interviewee 5 if she thought there was any basis to such statements. From her expression, she seemed to think such a question was strange. Considering her expertise and based on her previous answers throughout our interview, I interpreted her lack of response to mean that she does not feel such arguments are descriptive of reality.

One only needs to type “multicultural Sweden” into an internet search engine to be bombarded with countless websites calling Sweden’s multiculturalism a failure, and voicing fear because of the recently arrived (perceived as) Muslim immigrants. After Sweden took in so many Arab and Muslim asylum-seekers in 2015, Sweden Democrat party member, Paula Bieler, who describes herself as a nationalist, said she fears that an increasingly multicultural Sweden is in danger of losing its identity (Foreign Policy, 2016, February 10). The Sweden Democrat Party While there have, for some time been voices of disdain regarding Sweden taking in refugees, recent events such as occurred in

Gothenburg the second largest city, just hours north of Malmö, heightened concerns about the asylum-seeking immigrants Sweden was taking in (BBC News, 2016, January 28). Among the concerns are physical dangers, as there have been a number of cases of arson over the last few years, as well as recently, among other incidences; and fears that the social fabric of Sweden's identity is under threat, as taking in such a large number of asylum-seekers has put a significant strain on the Swedish social system (Traub, 2016). One of the recent incidences occurred in early 2016, in January, when a 15-year-old asylum-seeker was arrested for stabbing a 22-year old asylum center employee (BBC News, 2016, January 28). Interviewee 1 mentioned gang rapes at music festivals, which he said was done by unaccompanied minors (unaccompanied minors are children under the age of eighteen, or come to Sweden without a legal guardian). Included in the large number of asylum-seekers Malmö, as well as the rest of Sweden received last year, was quite a large number of unaccompanied minors. While multicultural Malmö has overall remained relatively tranquil and safe, the recent influx of Arab immigrants from Syria, among other countries, has raised concern. Some analysts such as Radinovic-Lukic, contend that Malmö needs further measures to combat the societal problems which arise due to various value clashes (2015). More discussion will follow on values and culture in a later chapter.

None of my questions were about politics in Sweden. Yet what I observed during each of the interviews is that it is very difficult to not talk about politics when one is discussing integration and policies involving immigrants, as the political situation greatly influences what sort of policy changes are made. As mentioned above, in late 2015 and

during the first three quarters of 2016, alone, there have been a few Swedish policy changes made that specifically target immigrants and asylum-seekers. There were two recent Swedish policy changes cited by nearly all the interviewees, as being the most notable. These policy changes are the policy that took effect in November 2015, that entailed mandatory border checks of everyone's identification, between Copenhagen and Malmö, before being permitted to cross the Øresund Bridge to Malmö, as well as the policy change that took effect July 20, 2016, which diminishes the current possibility of obtaining a permanent Swedish residence and makes family reunification significantly more difficult. These policy changes, while serving the purpose of decreasing the number of asylum-seekers entering Sweden and cutting down on costs to Sweden, all likely will serve to hinder, rather than help facilitate integration of the asylum-seekers.

Sweden has a reputation for being a multicultural and generous country, however the great number of asylum-seekers who came to Sweden last year, as well as prior to 2015, has prompted concern from many local actors—from policy makers, to academics, to government and non-government workers, to regular citizens. After receiving such large number of asylum-seekers last year, in addition to the thousands received in recent years, there is a growing focus on how to integrate those whose applications Sweden has accepted. As mentioned previously, significant recent changes have been made to Swedish immigration and asylum policies that the local experts interviewed described as less generous than the previous policies in place, but make Sweden's immigration policies stricter and are closer to the policies of her neighboring countries, and again, have immensely helped to stem the flows of asylum-seekers into Sweden.

Sweden has granted some of these asylum-seekers refugee status; others they have given subsidiary or temporary protection; and some others have been granted a different form of protection. Still, some other applicants have been denied asylum, or are still waiting for a decision. Among the challenges facing both Swedish society and the recently arrived asylum-seekers themselves, is how to facilitate successful integration into Swedish society (Traub, J, 2016 February 10). A review of the literature and interviews with local experts suggests that integration of asylum-seekers who are still awaiting a decision from Migrationsverket or whose asylum applications have been declined, however, is at the least more difficult, and at the most, impossible, as opposed to the asylum-seekers who have been granted some form of protection. An important detail to bear in mind is that with some form of protective status by the Swedish government also means one gets Swedish residence (temporary or permanent, depending on the current Swedish policy) as well as access to the social benefits included with the status asylum-seekers are granted.

CHAPTER THREE — INTEGRATION

A Short History of Sweden's Integration Strategies

Among the factors that drew my interest to Sweden is its approach to integration. Integration is a complex process that tends to be difficult to measure, and as van Krieken (2012) tells us in “Between assimilation and multiculturalism: Models of integration in Australia,” the very idea of integration has built within it a presupposition that there is a clear contrast between the already integrated, or presumably the majority population, and a minority population that is assumed to be the part of society that need more effective integration. Van Krieken states that “It [integration] overstates the cohesiveness of any given society and the on-going nature of the requirement to create cohesiveness throughout society, rather than integration being an issue that only concerns particular population groups” (2012, p. 501). What one views as integration and another views as assimilation are difficult to measure, and the differences between these two terms are widely debated. Interviewee 1 described Sweden as having an integration policy, as opposed to an assimilation policy. Hen stated that “The official policy in Sweden is that immigrants have to adapt, but the society has to adapt as well, hence Sweden’s integration policy instead of an assimilation policy” (Personal interview, July 7, 2016).

During the 1970s Sweden adopted what is commonly referred to as a multicultural approach, an approach that was meant to be inclusive and encouraging

diversity, while at the same time deeply rooted in Swedish culture. This policy was not having the desired outcome, and some people viewed it as resulting in too many separate groups of immigrants that were either poorly integrated or completely unintegrated (Jorgensen, 2011). In 1997, Sweden adopted what was called the Integration Policy, which was meant to be an improvement from the former approach. The overall perspective for this new policy was to be citizenship-based, stressing equality, tolerance, pluralism and “obligations and opportunities for all citizens regardless of their ethnic and cultural background” (Jorgensen, 2011, p. 101). While as of 1997, according to the expert interviewees who specialize in labor market and integration into the Swedish labor market, Sweden officially has an integration policy, however when one evaluates what Sweden offers to immigrants, multicultural policies are still largely used. Officially however, the 1997 Integration Policy provides the framework Sweden uses today. There are a number of facets linked to integration. Many of them are typically categorized into economic and socio-cultural. Very often however, the socio-cultural aspects can be challenging to pinpoint and describe, even for locally-based experts.

Exploring What Integration Is

Ballarino and Panichella, in “The occupational integration of male migrants in Western European countries: Assimilation or persistent disadvantage?” contend that an important aspect of human capital that is often an early and major barrier, is not knowing the local language (2013). Ballarino and Panichella found that another challenge in human capital may be less education than the natives or educational certificate obtained

in home country not recognized in host country (Ballarino & Panichella, 2013). Review of existing literature and interviews with local experts have strongly indicated that not being fluent in Swedish, as well as challenges in credential evaluation and a lower level of education often serve as major hindrances for asylum-seeker employment and integration. There are multiple challenges in regards to obtaining employment. Ballarino and Panichella contend that most immigrants have limited knowledge of the functioning labor market in the host country, and thus have greater difficulty finding a job that matches their abilities and expectations (2013) This also holds true in the particular context of asylum-seekers in Sweden, and will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on employment.

Throughout existing literature, integration has been defined, described, and measured in a number of ways. While the topic of socio-cultural aspect of integration was touched upon by all of the local experts during the interviews, overall, during the majority of the time in the interviews, the interviewees focused on describing the economic aspect of integration, and its importance. In Lemaître's (2007), article, "The Integration of Immigrants into the Labour Market: The Case of Sweden," he acknowledges that while labor market integration may not necessarily guarantee socio-cultural integration, it is a major step in that direction. Lemaître believes that "Labor market integration is arguably the most important thing that can be done to contribute to the integration of immigrants, in whatever way this term is defined," (2007, p. 10).

Lemaître's perspective reflects the overall attitude of most of the local experts I interviewed—that is the idea that generally, socio-cultural integration follows successful

economic integration. In regards to Sweden's integration policies, the primary focus has been on economic integration, and more specifically, labor market integration. The idea that economic integration precedes socio-cultural integration and must be at the forefront of integration policy was a common theme throughout the interviews. Perhaps this is partly so because the majority of the interviewees focus on labor market integration and employment. In response to a question about the relevance of employment for asylum-seekers, Interviewee 4 said that hen believes how "Swedish an asylum-seeker becomes" is not important; hen stated that Sweden is a very multicultural society, so as long as people are earning their own money, supporting themselves, and contributing to the system, they are pretty integrated. (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Interviewee 6, on the other hand, believes that integration is about much more than having a job. Hen believes it does not matter how integrated into Sweden one wants to become; there are certain cultural rules one is expected to apply to if they want to be considered truly integrated. Hen stated "It doesn't matter if you eat pork or not—there are plenty of Swedish people who do not eat pork, or do not eat meat at all, but it becomes a huge thing, especially for people from the MENA region, that if you do not eat pork or shake hands, then you are not integrated. It is a very strange way of looking at integration" (Personal interview, August 17, 2016). While all the expert interviewees have stated the importance of tolerance, they have given mixed responses on how tolerant Swedish society is to asylum-seekers.

In response to the employment aspect of integration Interviewee 4's comment, there are unfortunately many asylum-seekers residing in Malmö, as well as the rest of the

Sweden, who do not necessarily fall into the description he gave—many asylum-seekers are unable to earn their own money, at least legally, and thus unable to support themselves or contribute to the Swedish system. Unable to participate in the labor market or financially support themselves makes their integration very difficult and likely impossible. More discussion about employment and culture will be provided in later chapters.

Interviewee 1 contended that changing the migration policy to try to improve integration is now being discussed in Sweden but previously, migration and integration were seen more as two separate things (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Interviewee 5 believes integration and immigration go hand-in-hand. He stated that “You can’t study immigration without studying integration, and visa-versa,” (Personal interview, August 10, 2016). When asked what integration centers on, Interviewee 3 responded that integration is both the way in which the immigrant and the country benefit each other (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). Similarly, in regards to the situation in Sweden, Interviewee 1 stated that both immigrants and Swedish citizens must adapt (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). (Insert a segment here from Interviewee 5). Penninx, in “Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State,” makes a similar argument. He contends that integration rests not with one particular group, but is a process that involves many actors. Immigrants themselves, host communities, the host government, and institutions are just a few of the actors involved in integration which Penninx named (2003). Penninx believes that “It is the interaction between the two that determines the direction and the ultimate outcome of the integration process” (2003, para

3). He points out that there are two main parties involved in the process—immigrants and the host country, however, the parties are unequal, the host society has much more influence over the institutional structure and how it reacts to newcomers. Interviewee 6 shares a similar view to Penninx and the other experts interviewed regarding what integration is. Hen's views about the process needing to be two-way were clear. Hen made emotionally made the point that even if the immigrant wants to integrate, if he/she does not fit certain criteria and follow certain strange cultural norms, "We [Swedish society] won't let you integrate" (Personal interview, August 17, 2016).

Interviewee 6 shared a similar view of integration. Hen questioned though, if integration is even the right word to use. Pointing out that integration used to mean one was a part of society, but now in the Swedish context, it has come to mean that "If you are the immigrant, you should change to fit in with our society" (Personal interview, August 17, 2016). This view is very much a one-way way of thinking, which is more in line with assimilation, whereas integration involves both sides adapting and changing to becoming a community. Hen stated that Sweden had moved away from assimilation for a while, but seems to, in practice, be moving back toward it. Hen contends, that in Sweden now the idea is that the immigrant themselves should make all the efforts. Hen further mentioned that there has been discussion of instead of saying the term "integration," using the word "inclusion," which would imply that it is a matter of both sides adapting and changing to become a community (Personal interview, August 17, 2016). The description of inclusion that hen provided sounds very much what the definition of

integration actually is. It seems that the lines have become blurred, however, in Sweden, between what integration and what assimilation are.

When I asked if hen believed integration is what be the primary focus in regards to the asylum-seekers in Sweden, Interviewee 3 pointed out that there were two ways one could interpret this question. The first way hen interpreted this question was looking at the broader political picture, and addressing the causing there to be asylum-seekers in the first place. Hen stated “The western society, before the flow of refugees, should be concerned about the politics—not supporting dictators and selling arms. It’s all because of this kind of support to these regimes” (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). Hen continued, emphasizing that “While Sweden is known as such a neutral country, they sell so many weapons” (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). The second way Interviewee 3 said hen interpreted this question, was to refer to a smaller scale, in the context of the current situation, that recently so many asylum-seekers arrived in Sweden. Hen believes that after people have already come, the focus should be on integration, emphasizing the importance of education for them, and emphasizing the importance that the receiving society “try to understand them and where they come from” (Personal interview, July 19, 2016).

Some Groups May Be Perceived as Less “Integratable”

Some immigrants may be perceived as being less easily integrated than others. This can be based on several perceptions. Some of those perceptions that were voiced by the local experts interviewed regarding Swedish nationals about self-identifying Muslim

asylum-seekers from the MENA region, included perceptions about educational or work background or about of their culture and beliefs. While somewhat hesitant to discuss the topic of religion, possibly because Sweden is quite a secular country, most of the interviewees did mention that there is a common perception about Muslims and Islam. They cited the media as playing a major role in creating a fear of Muslims as there is often a correlation drawn between Islam and terrorism in the media. There are also other negative stereotypes, such as the one Interviewee 5 mentioned as having noticed in Sweden. Hen said that very often here, immigrants from the MENA region are stereotyped as having a lower educational background and being less productive (Personal interview, August 10, 2016).

Regardless of what evidence exists or does not exist to support some of the negative views about self-identifying Muslims from the MENA region, review of the literature and the information yielded from the interviews suggest that these perceptions could play a role in shaping policy. With so many asylum-seekers in 2015 coming from predominantly Muslim countries of Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, (“Statistics - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016) in addition to the concern of how to meet the challenge of providing adequate housing, education, and jobs, some of the other concerns arising pertain to culture, religion, and gender issues. All of these issues will be discussed in greater detail below.

Swedish [Non]Religiosity and Self-Identifying Muslim Asylum-Seekers

The feedback from the interviewees and literature suggests that for decades or even centuries, until quite recently religion in Sweden had largely been ignored. Over the past few years, and especially since the arrival of the recent wave of asylum-seekers to Sweden in 2015 however, the concern about religious belief and culture appears to be on the rise in Sweden, as well as throughout much of Europe. Research conducted on perception and discrimination conveys that concerns over religiosity and culture, particularly Islam and Middle Eastern background are rising throughout much Europe, Sweden being no exception (Anwar, Blaschke, and Sander (2004); Interviewee 5, (2016); and Interviewee 6, (2016).

Prior to the 11th Century, Norse Paganism was generally followed. After, and up until the 20th Century, Christianity played an major role in Swedish society. Today, however, even though Christianity still plays a ritual and cultural role, such as the celebration of Christmas and Easter, and some attendance of church, Sweden is today quite a secular country, and generally seems proud of this fact. The state religion could be said to be, as said by Interviewee 6, secularism (Personal interview, August, 17, 2016). Officially, however, the state religion remains Lutheranism, and in 2009, the U.S. Department of State released a publication stating that according to the Church of Sweden, 72.9 percent of Swedish citizens are members (October 26, 2009). Yet according to poll data from Sweden.se, only 29 percent of Swedes claim to be religious (June 21, 2016). According to Christianity is not nearly as prevalent in Sweden as it was a century ago.

Sweden is often viewed as a tolerant country; however, certain religions are more easily tolerated in Swedish society than others. Religions such as Islam, particularly after events such as 9/11, combined with media portrayal of Muslims as terrorists, as well as common perception that Muslim women are greatly oppressed, in a country that prides itself on secularism and women's equality, are not, according to the local experts, particularly well-viewed.

The place of religion in society and the status of women and how these views translate into cultural practice within a society are often sensitive and complicated subjects throughout the world, and historical accounts would suggest that this has been the case throughout history. Anwar, Blaschke, and Sander (2004) believe that many of the problems Muslims can face in Sweden can be largely attributed to the Swedish placement of religion. In their (2004) article "State Policies Towards Muslim Minorities: Sweden, Great Britain and Germany," Anwar et al. believe that in Sweden, the nature, placement, and position for religion in Swedish society is the notion that religion should in no way influence behavior outside of the very private sphere. They state that in Sweden, since the 20th Century, to a large extent, "To allow religious considerations to affect your public life is considered both irrational and wrong," (Anwar et al., 2004, p. 205) has saturated the general consciousness of the Swedes. Anwar et al. contend that the result has been that viewing religion as a factor in the Swedish way of seeing and understanding people and their ways of thinking and acting, including the way immigration can be seen, has largely disappeared (2004). They make the case that until

recently, immigrants had been almost exclusively viewed in terms of nationality, language, ethnicity, socio-economic class, and political opinion (Anwar, et al., 2004).

CHAPTER 4 — SWEDISH ASYLUM POLICY

Applying for Asylum in Sweden

The Migration Agency provided the simplified steps of the asylum procedure, which they have described as: 1. The person arrives in Sweden and submits an asylum application to the Migration Agency; 2. The applicant tells the Agency why she/he is seeking protection; 3. There is a decision; 4. If needed, there is further investigation; 5. The employment services are responsible for setting up a personalized plan with the asylum-seeker (who has been given some form of protection and Swedish residence) (“Asylum regulations - Swedish Migration Agency,” July 20, 2016).

The process of an asylum application

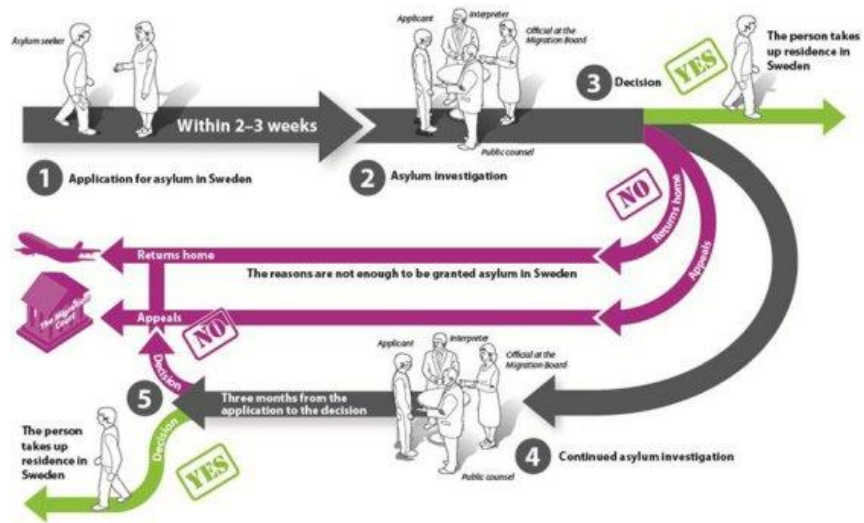


Figure 1: The Process of Applying for Asylum in Sweden

(Figure borrowed from the Swedish Migration Agency from “Regular procedure - Sweden Asylum Information Database,” 2016).

The above figure is the process of applying for asylum, according to the Swedish Migration Agency, (or Migrationsverket, in Swedish). The steps the Agency has provided, while perhaps making the asylum process appear simple and even short, the process for asylum has been negatively characterized by all of the expert interviewees as a lengthy one, with some asylum-seekers even waiting years for an asylum decision.

The Swedish Migration Agency on Asylum

Migrationsverket, translated as Migration Agency in English, and prior to 2015 named the Migration Board, is the Swedish authority that takes considers applications from people who want to visit or take permanent residence in Sweden, or are seeking protection from prosecution (“Our mission - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016). Throughout this document, the three titles Migrationsverket, (Swedish) Migration Agency, and Migration Board will be used interchangeably, as they all refer to the same organization. The Migration Agency’s website contains a plethora of information for those immigrating to Sweden, particularly for asylum-seekers.

Among the information the Migration Agency’s website includes are asylum regulations and an outline of the process of how to apply for asylum in Sweden and recent news including policy changes. Their website also describes how they determine what type of protection they will give to asylum-seekers, if the asylum-seeker’s application is approved. It is important to understand how the Migration Agency defines an asylum-seeker. As stated above, Migrationsverket defines an asylum-seeker as “A person who makes their way to Sweden and applies for protection (asylum) here, but whose application has not yet been considered,” (Migrationsverket, July 20, 2016). Migrationsverket states that one can apply for asylum in Sweden if he/she is a victim of persecution or at risk of persecution or inhumane treatment in his/her home country (January 21, 2016). There have been a number of recent policy changes that affect the ability to apply for asylum in Sweden. As of July 20, 2016, to apply for asylum in Sweden, one must either be at the Swedish border where they submit their application to the border police, or once in Sweden, to one the Migration Agency’s application units

(July 20, 2016). The only exception is for quota refugees, which is a program that instated by the UNHCR that operates in a limited number of countries. The number of quota refugees Sweden accepts every year, is minimal, in comparison to the number of asylum applications received between 2011 and 2015, and during this time frame was just 1,9000 people per year (January 21, 2016).

The Migrationsverket states that the refugee quota is primarily intended for refugees and other people who are in need of protection (May 15, 2016). Since 1950, Sweden has been receiving quota refugees, in a process of selection and organized transfer (May 15, 2016). Quota refugees are can apply for asylum through the UNHCR in another country. The Swedish government determines the number of quota refugees they will receive (May 15, 2016). The nationalities accepted and where the refugees come from is determined in cooperation with the UNHCR. Due to the situation in Syria, in both 2015 and 2016, Syria was prioritized in the Swedish refugee quota, the reason stated by Swedish Migration Agency Head of Section, Oskar Ekbladat as being due to the major refugee crisis created by the war in Syria. (“Focus on Syria in this year’s Swedish refugee quota - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016). Other countries in the MENA region are currently considered to be in a war, as well. The World Bank goes so far as to say the entire MENA region is in turmoil. In noting countries currently in the region currently in a civil war, they list Syria, as well as the countries of Iraq, Libya, and Yemen (“Middle East and North Africa Overview,” 2016). However, there is a stark difference between the percentage of asylum-seekers who seek asylum in Sweden who are granted protection

from these other countries in the MENA region and the percentage of Syrians granted protection.

Sweden's position as a signatory of The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, among other international agreements, means that for asylum-seekers according who are not quota refugees, Sweden examines each asylum application individually. Different aspects of identity are considered, especially gender identity and sexual orientation. The Migration Agency specifies that by sexual orientation, they mean whether the applicant is homosexual, bisexual or transgender ("Asylum regulations - Swedish Migration Agency," July 20, 2016). Applicants for asylum who identify as LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender), in light of the raised awareness of LGBT discrimination globally, and the LGBT movement, which is particularly popular in Sweden, are cases that do seem to be higher on the priority list than some other facets of identity. The reason I have chosen to point out this important component of identity, as opposed to say nationality or religion, as that neither nationality nor religion are discussed in detail regarding their rights to apply for asylum in Sweden, whereas identifying as part of the LGBT community is highlighted on the Migration Agency's website, and specific information has been published for members of LGBT who are seeking asylum in Sweden ("Asylum regulations - Swedish Migration Agency," July 20, 2016).

Ultimately, as the Migration Agency states each case is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Such a process can be beneficial, as within it lies the ability to more genuinely evaluate each case. On the other hand, evaluating each case in such a way is sometimes

criticized as being ad-hoc and inconsistent. Interviewee 3 criticized the Migration Agency, accusing them of acting on an inconsistent, day-to-day basis (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). The interview with Interviewee 6 shed a lot of light on this issue. Hen stated that there are cases in which one may apply for asylum, be denied and appeal, and reapply with the same story, and be accepted on a different day, from a different employee. It is clear there is a lot of inconsistency in who the Migration Agency grant asylum. It is also evident that there are certain overall preferences, for example over the past few years, for Syrians, and for other years Iraqis. There is also a preference for asylum-seekers with children.

Recent Changes in Swedish Policy

It is quite common to travel to Malmö from Copenhagen by taking a train from the Copenhagen train station/airport. In November, however, new security measures in the form of border checks were introduced at the train stations on both sides of the Danish and Swedish borders (The Swedish Migration Agency, 2016). This change has greatly decreased the number of asylum-seekers arriving in Sweden. The border controls in Copenhagen in which you must show your identification to cross into Sweden have had the intended consequence of greatly assisting in stemming the flow of asylum-seekers to Sweden (Interviewee 4, Personal interview, July 28, 2016).

Sweden's immigration policies are currently undergoing what some of the interviewees described as a reorientation that is less generous than Sweden's previous

policies and growing closer to other EU policies, as well as the neighboring Scandic countries. The new policies in place as of July 20 are to strive cut down on the number of people immigrating to Sweden, and to persuade them to not travel through all of Europe to come here. Over the months of conducting research, I have observed there to be a number of modifications and changes to the Swedish Migration Agency's website, including some information that has been removed. Finding the information again has been somewhat of a challenge, though overall, I believe this has not hampered research findings.

Sweden's Policies Vary

Interviewee 3 believes that one of the main problems with Sweden's policy on integration is that it is unclear and changing. For example, he pointed out that with the arrival of so many asylum-seekers last year, namely from Syria asylum-seekers from other countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia have become, as Interviewee 3 sees it, neglected (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). Review of the history of policy changes over the last several decades shows that Sweden modifies or adjusts its policies according to what the government feels is appropriate.

While the Migrationsverket states that they process each case on an individual basis, they also state on their website that certain applicants are given priority, such as the Syrian asylum-seekers. This was also stated by Interviewee 4, who is employed with an organization that works very closely with the Migrationsverket. In certain years prior to

2015, for example, Sweden gave more asylum-seekers from Iraq and Afghanistan asylum. Interviewee 4 stated that in 2015, in Sweden, between 90-95% of the Syrians who applied for asylum in 2015 received it, while approximately 50% of those seeking asylum coming from Afghanistan received asylum, and about 40% of the asylum-seekers from Iraq who applied received asylum (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). The interviewees typically referred to the Syrian asylum-seekers more so than asylum-seekers of other nationalities, probably because of the enormous number of asylum-seekers who fled to Sweden last year, at least one-third were from Syria (Migrationsverket, 2016). An interesting fact that Interviewee 6 provided is that the Syrians are not receiving refugee status in Sweden; they are giving a lesser status that Sweden calls “alternativt,” based on that they do not have individual reasons to feel persecuted (Personal interview, August 17, 2016). I was unable to find further information about this status, as the pages containing this word were written only in Swedish, however, I believe it is worth noting this detail, as it was not mentioned by the other interviewees, and had not surfaced during my review of English literature.

Interviewee 3 believes a main issue last year (2015) was that there was so much focus on getting more people into the country, and too little attention given to developing an effective integration plan (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). Interviewee 4 stated that part of the problem in 2015 was that with so many applications to manage, it is going to be hard to get so many people into the system as quickly as possible who are going to be allowed to stay. He discussed two recent policies in Sweden that are part of the new restrictions. The first policy of the policy changes that he discussed was the stricter ID

requirements to travel to Sweden, which was passed in November 2015. This law requires everyone to have identification to cross the border between from Copenhagen to Sweden, and hen said that almost everyone from Syria has some form of ID, while not that many people from Afghanistan, for example have tended to have ID (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). The second policy change Interview 3 discussed, that went into effect on July 20, 2016, is a temporary law, which makes it more difficult to get residence in Sweden ID (Interviewee 4, Personal interview, July 28, 2016). The Swedish Migration Agency states that this new law is one of several measures initiated by Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) to “bring about a sharp reduction in the number of asylum-seekers” (“The new temporary law has entered into force - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016). Interviewee 6 strongly emphasized that while the law is supposed to be temporary, hen, among many others, hen stated are skeptical, and believe that this law will likely be in effect for years to come (Personal interview, August 17, 2016).

According to Interviewee 4 the Migration Agency also sometimes handles applications depending on what country people are from, primarily to fast-track the people from Syria, “so they are not just in a long line with everybody else” (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Interviewee 4 further explained that part of the reasoning is “trying to preserve the system,” as well as ensuring the protection is given to the people “who really deserve political asylum, such as for people from warzones rather than what hen refers to as economic refugees” (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). It is certainly true that much of Syria has been labeled as a warzone. It is also true that there are several countries in the MENA region who have much conflict and are dangerous for many

people to live. Some countries such as Libya for example, until recently, did not have a government since the Arab Revolution, and the country is still very unstable and the political situation remains volatile and in some places, violent conflict continues. Yet, there has been no push to give Libyan asylum-seekers protection, even in the height of the war in 2011. However, through further research regarding Sweden's push for labor market integration, and the country's need for people with experience in highly skilled employment, it makes sense that Sweden would push to give most Syrians asylum. Second to the fact that Sweden considers the overall majority of Syria to be a warzone, because Sweden has specific labor market needs to fulfil, understandably, they would push for MENA asylum-seekers from Syria, as opposed to some other countries, in which people tend to have a lower education and have less experience in high-skilled jobs, in countries such as Afghanistan or Libya, for example. This is in no way a full explanation, however. More in-depth research on the reasoning for giving certain asylum-seekers protection and assistance, and others not, is something that could yield more concrete answers.

When discussing how the stricter ID requirements affected Syrians with Interviewee 6, hen expressed a view that conflicted with the statements of Interviewee 4 regarding all Syrians having identification. Interviewee 6 contended that it is not possible to know if all of the asylum-seekers coming from Syria have identification. Hen asserted that what they know is that oftentimes, whether asylum-seekers have ID or not is dependent on many things, one being what smugglers have instructed them to do. Hen

argued that no one can know that all the Syrians coming to Sweden seeking asylum would have identification (Personal interview, August 17, 2016).

Protection for Some, Forced Return for Others

The Swedish Migration Agency's website reads that how they determine if one receives refugee status, is in accordance with the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Migrationsverket specifies that they will grant Swedish residence to a person who is a refugee, according to the UN Convention, as well as a person in need of subsidiary protection, in accordance with EU guidelines ("Asylum regulations - Swedish Migration Agency," July 20, 2016). When a person has well-founded reasons for fear of persecution due to gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, race, nationality, or affiliation with a particular group, the Migrationsverket says they are considered a refugee ("Asylum regulations - Swedish Migration Agency," July 20, 2016).

The Migration Agency does not define subsidiary protection, but instead they describe who they determine is in need of subsidiary protection. According to the Migration Agency, one is in need of subsidiary protection if they are at risk of being sentenced to death; at risk of being subjected to corporal punishment, torture, or other degrading or inhumane treatment, or if as a civilian, they are at serious risk of injury due to armed conflict ("Asylum regulations - Swedish Migration Agency," July 20, 2016). Mitrow (2013) has stated that according to Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004, "A person is entitled to subsidiary protection if they can show that if returned to

his or her country of origin they would face a real risk of suffering serious harm, defined as: ‘Death penalty or execution; Torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or Serious and individual threat to a civilian’s life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict,’” (Mitrow, 2013, cited from Council Directive 2004/83/EC in *The Official Journal of the European Union*, April 29, 2004, p. 426). It is important to bear in mind that to receive any protection or assistance that comes with international protection, whether that be refugee status, subsidiary protection, temporary humanitarian protection, or some other form of protection, as one must be legally recognized as such.

Interviewee 1 went so far as to equate the term asylum-seeker with having no status in the country and thus residing in Sweden illegally (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). While I have unfortunately not been able to get in touch with her again to ask her for clarification on her’s meaning, considering his expertise, I think that her misspoke. However, regardless of whether Interviewee 1 meant by what her said, her’s words are perhaps not too far from the view of the Swedish Migration Agency. If her shares similar views to the Migration Agency, this would not be surprising, as Interviewee 5, who works in the same organization as Interviewee 1, mentioned that Interviewee 1 contributes policy recommendations, and may in other ways assist the Migration Agency.

On their website, the Migration Agency contends that they have great respect for human rights, stating that “Respect for human rights is the cornerstone of the Swedish migration policy” (“Human Rights - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2015). Their website further reads that “In Swedish legislation, it is a human right to receive protection if you

need it...” and that “People who are in need of protection and come here to find it must know that they are welcome...” (“Human Rights - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2015). Not everyone who comes to Sweden seeking asylum is welcome, however. Some asylum-seekers are denied, and of those denied who do not voluntarily return to their homeland, some are forcefully returned. Regardless of if a person claims to be a refugee due to persecution, or claims that they would face serious threat of persecution if they return to their homeland, without some sort of legal status, such as refugee status or subsidiary protection, a person can still be considered residing in Sweden illegally, and thus liable to forced deportation, or what the Migration Agency refers to as “forced return”. The Swedish Migration Agency describes voluntary return as the person accepting the rejection decision and leaving Sweden to return to their homeland. They state that “If the person does not return voluntarily, the Swedish Migration Agency will transfer the case to the Police. Having the person leave the country will then be a Police matter, known as forced return” (“Facts about the process - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016).

Forced return appears to be in contradiction with an important principle discussed by Grech and Wohlfeld in *Migration in the Mediterranean: Human rights, security and development perspectives*, the principle known as *non-refoulement* (2014). Under the principle of *Non-refoulement*, under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, an important right granted specifically to refugees is the right not to be returned to the country from which they have fled. Grech and Wohlfeld argue that in no circumstances may states return a person who is a refuge or claims to be a refugee, to the

country for which she is fleeing (2014). Despite the principle of *non-refoulement* however, which the UNHCR has affirmed “Constitutes a norm of customary international law and is thus obligatory for all states, not simply the states who are parties to the Refugee Convention,” (Grech & Wohlfeld, 2014, p. 41). However, as stipulated by the Swedish Migration Agency, as well as some of the local experts interviewed, it is evident that Sweden can and does return some people who claim to be a refugee and are denied, since, if they are denied they are considered to be living in Sweden illegally. If police find denied asylum-seekers, the police can put them into detention camps or forcefully return to the country from which they fled.

The European Migration Network, in “The Practices in Sweden Concerning the Granting of Non-EU Harmonised Protection Statuses,” claim that the protection provisions in Chapter 12 of the Aliens Act are based on the principle of *non-refoulement*. They state that according to Chapter 12, Section 1 of the Aliens Act:

There are no exceptions allowing a removal to proceed if the alien would be at risk of suffering the death penalty; subjected to corporal punishment, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the country to which he or she is sent; or if the alien is not protected in this country from being sent on to a country in which the alien would be at such risk (European Migration Network, February, 2010, p. 13).

The European Migration Network further explains that according to Chapter 12, Section 1 of the Aliens Act, if the alien is at risk of persecution in the country to which she or he is being sent, or if the alien is not protected in her/his country, then “The removal order

can only be enforced if she/he has committed an exceptionally gross offense that would endanger public order and security if she or he were allowed to stay in Sweden”

(February, 2010, p. 13).

Family unity is among that provisions that have been assured to third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted, Under Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004, all Member States, (with the exclusion of Denmark, as Denmark chose to not take part in the adoption of the directive), among other provisions, should ensure that family unity is maintained. Among the rights the Migration Agency lists are the right to live with whomever one chooses and to build a family with that person (“Human Rights - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2015). The new policy that went into effect July 20, 2016, however, makes family reunification much more difficult. It also changed from permanent residencies to temporary residency for asylum-seekers (who Sweden has given protection to). Hen said that at the time when the “Syrian crisis” started, all of the Syrians who came to Sweden got temporary residency, and all data shows the temporary residency is never a good idea, especially when the goal is integrating refugees (Personal interview, August 17, 2017). Hen said that they quickly realized that they needed to change it back to given the Syrians a permanent residency as well, because the Syrian situation will not change soon, and even if it does, Sweden cannot return them all to Syria. Now, the new policy has changed it to being that no one gets permanent residency, unless they arrived before November 25, 2015, and have children under the age of eighteen. Hen asserted this new law is making a huge impact on people’s lives and said

that it is even negatively affecting some people who came here three years ago, for those who still have open asylum cases (Personal interview, August 17, 2017).

CHAPTER FIVE—THE MAIN FACETS THAT HELP FACILITATE INTEGRATION

Through the review of literature and the interviews with local experts, I have found there to be several factors that help facilitate integration of immigrants and/or asylum-seekers into a society, and that separating each of these components is quite challenging, if not impossible, as they are all, in various ways interrelated and connected. The four main factors very often cited in the academic literature and mentioned by all the interviewees were employment, education and language, and housing. Each of these important factors, as well as some other, less tangible socio-cultural facets that affect integration will be discussed in greater detail in following sections.

Employment

Both academic research and interviews with local experts illustrate that employment is key to integration. The UNHCR views employment as essential for integration (Costa, 2006). Hansen, in “The Centrality of Employment in Immigrant Integration in Europe,” posits that while he believes there are other problems in regards to integration of Muslims in Europe, the primary crisis in Europe is “not one of immigration, multiculturalism, or extremism—whether of Islamic or anti-Islamic varieties,” (2012, p.3). He contends that the real issue is crisis of unemployment. However, this Transatlantic Council on Migration policy paper was released in 2012. One

could question if Hansen's view has changed since the recent migration wave into Europe in 2015, as well as the numerous terrorist attacks and scares in parts of Europe as well as in other areas. Nevertheless, his argument about the relevance of employment is compelling. Hansen argues that the greatest failure of all Western European Immigration policies is ensuring migrants have sustained employment. He concludes that integration into Europe will not work until immigrants in Europe work (Hansen, 2012). Hansen made some strong points that I am sure some people or parties, like the Sweden Democrats, for example would debate. What is important about Hansen's argument is that employment is central to integration.

In researching integration of asylum-seekers, in Sweden, as well as throughout Europe and the EU, as well as during the interviews with local experts, the most frequently cited for supporting integration was employment. Most all the respondents, when asked what integration centers on, first mentioned the labor market and employment. One reason for this is that in regards to integration, Sweden's policy's foremost focus has been on integration into the labor market. When asked what integration centers on, Interviewee 1 responded by saying that "In Sweden the focus of Swedish policy is always on labor market integration, and from the government's point of view, as long as people are integrated into the labor market, it is fine" (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Most of the integration policies in Sweden are centered around integration into the labor market, and in her view, there are almost no integration programs in Sweden for anything other than labor market integration. Interviewee 4

believes that successful integration largely means that people can get into the labor market and being able to support themselves (Personal interview, July 28, 2016).

In addition of the challenge of few available jobs in Sweden, Sweden does not have as many low qualification or lower paid jobs. Most of the jobs in the Swedish labor market are high-skilled and have high wages. Thus, for people who are coming here with little or inadequate education, there are not many jobs for them. Interviewee 4 said that even Sweden's lowest paid jobs are typically still much higher pay than even other European countries. Also, cost per hour to pay an employee is more in Sweden, even than neighboring countries, which leads to lower staffing (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Interviewee 5 said that in Sweden there are jobs available, but the problem is how the employer interprets the immigrants' competence. Hen also mentioned the job demand. In where there is a high demand for workers, such as elderly care. In jobs where there is a high demand, it, Interviewee 5 said it is easier to get a job, as the employers lower their standards since they need employees. However, concerning jobs where there is a lower demand for labor, the employers can pick and choose who they want (Interviewee 5, Personal interview, August 10, 2016). When they do that, hen contended that very often the employers stereotype immigrants, especially from the Middle East as people with lower education, lower competence, and lower productivity. Hen told me about one of Dan-Olof Rooth's experiments, of correspondence testing, by creating two CVs that are identical except for the name, in which some names were Swedish-sounding names, whereas other were Middle-Eastern-sounding names, and then submitting them to employers. Hen said the experiment results showed a significant difference in hiring rate.

(Interviewee 5, Personal interview, August 10, 2016). The findings yielded from Rooth's data collection will be explored in greater detail under "discrimination."

Diehl et al. believe that migrants typically become more integrated into the labor market over time (2016). However, there is much research suggesting that obtaining employment earlier on is associated with faster sociocultural integration and better overall well-being. Lemaître says that what employers seem to recognize and reward is previous Swedish work experience, and successful integration seems to be associated with early contact with the labor market (2007).

Among the challenges Interviewee 5 mentioned was that even though Sweden has a generous social system, there are some people who are locked into welfare dependency, and preventing getting stuck in social benefit dependency is important (Personal interview, August 10, 2016). After years of research on this topic, Interviewees 5 said he has found that having a job and income goes together with integration. Having a job is beneficial both for the asylum-seeker and for the Swedish government. Interviewee 5 ascertained that from the government's point of view, as soon as people start to work, the government can collect tax money from those people and the government no longer needs to pay them social welfare. As such, the government is interested in getting people to a point where they can sustain themselves. It is important to understand, Interviewee 5 pointed out that integration is a broader process than simply having paid employment, but employment is integral for integration to be possible.

Benefits of Paid Employment

Interviewee 2 believes that jobs are the most important factor in assisting with integration, as jobs are essential for stability. Interviewee 1 emphasized that in Sweden, as well as throughout the world, a plethora of research makes it clear that jobs are integral to well-being (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Having a job seems to positively affect the well-being of everybody. “You know that if that parents have a job, the kids are doing better in schools; that’s both for immigrants and non-immigrants. Everybody benefits from a job...most people feel better if they are employed.” (Interviewee 1, July 7, 2016). Interviewee 1 emphasized that a number of studies demonstrate that people who have a job drink less and exercise more, and thus, it is only logical to believe that for non-immigrants or immigrants, having a job is correlated with less risky behavior (July 7, 2016).

Research demonstrates that employment is correlated with less risky behavior, a generally healthier life-style, and overall greater well-being. The implications of unemployment have, until now, not yet really been discussed. In Interviewee 3’s words, “In general, if somebody is jobless, that’s the worse feeling ever” (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). Hen believes that being jobless can create anger and frustration. Frاسquilho, et al. (2016), in “Mental Health Outcomes in Times of Economic Recession: A Systematic Literature Review,” examine the recent evidence of possible association between economic recession and mental health outcomes. This research analyzes over 100 different studies in various parts of the world. What Frاسquilho, et al. found was that economic recession is possibly associated with a higher prevalence of mental health problems. They believe this is partly attributed to the fact that countries in recession often

experience a decline in living conditions and an increase in unemployment. Among the studies they analyzed were a study from Greece which showed that “mental health and self-rated health were negatively affected by unemployment during the economic recession,” (Frasquilho, et al., 2016, p. 3). A comparable study showed a similar result in Italy, where the self-reported health of both employed and unemployed individuals was amplified once the recession began. Unemployment status, Frasquilho et al., demonstrate, relates to several mental health disorders. Their findings show that mental health outcomes associated with unemployment can include a broad spectrum of changes psychological well-being or behavior, including increase in substances, such as tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs, as in the case of job-seekers in Germany, abuse of alcohol related to mortality in South Korea, in which incidence of alcohol-related deaths was found to be twenty times more likely with someone unemployed than someone working, increase in suicidal behaviors and death by suicide, both in Australia and Spain, increase in anxiety and depression in Iceland, and substance disorders, including driving under the influence of drugs, in Finland. They did not include a study specifically on Sweden, but their study did include some of Sweden’s Nordic neighbors, Finland and Iceland, and while this study did not focus specifically on self-identifying Muslims from the MENA region, it is likely that its implications are also relevant to people of a number nationalities, ethnic and religious background, including the population of interest.

There is a strong theoretical case, supported by responses from local experts that paid employment is generally beneficial in several ways. Yet it does seem that many asylum-seekers who lack the desired skillset for the Swedish labor market may find it

challenging in Sweden to enjoy employment and its benefits. Interviewee 1 said that Sweden has the lowest percentage of low-skilled jobs in the EU, and the highest number of asylum-seekers per capita in the EU (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Most immigrants move to live in one of Sweden's three biggest cities, Gothenburg, Malmö, or Stockholm. Interviewee 1 further stated that immigrants are doing worse in Malmö, as the unemployment rate in Malmö is higher, not only for immigrants to Sweden, but for everyone (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Local news source, Malmö stated that while the national average of unemployment is at 8.5 percent, the unemployment rate in Malmö is nearly twice that, at 15.3 percent ("Facts about Malmö Press," n.d.). This could be attributed to the fact that as Interviewee 1 and 5 conveyed, there are less low-skilled jobs in Malmö than in the other major Swedish cities.

Sweden's Labor Market

According to data from Wiesbrock (2011), in "The Integration of Immigrants in Sweden: A Model for the European Union?" the disparity between immigrants and native Swedes is high in a comparison of overall OSCE countries. Wiesbrock stated that from 1993 to 2003, the labor market participating gap in Sweden has widened. In the table below, Wiesbrock demonstrates that data from 2004-2005 demonstrated that the foreign-born living in Sweden are twice as likely to be unemployed than native-born Swedish (2011). The table compares Sweden to four other European countries who also have a significant foreign-born population.

According to data taken from other sources such as the OSCE, (2015) and Ekberg & Rooth, (2003) this discrepancy in employment rates between Swedish-born and foreign born people still remains today.

TABLE 1
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES OF THE NATIVE- AND FOREIGN-BORN POPULATIONS,
15-64 YEARS OLD, 2005/2004 AVERAGE¹⁰

	Native-born men	Foreign-born men	Ratio	Native-born women	Foreign-born women	Ratio
Denmark	4.2	11.0	2.6	5.1	11.4	2.2
Germany	10.5	17.9	1.7	9.9	15.8	1.6
Netherlands	3.6	11.1	3.1	4.4	10.1	2.3
Sweden	7.0	14.4	2.1	6.6	12.5	1.9
UK	6.9	5.8	0.8	3.8	7.2	1.9

Table 1 Unemployment [table from image file]

(Image borrowed from Wiesbrock, 2011, p. 58)

Sweden's Assessment of Foreign Education and Training

Many of the interviewees conveyed that in Sweden there is generally an issue with assessing the educational certificates of asylum-seekers. Interviewee 2 cited evaluative of credentials as often being a major hindrance to employment of asylum-

seekers. A recent example hen provided was the evaluation of diplomas of recently arrived Syrian refugees. Evaluation of merits is the responsibility of the employment office and is often a lengthy process, that can even take years (Personal interview, July 14, 2016). When Interviewee 4 and I discussed this issue, hen said that “the process is lengthy, but no one really knows why” (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Interviewee 2 contended that sometimes, by the time the credentials are evaluated, they may have become obsolete, causing one to lose a lot of time that could have been spent furthering previously attained skills and integrating and into the Swedish job market (Personal interview, July 14, 2016). Interviewee 3 contended that evaluation of qualifications more quickly is needed, so that what training the immigrant needs can be identified faster, so that in turn, he/she may begin paid employment in Sweden (Personal interview, July 19, 2016).

Language and Job Training

Interviewee 5 contended that historically, immigrants coming to Sweden were more highly educated than native Swedes (Personal interview, August 10, 2016). Ekberg and Rooth, in their article “Unemployment and Earnings for Second Generation Immigrants in Sweden. Ethnic Background and Parent Composition,” by analyzing a number of studies, have found that except for those born in Nordic countries, all immigrant groups to Sweden on average have more years of education than the native population (Ekberg & Rooth,2003). Interviewee 5 mentioned an example of what hen

referred to as “the intellectual elite” immigrants from Iran during the 1970s (Personal interview, August 10, 2016). Hen further stated that most of them were highly educated, and thus their children also became highly educated, and in general it has been observed that this group of immigrants has maintained a high level of education. Interviewee 5 said that they can see no differences between the native-born population with native-born parents, and the native-born population, with foreign-born parents, in regarding to educational level. Interviewee 5 said that for sure, educational level of parents of parents is very influential in regards to whether one will obtain a higher university education. Interviewee 5 believes that having a former education, as well as working-knowledge language are highly important for obtaining employment in Sweden, and that these three facets often go hand-in-hand. Hen said that learning enough Swedish to get a job gives the person opportunity to then advance further in Swedish once employed (Interviewee 5, Personal interview, August 10, 2016).

Interviewee 1 believes that other than employment, the biggest problem areas for integration of the population of interest are language and education, as “You almost always have to have 10 years of education and speaking Swedish in Sweden” (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Hen said it takes approximately 10 years to train or retrain an immigrant in Sweden (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Interviewee 4 greatly emphasized the importance of being able to speak Swedish. Hen said there tends to be a misconception that you do not need Swedish. Hen said however, here in Sweden, one definitely needs it—English is not enough. Unlike Swedish, however, English is a more globally used language, and hen pointed out that one of the differences between

immigrants moving to the UK and Sweden is that many people moving to the UK already speak English, whereas very few people coming to Sweden already speak Swedish (Interviewee 4, Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Interviewee 6 described the level of Swedish someone from the MENA region wishing to obtain employment in Sweden needed as nearly perfect. Hen made the point that on the other hand, someone of a European or American background, on the other hand may be accepted if even if they cannot speak Swedish, but speak good English (Personal interview, August 17, 2016).

Interviewee 3 said that for successful integration, there must be a good economy and education in the receiving country. In hen's view "If there is no education, you have nothing. To hen, both tolerance from the receiving society and the educational level of the society are key. When I inquired further what hen meant by education, since everyone in Sweden is educated, hen responded "Education for me, is the ability to not accept someone's opinions as it is, but to go further and do your own research, etc." Interviewee 3 made the point that hen does not mean that all the responsibility should not be placed on the receiving society; hen believes that immigrants should also make an effort to understand the society and integrate. However, hen feels that "Sweden basically puts everything on the shoulders of those looking for work" (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). While Interviewee 3 believes that employment is integral to integration, a big problem is, hen stated, that "If you don't know Swedish, you're out of luck" (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). In Interviewee 3's view, language is the foremost employment-related challenge to integration. Interviewee 3 does not believe Sweden is doing a sufficient job of teaching people Swedish.

Literacy level and educational background may impact asylum-seekers' ability to learn Swedish. As most jobs available in Sweden require highly-skilled workers, there tends to be a mismatch in educational and training background. Review of literature and interviews with local experts suggests that much of Syrians who are coming to Sweden are highly educated, whereas asylum-seekers coming from Afghanistan, for example, tend to have little or no education. Interviewee 4 believes that lack of previous education also negatively impacts people's ease of learning a new language, as asylum-seekers who have previously had an education typically learn Swedish more easily, than those who have not (Personal interview, July 28, 2016).

Sweden's Introductory Program

Emilsson believes that in recent years, humanitarian immigrants and their families have become the focus of Swedish integration policy (2014). In 2010, the Swedish Introduction Program was created. The Introduction Program is an individually-tailored program administered by the public employment service, consisting of settlement information, language courses, and job training. The idea of the program is to help immigrants (with Swedish residence) get into contact with employers, which in turn should help them get into the Swedish labor market more quickly, ultimately facilitating labor market integration (Emilsson, 2014). Emilsson describes Sweden as being "on the vanguard of labor market integration programs" (2014, p. 2) and lists some of the primary benefits including in Sweden's free unique provisions: Post-secondary education, municipal adult education, and Swedish for Immigrants (SFI).

While the responsibility of introduction of asylum-seekers now formally lies with the public employment service, prior to 2010, it was the responsibility of the municipalities. Among the reasoning provided by the interviewees, one explanation given for this decision was that there were issues with the responsibility laying solely within the municipalities, namely that there was a great amount of variation from municipality to municipality. According to Interviewee 4, some municipalities put a lot of resources into the introduction program, while others put little resources into it. The help and services one received was dependent on where one lived in Sweden, and the government wanted to make the services more consistent. Interviewee 4 conveyed that the Swedish government wanted to focus more on integration into the labor market, so they made the decision to shift the responsibility to the Swedish employment office Arbetsförmedlingen (Personal interview, July 28, 2016).

According to Interviewee 4, there is a push to get asylum-seekers who are qualified candidates into the labor market as quickly as possible. Hen stated that the Employment Agency, Arbetsförmedlingen, does a labor market prognosis twice a year, and then works to match those people with the types of jobs they are most qualified for and interested in (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). In practice, however, it appears that many people of certain national, ethnic, or religious backgrounds, particularly the population of interest, are not being well-matched with jobs.

Understanding the unemployment problem in Sweden can be a challenge, as the situation is a bit complicated. Sweden's employment rate is relatively low, around 8.5 percent, and data shows that there are many jobs available. Research suggests that the

primary challenge integrating immigrants into the labor market, and more specifically, getting asylum-seekers integrated into the labor market, is matching job-seekers with employers. According to Emilsson's research, the 2010 reforms have not brought significant improvements, and that since humanitarian immigrants still struggle, Sweden has tried to increase the number of labor immigrants (2014). In OECD's 2015 economic survey of Sweden, they state that while the labor market has performed well, with steady growth and development, their findings suggest that it is becoming more difficult to match vacant workers with jobs. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) attributes this to the changes in the labor force composition, which I understand to mean the people in Sweden who are seeking to enter the labor force. They note that while policies have been modified to raise participation of "the low-skilled and people with disabilities...the growing inflow of immigrants, particularly asylum seekers, creates more challenges for matching skills with firms' requirements," (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). As for the people in Sweden who have been unemployed for greater than one year, OECD data shows that low-skilled workers and immigrants are affected most (2015).

The Swedish Integration Policy that was to take effect from 2008-2010, included a number of areas for which the Swedish government stated they intended to work on. Among them were: Faster introduction for new arrivals, more entrepreneurs, better results and greater equality in school, better language skills and more adult education opportunities, effective anti-discrimination measures, development of urban districts with extensive social exclusion, and common basic values in a society characterized by

increasing diversity (Regeringskansliet, 2009). The overall focus of the strategy, they specified, was to increase labor market participation and improve performance in schools. This document also discussed other future changes that would take place, including shifting the responsibility of introduction measures from the municipalities to the state and the Swedish Public Employment Service working with the new arrival to put together a personal introduction plan. The personal introduction plan, they stated, would be “based on the individual’s previous education and work experience and should always contain courses in the Swedish language, civic orientation and employment preparation activities” (Regeringskansliet, 2009, p. 1).

The Swedish Introduction Act was passed in December of 2010. It is an introduction program that lasts from 24 to 36 months for all immigrant newcomers who have received asylum and the families of those people (Regeringskansliet, December 2010). When immigrants participate in this program they receive an income, free language training, access to labor market programs. The first purpose of the Act is, according to the publication fact publication, “New Policy for the Introduction of Newly Arrived Immigrants in Sweden,” to underline the importance of rapid employment into the Swedish labor market. The second goal is to help move immigrants to where the jobs are. Their third stated goal is draw up individual action plans. The fourth goal is to provide individualized benefits to be introduced. The fifth component of the Act is to have mandatory civic orientation. The sixth and final part of the Act is to provide the newly introduced immigrant with an introduction guide. They also specify that only certain people are eligible to participate in the Introduction program. They state that “Only

certain people who immigrate to Sweden are covered by the Act and ordinances regulating the initiatives for newly arrived immigrants” (Regeringskansliet, December 2010, p. 4).

Interviewee 2 shared with me her notes from a 2014 training held at the Migration Agency, which she attended. These points stood out to me as important to include: 1) The Introduction Program lasts between 24-36 months; 2) The target group of the program is adult refugees and families registered less than one year 3) Only 30 percent of the participants employed after three years; 4) On average, it takes 7 years from residence in Sweden to employment; 5) In Sweden, there is a 25 percent lower employment of refugees; 6) Refugees have a 40 percent higher dependence on social benefits (Interviewee 2, Personal interview, July 14, 2016). The outcome of the Introduction program is much lower than I would expect after reviewing the Introduction Act of 2010 and the Integration Policy of 2009, however after talking with the expert interviewees, this data was not unsurprising.

A major challenge in regards to implementing the integration program is that when the government created the introduction program, they did not create the program with the intention of as many asylum-seekers becoming enrolled as there has been (Interviewee 5). Interviewee 1 said that ten years ago, there were about 10,000 people in this program, but since the huge asylum flows since 2006, when the Iraq War followed by Somalis and Afghans, and now Syrians, she estimates there are now around 100,000 people in this program. She further commented that Sweden did not expect this program

to be for so many people. Already in the first half of 2016, around 60,000 asylum-seekers received protection in Sweden (Interviewee 1, Personal interview, July 7, 2016).

Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)

The free Swedish language training classes, Swedish for Immigrants, (SFI) facet of the Swedish Introduction Program is administered by the individual municipalities. Emilsson (2014) specifies that all residents of Sweden who lack basic knowledge of the Swedish language are entitled to free SFI courses. Each municipality is responsible for administering SFI (Emilsson, 2014). He further notes that frequently, municipalities are too small to offer their own employment-specific courses, and that more specialized language programs are significantly more expensive. Consequently, there seems to be little incentive to each municipality to offer their residents this more specialized language training. Emilsson points out that the SFI courses are often criticized for being overly generic and most participants are enrolled in generic courses that make little difference to employment outcomes (2014). He contends though, that intensive language training specific to occupations do seem to yield better results (2014).

Interviewee 5 stated that the classes are typically divided based on the participants' levels of education and experience, which hen believes is beneficial to the participants (Personal interview, August 10, 2016). In Interviewee 6's comments on the SFI program, hen also mentioned that having the classes divided in such a manner is a good idea. An issue that often arises that hen pointed out however, is that there are constantly new-comers added to the classes, as well as people who leave the classes, with

the unfortunate result often being that the entire class must begin from the beginning once again. Hen further stated that the classes are not practical for some people, as some people do not learn a language well sitting in a language class (Personal interview, August 17, 2016). Interviewee 1 emphasized that it is a very expensive program and that it has been proven that it takes longer than two years to retrain people. While hen contends it is not working well as what the politicians want, hen believes it would be much worse without this program (Personal interview, July 7, 2016).

As all the expert interviewees made clear, speaking Swedish is eminent for obtaining a job in Sweden and a very important component for the integration process. Both review of the literature and information yielded from the interviewees strongly suggest that very often once the immigrant obtains employment in Sweden, he/she can learn Swedish much more quickly. The problem is however, that speaking Swedish is generally a requirement before gaining employment in Sweden. The interviewees have also emphasized that speaking some Swedish is typically not enough—there is an expectation of fluency or near language fluency before consideration of employment. As fluency in the Swedish language in Sweden is a general precursor for employment, it is evident that Swedish language competency is essential for employment, and integration. Yet a major obstacle many immigrants, especially asylum-seekers coming to Sweden face, is that the clear majority of them do not speak any Swedish prior to their arrival to Sweden, and it takes quite a long time to gain fluency in the Swedish language, and even sometimes a long time before one can even register to begin SFI courses.

Housing

Besides employment, language, and job training, having stable housing is arguably the next most important component to integration, and for well-being in general. Interviewee 4 stated that all asylum-seekers (who have received protection or are awaiting a decision) are offered public housing (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Previously there was very minimal assistance provided to denied asylum-seekers. However since June 1, 2016, any person who has applied for asylum and “has received a refusal of entry or expulsion order” is no longer entitled to any type of housing or financial assistance from the Swedish Migration Agency (“New laws in 2016 - Swedish Migration Agency,” 2016). Interviewee 4 also stated that asylum-seekers (who have not been denied) still currently have the option to arrange their own housing and choose where they would like to live. Often, they choose to live in one of the big cities, Gothenburg, Malmö, or Stockholm. Hen said often the asylum-seekers report to the migration authorities that they will arrange their own housing, but in the context of Malmö, as well as the other main cities, due to the housing shortage, once they arrive, many people are finding themselves without stable housing. Once one becomes a resident of Malmö though, the responsibility becomes the city’s, placing a great amount of pressure on Malmö. With the vast number of people who came last year, the migration authorities are saying they simply do not have enough housing. If all of the asylum-seekers who have arranged their own housing needed the housing authority to provide them housing, the system would collapse, Interviewee 4 stated (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Hen also mentioned that previously, municipalities could report how many

asylum-seekers they can receive, however too many municipalities were reporting that they could not take any. The ones who did not want to take asylum-seekers tended to have the more anti-immigrant political wings, whereas the more liberal municipalities were “bearing the brunt of Sweden’s asylum politics” (Personal interview, July 28, 2016).

Interviewee 1 stated that the situation is so grim that many asylum-seekers have nowhere to live and no income, so they cannot buy anything. “No one knows how to solve this...unlike in the U.S. where it you sink or swim, here, it is the responsibility of the society to fix these things for the people and we have always managed to do that, but now no one knows” (Interviewee 1, Personal interview, July 7, 2016). He raised the question, “Where do we find apartments for these people, because there are no apartments? (Interviewee 1, Personal interview, July 7, 2016). There are tens of thousands of people living in reception centers, who have even received Swedish residence because they have nowhere to go,” (Interviewee 1, Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Interviewee 1 also stated that because there were so many asylum-seekers who recently arrived, any locations that can be used to house them in Sweden are being used, including abandoned schools and other buildings, etc. (Interviewee 1, Personal interview, July 7, 2016). A fact that is important to note is that once an asylum-seeker receives a positive decision (receives some form of protection) in Sweden, this also means that he/she gets Swedish residence. Swedish residence is another important factor for being able to obtain stable housing, in addition to gaining access to the Swedish labor market.

Interviewee 1 (Personal interview, July 7, 2016) described a major difference between the recent wave of immigration and the many immigrants who came in the 1990s, as being that in the 1990s, when Sweden took in what he estimated was around 100,000 Bosnians, is that even though the labor market was doing poorly, and in spite of the economic situation caused by the acute financial crisis in the 1990s, and the deep recession that followed, (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2015). Interviewee 1 said that at that time, unlike the current situation, there was not a housing shortage. He stated that finding housing for this group of asylum-seekers was quite easy, but now it is a major challenge. He further stated that now asylum-seekers live all over Sweden, from the biggest city to the smallest town (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Because finding available housing has been so challenging, in some places they are even housing asylum-seekers in abandoned buildings. One example that Interviewee 2 provided of this situation was that there was an organization utilizing an abandoned building in Malmö to house asylum-seekers, but they were shut down with the reason given that the building did not comply with fire safety regulations. Interviewee 2 stated that there is some skepticism about the motivation behind shutting this down (Personal interview, July 14, 2016).

Interviewee 4 believes there is also a lot of responsibility on the municipalities, especially the more liberal ones, and some municipalities have received more asylum-seekers than they can handle. (Interviewee 4, Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Interviewee 4 further noted that previously, Sweden had a very generous policy, but after taking in more asylum-seekers than any other country in the EU per capita, they were

quite close to a system collapse, and as such have had to make some policy changes, such as the rent laws passed in March and July 2016. Interviewee 4 further conveyed that these changes are quite controversial, and many people are not happy about these new policies in Sweden. While this thesis does not involve a discourse analysis, it may be worth noting certain word usages of the interviewees. Interviewee 4, in her description of Sweden's situation after the huge wave of asylum seekers, described it as a near "system collapse" (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). In my interview with Interviewee 5, when discussing Sweden's very difficult situation after receiving so many asylum-seekers, I told Interviewee 5 it sounded like Sweden was very close to a system-collapse. She chuckled at my word usage and said that while it was indeed challenging, and in fact there was an instance in which the Migration Agency hired 70 employees in one day, due to being overwhelmed, the use of the phrase "system collapse" is something the Sweden Democrats first used to describe the situation. She stated that while the Swedish system was strained, the reality was that they were never close to an actual "system collapse."

Residential Integration

In regards to housing, a facet that should not be overlooked is residential integration. After obtaining stable housing, Interviewee 5 places residential integration as the next important component. She contended that stable housing and residential integration are connected to labor market integration and that it plays a crucial role in overall integration. "If you have a job and an income, then you can also move to a better neighborhood, and so on," she said (Interviewee 5, Personal interview, August 10, 2016).

Over the last ten years, Interviewee 5 said hen has observed deregulation in the Malmö housing market. For example, before, there were rules on how much the owners of the house could charge for rent. On the one hand, there was the market value, and on the other hand you had these regulations. As Swedish citizens, hen and hen's family observed this change first-hand, as their personal rent was adjusted to the market value, which translated to their rent increasing. Hen observed that this change occurred prior to 2010. This is relevant to asylum-seekers, as it influences their living mobility.

Interviewee 5 stated that if one looks at Rosengård, (a city district in Malmö that is well-known for having many foreign-born people living there, as well as a high crime) for example, what one does not see in the news is that much of the population in Rosengård changes rapidly. When one arrives in Sweden as an asylum-seeker, they get an apartment one area in Rosengård, then after time one gets a job and moves inside Rosengård, then after time they move outside Rosengård. Hen said in the same way one has a career in the labor market, they also have a "career in the residential market." Hen further stated that the same goes for Swedes, but the problem is that if one stays in certain areas, (bad neighborhoods that consist of predominantly asylum-seekers and have high crime and poverty rates) they can get stuck and in hen's view, locked into the areas. Over the previous month before our interview in July 2016, were a number of incidents of burning cars in Rosengård and some surrounding areas, and hen believes this is a "meshement" of the frustration of people who feel they are locked in...they can't go anywhere...they don't have any money...they just..." He said often it is the youth who do this (burn cars or other forms of arson). Hen attributes it to factors such as parents not having a job,

having traumas from wars, and other factors, saying that it is quite a difficult situation. (Interviewee 5, Personal interview, August 10, 2016). Regarding the reasoning for burning cars, the interviewees tended to express views similar to Interviewee 5. The motivation named by the interviewees seemed slightly puzzling after reviewing the benefits that youth (unaccompanied or accompanied minors) aged eighteen or under receive upon being offered asylum, including a living stipend, free education, free Swedish language training, as well as a self-selected advisor to help give them advice and assistance. More research on the motivation behind such acts of arson could provide more concrete insight as to what the primary motivations of these acts are. When mentioning car burnings, both Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 5 attributed the motivation to immigrant frustration and feelings of marginalization (Personal interviews, July 7 & August 10, 2016). Fredlund-Blomst points out that living in segregated areas in itself, is not necessarily problematic, as living in an immigrant enclave when one first arrives may offer support to new arrivals who are not yet acclimated to the new country (2014). Problems can arise however, when these areas are not transitional, that is, as Interviewee 5 has contended, if multiple generations of immigrants feel they have no choice but to stay in them.

CHAPTER SIX—OTHER FACTORS INFLUENCING INTEGRATION

Reason for Immigrating

Research indicates that reason for immigrating can also play a role in ease of integration. All the interviewees pointed out to me during the interviews, that immigrants are not a monolithic group and that the motivation for immigrating to Sweden is an important factor to consider. While their education level plays an important role in likelihood of integration, Interviewee 1 believes it more important why a person immigrates to a country than their education level. He said that if a refugee and labor immigrant have the same education level, it always goes better for a labor immigrant than for a refugee (Interviewee 1, Personal interview, July 7, 2016). Often, when someone who falls under the category of a labor immigrant comes to Sweden, he/she is immigrating here to fill a specific job. Refugees and other categories of asylum-seekers on the other hand, who are immigrating to Sweden because they are fleeing a conflict, are less likely to come to Sweden already possessing the specific skills necessary to meet the needs of the Swedish job market. Interviewee 5 mentioned an interesting phenomenon he has noticed at least before 2015, which he referred to as “track changes” (Interviewee 5, 2016). Some people seeking asylum in Sweden, upon arrival to Sweden realized that the process to get asylum was quite long, and through varied connections, obtained a job and thus a work permit. This allowed them to change from being an asylum-seeker to being a

labor immigrant. When some people's job positions ended, if they had no other resources, they would then apply for asylum again. Hen said hen does not know what the situation is like currently, but in the previous few years, this is what hen has observed. "If one has [legal] work here in Sweden, then they can also invest in their future, integrate, and so on," Interviewee 5 stated (Personal interview, August 10, 2016).

Human capital is absolutely important, but an additional important facet, is the reason a person immigrates to a country, as this has an important impact on integration. Interviewee 1 stated this has been demonstrated in their research, though it is difficult to say why—hen attributed it to possibly being related to trauma, health problems, etc., but mostly, hen, as well as Interviewee 5, conveyed that is a difference between not moving to something, but moving away from something. Hen stated that asylum-seekers, when they have a previous education, often have an education that is not adapted to the Swedish labor market. For example, most economic immigrants are computer specialists or civil engineers, which they can use in Sweden. If one comes here as a refugee however, and are a doctor or a lawyer, for example, often Sweden cannot accept these credentials (Interviewee 1, Personal interview, July 7, 2016). From Interviewee 6's many years of experience, hen strongly believes that where the education is obtained has an impact as well. Interviewee 6 contended that there is discrimination, including employment discrimination of the population of interest, but that of the population of interest, those with a certificate or diploma confirming they have received their education or training in a European country, as opposed to those who have received it in the MENA region, have a higher likelihood of their training being respected and seen as qualifying

for jobs in the Swedish labor market (Personal interview, August 17, 2016). While other interviewees did not make this same point, most of their comments, as well as the information yielded from the literature review, overall seem to support Interviewee 6's viewpoint on this topic.

Identity

Research suggests that identity plays a role in integration, and it illustrates that identity is affected greatly by paid employment. While over the last decade or more, the policy focus in Sweden has primarily centered only on improving labor market integration in regards to the labor market, Interviewee 1 pointed out that last year (2015) during what many refer to as the refugee crisis, newer concerns about culture and values began to be raised (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). One needs to only access a couple media sources to see that even a few years prior to the refugee crisis in 2015, the topics of religion, values, and cultural, were already growing concerns. Similar to Interviewee 1, Interviewee 5 also contended that integration into the labor market is crucial for integration, but that there is more to it than just integration into the labor market. Hen contended that identity-related issues are also very important, and should not be ignored (Personal interview, August 10, 2016).

Interviewee 3 stated that hen finds identity to be an important factor in integration. Hen believes one must know who he/she is and one's background, while simultaneously feeling he/she is part of society. Hen mentioned the lack of integration of many people from MENA who immigrated to France during the 1970's. Many were poor and not part of society, and proper integration did not occur. Hen called to this as a

“failure of integration” (Personal interview, July 19, 2016), and expressed concern about a similar situation occurring in Malmö, or other parts of Sweden.

In discussing key factors that influence social integration, Interviewee 5 mentioned the importance of social security, which hen describes as having family, relatives, and people. “You have to have a strong social network” (Interviewee 5, Personal interview, August 10, 2016). Individual-family, relatives, other people from same country or same city as you. This provides a sense of social security for the individual. On the other hand, hen contended, you must have connections, which consists of the social capital, the networks that are aimed towards getting job-seekers and employers paired. (Personal interview, August 10, 2016). However, most of the time when asylum-seekers arrive, they have little or none of that.

Research consistently demonstrates that employment plays a major role in constructions of one’s identity. In their article “Identity Continuity and Loss after Death, Divorce, and Job Loss, Self and Identity,” Papa and Lancaster (2016) draw associations among three different types of self-relevant losses: divorce, death of a loved one, and job loss. They found that each of these three losses affect the construal of one’s sense of self. Lancaster and Papa draw attention to numerous cases suggest that there is an association between threats to meaningful aspects of identity and adjustment problems and identity disruption (2016). They measured grief stemming from the three above mentioned self-relevant losses by employing and found that in regards to the non-bereavement, with job-loss and divorce, there was a very similar identity salience, disruption, and grief pattern. They found that job loss has plays an important role in identity, and that job-loss has a

significantly negative impact on one's identity (Lancaster & Papa, 2016). This is important to consider, since a significant portion of the population has come to Sweden from war-torn countries and are arriving here without jobs.

Discrimination

In discussing some of the challenges self-identifying Muslim asylum-seekers from the MENA region face vis-à-vis integration, one of the main issues that came up is discrimination. Lemaître (2007) suggests there is substantial evidence to show that there is discrimination of persons in Sweden with a foreign background. He states that “Studies of persons with an immigrant background born in Sweden, who presumably do not have language deficiencies, show less favourable outcomes than for persons with similar characteristics born to native-born Swedes,” and says the evidence does overall point to discrimination problems (Lemaître, 2007, p. 5).

The discrimination of the population of interest seems to be related to at least two different facets of identity, both due to being from the MENA region, as well as being Muslim, or at the least, being perceived as Muslim. For successful integration, Interviewee 5 believes there must be a majority population that does not discriminate, and the majority of the population wants to have immigrants in the country, then there will be no problem, but the other way around would make problems, and that means the immigrants have no chance to get integrated into the society. Interviewee 5 stated that “Today you can observe a negative sentiment towards immigrants, which is very different from just five years ago” (Personal interview, August 10, 2016). Hen believes

that those with negative attitudes towards immigrants in Sweden are the ones who more or less feel threatened, such as being right at the bottom of the labor market, or just outside the labor market. Hen posits that perhaps they feel that the people are coming to take their job, or increase competition for jobs. In thinking about the challenge this situation presents to the integration process on the part of the asylum-seeker, hen further stated “If you go on the street and feel threatened, there are going to be problems integrating” (Personal interview, August 10, 2016). Sometimes discrimination is difficult to measure. Certain areas of discrimination, such as employment discrimination can be measured and documented. More on employment discrimination will be discussed in a following section.

When I asked Interviewee 3 if being from the MENA region and being a self-identifying Muslim presents any challenges vis-à-vis integration of this group, Interviewee 3 said that while hen does not cause any real challenges in Sweden, “Looking like an Arab may mean you can’t get into a pub here,” (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). Overall, Interviewee 3 conveyed that people in Sweden are quite tolerant. Interviewee 3 stated that hen believes the biggest challenge to integration of the population interest is how they are portrayed in the media, that Muslims are portrayed as “all terrorists” or “intolerant.” Interviewee 3 further commented that hen believes that with Muslims, just like atheists, Christians, Jews, and people of all faiths and non-faiths, you will find people on all ends of the spectrum, good and bad, tolerant, and intolerant (Personal interview, July 19, 2016). Interviewee 2 also found that being from the MENA region or being a self-identifying Muslim were to some degree hindrances to integration.

However, hen said there could be prejudice against Islam (and those perceived as being Muslim) (Personal interview, July 14, 2016). Rather than being Muslim or from the MENA region literally causing difficulties in integration, it seems that perhaps what is largely occurring is a negative perception of this group based on that they are perceived as Muslim or because of they are from the MENA region.

Interviewee 1 believes that for sure this population has much more difficulty in integrating than other immigrant groups (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). When examining the statistics, there are a lot of variability in regards to success of integration into Sweden. Some groups, including groups who are self-identifying Muslims are integrating better than others, but why is difficult to pinpoint. Interviewee 1 said that hen has observed that for the last year, since the refugee crisis, other issues have risen as well—issues such as culture and values such as gender equality and religious fundamentalism. Hen further commented that these are quite new topics that have not been important in the past, but now are becoming a concern, such as harassment of young girls at music festivals by unaccompanied minors. Interviewee 1 stated that there are almost no programs about culture, religion, or gender equality, as this is a relatively new concern (Personal interview, July 7, 2016).

Interviewee 6 blatantly stated that “Being a Muslim is definitely a problem—it doesn’t have to be, but it is,” (Personal interview, August 17, 2016). Hen believes that in general, higher religiosity, regardless of what religion is viewed negatively in Sweden. Hen conveyed that despite Sweden’s Christian Lutheran heritage, in current times, even Christianity is often not viewed positively. Interviewee 6 strongly believes that being

Muslim makes integration especially more difficult, though. Hen contended that it is not necessarily because the person is Muslim, but largely due to the perception of Islam, which hen has observed to be quite negative. Interviewee 6 believes that the majority of Swedes have a negative perception of religion, but when I inquired about feelings in Sweden towards religions other than Islam, or Christianity, such as Buddhism, for example, hen added that for sure, certain religions are viewed in Sweden more negatively than others, Islam in particular. Hen attributes this to public perception. Hen said that although there are some Buddhists who commit terrible acts, such as the Buddhists committing human rights atrocities against the Muslims in Burma/Myanmar, hen believes Buddhism is generally viewed as a peaceful religion by Swedes; Muslims on the other hand, are rarely portrayed as peaceful, on the other hand, and women are often portrayed as oppressed (Personal interview, August 17, 2016).

Even for the asylum-seekers who are not Muslim, both Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 2 pointed out that there is a common misperception in Sweden that all immigrants coming from these areas are Muslim, and thus the sometimes negative perceptions associated with Muslims are often transferred to a broader population of immigrants. When I asked if there was discrimination in Sweden, Interviewee 1 stated that according to opinion polls, there is little racism, however when hen has talked with immigrant groups, he said they have reported there to be quite a bit of racism. Hen mentioned that tests conducted to measure employment discrimination in Sweden of applications with same merits and different names have revealed that there is some

discrimination in hiring, however he believes this is occurring less frequently in Sweden than in most countries who have used a similar test (Personal interview, July 7, 2016).

Employment Discrimination

Prior to conducting longitudinal surveys, Åslund and Rooth believed that the terrorist attacks in the United States of America, on September 11, 2001, may have changed attitudes towards certain minorities in Sweden, and they hypothesized that the attitudinal change may translate to an increase in Labor Market Discrimination. In their article “Shifts in Attitudes and Labor Market Discrimination: Swedish experiences after 9-11,” they present longitudinal survey data that shows that despite what they state as “evidence of an attitudinal shift” in Sweden, their data collected during this study gives no support for increased labor market discrimination after 9-11 (Åslund & Rooth, 2005, p. 604). However, in a later study, “Evidence of Ethnic Discrimination in the Swedish Labor Market using Experiential Data,” which is discussed below, they did find that employment discrimination towards certain minorities in Sweden, namely those perceived to be Muslim or from the MENA region, had become a problem.

There have been many articles published that show that in general, foreign born people living in Sweden have a significantly lower employment rate than native Swedes. In 2014, the unemployment rate was 6.8 percent for Swedes, and measured at 16.6 percent for foreign born people living in Sweden (OECD, 2015). Much research also illustrates that there Muslims are more likely to be unemployed than non-Muslims. Connor and Koenig’s findings support this idea. In their (2015) article “Explaining the

Muslim Employment Gap in Western Europe: Individual-level Effects and Ethno-Religious Penalties,” Connor and Koenig contend that in Western Europe, it is well-documented that Muslims experience economic disadvantages in Europe and that Muslims are less likely to be employed than non-Muslims (2015). After analysis of data from sources including the European Social Survey their conclusion is that “Perceptions of discrimination jointly account for about 40% of the employment variance between Muslims and non-Muslims” (Connor & Koenig, 2015, p. 191).

When I inquired about the condition of the job market in Sweden, Interviewee 5 said that in Sweden there are jobs available, but the problem is how the employer interprets the immigrants’ competence. Hen also mentioned that job demand plays an important role. In cases where there is a high demand for workers, such as elderly care, hen stated that it is easier to get a job, as the employers lower their standards since they need employees. However, concerning jobs where there is a lower demand for labor, the employers can pick and choose who they want (Interviewee 5, Personal interview, August 10, 2016). Interviewee 5 contended that when they do that, they often stereotype immigrants, especially from the Middle East as people with lower education, lower competence, and lower productivity (Personal interview, August 10, 2016), leading to overall lower employment of people categorized as such. Hen told me about a research experiment of Dan-Olof Rooth’s, in which Rooth conducted correspondence testing, by creating two CVs that are identical except for the name, in which some names were Swedish-sounding names, whereas other were Middle-Eastern-sounding names, and then submitting them to employers. Interviewee 5 stated that the experiment results showed a

significant difference in hiring rate. In their article, “Evidence of Ethnic Discrimination in the Swedish Labor Market Using Experiential Data,” Carlsson and Rooth convey that their experiment provides evidence strongly suggesting that there is evidence of discriminatory behavior among Swedish employers (2007). Their longitudinal findings show that there is evidence of negative attitudes towards immigrants. They additionally state that “These studies indicate that discrimination is worst against individuals with a Middle Eastern background” (Carlsson & Rooth 2007, p. 717). The results of Carlsson and Rooth’s experiment showed that despite when applicants have identical skills and qualifications, the applicants with Swedish sounding names would receive 50% more callbacks than the applicants with Middle-Eastern sounding names (Carlsson & Rooth, 2007).

There have been cases in Sweden in which there has been reason to believe an employer discriminated against an employee because of her/his religion or culture. Interviewee 2 described a case from a few years ago, in which a Muslim man, during an internship through the employment office, at a factory, refused to shake hands with his female boss. The employment office drew back his benefits and he was refused continued employment after the internship was over. Interviewee 2 stated that the man argued that he was refused continued employment because he had refused to shake hands with his female boss, while his boss argued that that was not the case (Personal interview, interview, July 14, 2016). He took the employment office to court and the man lost this case. Interviewee 2 also spoke of another, more recent case from 2015, in which a man who was elected to a political party, the Green Party in Sweden, refused to shake hands

with a woman, and this has become a bit of a heated topic in Sweden (Personal interview, interview, July 14, 2016). Interviewee 6 also mentioned this case, and found this issue to be erroneous, partly because he said that it has been well-known that for years, this man has not shaken hands with women, and has not been an issue, and now suddenly it is. This topic has gained attention, and there is a growing debate about whether an employer can dismiss an employee if he refuses to shake hands with a woman (Personal interview, interview, August 17, 2016). In some cultures, handshakes are a cultural norm, whereas in other areas handshakes are not typical. According to Interviewee 2, handshakes in Sweden, as well as throughout much of Europe, are not nearly as common as in some countries such as the United States, for example (Personal interview, interview, July 14, 2016).

Interviewee 6 said they have hang-ups here in Sweden on what they think you should be like to be integrated. He believes that unfortunately, it does not necessarily matter how much one wants to integrate; if he/she does not have a job, speak the language, and adapt to all the strange cultural rules that apply. Interviewee 6 stated “If you do not get a job, study Swedish to perfection, or find housing in areas other than where people of a background like you live, then you are not considered to be integrated...it doesn't matter if you want to become integrated...we won't let you if you don't apply to some of our rules, and the rules might be stupid” (Interviewee 6, Personal interview, August 17, 2016). He said it does not matter if you eat pork or not—there are plenty of Swedish people who do not eat pork, or do not eat meat at all, but it becomes a huge thing, especially for people from the MENA region that if one does not eat pork or

shake hands, etc., then you are not integrated. It is a very strange way of looking at integration. (Personal interview, August 17, 2016)

The importance of tolerance and respect, on the part of both those immigrating to Sweden, and on the part of the receiving society, were mentioned by all five interviewees, as being critical to integration and overall societal well-being. Interviewee 3 contended that people should try to understand where others are coming from, who they are, and an understanding of their culture. Hen stated that “If no one knows anything about the ‘other,’ then they will always remain the ‘other’, leading to misunderstandings and clashes (Personal interview, July 19, 2016).

CHAPTER SEVEN—GENDER AND WOMEN’S EMPLOYMENT

As mentioned earlier, the interviewees seemed to refrain to some degree, from discussing topics such as culture, gender, religion, or gender. In the interview with Interviewee 1, hen commented that talking about topics such as religion and gender attitudes in Sweden, are sensitive topics to discuss in Sweden, though hen did not explain why. Hen also speculates that while there has been little research on this, perhaps lower religiosity could attribute to ease of integration into Sweden. For example, in hen’s research hen has noticed that women from a more secular country, such as Iran, seem to integrate better into the Swedish labor force than most women from more religious countries, such as Afghanistan or Somalia (Interviewee 1, Personal interview, July 7, 2016). One should take care to not draw broad conclusions from one, or even a few interviews, however. None of the other experts interviewed made similar statements, however it did seem they thought that religion, particularly Islam, seemed to in some way serve as a barrier to integration, whether it is because of the something(s) within the religion itself, or because of the perception of Islam or Muslims.

It does seem there are some challenges in regards to women’s employment in Sweden, though understanding exactly why is a challenge. Perhaps it is due to oppression of women due to adherence to Islam, or perhaps is more closely attributed to the work culture of the immigrants’ homeland. Interviewee 1 said that many of the immigrants

come from countries where women are not supposed to work, so often they do not think of themselves as workers (Personal interview, July 7, 2016). While there are some cases in which men do not allow the women to work, hen believes that primarily what occurs in most cases is that the women have simply never seen themselves as income-earners and thus do not have the mindset that they should work. Hen finds this to be more common in Muslim groups from MENA than other regions. However, Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 4 made it clear that Sweden expects everyone (those who want residence in Sweden) to be ready for the labor market. If asylum-seekers are not working, then they are not supposed to receive welfare benefits (Personal interview, July 7, 2016 & Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Typically, when an asylum-seeker is enrolled in the Introduction Program, they get paid a living stipend.

Both Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 4 made the point that not all women who immigrate here want to work (Personal interview, July 7, 2016 & Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Interviewee 4 believes that unlike the native Swedish women, for many self-identifying Muslim asylum-seekers from MENA, employment is not so much tied to their well-being. In general, hen stipulated that it could also be worse because the men are expected to provide for the family (Interviewee 4, Personal interview, July 28, 2016). It is not possible to draw assumptions from a few interviews. Exploring the role the husband has in providing for his family, according to Islam, or according to different cultural traditions from countries in MENA, is something that can serve as a good topic for future exploration and could yield insightful and valuable findings.

Importance of Equality in Gender Employment in Swedish Society

Interviewee 4 strongly conveyed that in Swedish society, there is great emphasis on equality between men and women, including in the workforce (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). Indeed, Sweden has one of the highest employment rates in the entire OECD, and has maintained a high employment of women since the 1970s, when a vast number of women began joining the workforce. In 2013, the OECD recorded that Sweden had a 71.8% employment rate of women. Of all of the thirty-five OECD countries, Sweden's high employment rate of women is surpassed by just Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013). Because work is such an important part of Swedish culture and Swedish women's identity, it appears that employment would help facilitate better integration of women who are asylum-seekers (and who have been given asylum and Swedish residence) into Swedish society. It also is evident from talking with the experts in immigrant labor market integration and the immigrant employment experts that in Sweden, there is a lot of focus in getting more people into the labor market, women included.

Women's Rights According to Islam

As is stated in the first chapter of this thesis, Islam itself is not the focus of this study, and this thesis is in no way claiming to be an in-depth analysis of the beliefs in Islam. I believe however, that as the population concerns Muslims, and gender equality is

important in Sweden, it is valuable to take note of what some scholars have said about women in Islam, and examine how this may translate to their rights and employment in Sweden. It does seem there is a discrepancy in Sweden's idea of women's rights and how women's rights are perceived and applied among the population of interest. Interviewee 4 posited that it could be because Islam is a religion where women are oppressed (Personal interview, July 28, 2016). After talking with all the interviewees and living in Sweden for nearly half a year and conducting personal observation, it appears that many Swedes hold a view that Islam is overly conservative and oppressive of women. Here, I seek to look at the possibility that perception of rights of women and their status is simply different between most native Swedes and self-identifying Muslims from the MENA region, not necessarily lesser or greater in either society. As Rehman and Dziegielewski (2003) in "Women Who Choose Islam," the perception that women in Islam are oppressed is not uncommon. They contend that many Muslim women would debate this assumption, however. Citing a verse from the Qur'an, the holy book in Islam, "According to the Qur'an, the duties and responsibilities (moral or legal) of males and females, as well as the consequences (spiritual or legal) are considered the same for both men and women" (Rehman & Dziegielewski, 2003, as cited in Qur'an 49:14). They further assert that unlike in Christianity and Judaism in the story of Adam and Eve, in which woman is blamed for the fall of man, the Qur'an makes no such accusation. In their research, they have found that unlike in the Jewish Torah and the Christian Bible, according to the Qur'an, both Adam and Eve are to blame, and in one verse, (Qur'an 20:116-22), Adam alone is blamed. According to Rehman and Dziegielewski's (2003) findings, the rights of

men and women, according to the Qur'an, are similar. Rehman and Dziegielewski (2003) state that these rights include:

The right to own property; the right to work outside the home; the right to conduct business (they are not obligated to spend their wealth in order to maintain themselves or their families); the right to divorce; and the right to pursue higher religious or secular education. Women also have the right to be provided for by their partner, father, or brother(s). When Muslim women go out in public they are commanded to cover their hair, neck, and chest area (Qur'an 24:31). The word 'hijab' literally means 'to cover.' (Rehman & Dziegielewski, 2003 p.)

On an aside note, regarding Muslim women in Malmö covering many of the Muslim women in Malmö, as well as in other parts of Sweden can be seen wearing what can be referred to as a head-scarf or hijab, which covers/conceals the hair and covers part of a women's forehead. There are variations in how hijab is worn and whether it drapes down to cover the chest area. I believe this could be attributed to the combination of cultures, Muslim and Swedish, resulting in a sort of wardrobe cultural mix.

Perhaps unlike in Swedish culture, in Islam, while there is emphasis on women's rights, there seems to be less emphasis on gender equality and more emphasis on what the gender's roles are, and what Allah, according to Quranic text states that women are entitled to. I believe should to be devoted to this topic in a future study, as understanding the way Muslim women themselves perceive their status in Islam and as Muslims is important, and gaining a better understanding of this could lead to able to better facilitate their integration into Swedish society.

History in Brief of Women's Participation Swedish Labor Market

From the 1930s to the 1950s, Sweden experienced a great deal of economic expansion. It was relatively inexpensive for the state to compensate unemployed, sick, or injured workers. (Einhorn & Logue, 2010). Einhorn and Logue, in “Can Welfare States Be Sustained in a Global Economy? Lessons from Scandinavia,” stated that income ratios during for those pushed out of work, such as unemployed, were about 40 percent of market wages (2010). The welfare state model at that time also assumed the traditional workforce—men and unmarried women. Married women typically stayed home to take care of the children. In the 1960s and early 1970s, income replacement wages were increased to 70 to 80 percent of market wages for those temporarily out of work. Pensions for the elderly and disabled were also pushed up. The tax policy was then revamped (part of that being that taxes increased) to increase female participation in the labor force, and after-school daycare and high-quality children's care were added as new social services to “support the movement of housewives into paid employment” (Einhorn & Logue, 2010). As the cost of daycare, after-school care, and care for the elderly increased, higher taxes ensued.

There was a push for economic equality of men and women. This not only included emphasis on equal pay, but equal taxation as well. Einhorn and Logue further state that taxation changed from being on a family basis to being on an individual basis, thus even for married couples, each spouse would be taxed individually (2010). The increase in taxes helped to motivate the remaining housewives to gain employment. The goal, Einhorn and Logue conveyed, was to dramatically increase the effectiveness of the

cost of the welfare system in the case of an economic downturn, which is exactly what in the 1980s, during what is often referred to as the oil crisis. By the 1980s, female employment in Sweden had risen to 78 percent. While it has decreased slightly since then, Sweden still by far, has one of the highest employment rates of women in the OECD, and in Europe, recorded at 71.8 percent in 2013 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2013).

The sort of familial and cultural re-orientation necessary in the 1960s and 1970s for women to rapidly join the workforce still largely remains today. Einhorn and Logue contend that to facilitate that each spouse could work, there either needed to be “A fundamental change in gender roles in the family—men taking an equal role in child rearing and household chores—or a dramatic expansion in public social services to include the traditional care-giving roles of the housewife” (2010, p. 11). After conducting an analysis of literature, interviews with local experts, and personal observation while residing in the country, I find that for the vast majority of Swedish women, working is a central part of life. It also appears that their employment is partly facilitated by the extensive public social services, as well as greater equality in child-rearing and household chores, as opposed to most of the non-Scandic countries.

Psychological Trauma

While this was discussed in little detail, more than half of the interviewees, when discussing hindrances to integration, mentioned the issue of psychological trauma, namely Post-traumatic stress syndrome, PTSD. As there have been so many asylum-

seekers, especially in 2015, coming from areas of war, many of them may need some sort of psychological assistance, but there is a shortage of these services. There was minimal further discussion on this topic, but it is evident that this is an important issue that should be addressed. In addition to treating the economic needs of the asylum-seekers, it emotional issues should also be given attention. This paper does not go into more detail on mental health of asylum-seekers. However, I believe that a study committed to looking at the rates of psychological trauma of recently-arrived asylum-seekers and how to address their mental health needs, such as the studies that have been conducted in Denmark (Norredam, et al., 2011, on refugees of a number of nationalities in Denmark, or Kivling-Bowden & Sundbom, 2001, on refugees from former Yugoslavia, living in Sweden) is likely needed presently or in the very near future. Mental health issues and psychological trauma can negatively impact numerous aspects of life, likely making integration a much greater challenge.

Interconnection of the Main Components that Facilitate Integration

One of the challenges to integration that Interviewee 5 brought up, is the amount of time that many asylum-seekers wait to receive an asylum decision. Hen said it is challenging to be motivated to integrate, including learning Swedish, and so on. Hen contended that the longer one stays in this sort of limbo, the more difficult it is. Interviewee 5 stated that it is often very difficult for the individual to focus on anything but the decision. It is a difficult position and there is a lot of insecurity, hen conveyed. According to Interviewee 6, even waiting one year is considered a short amount of time

before receiving a decision. Hen said that typically it takes much longer (Personal interview, August 17, 2016). When an asylum-seeker is waiting for an asylum decision from the Swedish Migration Board, this means more than just time passing—it also means longer time without important facets of integration—employment, language and vocational training, and probably stable housing, as well. There is much research that shows that the longer one remains unemployed, the more difficult it is to integrate. Extensive review of the literature, coupled with interviews with six local experts, indicates that all the main aspects that help to facilitate integration are interconnected. If one learns the Swedish language, and has access to education, then their access to the labor market increases, which in turn leads to a better possibility to live in better neighborhoods (Interviewee 5) As Interviewee 5 has stated, it is largely difficult to separate the key factors and that influence integration and discuss them as distinct components, as there is a great deal of overlap and interconnection among these factors.

CHAPTER EIGHT—POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Policy Recommendations

Trying to integrate so many asylum-seekers of any origin presents challenges. Integrating the population of interest, as would likely be the case with any monolithic or non-monolithic population, presents particular challenges. Integration of people into Malmö, as well as the rest of Sweden who originate from the MENA region and self-identify as Muslim into Swedish society, research illustrates, is a major challenge, namely due to the sheer numbers, but also due to the general public perception of Muslims and people coming from the MENA region. However, as with any great challenge, there are always a number of steps that can be taken to try to reach the overarching goals, and formulate sustainable solutions. In this case, the primary goal is to facilitate integration of this population, which, ideally would benefit both the population seeking asylum and the host society of Sweden. Based on extensive review of the literature on the interrelated topics discussed throughout this thesis, combined with the interviews with local experts, I make some following policy recommendations below. However, before making policy recommendations, it should firstly be acknowledged that Regeringskansliet (the Swedish government) has already made a number of valuable policy changes and recommendations to support better integration of asylum-seekers, including to better facilitate their employment. If they apply what they stated they

intended to do, both in the Integration Policy (2009) and in the Introduction Policy (2010), I believe there would likely be no need for recommendations. However, what is written on paper and what happens in practice sometimes do not correspond as closely as policy-makers and others would hope. Further, as Interviewee 1 pointed out, these policies were created before what is frequently referred to as the refugee crisis of 2015, as well as before the Arab Revolution began in 2011, which is the year in which the number of asylum-seekers fleeing to Sweden from MENA began to increase more than in recent previous recent years. The policy recommendations I make are a combination of recommendations already made by the Swedish government and changes the expert interviewees voiced need to be made.

1. ***Better support for Swedish language learning***

- a. To increase positive results, the language learning programs need to be more hands-on.
- b. The SFI program needs to more targeted towards the needs of the individual.

2. ***Improved access to employment***

- a. It is apparent that there is a gap between employers and job-seekers. There needs to be more effort put into helping job-seeking asylum-seekers get in touch with employers who have work that fits the asylum-seekers' experience level
- b. As most of the jobs available in Sweden are high-skilled and many of the asylum-seekers in Sweden are considered to be low-skilled, creating more low-skilled jobs may help to fill this gap.

- c. Job training needs to be more personalized so as to better prepare the individual job-seeker for the job that they are seeking, as well as the job that they have a higher probability of obtaining.

3. *Cultural Understanding*

As evidence illustrates that true integration is a two-way process, increased cultural understanding, on both the parts of the asylum-seekers, as well as the host society, could help in a number of ways, lessening tensions that have arisen due to perceptions of culture or religion or that have come into fruition largely due to media reporting, ideally leading to greater tolerance and respect on the part of both the immigrants and the host society.

4. *Review of Certifications and Qualifications*

Among the issues mentioned by the local experts interviewed that asylum-seekers face are that the process of review of their certifications and qualifications takes a very long time. Increased efficiency of this process would likely greatly benefit this population, and get them into the labor market more quickly.

Limitations

There were a few limitations to this study. The first limitation is time. At two levels, time has been an obstacle. A graduate thesis such as this requires a certain amount

of time, to be approved by the Institutional Review Board; for the researcher to recruit qualified, available, and interested interviewees; to conduct interviews; and finally, to analyze the data. There was only a short window in which field research could be conducted, and that time-frame was during the summer. Unfortunately, in Sweden, summer is the time of vacations and enjoying the short time of sunshine Sweden gets. Thus, finding many experts who were available to participate in an interview was challenging. It would have been beneficial to obtain more interviews. I think that having a greater number of interviews would have given me more insight and it would have allowed me to observe more patterns in responses. As this thesis is a qualitative work however, I believe that quality is of greater importance than simply obtaining high numbers. Even though the participants seemed hesitant to discuss religion or criticize the structures in Sweden that have the responsibility of introducing, integrating, and many other important aspects needed by asylum-seekers coming to Sweden, I think they all gave me very valuable information. This thesis would not have been possible without their invaluable input. The expert interviewees remained engaged throughout the entire interviews and seemed quite enthused to provide answers to my questions, as well as provide additional comments. Further, even though the interviewee population was small, as is illustrated throughout the paper, there were a number of similar points made, as well as some counter-views, which I believe has been important to record and include in this work. The second research limitation was language. While some reports and policy papers are published in both Swedish and English, still much of the information cannot be found in English and is only available in Swedish. Fortunately, some of the academic

interviewees were kind enough to direct me to articles written on the topics of immigration and integration in Sweden, that were published also in English. Lastly, this research is focused on the country of Sweden, centers on the city of Malmö, and thus should not be assumed as being a complete representation of all of Sweden, or as being representative of other countries. For better understanding of the integration situation of the population of interest in Malmö, more research dedicated to delving more deeply into the numerous topics discussed throughout this thesis is recommended.

Reflection

In addition to both the timing as well as the short window given to conduct interviews, it did seem there could be other reasons for which getting interested participants was so difficult. Some of the organizations I invited for an interview were international organizations. Of the few organizations who did respond, most said they could not participate, and would not provide reasoning for why. However, one national organization, in their response to my invitation, stated that the issue they had with my research is that I am focusing on self-identifying Muslims. In spite of providing a clear explanation for why I am conducting this research and that this project in no way discriminates against Muslims asylum-seekers from the MENA region, nor strives to paint them as a monolithic group, because my project has within it a focus on a religious group, this organization stated clearly that they in no way wanted to participate. As for those who expressed an interest in participating, it became clear that for nearly all of

them, their anonymity was highly important, and that their participating was contingent on that their identity would not be revealed. There are a number of potential reasons this was the case; it may be because the topic of religion is included in my research, and Sweden is a very secular country, or perhaps because I asked questions about Swedish policy. This could potentially be a delicate topic to discuss, as perhaps criticism of the government may be frowned upon by the Swedish government. The third potential reason I offer is that it is plausible that the participants were concerned about their jobs. Criticizing one's employer or a partner organization may not be accepted positively, and could potentially result in negative retribution. It is impossible to know for sure, however, why so many people invited declined an interview, and why the participant interviewees showed such concern about their anonymity and confidentiality being kept—these are only personal reflections that may be of interest to the reader.

Benefits

It is the hope of this research to contribute to existing literature on this topic, and to bridge an array of already existing information that surrounds the multiple intersecting components of the research focus of this study, Examining Sweden's integration strategy of self-identifying Muslim asylum-seekers from the MENA region and identifying the primary factors needed to facilitate their integration into Swedish society.

This study strives to contribute to existing knowledge and understanding at two levels: a) at a theoretical level, it hopefully allows for a better understanding of the effects

of the immigration strategies Sweden has used in the past and evaluate the current integration strategy being used, through the eyes of local experts; b) at a practical level, increased understanding, coupled with identification of particular strengths and weaknesses to Sweden's integration strategy, can allow for the development of a number of recommendations to be used in future initiatives, so as to include the likelihood of increased success, which can serve to benefit both the asylum-seekers themselves and the whole of Swedish society.

Conclusion

The immense wave of asylum-seekers to many parts of Europe in 2015 had a significant impact on many countries. Sweden was among the countries asylum-seekers fled to, and received, per capita, more than any other country in the EU. Asylum-seekers often choose to live in one of the three major cities. Malmö, the southern-most and third-largest city in Sweden, has been chosen the chosen place to live by many of the recent asylum-seekers. Malmö, as well as the rest of Sweden are struggling to integrate all of the asylum-seekers. Officially, asylum-seekers cannot be integrated, as they are considered as people awaiting an asylum decision, or can be considered people who have applied for asylum and have been denied. Those who can be integrated, according to the literature and experts interviewed, are those who have been given some kind of asylum status, which also corresponds with having Swedish residence. Swedish residence is needed if an asylum-seeker want to have employment, take Swedish language and vocational

courses, and to find stable housing, thus residence is an important ingredient to the process of integration. Culture and religion were also mentioned by the interviewees, however they generally expressed opinions that cultural and religious differences are not necessarily an issue—rather, the perception and lack of tolerance are. Among what emerged from this research is that in Sweden, there are four main elements that assist in facilitation of integration, which were employment, proficiency in the Swedish language, stable housing, and education. The component most stated by the experts interviewed, to positively influence integration was employment. In Sweden, in regards to integration of asylum-seekers, labor market integration, and by default employment, is the primary focus of immigrant integration policy in Sweden. It is plausible that recent policy changes, however, will have a negative impact on integration of self-identifying asylum-seekers from the MENA region. The policy recommendations which the made in 2009 and 2010 which included the Integration Policy in 2009, and the Introduction Act of 2010 contained within them exceptional recommendations that should serve to help the country better facilitate integration of the population of interest. However, policy changes do unfortunately not always have the desired outcome, and the wave of asylum-seekers beginning in 2011, capsizing in 2015 and extending into 2016 had not yet begun during the time of those policy changes.

Only with time can the effects of the policy changes over the last several years be fully known. Until then, as the expert interviewees all mentioned, perhaps a way to assist in facilitating integration and most likely increase overall well-being for everyone in Sweden, is to apply to Golden Rule of doing unto others as you would want done unto

you, and to strive to live lives of tolerance and demonstrate respect for each other. Much change is needed in Sweden in order to better facilitate integration of the population of interest. In the meantime however, practicing tolerance and respect for the “other” may have the potential to promote greater well-being and well as integration, facilitating a more peaceful and coexistent society.

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BIOGRAPHY

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