



AALBORG UNIVERSITET

# **The Experience of Integration**

A qualitative study of integration into Danish society as narrated by  
Somali and Arab refugees and family reunified immigrants

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## **Abstract**

Integration in Denmark is currently a hot topic amongst politicians and the general public because of the increase of refugees that have come to Denmark during the last couple of years as well as the resulting family reunifications. The last time Denmark received a large number of refugees was during the 1990s, where the legal development as well as the media coverage resembled the current situation. This thesis investigates what influence this context had on the integration and experiences of the refugees and the people who had been family reunified during this period, and whether this knowledge can be used in relation to the integration of refugees and immigrants today. The approach taken to examine this is to conduct 11 qualitative interviews: with five men and six women of Arabic or Somali background, who had arrived primarily during the 1990s. Through an intersectional analysis of these interviews, it is found that having a job furthers integration of the individual, however it was also seen that there is unequal access to education or jobs depending on the educational background of the individual. The media representation of immigrants and ethnic minorities was also seen to be potentially damaging for integration as it shapes the attitudes of the Danish public and leads to discriminatory behavior towards people with an ethnic minority background. Positive social encounters are seen to impact integration positively, as they increase the social network and cultural understanding of the individual as well as ease the cultural adaptation necessary to function in a new cultural context. The discussion shows that recently introduced initiatives by the Danish government are likely to give better access for everybody to the labor market, though general access will still remain unequal. The media rhetoric seems largely unchanged and the spread of social media outlets have possibly even expanded the amount of negative portrayals and subsequent discrimination. On the other hand, social media has also meant a mobilization of the part of the Danish public that wish to enforce positive social encounters. In conclusion, there have been positive changes to the legal framework, even though the restrictions in general have increased on the area. However, the likelihood of both positive as well as negative social encounters between the Danish majority and the newcomers have increased in both cases.



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## 1. Introduction

In the last couple of years Denmark – like most of the countries in the western world – has experienced a rise in the amount of the asylum seekers coming to the country as a result of the highest number of refugees ever globally. The majority of the refugees applying for asylum in Denmark in 2015 and 2016 have come from Arabic countries like Syria and Afghanistan, as well as from African countries, primarily Eretria and Somalia (Bendixen, 2016). A large majority of the refugees have been granted asylum and, even though the number of applicants in 2016 has been significantly smaller than that in 2015, the Danish public has reacted with concern. The concern is largely focused on issues such as whether the Danish society will be able to handle the increase of foreigners in the country economically but also in terms of how the integration of these newcomers will succeed. In addition, the political rhetoric concerning refugees and immigrants, especially from parties like the Danish People’s Party, has become more overtly hostile, with politicians publicly stating that the purpose is not to integrate the newcomers, but rather send them back to their country of origin as quickly as possible, so as to avoid threats to the Danish culture (Henriksen, 2016). As a result, the present government has introduced initiatives and legislation that to an increasing degree is supposed to encourage, or pressure, the immigrant to quickly become self-supporting as well as having increased the demands for what is expected of their integration process.

But how do these circumstances affect the integration of those refugees who eventually end up remaining in Denmark and the family members that are reunified with them? This is a question that is probably best answered in retrospect given that integration is a process and consequently might be difficult to examine at this early stage. It might however be possible to learn something from history: the last time Denmark experienced an increase in asylum applications in this magnitude was during the 1990s and the reactions during this time were similar to today’s, both politically and publicly. It was during this period, in 1998, that the first legislation governing the area of integration was introduced to Danish law, which since then has been tightened significantly. Media representation of immigrants and Muslims were stereotypical portrayals and has been seen to affect the Danes’ perception of them in advance of actually meeting anyone (Kleist, 2006). Given the similarity of the situation now and in

the 1990s, the purpose of this thesis is consequently to find out how experiences within such a context impacts integration, but also to find out whether there are intersections that among refugees and immigrants influence what they experience and the coping strategies available to them. In order to investigate this, 11 interviews were conducted with refugees and family reunified immigrants who primarily came during the 1990s from Arabic countries or Somalia. Through an intersectional analysis of these interviews and a comparison of the findings with the current situation in Denmark, the thesis answers the following question:

How have the experiences in the Danish society of refugees and family reunified immigrants who arrived in the 1990s impacted their integration, and is there something to be learned from these experiences in regards to integration of refugees presently coming to Denmark?

To help answer this, three research questions have been posed. The first is how integration and immigration was approached legally in the 1990s and how has this developed until today, in 2016? Secondly, how is integration experienced by the refugees who arrived in Denmark in the 1990s, and what factors have had an impact on the integration and adaption to Danish society of the individuals? The third research question is whether there are specific things that can be pointed out as detrimental or advantageous for integration, which should be taken into consideration in relation to the current situation in Denmark?

## **1.1 Structure of the Thesis**

The first chapter in the thesis situates and contextualizes integration in Denmark as it was in the 1990s as well as some of the challenges researches have found to it. This is done by firstly outlining the development of policies on immigration and integration as well as the changes to the requirements for permanent residence and Danish citizenship, and next by looking at the context in terms of Danish public opinions towards immigration and how this is connected to Danish identity and media rhetoric. In the following chapter the methodological considerations for the thesis are outlined in regards to the abductive approach taken. The chapter outlines the structure and format of the interviews, the selection criteria for the participants, as well as an introduction of

the participants. Lastly, an introduction of the intersectional approach taken in the analysis is presented in this chapter. In the next chapter, a discussion of the definition of the concept of integration is found, as well as the theoretical framework for the thesis, drawing on John Berry's acculturation framework (1997) and Pierre Bourdieu's forms of capital (1986). Following this comes the analysis in which the findings from the interviews are presented. Three subsections are found in this chapter: first an analysis of how cultural capital impacts the participants' access to the labor market and citizenship; secondly the effect that the media has on the individual's acculturation process; and thirdly a section that analyses the impact social interaction has on acculturation as well as what role culture plays in this. On the basis of these findings, the next chapter moves onto a discussion linking the findings with the current situation in Denmark, in order to discuss if there are areas of improvement in relation to integration in Denmark today. Lastly, a summation and conclusion are made to the research questions posed in the above.

All transcripts of the interviews can be found as a PDF file on the attached USB stick in the back of the thesis. References to paragraphs in the transcripts are listed in the format of (participant, paragraph number). For example, (P1, 18). For convenience, the table of participants, which can also be found on page 23, is also available on the USB stick.

## 2. Situating Integration in Denmark

One of the most recurring arguments against taking in refugees during the current "refugee crisis" has been the accused inability of immigrants already in the country to integrate properly. If they have not yet been integrated into society, how should the newcomers succeed? What should be done about these foreigners? Can integration ever be successfully achieved with this new wave of refugees, now that it failed so miserably – at least according to the media and certain politicians - with those of the 1990s? The purpose of this chapter is to thoroughly situate and frame integration in the Danish context as it was in the 1990s (and to some extent up to today). What context did the participants who have been interviewed find themselves in when arriving in Denmark? To answer this question, the laws on immigration and integration from the 1990s will first be presented, as well as how they have evolved until now, so as to understand what legal requirements the participants were met with. However, legal requirements are not the only things that influence immigrants' experiences, but also circumstances tied to the population and media. The second part of this chapter therefore outlines, on the basis of previous research, what the participants would have faced in terms of public opinion. Having this as a background will help contextualize the experiences of the participants that are analyzed and discussed later in the thesis.

### 2.1 The Legal Framework

The following will outline the legal requirements and restrictions that are relevant in order to integrate into a Danish context. The first part focuses on the development of the laws on immigration, integration, as well as residence permits and outlines some of the changes there have been made. These are the rules that govern being able to live in Denmark as a foreigner, and, as will be seen, these have been tightened to an increasing degree over the years. The second part presents how the rules on acquiring Danish citizenship have changed. In contrast to the rules on the first part, citizenship is not something the refugee will *have* to go through, but it will mean an access to rights and duties on equal footing to Danes. As will be seen however, citizenship and the symbolic belonging to the Danish society have increasingly become something that has to be earned. Given many of the changes to the integration laws and on obtaining citizenship have been introduced after 2000, most of the participants in this study will not have

been affected by them. The discourse behind the changes would, however, still implicate them.

### **Laws on Immigration, Integration and Residence Permits**

The first actual law on integration in Denmark was The Integration Act of 1998, which became effective January 1, 1999. This was the first collective set of rules on the subject. The shift in policy towards more restrictiveness was a result of the increase in immigration that had happened during the 1980s and 1990s. Prior to this, legislation was far more lenient. In fact, the Danish Aliens Act of 1983 was considered to be one of the most liberal in the world (Ersbøll, 2010, p. 107). Before the mid-1980s, the immigrants that had come to Denmark had primarily been working migrants. Because of a restriction, the 'immigration stop' introduced in 1973, immigration had been relatively low from the mid-1970s until the mid-1980s. This changed by the middle of the 1980s, when immigration increased again as a result of family reunification. But it was the increase in the number of refugees that caused the numbers to rise rapidly (ibid. p. 109). The revisions to the Aliens Act in 1992 and 1994 were consequently reactions to this rise, where both revisions introduced lengthened waiting periods for permanent residence to its final length of three years in 1994 (Stokes-Dupass, 2015, p. 52).

The aim of the Integration Act of 1998, introduced by a Social Democrat government, was to strengthen integration by making immigrants and refugees contributing members of the Danish society on equal footing with Danish citizens by getting immigrants to be self-supporting as quickly as possible and to impart an understanding in them of the fundamental values and norms of Danish society (Stokes-Dupass, 2015, p. 44). More specifically, this meant that from this point onwards, the main responsibility for integration was placed with the municipalities, whereas before, it was at the hand of the Danish Refugee Council. The municipalities were also made responsible for housing, and newcomers were meant to be spread more evenly over the entire country (Ersbøll, 2010, p. 112). Furthermore, an integration program was introduced, laying down a plan befitting the individual's skills and abilities, which covered a Danish course as well as different types of options meant to qualify the individual and bring them closer to employment (ibid. p. 113). Lastly, under the Integration Act, an introduction aid was implemented, meaning that the immigrants received an amount of money lower than welfare benefit given to unemployed Danish

citizens, in the hope that it would be an incentive for the immigrants to find a job as quickly as possible. However, because it was questioned whether the introduction aid was in compliance with international anti-discrimination conventions, the scheme was abandoned in 2000 (ibid. p. 112).

Alongside the Integration Act of 1998, the Act on Teaching Danish as a Second Language for Adult Foreigners and Others and Language Centers were adopted, with the aim of targeting the individual's capabilities as best as possible, by increasing the amount of weekly education. A certificate for actively participating in the Danish course was given, which had become a condition for being granted permanent residence permit. Three tests could be taken, General Examination 1, 2 and 3 (Ersbøll, 2010, pp. 115-116). An amendment was also made to the Aliens Act in 1998 regarding residence permits, where it now distinguished between permanent and temporary residence permits. Furthermore, supplementary conditions like a proof of participating in the language course, as well as active participation in the integration program was added (ibid. p. 121).

In 2002, several revisions were made to the legislation with the aim of among other points limiting the number of immigrants additionally, strengthening the requirements for being self-supporting, improving integration and further labor market participation. This was done under a liberal government that had been elected in 2001. An amendment to the Integration Act was consequently made, so as to change the integration plan to an integration contract, which was meant to clarify what offers the immigrant could expect as part of the introduction program. At this point, the integration contract was still based on the individual's skills, background and needs, and contracted between the local council and the person in question. Written into the contract would also be the sanctions that could be applied for, such as suspension of introduction aid if the individual did not appear or refused to participate in the agreed upon activities (Ersbøll, 2010, p. 113). The requirement for being granted permanent residence was also strengthened in 2002 as a result of an amendment to the Aliens Act, where an examination of language proficiency was now added (ibid. p. 115). In addition, the residence requirement was then raised from three to seven years. It was also at this time that family reunification stopped being an entitlement, but instead was governed by various rules, for instance the 24 years rule, which requires both parties in a marriage to be older than 24 in order to be granted family reunification. The residence

requirement of seven years was however amended in 2003 and changed to five or three years depending on the level of integration (ibid. pp. 121-122). Further changes were made in regards to the language test, with the introduction of the Act on Danish Courses for Adult Aliens and Others in 2004. According to this act, the purpose of the language courses was to better equip and bring immigrants closer to the labor market, thus making them self-supporting. The Act meant the introduction of four new language tests at the language centers, which covered a larger span of language proficiency than previously (ibid. 116).

A new integration plan, A New Chance for Everybody, was launched in 2005, wherein emphasis was put on the importance of fundamental values like democracy and equality of sexes. Generally, foreigners were to be met with the same expectations and requirements as everybody else, but also that opportunities should be available to the same degree. This translated into a bill in 2006, amending both the Aliens Act and the Integration Act. In it, there was a move away from the individual-emphasized approach, as the individual integration contract was replaced with general contracts. Also, the immigrant would have to sign a Declaration on Integration and Active Citizenship, which had the purpose of making visible the Danish values, as well as signal that there was an expectation from the Danish society for the immigrant to integrate and become an equally contributing citizen (Ersbøll, 2010, p. 114). Also, in 2007 an act amending the Aliens Act led to the introduction of an exam, the integration test, to be a requirement for permanent residence, as well as an immigration test for people applying for family reunification (ibid. p. 124). The immigration test was supposed to be introduced in 2010, including a language test and questions about Danish culture and norms (ibid. p. 132). However, the immigration test was abolished in 2012, and is only a requirement today for religious workers (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2012). The integration test was created as an incentive for immigrants to seek employment. Consequently, the immigrant now would have to have had a full-time job for at least two years and six months, as well as have passed a Danish and English language test at the same level in order to acquire a permanent residence permit (Ersbøll, 2010, p. 127). Several language teachers criticized the level of the test, as it was argued to exclude those who, at the time arrival in Denmark, were illiterate in their own mother tongue from acquiring a permanent residence permit (ibid. p. 128).

In 2010, a point system was introduced as a requirement for immigrants gaining permanent residence. Now, the immigrant would have to gather 100 points in order to apply, which would be given on the basis of fulfillment of many of the same conditions as before: amongst others, four years of residence, passing a test in Danish 2, as well as having had fulltime employment for two and a half years out of three, and still being employed. These requirements counted for 70 of the 100 points. The rest would have to be gained through supplementary conditions, such as further education or work experience giving 15 points. The remaining 15 points would be gained through active citizenship<sup>1</sup>, either proven by work in volunteer organizations for a minimum of one year or in a new Active Citizenship Test (Justitsministeriet, 2010). By the end of 2011, a new left wing government came into power, with the Social Democrats at its lead, and changes were once again made to the rules regarding permanent residence, this time towards overall slightly easier requirements. Consequently, from July 2012, the requirements for permanent residence became five instead of four years of residence, however the condition of active citizenship was abolished, the language requirement was changed to Danish 1 and the employment requirement was changed to having been employed for at least three out of the last five years (Justitsministeriet, 2012).

In the last parliamentary election in June 2015, the Danish People's Party had a major increase in votes, which meant that the Liberal party once again came into power. This also impacted on legislation and the requirements for permanent residence was increased once again, returning to similar but harder requirements than prior to 2012. The major changes are that in order to achieve permanent residence, the immigrant will have to have lived six years in Denmark, pass a Danish 2 test, and have been employed fulltime for two and a half years out three, and still needs to be employed at the time of applying. In addition, there are four supplementary conditions, among others, the re-introduction of the active citizenship requirement, whereof at least two has to be fulfilled. If all four are achieved, permanent residence can be applied for after only four years (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2016). In addition to that, the government has also introduced a new educational scheme meant to bring the immigrant into the labor market more quickly and more efficiently. The integration basis education is an offer for refugees and family reunified immigrants that are meant to give the individual qualifications relevant for Danish society, so as to be ready to enter the labor market or

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<sup>1</sup> "Medborgerskab"

vocational training. The education lasts two years and encompasses a paid internship as well as schooling. It is meant to increase language skills as well as qualifications relevant for either entering the labor market directly afterwards or used as a stepping-stone for further education (Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet, 2016a). In relation to that, the integration program has been changed and targeted towards the achievement of all immigrants being in regular employment within a year (Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet, 2016b). Lastly, the new government has also introduced a new social welfare benefit called the Integration Benefit, which significantly cut the social security benefit paid to immigrants (Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet, 2015).

### **Laws on the Acquirement of Danish Citizenship**

It could be argued that the final step of being integrated in a nation is to have citizenship in that country. Having citizenship ensures that you are treated the same and have the same opportunities, rights and duties as other citizens in the country. For instance, it makes it easier to travel and return to the country and it also means you have the right to social security. Like the above laws regarding immigration more generally have been, the requirements for obtaining citizenship in Denmark have gradually been strengthened since the beginning of this millennium. At the beginning of the 1990s, having knowledge of the Danish language was the only requirement for being naturalized. The assessment of this happened through an informal interview with a local police officer, who subsequently would estimate whether the applicant was able to speak and understand Danish or not. However, after the Liberal and Conservative governments were formed in 2001, right-wing parties like the Danish People's Party called for a strengthening of the requirements, primarily because a reduction of naturalization was wanted. For the Minister of Integration, citizenship was seen as something to strive for and as an encouragement to adapt to society, rather than part of the integration process (Ersbøll, 2010, p. 133).

The first changes that were made to the naturalization process were in 2002, when it was decided to have only two bills of naturalization per year, in addition to the strengthened requirements for permanent residence as mentioned in the above (Ersbøll, 2010, p. 134). In 2005, the language requirement for naturalization was again raised, and in 2008 it was raised to the current level, which requires Danish level 3 (ibid.

p. 136). Perhaps the most controversial change came with the introduction of the citizenship test. The citizenship test was introduced in 2006 and implemented in 2007. The reason for introducing it was that, despite learning Danish in language schools and being tested on language skills, the immigrants were not tested on knowledge of Danish society, culture and history. The test consisted of 40 questions. Until 2008, these were picked from a pool of 200 questions that were made public, and 28 of the questions had to be answered correctly. However, because the success rate was very high, the Danish People's Party demanded it to be revised, and by the end of 2008, the changes became effective. Consequently, the questions were no longer available to the public and instead of 28, 32 questions had to be answered correctly. Furthermore, the duration of the test was changed from 60 to 45 minutes. The questions were based on a textbook covering Danish history from the Viking age up to present time, as well as knowledge on cultural customs, norms and the welfare system amongst other (ibid. p. 142f). After the first test, the completion rate had dropped significantly, from 97% passing rate to only 23,5%. Experts on history heavily criticized the test for inaccuracy. The following year the pass rate was at 42,1%, where a significant part had paid for preparatory classes in order to pass (ibid. p. 147). With the introduction of this test, there has been a clear shift towards more emphasis on culture in the integration strategies.

Like it was seen in relation to permanent residence, the left-wing government elected in 2011 made changes to the requirements for naturalization that to some degree were less strict. In 2013, an agreement was made which meant that the current citizenship test was replaced with another<sup>2</sup> differently formatted test with only 30 questions, out of which 22 had to be answered correctly to pass. This test was first used in June, 2014. The other conditions were changed so the applicant would have to have been self-supporting for two and a half years out of the previous five years, and have passed a test in Danish level 2 (Justitsministeriet, 2013). However, this law was only in place for a short time, as the current government in 2015 once again increased the requirements. Consequently, the changes mean that today, in order to apply for Danish citizenship, the immigrant will have to have passed a test in Danish level 3, unless the applicant has been self-supporting for 8,5 years out of the past 9 years. The general requirement for application is that the immigrant has been self-supporting for 4,5 years out of the past 5 years at least. The citizenship test returned to a format similar to that

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<sup>2</sup> From "indfødsretsprøve" to "statsborgerskabsprøve"

prior to 2014, consisting of 40 questions, of which 32 must be correct to pass. Lastly, the waiting period has been increased with 50% in case of criminality (Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet, 2015). Otherwise the requirements of a declaration of faith and loyalty, having a permanent residence permit, and having no debt to the public sector remains the same.

## **2.2 The Danish Public and the Perception of Immigrants**

As will be seen later from in theoretical discussion, an important part of integration and adaption is the society the immigrant comes to and what its perception and attitudes towards immigration are. In comparison to laws and regulation, this is more difficult to pinpoint precisely, but in the following it will be outlined what social context the immigrants arrive in, and what complications researchers have pointed out.

According to British sociologist Richard Jenkins, the Danes' perception of themselves is constructed as a socially and culturally homogenous people that have as their core values equality and sameness (Jenkins, 2012). This cultural homogeneity has been focused on, emphasized and solidified from political side, as well as through initiatives such as the Cultural Canon, established in 2005, which is meant as an introduction to the Danish cultural heritage (Kulturministeriet, 2006). Also a campaign like the Danish national dish, initiated by the Ministry of Food, was a solid attempt to clarify what 'Danish' entails and what it does not. Worth noticing is that all the eight contenders were based on pork, including the winning dish, consequently excluding Muslims – and vegetarians – from access to the identity. The problem with this constructed narrative of Danish cultural homogeneity is that it excludes immigrants or descendants of immigrants from ever completely belonging to the Danish majority. American Sociologist Nicole Stokes-DuPass has pointed out that, as she found through her study on what restraints there are on citizenship and who in fact is capable of becoming Danish, the construct of Danish identity is very narrow (2015). According to her, this stereotypical, but not actually defined construct of Danish identity and Danishness, enables the native Danes to refuse legitimization of immigrants' and ethnics' claims of Danishness and consequently also belonging to Denmark and the Danish majority. Also Jenkins has argued that a contributing factor to integration being perceived as a problem is this idea of Danish homogeneity as its perception collides and interferes with having to handle the diversity that necessarily is introduced by

immigrants. He furthermore points out that, in general, European and Western immigrants are not required to assimilate to the same degree as people from non-Western countries and are more quickly accepted by native Danes (Jenkins, 2011).

In 2004, Lise Togeby published a study comparing Danish public opinion on immigration from the mid-1980s to 2003 (2004). She found that the opinion towards immigration is more or less stable, with for instance about 40% being against further restrictions to immigrant reception with only minor variations. The variations that did happen to opinions to a large degree reflected when concrete events relating to integration happened and the media coverage intensified as a result. According to Togeby, changes in public attitudes are mainly reactions to what is interpreted politically as well as what is narrated in the media. Many other researchers have pointed to the impact that media have on public opinion, influencing legislation and how immigrants are perceived and met in daily life encounters with the majority population. Rikke Egea Jørgensen and Vibeke Søderhamn Bülow have argued this as well, saying that the media to a large extent shapes people's cultural understanding of foreigners, especially because it is from the media that most Danes obtain their knowledge of refugees and immigrants (Jørgensen & Bülow, 1999). They show how one negative story about a Somali man who was described as having exploited the Danish welfare benefits, came to be perceived as representative for all Somalis' behavior. The single individual's actions became symbolic for all immigrants. According to Jørgensen and Bülow, immigrants and refugees are consequently only spoken of in two ways: either as an economic liability or as cultural threat. Through an analysis of various news articles, Ulla Holm Fadel, Peter Hervik and Gitte Vestergaard found that a narrative has been established of Somalis as difficult – if not impossible – to integrate and fundamentally different than Danes. The media emphasizes the perceived differences, consequently resulting in grouping 'them' against 'us' (Fadel, Hervik, & Vestergaard, 1999).

However, it is not only the Somali ethnic minority that has had to put up with generalized and stereotyped media representation. In an extensive study of both newspaper articles as well as TV newscasts, Rikke Andreassen found that in general, minorities are treated as a homogenous mass without differentiation regardless of national, cultural and religious background. All minorities are categorized as Muslims, and there are furthermore no distinctions to be seen within Muslims. Andreassen found three stereotypes that align along intersecting categories: the suppressed Muslim

woman, the headscarf-wearing woman and the sexually aggressive minority male. Given that the individual migrant is not given a voice through interviews, for instance, they are only represented through these stereotypical images and their experiences are muted. The effect of this, Andreassen argues, has likely been anxiety among ethnic Danes, for instance for women in regards to ethnic men because in the framework of the one-sided narrative, the ethnic male is dangerous and women-suppressive (Andreassen, 2007). A similar, though less extensive study made in 2011, found that negative portrayal of Muslims still prevailed in media and was seen to solidify a stereotypical image of Muslims, and perhaps even contribute to hostile opinions towards Muslims and Islam (Jacobsen, Weibel, & Jensen, 2013).

This could perhaps be seen as especially true if considering the argument made by Marianne Holm Pedersen and Mikkel Rytter, namely that 9/11 changed the way Muslims were seen and approached politically and publicly (Rytter & Pedersen, 2014). According to Rytter and Pedersen, 9/11 connected terrorism with Islam, but the kind of Islam that is presented is only the radical version, adhered to by extremist Muslims. This one-dimensional representation of Islam is seen and represented as incompatible with democracy, and consequently, Muslim populations in the Western world have increasingly been perceived as potential internal enemies. As could also be seen in the above, it has led to an increasing securitization of the Danish state as a reaction to the perceived outside threat and, as a consequence, the perceived potential inside threat of Muslim terrorism. According to Rytter and Pedersen, this gradual process of securitization of the state has resulted in alienation and non-recognition regardless of what the immigrant attempts to do to prove that they do not pose a threat. Consequently, it has meant an increasing divide between the Muslim minority and the ethnic Danish majority in Denmark (Rytter & Pedersen, 2014). The reason for the increasingly strict legislation as well as the negative media coverage could be seen as being grounded in the predominant Danish perception of itself as a homogenous entity, as described in the above, that considers itself threatened by the either dangerous or parasitic newcomers. According to Danish anthropologist Peter Hervik, this is a result of a neo-racist rhetoric, wherein the construction of 'they', the out-group of foreigners, is rigidly constructed in contrast to 'we', the Danes, to such a degree that the cultural difference is seen as insurmountable if not completely unbridgeable (Hervik, 2004). Within this rhetoric, the immigrant is perceived as the guest, while the ethnic Danes are

hosts and any negative and stereotyping – perhaps even discriminatory – behavior towards immigrants or refugees is only a result of ‘them’ being guests, not behaving within the cultural norms deemed proper by Danes. From this then, it is clear that the social, cultural, as well as legal framework the participants interviewed for this thesis arrived in, was to a large degree shaped by a negative rhetoric that expected cultural difference to be a difficult barrier to successful integration.

### **3. Methodology**

As stated in the above, this thesis explores how integration is experienced from immigrants' point of view and consequently this research is data driven and explorative by nature. Because of the explorative nature of the research, and the relatively small interview sample, the approach to the relationship between the data and theory is abductive. In an abductive approach, theory is deduced and created on the basis of the collected data, in much the same way as in inductive approaches, rather than deciding on theory in advance, to which the data are then applied (Bryman, 2012, p. 26). This means that the theoretical framework, which is outlined and discussed in chapter 4, was decided on the basis of the interview data. The abductive approach is found to be fruitful in terms of this research as it, to some extent, allows me to avoid applying any preconceived ideas or attempts to fit the interviewee's answers within any strict theoretical frame in advance, and I thereby remain open to understanding their interpretation of the social world (Ong, 2012, p. 427). The thesis focuses on the micro level; that is the day-to-day, face-to-face interactions between the immigrant and the local natives, as well as their encounters with social workers with the municipality. The interest is in the subjective, personal experience of the immigrants and the epistemological standpoint is therefore taken in phenomenology. Individuals make sense of their social reality through common-sense constructs and by gaining access to these, it will be possible to understand how integration is perceived from the immigrants' point of view and how this perception influences their actions in terms of adapting to the receiving community (Bryman, 2012, p. 30). The emphasis that is made on how the individual constructs his or her social reality consequently means that the ontological position in this thesis is to view social reality as constructed and not as an objective truth out there to be described. Social reality is subjective and never definite as it is ever changing, being created and recreated within social interaction (Bryman, 2012, p. 33). This also means that the reality that this thesis, on the basis of the interviews, present here is only one of many versions out there, and consequently not representative of all immigrants coming to Denmark and their subsequent experiences. Rather, the strength of this approach is that by looking at the particular, it will be possible to find out how different intersecting categories shape the individual's experiences and in consequence, also how they choose to integrate.

### 3.1 Qualitative Interviews

In order to investigate this, qualitative interviews were conducted. Qualitative interviews enable me to get as deep and broad an insight as possible into the experiences of the interviewees. Because of the intent to understand how it is to be on the 'receiving side' of the integration measures, the method of interviewing has been a combination of both the biographical narrative method and a few open-ended questions, within a semi-structured format. This method is adequate to find out both the explicit as well as implicit world-views and attitudes of the interviewees as they narrate their life stories. The interviews were conducted as narrative interviews as this is the interview method where the researcher has the least impact on the informant's answers, as they are not twisted in a certain direction by questions based on preconceived assumptions. Where question-guided interviews can shape the answers of the informant, the narrative interviews are not imposed with a specific bias by the researcher's choice of wording, and should therefore be more valid accounts of the individual's perspective (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000, p. 3). This is also the reason why the more direct questions about integration are placed at the end of the interview, because hopefully biases shaped by a definition given before the narrative are avoided. The aim with narrative interviews is to understand events from the perspective of the informant, by getting them to reconstruct social events in the narrative. The biographical narrative interview method elicits very detailed descriptions from the interviewees themselves, where they are able to bring forth what they have found to be particularly significant for their life story in relation to integration. As mentioned integration is perceived differently and might bring up different connotations for each individual, so what is emphasized in their narrative might vary. How the narrative is constructed, what is emphasized and what is neglected are important in order to understand what influences the individual in his or her choices when dealing with integration, as narrative accounts of events are selective (ibid). Events that an interviewee chooses to narrate consequently must be of importance for his or her understanding of integration.

In terms of the structure of the interviews in this thesis, the interviewee was informed about the purpose, format and structure of the interviews, that I would begin by asking factual questions and next ask them to tell about their life and experiences in Denmark. Next some very general questions about the interviewees were asked, for example how old they were when coming to Denmark, their age presently, as well as

whether they had Danish citizenship. Beginning with these factual questions enabled me to have a very rough contextual understanding of the participants but also served the purpose of getting the interviewees to talk, by answering relatively safe questions. After this, a transition was made to the narrative interview. I began by asking them to tell about their life in their home country. Some naturally transitioned after this into a narrative about their time in Denmark, others did not, and I would then ask them to continue to tell about their life in Denmark. The aim was to ideally have the participants give one coherent narration of the events they found relevant to their experiences with integration and in a few cases, this also succeeded to some extent. However as Sandra Jovchelovitch and Martin Bauer point out, even though this is the ideal, because of the smallest degree of intervention by the interviewer, it is not always possible to get the participant to do so, and it might be necessary to compromise and shift between a narrative and questioning the participant (2000, pp. 7-8). In advance I had therefore prepared a range of topics that I wanted to cover in the interviews. These were the job market, integration laws (and if they had affected their lives), the media coverage of refugees, political rhetoric, contact with official representatives such as caseworkers, coming to a different culture and the meeting with the majority. In most cases the interviewee would narrate an event or opinion that dealt with the topics and when the interviewees had finished their narrative, it was possible to question them about certain events in the narrative that seemed of particular interest, or where it was felt that more information was needed in order to understand it completely. In cases where the interviewee had not touched upon all topics I would question them as neutrally as possible within these topics. The aim was to pose the questions in such a way that they would not lead the participant to answer in a certain way, but rather elaborate on the possible events in their own way. However some interviews would end more as loosely structured interviews rather than narrative ones, especially as a few of the interviewees would directly request being questioned rather than telling a narrative about their life.

The interviews were conducted between July 7 and August 22. The interviewees were offered the choice of either conducting the interviews at a neutral space such as a local meeting room, or in their home. The choice of these locations are based on the fact that being at home might make them more relaxed about doing the interview and thereby open up for a more elaborate and honest narrative. The meeting rooms might not offer much in terms of homeliness, however they are neutral spaces. Both choices of

location were deliberately chosen to be as private as possible in the attempt to create the optimal setting for the interviewee to go into depth and to be concentrated while telling their narratives. Except for two, all interviews were conducted in the meeting rooms. The interview with participant number ten was conducted in her home and because of this, there were a few interruptions during the interview from her children and her neighbor. This of course resulted in breaks in the interview and narration, but it also seemed like the interviewee was more relaxed compared to some of the others. I met with participant number three in his office, where his co-worker with a Somali background also was present. All interviews, except the one with participant number three, were recorded on a phone and subsequently transcribed. Participant three declined to have the interview recorded because as he said, such things could be distorted and twisted. For this interview, I consequently only have the notes written during and immediately after. Because of that, it is not possible to quote him directly. The interviews were conducted in Danish. This of course means that it is not the native language of the participants that the interviews have been conducted in, and this might for some have hindered their ability to fully express themselves, because of their Danish language proficiency. The quotes in the analysis have therefore also been translated after content rather than exact wording. In cases where any ambiguity might be possible, this will be indicated in a footnote.

All participants were informed of the purpose of the thesis and subsequent use of the interviews prior to the interviews, as well as given a promise of remaining completely anonymous, and that nothing could be traced back to them or used against them. The names of the participants that occur in this thesis are consequently pseudonyms. I chose to inform the interviewees about the aim with the thesis – that is investigating integration – and emphasized that the interest in this is on their point of view. This might mean that a slight bias could have been introduced as the interviewees might wish to give answers that could satisfy this purpose. However, despite this, it was seen as fruitful as it might have helped them not only feel safer being open about their experiences, but also include things that otherwise might be left unheard.

### **3.2 The Informants**

Prior to beginning the process of contacting possible interviewees, I decided on a few initial selection criteria for people that could be interviewed. Given the focus of this

thesis, these were of course, first and foremost, that the interviewee would have come during the 1990s either as a refugee or someone who, as family to a refugee, had been granted a residence permit by the Danish government as a result of family reunification rules at this specific time. It was decided not to distinguish between these types of immigrants, as it is suspected that the challenges that they, as well as the Danish society, face in regards to integration are similar. The spouses or other family coming here as a result of family reunification are likely to have had similar experiences in their country of origin as those who have refugee status, and the resulting difficulty connected with, for example attaining and having a job, are just as plausible. Also how they are met by the receiving Danish society is likely to be undifferentiated.

Furthermore an equal division of gender was wanted in the interview data and consequently half of the participants should be male and the other half female. The reason for aiming at this division is based on the assumption that one's sex, in combination with other categories of differentiation, influences how one shapes and experiences events. Furthermore, whether you are male or female influences what expectations you are met with depending on pervading norms. This especially applies in the Danish context and in the case of immigrants with Muslim background where women, by Danish natives, often are victimized and men are stereotyped as patriarchal abusers (Charsley & Liversage, 2015). Being met with such stereotypes and expectations to supposedly normative behavior is likely to influence one's experiences and how one integrates into society. In terms of age, the interviewees would have to have been within the age range of 20-30 years old at the time of arrival in Denmark. This age range is chosen because it will mean that the interviewee would not have attended primary school or 'gymnasium' in Denmark, and therefore had not been socialized into Danish culture during their childhood or teens. The upper range of 30 was chosen as the immigrant at this age might have settled in life in their home country, but has not yet had decades to settle into a routine. The older people are, the more difficult it often is for them to transition and they become accustomed to other cultures and social settings. By limiting the interviewees' age to be between 20-30, I therefore hoped to have a selection of participants who have not been socialized through the Danish school system into 'good integration' but who have neither been too old to transition into a new society (Jenkins, 2008).

The primary countries that refugees arrived from in 2015 were Syria followed by Iran, Afghanistan and Eritrea, and in 2016 it has been Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Iran (Bendixen, 2016). If looking at statistics of the 1990s, the primary countries that refugees arrived from were Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia, Iraq and stateless Palestinians. In addition to this, a significant part is listed as 'other'. For the purpose of this thesis, the focus is on people from two groupings of refugees: Somalia and Arabic countries. The reason not to include refugees from Bosnia, is because research has shown that despite most of them belonging to the Muslim faith, they were, in contrast to for example Somalis, seen as being culturally closer to the Danish by the native Danish themselves (Hervik, 2004). This has to do with the geographical proximity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and their comparatively same physical exterior. In contrast the current refugees are considered further from Danish cultural and political traditions, belonging to the 'Muslim others'. There is however likely to be a perceived underlying distinction made by Danish natives between the African Muslims and the Arabic Muslims, based on geographical origin and color of skin. The grouping and division in this thesis is therefore not a retreat to cultural reductionism, but echo this distinction. The perceived difference between a Syrian, an Iraqi, a Lebanese or an Afghan person is not large enough for it to be met with differentiated reactions and expectations from the general Danish public, and they are consequently conflated into the category 'Middle Eastern' or 'Arabic'. There is however a visible difference between those with African background and those with Arabic background, and their meeting and interaction with native Danes might be influenced by their perceived differences. The purpose of interviewing Somalis therefore rests on the assumption that their experiences of interaction with the Danish society might be similar to that of those who have come from Eritrea. Likewise, the interviewees with Arabic background might be closer to those who now come from Syria, Iran and Afghanistan. It is furthermore important to recognize that all interviews will be highly individual and subjective, and regardless of cultural similarities, people will experience and react to the process of coming to Denmark and having to adapt differently. It will consequently only be possibly to conclude about the particular in these cases. It might however be possible to identify differences and similarities with the experience of coming to Denmark across ethnicities, gender and other categories of differentiation. The basic selection criteria can be seen in table one.

**Table 1 Initial Selection Criteria of Participants**

<b>Age 20-30</b>	<b>Somali background</b>	<b>Arabic background</b>
<b>Male</b>	3	3
<b>Female</b>	3	3

In order to come into contact with the participants, several different methods have been used. I have made use of my own network, which I have established through my job and internship working with a group of fathers. The fathers in this group are ethnically mostly Somali, and I therefore had the opportunity to find interviewees through them and their networks. The snowball sampling technique was used, relying mostly on the participants' network (Bryman, 2012, p. 424). In order to get in contact with women with Somali background, a local women's group in Aalborg East was contacted, and it is within this group that all the female participants were recruited. Prior to contacting them, I had had previous contact and cooperation with the women through my job at the local social housing project. Because of this previous relationship, they seemed more willing to help by doing an interview. However because I knew them previously, as I did with the two Somali men I interviewed, a bias was introduced as I had previous knowledge about them, their family connections and other circumstances surrounding their lives. The familiarity might also have meant that they excluded certain things because they expected I knew them previously.

Getting into contact with people with Arabic background turned out to be more challenging because of my lack of contacts within this group, especially in regards to men. To get into contact with people, I mostly relied on a gatekeeper who has a large network privately among the Arabic ethnic community in Aalborg East. This gatekeeper agreed to help me because of an existing good relationship with a co-worker of mine who vouched for me. Through her, I managed to get into contact with all three of my female participants. I had less success in relation to male Arabic participants. I managed to come into contact with one male participant by contacting the local integration council and subsequently he helped me get into contact with the second, but was unsuccessful otherwise. A suggestion to why this is could be found in the mistrust and questions I was first met with when I contacted the Arabic gatekeeper. She wanted to know what my intentions *really* were, and to be sure that I was not just out to say further negative things. When I explained what the purpose of the thesis was, she

answered: “I will do whatever I can to change what is being said about refugees”. As mentioned above, there was a similar mistrust to my actual intentions from participant three, who would not allow the interview to be recorded. It is possible that he might have restricted his narrative in other ways because of this insecurity. It was therefore clearly beneficial in terms of recruitment if someone they knew had put me in contact with them.

A few comments should be given to the overview of participants in table 2. First, I only managed to conduct 11 interviews out the 12 initially planned for. This is connected to the difficulties described above. There is consequently only data on two male participants with Arabic background. Furthermore, the first of the male participants with Arabic background, participant one, did not come to Denmark as either refugee or because of family reunification. His choice to come to Denmark was motivated by a job opportunity given through a friend. The second Arabic male participant, participant 11, also falls outside the initial criteria as he arrived in Denmark in 1985. Essentially this means that there are no male Arabic participants that meet the selection criteria. I have nevertheless chosen to include them in the analysis, as they are interesting to use in order to compare how others outside the group experience having to adapt to the Danish context in order to see what similarities and differences there are between their experiences and the rest of the participants.

There is a clear bias in the sample if looking at occupation status. Eight of the interviewees have jobs, and have had it for a long period of time. Two have been granted early retirement after a longer period of having jobs of different types. Only one is unemployed and has been for a while. This means that I will not be able to claim anything more definitive about patterns of adaption relating to unemployment, but only of those relating to being employed. Also, as should be noted from the above, the sampling techniques have meant that all of the female participants are active in voluntary women’s groups. This of course means another bias in the sample, as those who are not active in groups or associations are not represented.

This could be slightly problematic as those who are least active in the surrounding society often are those who are perceived, by the Danish native population, to be poorly integrated. Also, an unfortunate bias is introduced through the requirement of a certain level of language proficiency in order to communicate, as I again neglect to

**Table 2 Overview of Participants**

	Country of Origin	Sex	Current age	Year of Arrival in Denmark	Age at arrival	Refugee/Family Reunification	Danish Citizenship	Current occupation
P1 'Amir'	Lebanon	Male	48	1995	29	Other	No	Social housing employee at municipality
P2 'Sahra'	Lebanon	Female	45	1997	27	Family reunification (Husband)	No (Pending)	Nursery assistant and personal aid
P3 'Cabdi'	Somalia	Male	47	1992	23	Refugee	Unknown	Translator and mentor
P4 'Fatima'	Kuwait/ Palestine	Female	39	2001	25	Refugee	Yes	Pedagogue in School
P5 'Iman'	Syria	Female	45	1993	25	Family reunification	Yes	Nurserys teacher
P6 'Amran'	Somalia	Female	44	1993	29	Family reunification (Aunt)	No	Cleaning assistant
P7 'Basra'	Somalia	Female	48	1993	25	Refugee	Yes	Early retirement pensioner
P8 'Rashid'	Somalia	Male	40	1998	24	Refugee	No	Employed at slaughterhouse
P9 'Said'	Somalia	Male	46	1994	22	Family reunification (Wife)	No	Unemployed
P10 'Fartuun'	Somalia	Female	50	1988	21	Refugee	Yes	Bilingual teacher
P11 'Hakeem'	Lebanon	Male	54	1985	21	Refugee	Yes	Early retirement pensioner



represent those who in terms of 'good integration' are furthest away from the Danish society.

Lastly, I want to point out that the ages and years stated in the table are those that the participants informed. Many had difficulty remembering their age at arrival and the above noted are the estimate that the participant would give. Because of this, some discrepancies can be detected, however this is of minor importance as it in most cases is a matter of one or two years difference in age.

### **3.3 Analytical Approach**

For the analysis it was decided to draw on two methods of analysis. The first approach is a thematic analysis. This approach was used in order to divide the data into overarching themes that were generally recurring throughout all the interviews. Firstly, this was achieved by reading and then re-reading the transcripts in order to find passages that would be relevant to the research area, which then would be marked by keywords. Next, all of the keywords from each text were compared and grouped into broader themes that would appropriately cover different viewpoints, incidents, etc., on the same subject. These themes serve as the outline for the next layer of the analysis, namely an intersectional analysis.

#### **Intersectional Analysis**

Intersectionality is concerned with how different social categories intersect and impact both structural as well as identity processes (Jensen & Christensen, 2011). The concept was first coined by black feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw, who argued that the experience of black women was not fully understood through the single categories of 'woman' and 'black' as these discourses only encompass the experiences of each category separately (Crenshaw, 1989; 1995). According to Crenshaw, being a black woman consequently means a position at the intersection of both categories, and in order to fully understand this position and not marginalize or neglect these women's experiences, both categories would have to be taken into consideration simultaneously.

Where Crenshaw's approach to intersectionality is primarily directed towards the discrimination of women, the concept has since been expanded to encompass other categories of differentiation. An example of this is political scientist Laurel Weldon, who argues that intersectionality also can be used to explain how other social divisions intersect and influence each other (Weldon, 2008). In Crenshaw's argument, focus is on

how certain categories serve to disadvantage people at their intersections, however, as Weldon also claims, the concept can be used more generally to explain how all kinds of social structures interact in both marginalizing as well as privileging ways (Weldon, 2008, p. 195). The categories of differentiation and social divisions that one can belong to are numerous. The most commonly analyzed are race, gender and class as well as age and religion. There are of course many others, and the list is by no means meant to be exhaustive. Whether or not the categories of differentiation intersect in such a way that they become positions of privilege or discrimination depends on the specific cultural tradition, historical context and location of the individual and its surrounding society (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Given the interest of this the thesis is to find out how immigrants from the 1990's experienced coming to Denmark and subsequently having to integrate, an intersectional analysis is suitable as it can show how different categories of differentiation influence how the immigrant interacts with and meets the requirement of the receiving society. Also, this kind of analysis will help highlight that, though the immigrants coming to Denmark are often perceived as basically the same, different social categories serve to influence their different experiences as well as how they choose to react. To perform the analysis, this thesis will lean on three principles that Danish researcher Dorte Staunæs (2004) has formulated and argues to be central to intersectionality and the analysis of intersections of social categories. These sum up and specify the above description of intersectionality. These are firstly, that no category of differentiation is automatically or self-evidently given primacy over other categories. Specifically, this means that during an analysis, one or several social categories cannot in advance be decided to be more prominent or important than others. Instead, this thesis will decide during the analysis what category or categories in combination have the biggest impact on the experiences of the immigrant in question. The second principle is that categories are always mutually constituting and should optimally be analyzed simultaneously. This is also called the non-additive principle, meaning that categories can influence each other in many different ways. Categories should not only be seen as reinforcing each other, but they can also function to exaggerate and undermine each other or even cancel each other out. How the categories affect one another is contingent on the specific context, which is also why the findings of an analysis such as the one in this thesis cannot be taken to be applicable universally; in

another context the categories might intersect differently and have a completely different outcome. The final and third principle relates to Weldon's argument that categories can be both advantageous and disadvantageous. In the majority-inclusive principle, the emphasis is that all groups and individuals in essence are intersectional. A man is not less gendered than a woman, and in relation to this research an ethnic minority, such as Somalis or Arabs in Denmark, are not more ethnic than the Danish majority (Staunæs, 2004, pp. 65-68).

In the analysis, this thesis will attempt to include all these three principles as best possibly. Also, it has been attempted – during the entirety of the analysis – to remain as sensitive and true to the original meaning of the interviewees, in order not to misrepresent them and their experiences. It is again emphasized that the strength of this research is its attentiveness to the experience of the individual, and how it differs among an often stereotyped and abused section of the Danish population. It is however not possible to say anything more generally representative about the entire section of immigrants on the basis of these findings, as the experiences of each individual will depend on their situation and background. Neither should the findings be conflated to represent Somalis in general or Arabs in general. As is often the case with integration, it is important to take this research as only representative of each informant's perspective and experiences.

## **4. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

How is it possible to theoretically explain the differences and similarities there are in how people coming from one cultural background cope with their experiences (and ultimately adapt) in a new cultural setting? In the following, the theoretical and conceptual framework that is used to answer this question will be outlined. As mentioned, the methodological approach to the analysis of the interviews is abductive, meaning that the following theoretical framework was determined after having conducted the initial analysis. As will be shown in the analysis, some of the participants would have had experiences of a similar character where it would seem that their ability to deal with it depended on coinciding, intersecting categories, differing resources, cultural background as well as their attitude towards their situation and what they thought could reasonably be expected. To explain these things John W. Berry's theory of acculturation (1997) and Pierre Bourdieu's theory on different forms of capital (1986) will be applied. These two theories are easily applicable on the individual level that is of interest in this thesis and make it possible to pay attention to key variables that might influence how the participants have dealt with their experiences in Denmark and the subsequent approaches taken to adapt to Danish society, while simultaneously bringing in the contextual framework.

### **4.1 A Note on the Usage of the Concept of Integration**

Integration holds a central position in this thesis as it is situated in the Danish context, where, as could be seen from the first chapter, integration is presented politically as the official policy for the acculturation and adaption of immigrants and refugees into Danish society. However, integration as a concept is elusive and diffuse, but still academics, politicians, media and laypeople alike often use it as though it is neatly defined and agreed upon. As sociologist Ellie Vasta says, "one main problem with integration is that it is a vague concept that can mean whatever people want it to mean" (2007, p. 6). Also in the Danish public and political rhetoric used on the topic of how to deal with integration, the discussion sometimes seems to stray more towards other types of acculturation. This is perhaps best explained following the argument Vasta makes. According to Vasta, there are two main usages of the term integration in a political context: the first is when integration is thought of as a process where immigrants and refugees become part of the receiving society. In this way, it is used normatively and is

thought of as a one-way process wherein it is expected of the immigrant to adapt and fit in with the majority culture. This usage could be thought of as a diluted form of assimilation as it does not recognize and make room for the culture of the newcomers. The second usage is perhaps the one closest to the definition Berry makes, where integration is perceived to be a two-way process meaning that both the newcomers as well as the receiving society adapt in terms of values, norms and behaviors (Vasta 2007, p. 5). The dilution and messiness of the concept means that whenever a person mentions integration, it is necessary to question what is actually meant by the usage and to recognize that it is deeply subjective and context dependent. Also, as Danish researcher Charlotte Hamburger argues, a problem with the lack of a clear definition of the integration concept in the Danish discussion is that it results in a blurring of the end goal, the process, as well as the means to achieve it. This consequently means that it can cover initiatives and processes that are assimilatory and segregational (1997, p. 136).

Because of this diffuseness of the concept, it is necessary to define the usage of integration more clearly in this thesis. Therefore when utilized in this thesis, integration is conceptualized as described by Berry (see below); that is when the immigrant is able to maintain the original culture while participating actively in the settlement society, in this case the Danish society. The process is seen as two-way: accommodation must happen on both the immigrant's side as well as the receiving society's. This requires a certain degree of openness from the majority, which, as could be seen in chapter two, in the case of Danish society might be questionable. As Berry argues:

Integration can only be "freely" chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity. Thus, a *mutual accommodation* is required for integration to be attained, involving the acceptance by both groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples. This strategy requires non-dominant groups to adopt the basic values of the larger society, while at the same time the dominant group must be prepared to adapt national institutions (e.g. education, health, labour) to better meet the needs of all groups now living in the plural society (1997, pp. 10-11).

It should be noted that given that this conceptualization is theoretically based, it does not follow that the participants that have spoken with necessarily conceptualize integration in the same way. In the analysis, I will remain sensitive to this fact, and best possibly incorporate it for a full understanding of the approach taken by the individual to acculturation into Danish society.

## 4.2 A Framework of Acculturation

Adapting to a new cultural setting is not something that happens overnight, but should rather be thought of as a process. Psychologist John W. Berry's framework on acculturation (1997) explains the social change that happens as a result of migration – that is, it explains the process of adapting to a new society. Acculturation is theorized as the outcome of continuous meetings between individuals or groups who have different cultural backgrounds, which results in changes in “the original patterns of either or both groups” (Berry, 1997, p. 7). Acculturation is consequently useful in explaining the process of adapting into a society that has different cultural norms than the one you came from. This approach enables me to look into not only whether the immigrant chooses to take a strategy of integration or another approach to his or her acculturation process, but also what factors in combination with this choice influence how and to which degree they end up adapting to the Danish society. Given that the analysis is only of specific fragments of entire lived lives, it is unlikely that it will be possible to say anything about how the participants acculturate generally, but more about how each situation is coped with.

Acculturation happens at both group and individual level. At group level, acculturation is when the change happens in the culture of the group. At the individual level, or psychological acculturation as Berry calls it, the change happens in the psychology of the individual (1997, p. 7). An example of this could be if a group of individuals migrate from one cultural context where the cultural norm is for women to be housewives, to a cultural context, where women are expected to contribute on equal footing to men. Because the individuals will adapt to this norm, a gradual change to the entire group culture will happen. As this thesis investigates how individual, subjective experiences have influenced each participant, it is the individual level of analysis within the acculturation framework that is interesting for the purpose of this thesis. The actual acculturation process on this level takes place as the individuals have experiences and actual life events in meetings with the majority culture. In order to adapt to the majority society, the acculturating person will have to learn the norms and appropriate behaviors of this culture. These learning experiences might result in a type of ‘acculturative stress’, be seen as barriers or opportunities, or not regarded at all

depending on whether it is experienced as easy or challenging by the individual (ibid. p. 18). Whether it is one or the other is likely to depend on how easily their capital transfers to the new cultural setting. Ultimately this will lead to some kind of adaption to the society, culturally, psychologically, socially and health-wise. How this is done and how easily it is achieved depends on different variables influencing the individual. Here, the group level is brought into play again, as it has an important role in shaping the context for where the immigrants came from and also what they arrive to. Berry calls these variables situational variables (1997, p. 14). In terms of the society of origin, such things as the economic situation of the country, demographics, as well as the political context but also any cultural characteristics that shape the background of the individual can be mentioned. For the society of settlement, variables influencing the acculturation process are, for example, the general and political attitudes towards immigration and also what social support there is from the larger society itself and the ethnic society (ibid. pp. 16-17). In chapter two of this thesis, some of these situational variables were described and the analysis will show to what degree they influence the acculturation process of the individuals within the context of the Danish society.

On the individual level, Berry groups two different moderating variables tied to the individual that influence how they end up adapting: those that existed prior to the individual beginning the acculturation process, and those that occur during the acculturation process (1997, p. 18). The latter are to some degree influenced by the settlement society and consist of such factors as when in the acculturation process the experience occurs, the coping strategies of the individual and social support in terms of ties to either the original culture or to members of the settlement society (ibid. p. 25). Also, societal attitudes play a role for the individual, where for example negativity towards immigration results in discriminatory behavior that affect the acculturating individual. Lastly, the choice of acculturation strategy is an individual variable that influences the process.

According to Berry, there are four different acculturation strategies. An acculturation strategy is the way groups and individuals manage the task of acculturating and depend on the attitudes towards having to acculturate. The different approaches will ultimately result in different forms of adaption. Two main issues are of concern when the approach is chosen: first, cultural maintenance, which is how important the original cultural identity is perceived to be and to what degree it should

be preserved and upheld. The second important issue is how much contact should be made interculturally: should there be involvement with the settlement society or is separation from it mainly preferred? According to Berry, the answers to these, whether positive or negative, determine what strategies are employed (1997, p. 4). The four different acculturation strategies are: *integration*, where the individual wishes to maintain his or her own culture to some degree, while still wanting to interact daily with the settlement society, i.e. the native Danish in the case of this thesis. It is also this type of acculturation strategy that is officially subscribed to by the Danish state. Another strategy is that of *assimilation*. With this strategy, the individuals have no intention of maintaining their cultural identity and wish to interact regularly with the other culture. The aim is to blend in with the majority culture. Here, naturally, a great degree of culture shedding of the original culture is happening; that is, the unlearning of previously learned cultural knowledge that is no longer relevant (ibid. p. 13). Culture shedding could be seen as the opposite of cultural maintenance. *Separation* is when the individual finds it important to hold on to the original culture and largely wishes to avoid interaction with the other culture. The isolation from the larger society here is voluntary whereas segregation, which is its counterpart, is forced isolation. The last acculturation strategy is that of *marginalization*. This is when interest in or opportunity of cultural maintenance is low often because of regulations making it impossible. Relationships and interaction with the other culture has little interest, often because of exclusion and discrimination according to Berry. This again has a forced element to it (ibid. p. 9). The approach taken formally by the receiving society and the approach of the immigrant might not always be congruent, and because of that, the outcome might result in acculturative stress and in an end result different than that initially wanted (ibid. p. 10). Also variations to which strategy is taken by the individual to deal with acculturation experiences might occur depending on the context, for example one might not want as much intergroup contact in relation to the private sphere than the more public ones (ibid. p. 12). This means that in the analysis of acculturative experiences, it is necessary to be aware of acculturation happening on different levels, as the individual moves between different contexts, for example in the home or in work situations.

In addition to the above variables that occur during the acculturation process, there are also variables that are attached to the individual level. Given that people migrate from one cultural context to another, they will have a certain set of attributes

tied to them, which cannot be controlled by outside factors during the acculturation process. These previously adapted moderating factors are, for example, age, gender, education and religion. Also such things as an individual's social status in his or her country of origin can affect the acculturation process in the settlement society, as a higher status previously might result in status loss in the new context (Berry, 1997, p. 22). On the other hand, the acculturation process might give opportunities to some that would not have had them in their country of origin. The motivation for coming to the settlement country as well as what expectations there might have been to the experience also influence how you acculturate and adapt to the country. Positive expectations to the life in the settlement society might influence acculturation in way that it become easier, but on the other hand, too high expectations might lead to disappointment and influence it negatively. Also personality traits such as introversion and extroversion can act as possible influencing variables. This, of course, has to do with an introvert person being less likely to interact as much and as openly with natives of the settlement society as those who are more inclined to extroversion (ibid. p. 23). Lastly, Berry mentions cultural distance as an influencing variable. Here, cultural distance refers to how similar the original culture and the culture of the new society are perceived to be. If the original culture is perceived to be similar to that of the settlement society, the acculturation process is likely to be perceived as easier by the individual as well as the settlement society, as fewer changes will have to be made and thus less acculturative stress will be experienced. On the other hand, if the original culture is perceived to be very different, the process might become equally harder, especially if the individual wishes to maintain his or her culture.

### **4.3 Forms of Capital**

Interestingly, it quickly became apparent in the preliminary analysis of the interview data that there were great differences between the resources of the participants, in the shape of previous education, skillsets and cultural backgrounds. In many cases, there seem to be very clear correlations between the individual resources and what experiences they have had with acculturation, what chances and obstacles they faced, and not least how they were able to approach and deal with them. This falls within the individual level variable in Berry's framework. However, in order to explain this more

thoroughly, Pierre Bourdieu's three forms of capital will be utilized (1986). According to Bourdieu, capital is the factor that plays into how society is arranged and because of the differences in capital resulting in the structures of society, not everybody has equal access or equal opportunity for raising their social status. Capital is therefore understood as the accumulated assets of an individual, which can be brought into play and influence one's social mobility (ibid. p. 241). How capital is distributed and how available it is, is connected to social structures, which, depending on the context, might be more or less restricting for some individuals. Capital consequently makes some things more possible for some but not others, and specific forms of capital might be more important in some situations than others (ibid. p. 242). This theoretical approach will allow me, in combination with the acculturation framework, to explain how the different resources or the type of capital influence the opportunities and obstacles the interviewees have faced during their time in Denmark and with integration.

Bourdieu distinguishes between three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social capital. Of the three forms, economic capital is probably the most commonly known type of capital and the one that Bourdieu spends little time discussing. Economic capital is the possession of economic resources in the form of money or assets. It is the most tangible of the capitals forms as it is easily measurable and easily exchangeable. Given that the participants in this thesis have come as either refugees or through family reunification, they are not as such in possession of economic capital. However, as a few also point out, this has less influence in a society such as the Danish model, where the welfare system makes the social stratification less pronounced. However, the amount of economic capital often influences the opportunity of acquiring other types of capital, especially in more stratified societies as some of the participants come from. For example, a higher economic capital gives a family the opportunity of allowing their child to have more time to gather cultural capital than a family with lesser economic means (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 252).

Cultural capital covers, for instance, skills and educational knowledge but also cultural knowledge in the form of societal norms, which one may or may not be conscious of actually possessing. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital appears in three different formats, the first of which is the embodied state (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). Embodied cultural capital is, as suggested by the name, capital that is inherent or

embedded and tied to the individual. It is the least tangible of the forms of capital as it is the knowledge of cultural norms and traditions, 'cultivation' or 'bildung' as Bourdieu says (ibid. p. 244). It is difficult to measure some forms of embodied cultural capital given that such norms are often acquired unknowingly through the socialization process of the family (ibid. p. 246). However, embodied cultural capital also includes more tangible things, such as skills in the form of language proficiency and other knowledge gained through education. Given the nature of embodied cultural capital and the fact that it is procured in a cultural context, it is a form of capital that does not always translate or transform well into another cultural context. For example, cultural capital of norms acquired in one cultural setting will rarely transfer directly, and in some cases not at all, meaning that immigrants will have to acquire anew such cultural capital relevant to the new social setting. Depending on how well much their previously acquired embodied cultural capital translates, and how much new knowledge will have to be acquired, different challenges might be met and also different outcomes could be expected in terms of how they integrate. The second form of cultural capital described by Bourdieu is the objectified state. Objectified cultural capital is connected to the objects of human cultural productivity, more precisely cultural goods. Objectified cultural capital can therefore be said to be a product of embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 246). Whether an individual owns, materially speaking, objectified cultural capital is mostly a question of economic capital, however whether one symbolically possesses it depends on embodied cultural capital (ibid. p. 247). For instance, owning books becomes a way of showcasing the cultural capital you have. This second form of cultural capital is not as directly relevant to the analysis of the immigrants as the other two discussed here, as such embodied capital often is left behind because of the migratory context. The last form of cultural capital that Bourdieu describes is that of institutionalized cultural capital. Institutionalized capital is "the objectification of cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications" (1986, p. 247). The advantage of the institutionalized cultural capital is that it rules out any doubt of having the skill in contrast to self-taught cultural capital, which can be questioned at any given time (ibid.). Through the institutionalization of cultural capital, it becomes possible to measure it and 'trade' it in terms of the job market. In a country like Denmark where the job market has become specialized and requires such institutionalized cultural capital to an increasing degree, this can become an obstacle

for integration both in cases where the institutionalized cultural capital differs in value from the original place of acquirement and in Denmark, and in cases where no such capital has been acquired at all, in many cases because of the instability of the countries they have left. In this way, the migratory context can become an obstacle for integration because the already obtained cultural capital is not recognized. On the other hand, integration might benefit from the requirement of institutionalized capital as it opens up opportunities for some who otherwise would not have had it.

Social capital is the third form of capital that Bourdieu theorizes and has to do with the (potential) resources connected to having networks and relationships and through which one is recognized and accepted as belonging to one or more groups (1986, p. 248). It covers all kinds of group belongings, ranging from the informal and social ones – like a family – and on a larger scale, for instance belonging to a nation. An individual's social capital is measured through how many people he knows and is able to draw on if needed (ibid. p. 249). Immigrants and refugees coming to Denmark, as well as other places, often do not have any useable social capital when coming to the country. This will have to be built through socializing with others. Robert Putnam has expanded the concept adding the two distinctions of bridging and bonding social capital (2000). The latter is the type of social capital that primarily happens within somewhat homogenous groups, whereas the former bridges the divide between two different types of groups. Bonding social capital consequently helps solidify group identity and solidarity. This could for instance be if groups formed on the basis of all belonging to the same ethnic minority. Bridging social capital on the other hand is useful to for instance get jobs outside one's ethnic group and also valuable in terms of gaining context specific cultural capital for migrants (ibid. pp. 22-24). Social capital and social integration are therefore also strongly connected as social capital can only be obtained by being accepted within a defined group, and acceptance by a group within the majority, for instance, is a step towards social integration and might also serve to improve the immigrant's social situation.

## 5. Findings and Analysis

What will an individual who has come to Denmark as a refugee or been family reunified emphasize if asked to tell about their life since coming to the country? Which experiences will be narrated to have had importance for their way of adapting to the Danish society, knowing that integration is the area of interest for the research? The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the interview data and through an intersectional analysis, examine how the participants have experienced having to acculturate in Denmark and what has impacted the process. This will be done within three topics that all were recurring themes throughout the interviews. The first is access to the labor market as well as Danish citizenship, which both were found to be influenced by the cultural capital the immigrant had at arrival. Next, the impact of the media on the participants' acculturation is analyzed, both in terms of what coping strategies are employed as well as what effects it has on the daily interaction with ethnic Danes. The last topic analyzed is the influence of social interaction on acculturation and how culture is negotiated within these meetings. In terms of intersections, the only constant is the ethnic minority category that the participants inevitably found themselves in. At points this intersects with gender so that different experiences with the majority are more common depending on whether the participant is female or male. In a less direct but perhaps more influential way, the class the participants belonged to prior to leaving their home country intersect to position the participant more or less favorably in the Danish society, consequently also influencing the available coping strategies and opportunities. As will be seen however, intersections are not very prominent overall. This is not to suggest they do not happen at all, but perhaps more importantly that the ethnic minority category means that the participants, in many instances, are treated as a homogenous mass by the Danish majority, despite for instance coming from different countries. Even though the experiences narrated by the participants are analyzed within these topics, it is important to see them as fragments of entire lived lives being reflected upon in retrospect. This consequently means that the narrated events do not necessarily cover all the events that have factually happened in their lives, but rather the ones supporting their present experience of their situation.

## **5.1 The Impact of Cultural Capital on Labor Market Access and Danish Citizenship**

Both labor market participation as well as Danish citizenship are areas that are governed by rules as described previously in this thesis. Employment in particular has increasingly been emphasized as an expectation for living in Denmark as an immigrant or refugee, and has also become an important part of being granted access to Danish citizenship. Both can consequently be seen as important parts of adaption and integration in Denmark. What was found however, is that some are better equipped at achieving these things upon arrival in Denmark and particularly cultural capital in its institutionalized form is significant in this. In the following, this will be elaborated on, first in relation to education and the job market, and secondly in relation to Danish citizenship. As will be seen, the ability to access the labor market or the lack thereof has significant importance for the individual's acculturation process and lives in general.

### **5.1.1 Institutionalized Cultural Capital and Access to Education and the Labor Market**

An interesting finding from my data was that many of the interviewees, when initially narrating their story, would begin talking about their way into the job market. In many cases this would be the only or primary focus within the narrative, and additional details on other subjects would only follow the questions they were asked. An example of this is Cabdi who more or less listed the transition from one job to another and then ended his narrative (P3). Having a job or taking an education has some clear benefits in terms of both acculturation but also for the individual's self-perception. Being employed means that you do not receive social security benefits, which is a major aim in regards to official integration strategies and consequently also allows access to permanent residence permits and Danish citizenship. It also has value in terms of one's self-perception, as it means you are able to provide for yourself and be self-reliant. On a practical level it makes a major difference in terms of self-determination. To Fartuun, this is a clear advantage:

You know, it is the money you sweat for that you become happy with. But those you get, it... I don't think it's that good because it something like, it's forced on you. And after 'you need to do this, you need to do this'. But [the money] you work and sweat for, you decide yourself when you [...] plan your vacation and how you are able to plan your future right. But when you get social security you can't (P10, 63).

According to Fartuun, having a job equals more freedom to do what you choose, whereas being on social security is in her opinion not good, as it means that the municipality and state are able to force decisions on you. This reluctance to social security is also expressed by Cabdi, who believes that receiving it can have a detrimental effect on one's psychological health (P3, p. 32). This reluctance to social security could perhaps also be explained by the negative media coverage of immigrants as described previously.

If looking at the table on page 23, the jobs the participants have or have had are primarily within the childcare sector or unskilled jobs cleaning or working at factories. A few have jobs at the municipality doing social work or have been self-employed. Out of the 11 interviewees, five came to Denmark with high school or university level education (P2; P3; P4; P5; P10) and three have taken an education in Denmark. Besides the occupational differences, where women in general occupy more traditionally 'female' jobs, with emphasis on childcare, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what intersections are at play in terms of the opportunities and barriers there are for work and education. As will be shown in the following, especially institutionalized cultural capital acquired in the country of origin has an impact on what opportunities the individuals have, both for education and subsequently also in terms of possible jobs. This also fits theoretically as individual moderating variables obtained prior to arrival, as for instance cultural capital, affects the acculturation process.

### ***Institutionalized Cultural Capital and the Access to Opportunities***

From the interview data, it quickly became clear that having some kind of institutionalized cultural capital at arrival is advantageous in terms of the opportunities the individuals have for gaining a job or further education. Cultural capital can thus be seen as an individual moderating variable obtained prior to arrival, which affects the acculturation process. One example of this is Fatima. Fatima comes from a well-educated family where both her parents had higher educations and very good jobs. This means that the embodied cultural capital she has from her parents is likely to be attuned to a situation in life compatible to having a higher education. While in Kuwait, she also dreamt of educating herself, however because the war broke out, this became impossible: "Our living situation started to deteriorate. And then my parents they are, they become, they couldn't... live up to those dreams I had always dreamt about

education so..." (P4, 24). Instead Fatima met her husband, who she agreed to marry only because he would allow her to go out with friends and potentially also take an education (P4, 26). Eventually, her husband came into trouble because of his political opinions, and they consequently had to flee to Denmark. Here, Fatima finally was able to take the education she had been dreaming of. When she and her husband had settled in Aalborg, she went on to take a preparatory course, which is offered to immigrants and refugees having some kind of high school education from their country of origin and on the basis of this, she was able to apply to study a bachelor's degree in social education. Consequently, the migratory context meant an opportunity which Fatima otherwise would not have had. Having been forced to flee therefore led to a positive changes in her life which also seems to have influenced her attitude towards the Danish nation and society, which she talks very sympathetically about (P4, 74). This would indicate that the opportunity to take an education has impacted her acculturation process positively.

The move from one cultural setting to another for Fatima, who was not able to get an education in her home country, meant an increase in opportunity. But what if the individual had an education prior to coming Denmark? Iman and Sahra are examples of this. Iman, who in Syria took an education as an office assistant at university, has been married twice and because she had an education prior to coming to Denmark, she was offered to go to school at VUC when living with her first husband in Aarhus. As she points out, it is a means to get those who already are accustomed to studying quickly onto a path that is useful in the Danish context. So Iman was actually offered, because of the institutionalized cultural capital she had prior to coming the country, to begin an education in Denmark. Despite her wish to study, she was not allowed by her husband to do so. However after remarrying, Iman had another chance at education. She was educated as a pedagogical assistant in 2007 and worked for two years in a kindergarten, but after a while, she stopped and began taking a higher preparatory examination course (HF). When she eventually graduated HF, she 'was so happy, really happy and proud because [she] had studied HF" (P5, 32). It would seem that Iman has felt no barriers for her possibilities of increasing her cultural capital through education. She recently applied for access to both teacher training and the social worker education (P5, 28). In general throughout the interview, Iman seemed to find that there are many opportunities for bettering her social position and in general was very positive about this and the Danish society. Some part of the reason for this, in addition to the

institutionalized cultural capital she arrived with, might be found in her actively choosing to come to Denmark as she wished to marry a man abroad (P5, 28). Her attitude towards her life in Denmark therefore was very positive, which is a moderating variable that might have meant an easier acculturation process.

In contrast to this is Sahra, who had studied Arabic literature at university in Lebanon and afterwards worked as a teacher for four years. She then married her husband, who lived in Denmark, with whom she was family reunified (P2, 20). When Sahra came to Denmark, she wanted to continue on a similar career path and when she had finished in language school, she began taking a bachelor's degree in social education. However, because of the change in her situation – she now had to study while having small children as well as doing it in a foreign language – Sahra eventually quit the study because she became too overwhelmed and stressed (P2, 47). So even though Sahra, like Fatima and Iman, had fairly easy access to education because of her previous institutionalized cultural capital, her change of situation meant that she eventually had to lose status compared to what she had had in Lebanon. The major difference between Iman and Sahra's situation in this area is that where Iman saw it as an adventure, Sahra actually left behind a fully functioning every day life with which she was very happy. Also where Fatima, because of the circumstances, was simply unable to study in her country, Sahra had already taken an education and was using it. For Sahra then, having an education prior to coming to Denmark did not affect her acculturation process particularly positively, as she had to give up on finishing her education in Denmark, because of the change in situation. She did however, contrastingly to many others who do not have education, have the opportunity to pursue a career path in Denmark similar to the one she left.

The above three examples all show women coming from Arabic countries, however two of the Somali participants, Cabdi and Fartuun, also arrived in Denmark with a high school or higher education. The country of origin consequently cannot be seen in these cases as being a factor in whether the participants had educational opportunities. What all of these have in common is that their narratives reflected that they perceived there to be plenty of opportunities in society. But even though these women in particular have had an easier access to education, it does not necessarily entail that they subsequently to taking it have had easy access to jobs. Both Fatima and Iman suspected that they had had a difficult time finding a job because they are women

and Muslim. Also Iman had had an internship in a kindergarten, where she had worked for six months and in general felt like her work was appreciated, however they had no position for her when the internship ended. She felt that her gender was a disadvantage: "As a woman and mother it is not as easy like a man, I don't think it is. Especially when you are wearing this [points to headscarf] it might be a bit more difficult" (P5, 34). She continues, "Getting a job isn't easy, it becomes easier if you don't wear this, of course, I know that. We all know that" (P5, 36). According to Iman, it did however help when she had an education as she eventually got a job. Also Fatima had several substitute jobs and internships without finding permanent employment. Eventually however, she applied for a job a former colleague recommended, which she got. For this job, she sent the application without a picture which indicates she thought that her appearance had something to do with not getting a job. So on the basis of this it would seem that the intersection of being female and Muslim and outwardly showing it with a headscarf is a barrier to the job market. Otherwise it does not seem like the country of origin or gender intersects disadvantageously in relation to being able to apply for education.

### ***The Absence of Education and the Restriction of Opportunity***

From the above, it is clear that coming to Denmark and having institutionalized cultural capital from one's country of origin is an advantage in terms of getting an education and potentially also more specialized jobs. This of course has to do with the high degree of specialization that the Danish job market generally requires for almost every job, and even unskilled jobs such as cleaning, factory jobs or other manufacturing jobs often require a minimum of language and often also reading abilities. As a moderating individual variable, not having any institutionalized cultural capital or only having primary school level education from your country of origin, consequently has an influence on what opportunities the individuals have and are offered when coming to Denmark.

An example of this can be seen if Basra and Amran are compared. Both of these women come from Somalia. Amran lived in the country under more modest conditions, with a father that had died, so her mother had to provide for them (P6, 20). This indicates that she belonged to a lower social class in Somalia. The schooling she received there only happened in Somali, so when she came to Denmark, she did not

know any English, which she says was a major disadvantage in terms of communication with neighbors (P6, 22). The cultural capital she had did not transfer to a new cultural context. In Denmark she initially was put in a reception class in a public school<sup>3</sup> where she was one year, but then she married her husband, became pregnant and subsequently did not want to attend lower secondary school any more (P6, 24). After returning from maternity leave she therefore began attending a women's project and courses at a folk high school that offers daytime classes<sup>4</sup>. Here she remained for the next seven years, learning practical crafts, such as needlework, but it also became the primary place for her to learn language. Eventually however, she decided that she wanted to have a job (P6, 22). The first position she had was as a substitute bilingual worker in a child care institution, which she found by drawing on her social capital, namely her cousin who was going on maternity leave and therefore left the position open (P6, 26). She worked until there no longer were enough hours for her to support her family, and then applied for the job she is in now as a cleaning assistant. According to Amran, it was easy to be hired for this job, because the primary interest of the sales manager was on language as well as having a driver's license (P1, 30). Obtaining a job consequently does not seem to have been a major difficulty within this sector, where the primary cultural capital that she has needed to obtain was language. However, the extent of her institutionalized cultural capital also means that she is restricted to jobs where this is the only needed skill.

Where Amran comes from a family that lived in the country, Basra on the other hand comes from a family that lived in the capital Mogadishu and that prior to the civil war breaking out, had considerable economic capital and seemed to belong to a higher social class. In contrast to the Arabic women described in the above however, Basra only went to school until the 9th grade, when she married her husband. After this she helped her father in his store until the civil war broke out in Somalia (P7, 32). In school she learnt Somali but also Arabic and English (P7, 64). Where Amran found that her lack of language knowledge had been a problem, Basra also found that it was a clear advantage knowing English and Arabic, as the first enabled her to communicate with

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<sup>3</sup> As mentioned in the methodology some of the participants were sometimes uncertain about how old they were and what year they came. Basra informed in the interview that her age at arrival to Denmark was 19, however her being placed in a reception class at a primary school would indicate that she could have been younger at arrival.

<sup>4</sup> "Daghøjskole"

people in the beginning and the latter helped her to quicker learn Danish (P7, 64; 72). Her embodied cultural capital, in terms of language skills, consequently was an advantage in terms of the acculturation process, as it meant a smoother culture learning than in the case of Amran. Like Amran, Basra went to a women's project for three years after coming to Aalborg before attending language school and after that, to a folk high school offering daytime classes. After this she shifted between school and unskilled substitute jobs until eventually she had to have several surgeries because of an injury she had had to her leg from a bomb while living in Somalia. Because of these injuries, her doctors declared her unfit for work, so she was given employment and support allowance<sup>5</sup> and has not been working since then (P7, 42). From the example of Basra and Amran, it would seem that social class has an impact on the amount of education, and consequently the institutionalized cultural capital gained in the country of origin. However, despite that there are some differences in these two women's embodied and institutionalized cultural capital at arrival in Denmark, the fact that none of them have any higher education with them means that neither of them were offered any type of vocational training or further education. This means that they are limited in terms of what jobs they are able to apply for and it consequently also means that their social mobility is limited. Neither of them seem to be troubled or dissatisfied by this fact or at any point during the interviews express having had a wish to find themselves in another position.

The same was found in the case of Rashid. Rashid comes from a family with a good deal of economic capital and had the civil war not broken out, this economic capital would likely to have benefitted Rashid with a high social status and a good education, thereby giving him institutionalized cultural capital that could have been valuable when having to flee (P8, 46-48). However, because the civil war broke out when Rashid was still fairly young, only 13, he left without this. Despite of this, Rashid seems to be aware that part of his situation in terms of jobs is primarily a result of his own inconsistency and unconcerned approach to schooling. Rashid has worked in manual labor as an unskilled worker during his time in Denmark. During his time at the folk high school, he got into taking pictures on a more professional level. However his partying derailed him, and as he says, if he had focused, things might have been different (P8, 110). Also during his time at language school, he is honest about not

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<sup>5</sup> "Førtidspension"

prioritizing it compared to other social activities with friends. Consequently, Rashid seems satisfied with his situation, knowing that he had some opportunity to influence his situation but chose not to. Part of the reason he is less concerned about his social status, could perhaps be found in him pointing out that everybody is treated equally in Denmark regardless of one's job or social position (P8, 56). In Rashid's case then, the situational variables of the majority society have consequently impacted his experience with the labor market positively, as he has been able to be relaxed about the social position his job offers.

Even though Rashid and Basra have been able to keep finding work within the unskilled part of the labor force, not having any education to fall back on is a vulnerable position. This is clear if considering the case of Said. What is known about Said's life in Somalia prior to coming to Denmark is limited, however as he is presently waiting to begin a 10<sup>th</sup> grade education, it suggests that he has not taken any sort of higher education in Somalia, and thus does not have any institutionalized cultural capital that could be transferred and utilized in the Danish context (P9, 18). When he came to Denmark, he began language school but left fairly quickly to begin working as an unskilled laborer instead, which at this time was considered good practice. However, after having worked for about nine years as an industrial worker and as a cleaning assistant, he unfortunately had a slipped disc. Because of this he has been without a job for the past six years, and as mentioned, is waiting to begin school again (P9, 28). However there seems to have happened a shift between when Said had a job and after he lost it, as though the obstacles to the job market have become insurmountable and he no longer sees how he should proceed in Denmark:

After that, it was... It was really, been really, especially, a change in my life and I have had some... thoughts, but how can I live in Denmark so... I would like to become a little better, back then I just lived in Denmark, I couldn't see here, like, there are [some] who come, who tightens with foreigners (P9, 20).

This illustrate the vulnerability of not receiving any type of education before entering the labor market, as a work injury like Said's will mean that the distance to the specialized labor market seems like an insoluble barrier. Consequently the coping strategies available to deal with this distance are limited because of his lack of institutionalized cultural capital. Said also places the blame of his situation with the demands there are in relation to work and education in Denmark. This becomes clear as

he narrates how a delegation to the US, which he was not a part of, saw how the US offers vast opportunities rather than the barriers he finds in Denmark. He argues that in the US, if you decide on a career path there is nothing that will stop you, rather they will help you to succeed. In contrast to Denmark, he says, in the US, after having attended language school it is not as difficult, you are able to do whatever you want “without requirements” (P9, 40). To Said then, the US offers what Denmark in his opinion does not: acknowledgement and opportunities. Consequently, the situational variables of the Danish settlement society seem to influence how the experience is dealt with. Specifically in terms of integration, it is clear that the unfortunate events and Said’s following dissatisfaction with the situation has negatively impacted his opinion of Denmark, and in effect also his acculturation as he would rather leave the country.

### **5.1.2 Citizenship as Boundary**

As was seen in the second chapter, laws on immigration and integration as well as applying for Danish citizenship have gradually been tightened through increasing requirements. Given that situational variables theoretically are seen to influence acculturation, this could be suspected of having a major impact on the participant’s lives and consequently also their narrative. However what was found did not unequivocally point in that direction. Except for in a few cases, the interviewees actually did not seem to have paid particular notice to the strengthening of laws, most likely because it had not influenced them particularly. This of course has to do with the fact that most of the participants came prior to 1995, so the rules introduced in 1998 and after have not directly affect them. Most were however aware that there had been a tightening of laws, but often the eventual reaction would be more related to the newcomers. In interviews where the participant would not mention law strengthening on their own, most would, when questioned about it, answer regarding citizenship. This would imply that especially citizenship is considered to be part of the integration process by the participants. Given that citizenship can be considered the last barrier to cross before formal, political integration in a society is achieved, it can also be seen as a symbolic boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Crossing this barrier has become increasingly difficult. The following will consequently show how citizenship is perceived and differently impacts the participants and their acculturation process. Similar to the

previous section, cultural capital would seem to have increasing importance in terms of being granted Danish citizenship.

Five of the participants have Danish citizenship, five do not, and one did not say whether he had it or not. There are slightly more participants with Arabic background that have citizenship, than those with Somali background, which perhaps could have something to do with educational level, but might as well coincide with having come to Denmark earlier than those who do not have citizenship. The most common incentive for applying for Danish citizenship has less to do with becoming part of the Danish society and more with practicality. For instance Sahra, who is currently waiting response on her application, mentions that because her current passport is Palestinian, it is not accepted in many countries. Therefore, if she wants to travel with her husband and children who already are Danish citizens, she has to have the Danish passport (P2, 45). Also Amran, Rashid and Iman point out that it is easier having Danish citizenship when being abroad (P6, 76; P8, 58; P5, 52).

Accessing citizenship has however become increasingly difficult since the introduction of harder requirements and for some this experience is more difficult than others. Here cultural capital once again comes into play. Fatima, for instance – who shortly before doing the interview has received Danish citizenship – found that the difficulty of the test had been exaggerated by her female Arabic friends when she had taken the test herself. She furthermore understands and actually empathizes with the need for the requirements for Danish citizenship. In her opinion it is completely fine that you have to be somewhat integrated, have work and be able to provide for yourself (P4, 68). As seen in the above, Fatima was able to utilize her original cultural capital, which is also seen in relation to the requirements as she argues that it fits with the mentality of working hard that she learned from her parents (P4, 64). In contrast, Amran is already considering the test to be very difficult even though not having applied for it yet. Amran has a hard time understanding why the requirements has to be so hard especially in cases like her husband, who applied during the summer and failed the test, but has lived in Denmark for 27 years and worked for the entire time living here (P6, 80). As mentioned previously, Amran came without transferable cultural capital in contrast to Fatima. It could consequently be argued that the later the participant applies for Danish citizenship, the more important cultural capital becomes as a means of coping with the increasing demands of the knowledge based tests

introduced for acquiring citizenship. Basra, who acquired citizenship prior to the rules being tightened, argues along the same lines as she points out the barrier the increasing demand for literacy and language abilities are, for people who have never gone to school. She believes the rules being tightened are a way to refuse people having Danish citizenship: "It's like the Danes say no. They don't want to say no, but it is... Really, it's a no" (P7, 84).

This perception of the requirements for Danish citizenship being a way of turning people away is very clear in the case of Said. As mentioned previously, Said is outside the job market and has been for several years. In addition to that, he left language school fairly quickly to go work, so he did not get an examination in anything but the first level of Danish offered at the time (P9, 28). This has had the effect that when he applied for Danish citizenship, he was refused. He narrates how some of his siblings living in North America, England and Sweden often ask wonderingly why he does not have Danish citizenship when his family does (P9, 22). By bringing in his siblings' opinion, Said underscores how absurd he finds the system to be. He point out how the rules each year are tightened and says that to focus on a minority, only leads to dissatisfaction:

Because all of them, if they had seen any welcome and they would very much like to be happy and then, they would very much like to have work and earnings here in Denmark and *if I had seen a big welcome, I wouldn't, it is not like other countries and then*. But if Denmark is an exclusion country then there are many who become very much angry, *even if they had jobs, even if they had education, even if they had a really good life*. They are not satisfied, no (P9, 22, Emphasis added).

Said through this passage brings out how *other* people, who have all the things he has not, like a job and education, still would not be satisfied in Denmark, which legitimizes his dissatisfaction with his situation. His way of coping with it is by criticizing the Danish system and society for their reaction to him, consequently feeling entitled to his frustration and anger. What is clear from this is that the situational variables in the form of legal requirements to Danish citizenship have pushed Said further away and created resentment towards the Danish society and ultimately impacted his acculturation process negatively.

This is also true in the case of Amir who was refused when applying for Danish citizenship without any further explanation. Confused, as he fulfilled the general requirements at that time, he contacted the human rights institute and was told that he

had likely been refused citizenship because he was considered a threat to national security. Amir narrates how this made him feel like a criminal and entirely unwanted (P1, 49). Where Said had not been able to get citizenship because of him being outside the labor market, Amir felt rejected and as a suspect, despite of him trying his to acculturate as best possible to Danish society, for instance by going into politics, thereby adopting the democratic ideals that are emphasized by politician as vital for integration (P1, 18).

Danish citizenship therefore is an important part of the acculturation process, especially if integration is to be achieved, as it is able to make people feel welcome and recognized by the majority like in the case of Hakeem, who argued that him being granted citizenship is a proof of him being wanted there (P11, 101). Contrastingly, it also serves to deepen the divide between the Danish society and newcomers, as it becomes an insurmountable barrier to cross for some, which ultimately leads to a feeling of rejection that is detrimental to integration. As Amir says, “that makes someone who is completely for Denmark feel like they’re completely outside of it” (P1, 49).

## **5.2 The Media’s Effect on Acculturation**

The amount of media and political attention given to immigrants and refugees by the end of the 1990s and in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> millennia was quite extensive, bringing about very negative stereotypical perceptions of the different ethnic groups as seen previously. On the basis of the interview data, it quickly became apparent that the participants had been highly aware of this and many also have expressed concerns in relation to it. In the following it will be shown how the discourse about ethnic minorities in the Danish media has impacted both an individual internal level as well as on the relationship between the participants and members of the ethnic Danish majority. Particularly in the latter case, there seems to be major differences as a consequence of the different intersections of gender and ethnic minority status. Overall however, it is clear that being Muslim intersects disadvantageously with belonging to a minority in the Danish context, as it leaves you open for discriminatory behavior. However, there does not seem to be any major correlations between these experiences and whether the participant belonged to the Arab or Somali ethnic group, neither in terms of what they were able to do in terms of coping with the media rhetoric.

### 5.2.1 Coping with Media Rhetoric and Stereotypes

All 11 participants that were interviewed for this thesis expressed an awareness and also an opinion or reaction to the media rhetoric regarding immigrants. Only two, Rashid and Hakeem, seemed to have been less affected by it than the remaining nine participants, only briefly mentioning comments that they remembered (P8, 100; P11, 114). Hakeem does however acknowledge that despite him not having been affected by the media attention as a consequence of having been too busy to actually notice, other, newer refugees or immigrants might have been affected by the rhetoric (P11, 112). Several of the other participants did however mention that they felt framed within stereotypes they did not recognize themselves in. An example of this is Amir, who had not felt estranged from the Danish community before he heard Muslims being called 'Muhamedanere' in the media. According to him it was "the first word [he] heard that separated [him] and Denmark" (P1, 18). To Amir this rhetoric not only made him feel violated, but he found it to be imprecise, given that Muslims believe in Allah and not Muhamed, and it grouped him with something he could not identify with. Sahra is also affected by the stereotypes, and how Muslims and ISIS have become synonymous. It has left her feeling as though she needs to prove somehow that she too is against them. Her way of doing this is to talk with her colleagues about ISIS and thereby making sure that they know her stance. Because she is a woman and a Muslim, she wears a headscarf and she finds that wearing this influences how she is perceived by the majority of Danes: "They become a bit 'hmm we are talking about Islam and she is wearing a scarf?'" (P2, 35). The headscarf this way is a clear signifier of her being Muslim, which makes her feel like she needs to prove she is not like how the media depicts Muslims to be.

This is also the typical coping strategy of the participant, to attempt to deflect or show the stereotype to be wrong. Many however seem to cope by claiming not to care or reacting to it, pointing out the ignorance of blaming everybody for a few people's action (P2, 40; P6, 52; P5, 62; P7, 94). On some it does however have some effect. For example Cabdi said that the incessant media rhetoric about the inabilities of Somalis to integrate began to make him wonder whether they were somehow inherently flawed and thereby unable to do what was asked. He compares it to asking someone unable to walk, to take a stroll, and then scolding him or her for not being able to do so (P3, p. 31-32). Cabdi argues that the difficulties were caused by cultural differences, and people

were expected to change too quickly, but also says that he simply ignored what was being said. Cabdi consequently was able to cope and still move forward by simply ignoring and shutting it out. Another thing that effectively is used by the participants as a coping mechanism to deal with the stereotypes created by media, is to point out they have a job, as it proves that they contribute to the society, contrary to what is generally said about immigrants (P6, 48; P5, 62). Basra is an early retirement pensioner and consequently cannot use a job to show that the media is wrong. Instead she draws on the praise she was given while she was in language school. Directly after having talked about the media rhetoric she says: “I don’t know about other people but I... Every day my teacher she tells the others, she says ‘listen Basra is here at 8.30 in school.’ [...] ‘look you’re late, you’re late, you’re late. Look at her, she’s a single mother with kids, she’s here perfectly on time in school’” (P7, 76). This is clearly a way to emphasize how wrong the media is – at least in relation to her and consequently a way to cope with and deflect the stereotypical perception of Somalis as lazy.

In one case, the media actually inspired one of the participants to start a women’s club. Fartuun, who is president of this club, says that the reason for her to start the club, was that she saw how many ethnic minority parents were confused and she decided that she wanted to share her experiences and knowledge because:

We were in the media a lot, they say that Somali children or immigrant children steal and they do like this on the street or at night, so those of us parents who understood a lot or had an education or something, we thought we should stand together, I said no, what they are saying in the media right, we would like, we will not put up with it. We just had to do something (P10, 35).

What they decided to do was to “stick together” (P10, 35) and begin to cooperate with the school administration, youth clubs and the police. Several things are interesting in this. On the one hand, the negativity surrounding Somali children actually meant that these Somali women formed and gathered within a very typically Danish tradition, meeting voluntarily to change something in society. However what also becomes evident is that what Fartuun and the others who rallied behind this idea had in common was cultural capital, both embodied and objectified. These were women who ‘understood a lot’ or had education. The social capital created was consequently of the bonding type and the effect the media coverage had was a unification in a group as Somalis. They ‘rallied’ as Somali women, and their identification as group was to an

increasing degree solidified in contrast to Danes. It was the 'others' the native Danes they needed to show the wrongfulness of the prejudices. For these women, the negativity in the media became a challenge to their acculturation, however because of the cultural and social capital they had, they were able to face it and turn it into something empowering. It did however also mean that the perceived distance between the majority and minority became more evident.

One participant who was not able to simply ignore but rather expresses a very strong dissatisfaction with what was presented by the media every day, is Said. To Said, the extreme focus is perceived as a pressure to acculturate in a specific way into the Danish society. His initial reaction to this was to leave the country because he felt that given his ethnic background there was nothing good in store for him because of "[his] culture and [his] religion and [his] color" (P9, 20). How Said actually coped with the situation is uncertain, as he simply says that now he has lived for many years in Denmark (P9, 20). He does however still not like living in Denmark, which he states explicitly. This is because, he says, "I have my own culture and I do not want it to disappear and, I won't throw my culture away, I don't want to ever. And I don't want to throw away my religion, never" (P9, 20). Said seems to perceive there to be pressure from Danish society for him to not only integrate but actually assimilate into the Danish culture. Because he emphasizes cultural maintenance to such a degree it, in combination with his experiences with Danish citizenship and the labor market, means that he finds himself unable to adapt to the Danish society in a positive way. The only reason why Said has not left yet is that he finds himself in a difficult position, because his children do not wish to leave the country (P9, 38).

The effect of this type of media rhetoric and the resulting stereotypes can consequently be seen to create a distance between ethnic Danes and people belonging to ethnic minorities. Fatima points this out as she narrates how she and her family had had a good relationship with their Christian neighbor in Kuwait, despite their cultural differences. She questions however, if this is possible in Denmark when the focus on immigrants is primarily negative:

The things that's funny is that you could without problem, you know, find a peaceful way to co-exist, but the question is if there is a tendency for it, if you are able to if you keep hearing such negative things and, yes, only let the negative show (P4, 64).

What Fatima is pointing to here is that the negative stereotypes drives a wedge between two populations and restricts the role of immigrants, consequently also influencing the way the ethnic minority and the majority are able to interact. One-sided, negative and stereotyping media coverage therefore could be seen as potentially detrimental to acculturation, especially for people who do not have the resources to counteract and prove the stereotypes wrong. Those who have resources, especially in areas that are emphasized negatively in the media, are better equipped at coping with it by knowing with themselves that they do not fit within it and being able to prove it wrong.

### **5.2.2 Effects of creating a distrusted other**

So what effect do the negative media rhetoric and the stereotypical portrayals of immigrants and refugees have on everyday encounters with ethnic Danes? As was seen previously, public opinion is to some degree influenced and shaped by media representation. Theoretically this can be seen as a situational variable as it in some instances translates into discriminatory behavior as almost all of the people spoken with, regardless of having Somali or Arabic background, expressed that they to some extent or other had experienced either verbal and/or physical abuse in their daily lives from people on the street. Most of the participants also reason that these reactions are an effect of what people hear in the media. There is however a difference in what type of discriminatory behavior that the participants experienced depending on whether the participant is male or female. In the following these differences will be elaborated.

#### ***Being Woman and Vulnerable***

It seems that ethnic women generally experience more overt abuse than men. All six interviewed women had been harassed verbally and most of them had been pushed or shoved while in public by ethnic Danes. An example of this is Amran who narrates having been harassed in public and says that “if [she] look[s] back, now when it is a long time ago, it was really difficult” (P6, 58). She remembers one time where she had been out shopping and had an encounter with an older woman who had pushed her and told her to leave the country. Despite being upset, Amran had seen no other option than to ignore the incident:

She is 70, what do you do? What do you tell her? People can't say [against] her, but you say 'be silent' or something. Then, people are able to see you, what do you want with her, right. So you have to close your ears and then go (P6, 58).

Amran reasons that because she is a Somali woman no one has noticed, or chose not to notice how the woman pushed her and that if she decided to confront the woman, people would become suspicious of her intentions. Consequently, Amran finds the only way to react and navigate in a situation like this is to ignore it and move on. This point is made even clearer when she narrates of a similar incident where her aunt was pushed and wants to react, but Amran argues, “she has no witnesses” (ibid). Amran’s coping strategy is to rationalize and accept the apparent inevitability of these reactions, saying that some want foreigners in Denmark, others do not “it’s different and we respect that. That’s a given because we are the guests here” (P6, 58). In Amran’s case then, the impact of such experiences is that she is made aware of not being fully accepted by the Danish majority, consequently emphasizing her position as a foreigner.

Amran is not the only one to have had this type of experience as several of the others narrate having been pushed, hit or yelled at in different situations (P7, 95; P10, 43; P5, 64). It is by most accepted as a natural reaction to the media and them being ‘strangers’. As Sahra says “I understand them. When the media talk about all that they are saying, and they meet us and think that we are like those who [the media] are talking about” (P2, 41). Others also point to the fact that it is often older people who have not been in contact with people with ethnic minority background who react (P10, 43; P5, 64). In general, the coping strategy that seems to be employed is to ignore what happens and also accept and even in some cases justify their actions through rationalization. For instance Sahra has had experiences with people especially elderly women approaching her, name calling her and telling her to “go home” (P2, 37). Her approach to this is also to ignore it and not listen. Also she to some degree rationalize it: “it is normal I think, its normal. That some people become a little... a little... Is it racist, you could say, nothing racist but”. She continues, saying that she knows Lebanese people also become unfriendly towards the Syrian refugees (P2, 37). However despite rationalizing and claiming to ignore it, it does have some effect on her: “[if] I experience it very much I become annoyed and I don’t like being here in Denmark actually, if I in my everyday life meet people in the street and [they] say some bad words to me or something” (P2, 37). She also says that is was worse in the 1990s and that when it did happen to her at this point in time, she “hated going on the streets back then” (P2, 39). The negative encounters consequently should be seen as having a possible negative

effect on integration as it problematizes the interaction with the majority. As will be shown later positive encounters do however seem to counterbalance the negative ones.

The reason for women to be harassed seems to lie with the headscarf often worn by Muslim women. For example one of the Somali women, Fartuun, did not wear a headscarf the first few years of her residing in Denmark. However Fartuun decided, when her daughter was seven, that she would begin wearing it in order for her daughter to learn about her cultural background (P10, 37). According to Fartuun, after having put on the headscarf the amount of negative attention given to her increased significantly: “so every time I come into the city, and especially [when] I begin wearing a headscarf, then they begin ‘bug off’, ‘go home’ and all that” (P10, 43). If you are woman and Muslim and chooses to wear a headscarf, your position thus seems to become especially disadvantaging. That there is a difference in vulnerability between men and women is also clear from Hakeem’s concern about something happening to his wife and daughter because of the change in societal opinions towards Muslims (P11, 86-87). The headscarf therefore can be seen as a clear and obvious physical marker for Danes, showing that there is a cultural distance to the person wearing it. For Danes who do not approve of Muslims being in Denmark it becomes easy to target them and through discriminatory behavior exclude them from the Danish collective. Consequently it is clear that being woman and belonging to a Muslim ethnic minority intersect in a way that leaves you open for discrimination to in a way that that Muslim men are not.

### ***The Feared Muslim Man***

Where Muslim women experience explicit public discrimination rather frequently, it would seem that at least among the participants that were interviewed, men experience less of this though a few briefly mentioned that they had been affronted in public. For instance Said was met with suspicion by an older woman who questioned him about where he was from and if he were Muslim. When he answered in the affirmative, the woman asked whether he wanted there to be bombings in Denmark. His reaction is similar to that of the women above, that is, to draw parallels to media representation and the ignorance of the woman as she bases her assumption on this solely and not on actual meetings with Muslims (P9, 22). On the other hand, there is Rashid who said that he had never experienced something like this. He accredited this to the fact that he had gone to the gym a lot previously and therefore was very muscular at this time. Because

of this, he believes that nobody dared to say anything to him (P8, 100-104). Though, only Rashid argues this, it suggests that the reason why the men that was interviewed for this thesis experience less overt reactions in public is because they are perceived to be dangerous to some degree or other.

This type of negative stereotype can impact an individual's life more directly, even when adapting in a way where integration is used as an acculturation strategy. In one case where the media transmitted anxiety about Muslim men became a problem is that of Amir's. Amir came to Denmark in 1995 as work migrant and had been living in both Sweden and Brazil prior to coming to Denmark. He had after living in Brazil, returned for to Lebanon, however he found that he had changed and no longer felt that he fit within the Lebanese culture because of the culture shedding that had happened during his travels (P1, 18). After this he moved to Sweden and then Denmark. Amir had generally been carefree until one day he met a Danish woman who he initiated a relationship with and eventually married. They quickly discovered however, that having a relationship such as theirs in itself is problematized by outside voices:

You can look at our relationship; everything went smoothly and was lovely like it should be. Until you realize that in this society you cannot love each other if you come from two different backgrounds... Yes you can, but nobody let you be, not the society here... (P1, 18).

It had not been a problem for the couple when it had just been the two of them, but when a child came into the picture everything changed and the "culture-war", as Amir calls it, began. Living in a small society, he overheard an elderly Danish man tell Amir's wife that Amir now probably would kidnap their child and take the daughter with him to Lebanon and that the wife would never see their child again. After nine years together the couple split shortly after they had their daughter "actually mostly because, often you hear something in the media, but she became worried" (P1, 18). The suspicion spread by the media, thus consequently meant that Amir, who had adapted to such a degree that he had married an ethnic Danish woman, actually found himself being feared by the same women. This carried into the years following, where he was not allowed by his ex-wife to take his daughter on trips, as she was worried that he would not return (ibid.). According to Amir his ex-wife's fear of him taking their child should be explained by the stories told in the media of Muslim men kidnapping their children of mixed marriages. Eventually however Amir's ex-wife let him take his daughter on a

trip to Spain: “When I came back with my [daughter] I was proud to show her after those five years that, look, your daughter hasn’t been kidnapped or anything” (P1, 18). Again we find similar to the above, that the only strategy available in these instances is to prove the stereotypes permitted by media to be wrong. The most striking thing about this example is however the extreme power of the media to interrupt and sow insecurity even between two people who are close to each other. As Amir puts it:

All this I’m speaking about here, its part of something with someone who lived with me, closely. And we lived together so may years, that that mistrust to each other is because of all those many rumors (P1, 18).

So even though being male and Muslim intersect to elicit less direct discrimination, the categories does intersect in a way in the Danish context, that opens for another type of discrimination, that, as was seen, might influence social interactions in another just as detrimental way and consequently impact integration.

### **5.3. Bridging Social Capital, Breaking Barriers and Negotiating Culture**

Many of the participants, especially the women, emphasized in the interviews the importance of social interaction with the Danes. Theoretically, this approach of prioritizing interaction with the majority usually leads to an acculturation strategy of either integration or assimilation. What makes the differences between the two theoretically is the emphasis given to cultural maintenance. However cultural maintenance and social interaction is not always a possibility, because as Fatima says about her experience with Danes:

It is a little, it is actually difficult to convince the other that you are able, that you have something and that you are able to do something and that you have something, yeah. That it is worth [something], I mean, I can come and as I said get insight into your culture properly, but are you able to get the others to come in, look into (P4, 38).

This plays into the notion that integration is a two-way process that requires the majority to accept and to some degree adapt to the newcomers as well. As was seen previously in the analysis many Danes do not accept this, which leads to discriminatory behavior and subsequently could lead to some degree of marginalization. However, as will be shown in the following, positive social encounters with ethnic Danes counteracts this, in some cases break down barriers and also serve to increase the social as well as

the cultural capital of the immigrants. In terms of culture it is clear that for the immigrants some negotiation is going on of what to maintain and what is deemed as passable to shed. This process seems to largely be influenced by how close one's culture and cultural capital is perceived to be to the Danish, where those who perceive their culture as similar to the Danish need to shed less. These two points will be elaborated on in the following.

### **5.3.1 Breaking Barriers through Social Interaction**

One thing that especially the women seemed to experience when coming to Denmark is difficulty managing the social isolation that follows leaving their country and entire social network behind. Several of the women interviewed narrated how they after arriving in Denmark had felt it had been very difficult to deal with this loss of their social capital and it became a barrier that they had to figure out how to overcome. In many Muslim countries there is more tradition for families being very close-knit and an invaluable resource of support especially in terms of child rearing. Amran for instance pointed out how she, because she had married quickly and had children, missed her home country where there would have been others to help out (P6, 20). Also Fatima narrated how the initial three years in Denmark had been difficult as her and her husband who had come as refugees were only given residence for one year at the time (P4, 30). It affected them psychologically she says as there were many new things such as the weather and a different culture, but also loneliness and rootlessness. The instability and insecurity about their situation influenced how Fatima was able to cope with the situation. Adding to the loneliness Fatima and her husband had wanted to be located in a separate housing as they had children and they were consequently placed in a house situated in the country far away from anything else. This kind of isolation was a grave contrast to what they had come from and Fatima ultimately became depressed. She contrasts it to her life before: "I come from a family that like often the neighbors and family. And then all of a sudden you are here all by yourself and then... I don't have any family here" (P4, 30). The loss of her social capital consequently made it difficult for her in Denmark. What helped her in this period was the contact she had with a Danish child health visitor who supported her in the difficult time. She became close friends with her and was amongst other invited to 70-year birthday (P4, 78). Fatima consequently increased her bridging social capital, which helped her overcome

the loss of her previous social capital. Similarly Sahra, who were family reunified with her husband in Denmark, describes how she experienced mixed feelings of excitement prior to her coming to a foreign country but also sadness about leaving her entire social network in Lebanon. She describes how she found her life in Denmark to be difficult in the beginning: “I know no-one only my husband. And everything is new, roads and country and people” (P2, 20). This difficulty persisted for about a year, both because of her having left everything she knew as well as her husband working long hours adding to her isolation. What turned this around was that she began in school, met new people and “had some responsibilities and things to do at day” (P2, 20). Because of this her social capital was raised as she gained a social network and it meant that she became more content with her life in Denmark.

That it is women who generally emphasize how lonely they were at first in Denmark could be because of a disadvantaging intersection of gender and religion. Being a woman, in an Islamic culture, often to a larger degree entail restriction to the home in contrast to men who are allowed more freedom. This is for instance possible to see from the fact that Amir, Rashid and Hakeem all had Danish girlfriends. In addition both Rashid and Hakeem say that they due to this learned about the Danish culture (P8, 116; P11, 56). This happening for Muslim women is less likely as Islam forbid women to have relationships prior to marriage. In that way it would seem that men are advantaged in terms of establishing bridging social capital and getting acquainted with Danish culture.

In general most of the participants emphasize how important it is to get out and be social rather than sitting at home in isolation. Work and education are some of the places where social interaction across ethnicities are inevitable and very fruitful in terms of building social capital across cultures and through this breaking down barriers. Rashid for instance found that because he during his time in Denmark was at a folk high school where there primarily were Danish natives, he more quickly gained cultural capital in form of language but also general understanding of the Danish culture (P8, 40). This is because he established bridging social capital through interactions with the people belonging to the majority. Also for Fatima taking an education meant an increase in social capital as she acquired a network within the Danish society, especially as she formed a group with two Danish students. Within this group a kind of “cultural understanding” (P4, 40) came to exist, where their different cultural backgrounds were

acknowledged and accepted. Through this group she consequently made close friendships and thus gained bridging social capital, as they still continued to be friends after having graduated. Because of these friendships, she has gained insight into the customs of for instance the Danish church wedding, which as she says, was only otherwise seen in movies (P4, 42-44). Belonging to this group during her studies also seem to have had an additional value to her as it meant acknowledgement by others, who by birth belonged to the Danish majority. As peers in their class began to realize the value of their group, Fatima found herself in the position of actually being able to deny others permission into the group: "So I actually had the power to deny them" (P4, 44). Though having social capital within the majority, she still emphasizes the importance of maintaining her culture. Fatima thus seems to have been successful in employing an integration strategy during her acculturation process, as she has gained bridging social capital while maintaining her culture. Educational situations can consequently be seen as beneficial for integration as it offers social interaction across ethnicities. But also workplaces offer possibilities of breaking down barriers between ethnic minority and the majority. For instance for Fartuun, the work place meant an increase in bridging social capital and became a place for breaking down barriers and learning culture. Fartuun initially felt questioned by her co-worker about her way of doing things in class and felt she was given no room to perform her work. She had been employed in her position as a bilingual teacher to help the Somali children bridge the cultural divide. To solve this problem, she went to her employer, who decided to make a course for all teachers about what the role of bilingual teachers in classes were. Because of this her relationship to the teacher became much better afterwards and according to Fartuun this is because "she learned my culture and I learned hers" (P10, 35; 67; 71). Fartuun's employer consequently helped establish understanding between the two and their cultural differences.

Taking an education and having a job thus to a large extent is a guarantee for social interaction with native Danes which often leads to bridging social capital as well. But what about those who do not have a job or have taken further education than language school? Basra is a good example of this as she has been outside the labor market for a long period because she became a pensioner relatively early and therefore could have ended up being isolated. However Basra emphasizes the importance of being socially active in order to become integrated: "You do integration, you go and talk

like I do here with [...] [people at local housing project] and I do theater and so I go other people, you become integrated and you know many” (P7, 51-53). Basra has consequently actively sought social interaction with the majority society. In addition to this, Basra is a volunteer member in a Somali women’s club, which has been important for Basra’s perception of herself. This has meant an appreciation of her through work with the club as for instance they have met with other volunteer groups telling about their work, and according to her, the group of women has been praised for their skills by the municipality (P7, 55). So even though the primary objective of the group is to help other ethnic women, they receive acceptance by the majority society and has also interacted outside the ethnic community. This way, the Somali women’s group has become a way for Basra to gain bonding social capital, but to some extent as it also has grown into the community around them, it created bridging social capital that enable the women to better understand the Danish society.

### **5.3.2 Negotiating Culture**

For the large majority of the participants, culture is more or less conflated with religious conviction. This means that for the interviewees acculturating in a Danish context becomes a matter of Christian versus Islamic culture and how to adequately navigate within these two. For some the perceived differences and distance between these cultures are larger than for others. For those who perceive the cultures to be very different, the amount of cultural shedding that has to happen in order to adapt is more extensive, however for some it is crucial that it happens within the boundaries of what is perceived as acceptable for still being able to identify and maintain an Islamic identity. One area where culture especially is under negotiation is in regards to children and child rearing. An example of this is in regards to young girls and what they are allowed to wear. For instance Basra has allowed her daughters to wear trousers, despite it not being well received by other Somali Muslims in Denmark who rather saw that women and girls were completely covered like they would have been in Somalia. When she was confronted with this, her response was to argue that she no longer lived in Somalia and consequently had to adapt accordingly:

I take a little Danish [culture] and I take a little in Somalia, Muslim [culture]. Not everything, so I become a little less. In the middle. [...] My children attend a Danish school. And Danish people wear pants; they don’t wear an entire scarf, no. So they wear trousers and they wear a little scarf. No problem (P7, 82).

Here it is clear that Basra is very aware that her fleeing to Denmark has meant that her children is going to be brought up and live their lives in another cultural context. Her reaction to this is to allow some cultural shedding in order for her children to adapt best possibly to the Danish context they have to live in. Similarly, Amran narrates how much confusion and conflict there has been among Somali parents because of the religion classes or 'Christendom' classes in primary and secondary school. According to Amran, many parents pull their children from these classes out of fear that it is disguised Christian religion being lectured. She and her husband did however decide that their children should "attend Christendom classes because in high school you need it" (P6, 66). The compromise having been made here in terms of religion is consequently primarily because Amran and her husband want to give their children the best possible chance in school. That it is a negotiation is however clear as she says "I don't know anything, what does it take or is it Christendom, or what is it. But he respects that he is Muslim, he respects these classes" (P6, 68). Her argument here is that her son is able to excel and get good grades in a topic like Christendom, without it being a compromise of his religious conviction as a Muslim.

Many of the participants do however prioritize passing on some kind of cultural capital relevant primarily for their origin country. An example of this is for instance that Fartuun decided to begin wearing a headscarf to show her daughter especially where and from what culture she originates (P10, 37). Fartuun emphasizes that she has attempted to raise her children so that they have something from both the Danish as well as the Somali culture (P10, 37). So despite shedding some original culture, she wishes to maintain other parts of it. Similarly Iman has taught her children Arabic since infancy and Sahra and her husband have chosen to keep speaking Arabic, so that their children will be able to learn it (P4, 78; P2, 84). This would indicate that it is important for them to maintain their cultural background and pass it on to their children. It is primarily women who comment on children and passing on culture.

In contrast Hakeem argues that "your culture here is closed in your home", but also mentions the many opportunities there are in the Danish society to maintain culture and language, such as language schools and mosques (P11, 94). When asked if this is something he and his family have utilized he answers:

No I haven't because I don't, I don't want to be too close to all that. I would rather my children don't get confused. So if bilinguals have problems, but, well 90% of those who are bilinguals have some problems. They are confused which culture they belong to. I tell my children 'You are Danish. Okay, we have a Lebanese background, it is me who have a Lebanese background, you should move on, don't look back (P11, 96).

Hakeem has consequently taken an active choice not to pass on his cultural capital and identity to his children in order to not disturb their chances in the Danish society. Similarly Hakeem encourages his daughter to not wear the headscarf, as he believes that she will have better opportunities in terms of jobs and education (P11, 171). It would seem that Hakeem to some extent has chosen to assimilate rather than integrate. What is interesting about Hakeem is furthermore how he perceives the cultural distance between Denmark and his home country to not be that pronounced. According to him, Lebanese culture is very much like western culture as there are Christians there too. Because of this "[he] ha[sn't] felt like a stranger here" (P11, 50). Hakeem seems to be arguing that his cultural capital is in fact almost the same as the Danish culture and norms. He for instance also emphasizes how drinking alcohol at parties in Lebanon is completely accepted, which normally is forbidden in Islamic culture. Because he perceives his culture to be virtually the same as the Danish, it means that he has had to shed less of his original cultural in order to adapt to Danish customs.

This type of coping strategy of claiming cultural proximity is also evident in the case of Iman. Iman was brought up by parents who were both educated in university where her father was teaching at one. She argues that her upbringing and life had been just like those of people in Denmark, with interaction across genders and with a large degree of self-determination for instance in relation to clothes and wearing a headscarf (P5, 72). Furthermore, her father's work entailed meetings with many people from European countries, which according to her, made it natural to meet strangers, "So when [she] came to Denmark, [she] couldn't feel any difference.[...] maybe my clothes are different but [laughs] nothing else" (P5, 68). In general Iman also seems to have had relatively ease with adapting to the Danish society, and in terms of her daughter she has allowed her to not wear a headscarf, like she herself did not when first arriving in Denmark. Again there seems to be coherence between the perceived cultural similarity and the amount of cultural shedding that has to occur. In other words, it is fairly unproblematic for those who perceive their culture to be similar to the Danish to

choose integration as an acculturation strategy, as cultural maintenance to a larger degree becomes unproblematic for both the individual as well as the receiving society.

The opposite can be argued as the perceived cultural distance becomes proportionally bigger. For instance, even though Fatima argues that she does not perceive that there is so much of a cultural distance, she does point out that her appearance as well as her not drinking alcohol set her apart, even though she respects if others choose to do so (P4, 56). She has however experienced pressure to assimilate in certain aspects. She gives the example of a colleague who kept commenting on her food and subsequently mentioned how he had chosen to eat what was the norm when he had travelled to other places. From this she concluded that what he wanted from her was to do the same and not maintain the food restrictions connected with her religion (P4, 74). Her coping strategy for this however, is to compare herself with others who do not do certain things either. For instance one of her previous co-students did not drink alcohol, like Fatima does not, whereas another co-student got really drunk frequently (P4, 74). In that way she finds common differences and similarities with the others and are able to claim some degree of cultural similarity with certain persons of the majority. On the basis of this, it is also clear that the majority society's perception of whether you are culturally similar, to some degree plays into the difficulty there is connected to maintaining one's culture. Her having experienced this pressure does not however seem to influence her ability to feel comfortable and satisfied with her situation in Denmark. For instance she narrates how her and her husband had been in an amusement park where she, though standing out from the crowd, had felt very happy and satisfied:

I just sat by the pool by the water world and my kids they swim[...]. I know that I like, yes, I looked a bit different with headscarf but that's fine, it's my dress, like summer dress and I just sit there and enjoy it. I said to my husband 'I just love this country', I know, I stand maybe little like, yes, and there are many naked people and they like look, that's fine, well I am, they are allowed, and I'm allowed too, I'm allowed to wear my headscarf and sit in whatever place I want to (P4, 74).

So even though she is aware that she is different than the rest of the people there, she is able to accept and enjoy herself, maintaining her culture while still being a part of the larger society. Fatima consequently seems to be able to successfully employ integration as an acculturation strategy.

In general the majority of the interviewees seem to have found a way to maintain their culture, with either more or less culture shedding as a consequence. This is however not the case for everybody. Said, as the only of the participants, has a very restrictive version of what is acceptable in terms of cultural maintenance. In connection with talking about the difference in Danish and Somali traditions regarding public semi-nudity and swimming Said says:

Some people from my country or Muslim country, they don't care and they become like the Danish culture. [...]It is Pia Kjærsgaard who likes them and says 'I integrate people' [laughs]. I don't know. It doesn't have anything to do with integration if you throw away your culture or religion or something, no not at all (P9, 32).

As mentioned previously, cultural maintenance is of an extremely high importance for Said, and the option of not maintaining his culture just as it was in Somalia is implausible to him. People who do decide to assimilate or shed their culture to some degree rather than maintain their culture, is grouped by him with Danish People's party's former leader, Pia Kjærsgaard, who is known for her dislike of immigration and multiculturalism. This would suggest that his opinion about what should and should not be mixed or given up in terms of culture is very strict. This becomes even more clear as he narrates how, in his opinion, that "there are no-one who understand what integration is, not at all" at the integration office. This is because, all of the employees he knows of with ethnic minority background, have either been born and studied in Denmark, or have engaged in intercultural marriages with Danes (P9, 40). That he feels that intermarriage is a violation of any cultural capital the individual might suggest that in his opinion, interaction with Danish people should be kept at minimum, especially in the private sphere. This would mean that, at least in terms of the private sphere, Said employs separation as an acculturation strategy. The entirety of Said's rejection of the Danish society and culture could however also be argued to be a coping strategy for having ended up in a marginalized position. As seen from the above, Said clearly feels that there is a pressure for him to assimilate to the Danish culture and he to some degree use this as reasoning for claiming integration in Denmark to be a failure (P9, 22). In addition to that he has, as a result of an injury and lack of cultural capital, found himself involuntarily separated from the majority society. He has been outside the labor force for several years at this point and feels as though he is stuck in his situation and

he consequently has very little interaction with the majority society. By actively rejecting the Danish society and prioritizing the purity and maintenance of his culture it becomes possible for him to claim an active choice instead of a position he has been forced into, making it a situation he is able to cope with. Given that Said is the only of the participants who finds himself in this position, it is not possible to say if this is a common reaction for someone in similar situations, however it is an interesting contrast to the rest of the participants who have found ways to adapt and cope with their experiences so as to be content with their lives in Denmark.

## 6. Discussion

The purpose of this part of the thesis is to discuss on the basis of the above findings in the analysis as well as the contextualizing chapter whether there are specific things that can be pointed out as detrimental or advantageous for integration and relate it to the current situation in Denmark. Basically, the question is whether there are some things to be learned from the experiences of the people who have come to Denmark previously and have already begun the acculturation process and have had to cope with and adapt to specific challenges during their time here.

The first thing that became clear from the analysis is that attachment to the labor market had a major impact on the participants and is extremely important for the general satisfaction with one's life situation, and consequently also how one adapts to society. Of course, this argument is not only relevant for immigrants and refugees but also to native Danes, as falling outside the job market and being on some kind of social security has become increasingly difficult. This is partially to do with recently introduced cuts to the amount given in social security (Styrelsen for Arbejdsmarked og Rekruttering), but also because of the increasing tendency to accuse people who receive welfare payment of being lazy and taking advantage of the welfare state. As could be seen in the analysis, in addition to simply fulfilling the requirement for being a participating citizen or denizen<sup>6</sup>, having a job became a way for many of the participants to prove how the stereotypical perception of immigrants as exploiting the system was wrong, at least in terms of them individually and for many it was their primary source of social encounters with ethnic Danes. Because the labor market attachment influences so many other spheres of integration, it could be argued to be particularly important to seek as much equality of access as possible.

However, as also became evident from the analysis, not everybody has equal access to either education or the job market. Having previous institutionalized capital is a clear advantageous factor for those who arrived in Denmark in comparison to those who had little or no education. The latter are at best able to apply for unskilled labor, which are often also the most vulnerable jobs in terms of long-term employment. The

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<sup>6</sup> Denizans are defined as aliens or strangers in a state who are granted limited rights than citizens as well as having a weaker entitlement to these rights. Examples are economical, political as well as cultural rights (Standing, 2012).

former on the other hand, have far more opportunities as they in general were offered further education, which usually leads to economically more attractive and personally stimulating jobs. The danger of this is that in such a highly specialized and educated society as the Danish model, if you become unlucky and have a work injury, which was the case for one of the participants, you find yourself completely unequipped to find your way back to the labor market, through for instance education. Similar findings are pointed to by Karen Magrethe Dahl and Vibeke Jacobsen, who argue that the demands of the labor market have changed to such a degree that labor market integration has become increasingly difficult for immigrants, and that the amount of education, work experience, and language proficiency is able to influence this positively (2005, p. 56).

If comparing the initiatives, regulations and general focus that were in place during the 90s and those of 2016, it would seem that the importance of attachment to the labor market has been given even more focus today. This is for example seen in that work, education and language proficiency are the first three of nine targets in the Integration Barometer introduced in 2012 (Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet). As illustrated in the second chapter of this thesis, the Danish system was far more lenient in terms of what was required of the immigrant until the beginning of the 2000s. For instance, this came to show during the analysis as several of the participants left language school shortly after beginning without having passed any or only a few exams. With the introduction of proof of language knowledge as a requirement for permanent residence 1998, the incentive for leaving language school prematurely had become far smaller. This is a significant change, as it is not only being able to communicate with the majority that is key to successful social and labor market integration (see for instance Dahl and Jacobsen) but, furthermore, as the requirements that an immigrant has to fulfill have become higher, it has meant an exclusion (from for instance Danish citizenship) of those who did not apply for it, or were unable to because they found themselves both outside the labor market as well as without the needed proof of language proficiency. As could be seen from the analysis and findings, citizenship can act as a major barrier and lead to marginalization, especially of people who already are less equipped to be successful in society. If the individual does not have the resources and capital necessary or simply ends up being unlucky, the result might be that a form of separation is a better choice of strategy for engaging with the Danish and distance themselves further from the Danish society.

The introduction of such initiatives such as the integration basis education program and the integration program (see chapter 2) not only help enhance the qualifications of an individual whose cultural capital is not relevant for the Danish context, but also means that the immigrant comes into contact with the labor market, and thereby ethnic Danes more quickly. As was seen in the analysis, this often results in the establishment of bridging social capital and through that, the attainment of cultural capital specific to Denmark. Given that the comparative distance to education and the labor market with which the immigrant arrives cannot be changed, the current approach seems promising in terms of better equipping the individual to deal with the challenge of approaching the labor market, which ultimately influences integration positively, both in the eyes of the individual as well as the majority society. Nonetheless, it does not change the fact that refugees and immigrants arriving with less transferable cultural capital are in a more disadvantageous position. Additionally, a new level of pressure is introduced in order to succeed in getting a job with the introduction of the integration benefit. What exact impact this will have is uncertain, but again, it is likely to affect those who are the weakest in terms of cultural capital the most, given that they have the largest barrier in terms of getting a job. Based on the findings of the analysis, it could be argued that this will affect Muslim women choosing to wear the headscarf severely, as they experience the headscarf to be a barrier to finding jobs. According to an investigation based on telephone interviews, 55% of the Muslim women asked felt discriminated against and felt that the headscarf was a barrier to getting a job (European Network Against Racism, 2016). This type of discrimination is difficult to prove factually, but if this is the case, Muslim women that are coming to the country presently will experience it as a barrier to the labor market and have to make do with the reduced integration benefit. Overall, it could be argued that the initiatives and increasingly restrictive measures, such as the requirement of language on a specific level, are actually useful. Some will however be disadvantaged as these types of restrictions and requirements impact those who are already furthest away from the labor market the hardest.

The second finding in the analysis was that media coverage has a potentially detrimental effect on integration. The analysis showed that the participants had paid attention to and been emotionally affected by the stereotypical portrayals of

immigrants in the media and had had to find ways to deflect the stereotypes. This is not in and on its own particularly new knowledge. For instance, Danish sociologist Nauja Kleist has found that negative stereotypes about Somalis, furthered by media and politicians, are potentially detrimental to integration as well as the feeling of belonging to the Danish society (2006). What was found during the analysis is that having a job enables the individual to cope better with the media attention, as it makes it possible to deflect the conditions of the stereotype to some degree. For individuals who do not have a job, the impact is potentially larger, depending on if they have had other experiences they can draw on to disprove the stereotype. This once again emphasizes the importance of the labor market attachment for immigrants and refugees. The analysis furthermore showed that this had affected the everyday social interaction between the majority and the participants as it led to increased fear and discriminatory behavior towards the participants. Many of them narrated how they had experienced discriminatory behavior in meetings and it was seen that the only way they usually felt they could deal with it was by ignoring it. According to Kleist, the stereotypes influence native Danes' perceptions so they have predetermined opinions prior to actually meeting Somalis. Consequently, the predetermined opinions reduce Somalis to strangers who do not belong in Danish society (Kleist, 2006, p. 125). As could also be seen from the analysis, this is problematic as the divide between 'us' and 'them' is solidified by the media rhetoric. This leads to discrimination and irrational fear, but as was found in the analysis, there are clear differences in how this comes to show depending on what gender the person has. The findings showed that being a woman and a Muslim intersected in such a way that you become more vulnerable to be more overtly discriminated against, being pushed or yelled at. A report recently published by the European Network Against Racism, based on findings in eight European countries including Denmark, had similar findings, showing that Muslim women are more likely to become victims of discrimination like hate crime and hate speech (Šeta, 2016). According to their findings, 60% of the Muslim women in Denmark stated that they had experienced being shouted at or similar things (ibid. p. 26). Fewer of the men in this study, on the other hand, had experienced overt discrimination; a few had been questioned in public but otherwise not. Being male and Muslim consequently seems to elicit less discrimination in everyday life encounters with random strangers on the street. As shown, however, for one of the men, it directly impacted on his life, as his

Danish wife began to fear that he would kidnap their child and bring it to his home country. This is a clear example of the potentially directly negative impact that the media can have on integration, as a cross-cultural marriage by all intents and purposes can be considered acculturation and adaptation through an integration strategy.

Research has shown that the actual number of immigrants influences general attitudes towards immigration less than the media presentation, and also that the tone of the media affects it, i.e. a positive tone diminishes anti-immigration sentiment (van Klingeren, Boomgaarden, Vliegthart, & de Vreese, 2015). Consequently, it is worth considering the media's representation and coverage of immigration and immigrants if the intent is to give integration the best possible foundation for success. So has the situation changed? If comparing the media rhetoric during the end of the 90s, the beginning of this millennium, and the current situation, it is difficult to say if it has become better or worse. The focus did however shift after 9/11, as was mentioned previously, and media coverage of extremist Islamic terrorism has become the primary story told about Muslims. This generates additional anxiety and suspicion towards Muslim immigrants, about whether they are terrorists, as also could be seen in the analysis. In connection with that, it should be mentioned that the events narrated by the participants have not necessarily happened during the 90s, but might as well have happened closer to today. Even though there has been some revision and reflection among the media itself about the bias towards immigrants<sup>7</sup>, there still seems to be a tendency towards a stereotypical and negative portrayal, which could be linked to the current political and public attention and resistance to immigration. In addition to that, a major difference between the end of the last century and today is in the introduction of social media, which has expanded the platform for social interaction and consequently also potential discrimination. The nature of the medium allows for every person to give his or her instant, unedited opinion on every topic, including refugees and immigration. This means that the number of negative encounters that an individual might face is far larger than it was previously, which as previously argued, could influence the immigrant's choice of acculturation strategy towards separation, if they, as was the case with one of the participants in the study, experience enough resistance. Consequently, it could be argued that the media and politicians hold a vital role to an

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<sup>7</sup> See for instance Information.dk, October 3, 2010 "Medier taler ikke med indvandrere" (<https://www.information.dk/indland/2005/10/medier-taler-indvandrere>)

even larger degree today in influencing the majority's opinion – and thus also integration – through a diversified and nuanced representation of the immigrants coming to the country.

On the basis of the third and last part of the analysis it can be argued that positive social encounters seem to be able to outweigh or balance the possible negative and discriminatory experiences the participants might have had. Interacting with ethnic Danes is helpful in many cases, as it was seen to mean an increase in social capital and also an important increase in cultural capital specific to the Danish context, which often coincided with more optimism about their situation in Denmark. As was said in the theoretical chapter, an important factor in the immigrant's choice of acculturation strategy is the individual's relationship to cultural maintenance. In the findings this became clear, as it was possible to detect a kind of negotiation of cultural happening about the degree to which cultural shedding was acceptable so as to function best possibly in society. If the individual in question perceived his or her culture to be relatively similar to the Danish, this would be relatively easy as cultural maintenance would be no problem at all. On the other hand, if the cultures were perceived to be more distant and different, the individual would have to negotiate specific cultural traditions, so navigation and coping became possible. This was done either by compromising, for instance by softening rules on religious clothing or participation in certain classes for their children, or through finding similarities with individuals belonging to the majority, thereby arguing for a larger degree of sameness rather than difference. Both of these changes are reactions to cultural meetings between the majority culture and the immigrant, but the latter in particular were most often done through close interaction with ethnic Danes, for instance in educational contexts. Importantly, however, there were in almost all instances of the participants – regardless of perceived cultural difference and preference for cultural maintenance – importance accredited to the interaction with the majority, which suggests an interest in integrating into the Danish society. The only exception, where preference was given to separation from the majority, was where the individual had been outside the labor market for a considerable amount of time, and generally felt rejected by society.

The above consequently adds to the importance of education and jobs as most of these positive encounters happened through either of these. The reason for this is likely

to be that the context of jobs and education often require of all involved parties some degree of cooperativeness, which means that it also is useful in terms of breaking down barriers of people belonging to the majority who might be prejudiced in advance from media. For some of the participants, it furthermore allowed for the feeling of belonging to the majority. Being at a workplace or participating in an education consequently becomes a place for creating bridging social capital, which opens up for the opportunity for and enables the immigrant to better choose integration as an acculturation strategy, as it still allows for some degree of cultural maintenance which also was clear in the analysis. The changes that have been made to legislation on jobs and education, as argued in the above, consequently seem to be a positive improvement. However, this is not the only change there has been for the chances of positive encounters between newcomers and the majority. As was argued in the above, social media has added another dimension to the possibilities of social interaction, and even though it might be used for discriminatory purposes, it has also meant a mobilization of the part of the general Danish society in Facebook-based groups like 'Venligboerne', which has spread from being a local initiative to a national phenomenon, with the sole purpose of meeting people in general with kindness and openness (Eazyintegration). In addition to these types of largely non-systemized groupings, a report made about the Red Cross volunteer effort shows that there generally has been an increase of volunteers working with integration under the auspices of the Red Cross over the past 20 years. But an especially large increase happened between 2014 and 2015, both in terms of local divisions offering integration activities<sup>8</sup>, but also in the number of volunteers that nearly doubled<sup>9</sup> (Oxford Research, 2016). This indicates that parts of the general Danish population are open and willing to meet the newly arrived refugees and immigrants, which, based on the analysis, is vital for integration being the result of the acculturation process. It consequently seems like at least a part of the Danish society has begun to assume some kind of responsibility for the integration process. Sociologist Richard Jenkins has argued that part of the reason that integration is perceived as a problem, is the Danish perception of integration being solely an immigrant issue. If immigrants themselves are responsible for their own integration, then it is also their fault if integration is perceived by the Danish population to fail (Jenkins, 2011, p. 261). With

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<sup>8</sup> From 65 to 81

<sup>9</sup> Approx. 1200 to 2300

the involvement of the general public in integrational activities and projects, the likelihood of the acculturation process being two-way is far greater. Thus, in this respect, it consequently seems like integration now has a better chance to succeed.

## 7. Conclusion

Integration has been considered an important topic in relation to refugees and immigrants coming to Denmark for many years. With the current rise in the number of asylum seekers, the debate has been further fueled and has meant increasingly hostile rhetoric, and restrictions upon restrictions made to the laws governing immigration and integration. The interest of this thesis is to investigate how the Danish context of the 1990s had been experienced by and impacted the integration of those refugees and family reunified individuals who arrived during this period. The purpose with this is to discuss if their experiences could be argued to be relevant for integration in the current situation. Through an intersectional analysis of 11 interviews with Arabic and Somali participants, the following conclusions can be made to the above.

Since the introduction of the first law on integration in 1998, the requirements have increasingly become stricter and more demanding of the immigrant, for example with the introduction and development of language tests. Intersections of categories were found to be less prominent than expected in terms of how the Danish context was experienced, except in specific situations where the gender and class of the individual in his/her country of origin intersected especially advantageously or disadvantageously with the minority position they belong to in the Danish context. Mostly however, the ethnic minority category positioned the participants as a homogenous group, which they are consequently also treated as by ethnic Danes. A partial exception of this was found in terms of access to the labor market. Access to the labor market was seen to be particularly important as it influences the integration of the individual, especially as it means the partial fulfillment of the requirements the Danish state has tightened to an increasing degree for permanent residence and Danish citizenship. Citizenship furthermore acts as a barrier between the majority Danes and those who are legitimately stapled as foreigners. Those who are not able to access it consequently feel rejected by society, which is detrimental to the overall integration. Today, the Danish government has introduced initiatives that better equip refugees and immigrants for the requirements of the specialized Danish labor market. It consequently also positions them better in relation to permanent residence and citizenship, but the fact remains that some are better positioned to begin with than others, and those who arrive with the least preconditions are those who have the most obstacles to overcome.

The often one-sided and negative media coverage of immigrants and the subsequent stereotypes were also found to be potentially detrimental for integration. The degree to which this impacted integration depended on whether the participant was able to cope sufficiently with the stereotypes by deflecting them and proving them wrong. It was furthermore found that media representation is the primary influence on general attitudes towards immigration, and such negative rhetoric leads to discriminatory behavior towards people with an ethnic minority background, as fear and distrust are created between the majority and minority. Here gender was seen to intersect with the minority position to elicit different types of behavior towards the participants, however in both cases, it influenced integration negatively. The media rhetoric today was seen to still tend towards negative portrayals of immigrants and in addition to that, other platforms on social media have been introduced that also feeds into this stereotypical portrayal. Consequently, it was concluded that in terms of the current situation, the media and politicians today are instrumental in shaping the public opinion and are able to influence integration positively or negatively depending on whether a diversified or stereotypical image of the refugees and immigrants is created.

It was however seen that positive social encounters between the participants and the ethnic Danes to some degree balance the negative experiences and consequently is able to impact integration positively. It was also through such experiences that many of the participants were able to gain social networks and cultural capital specific to the Danish context. Social interaction also seemed to influence the individual positively so the necessary cultural adaption of the individual became easier. Given that these encounters often were found in educational contexts or at work places, the changes made recently to legislation to further labor market participation are likely to positively influence social interaction, and consequentially, integration too. Furthermore, the higher degree of social mobilization among ethnic Danes that has occurred during the last couple of years increases the likelihood of integration becoming a two-way process where there is space for the immigrant to maintain his or her culture while still interacting with the majority.

Overall, it can be concluded that many of the things that were found to impact integration have been changed towards the better in terms of legislation. The mobilization of the general public is promising in terms of positive social encounters, however whether this will outweigh the increasing platform of negative and

stereotypical representations only time will tell. Lastly, it is important to once again point out that the participants in this thesis are not representative for *all* immigrants and refugees, and the results found in this consequently cannot be generalized. Furthermore, the study is even less representative given that most of the individuals interviewed for this have jobs and in general felt content about their situation in Denmark and how they had adapted to Danish society. The only exception to this in the sample correlates with the only individual who involuntarily had found himself outside the labor market and consequently also been unable to apply for citizenship. Given this contrast, it could suggest that refugees or immigrants who generally find themselves in such marginalized positions might have given a different depiction of the acculturation process in Denmark as well as what challenges they might have faced. On the basis of the data in this study, this however cannot be argued with certainty.

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## **Appendix**

All appendices can be found on the USB attached below.

### ***Contents of USB stick:***

- A collected PDF with all transcripts of interviews.
- Table of participants.