



MSc in Development and International Relations (DIR)

A Case Study of Second-Generation Female Immigrants and their
integration into the Danish Education System

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Abstract

This thesis explores why non-Western second-generation female immigrants have become more integrated into the Danish education system, by seeking to uncover possible motivators. The data consists of semi-structured interviews with Danish born females of immigrant descent who are pursuing or have completed a long cycle higher education. The quantitative analysis supports the main hypothesis of this thesis, the assumption that the increased integration of non-Western second-generation female immigrants is influenced by the educational aspirations their parents hold for them. This study finds a strong correlation between the parents' expectations and the participants educational commitment and achievements. However, regarding gender, it cannot be concluded that the participants gender has played any positive role in their educational career. Moreover, the participants cultural capital can be argued to create some negative conditions in relation to the dominant cultural capital in the educational sphere.

The thesis is based on a deductive approach and takes the form of a case study. To offer a lens through which subject can be examined, the thesis presents a theoretical framework consisting of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, Sandra Bem's gender schema theory and Jacquelynne S. Eccles and Allan Wigfield's expectancy-value model theory.

Keywords

Second-generation females, parental expectations, Cultural Capital

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| List of Figures | 5 |
| 1 Introduction | 6 |
| 1.1 Problem formulation | 6 |
| 1.1 Immigration in a Danish context | 7 |
| 1.1.1 Government responses to immigration and integration | 7 |
| 1.1.2 Snapshot of the second generation | 9 |
| 1.1.3 The position of the Second Generation in Education | 9 |
| 1.2 Definition of concept | 12 |
| 1.2.1 Immigrants and descendants | 12 |
| 1.2.2 Middle class and working class in Denmark | 13 |
| 2 Methodological reflections | 13 |
| 2.1 Research strategy | 13 |
| 2.2 Research design | 14 |
| 2.2.1 Challenges to the research | 15 |
| 2.3 Data collection | 16 |
| 2.3.1 Semi structured interviews | 16 |
| 2.3.2 Interview guide | 17 |
| 2.3.3 Data treatment | 17 |
| 2.3.4 Selection and recruitment of participants | 18 |
| 2.3.5 Background of informants | 19 |
| 2.3.6 The role of the researcher | 20 |
| 2.4 Qualitative data analysis | 20 |
| 2.4.1 Thematic analysis | 20 |
| 3 Theory | 22 |
| 3.1 Cultural Capital and Educational Success | 22 |
| 3.1.1 The concept of habitus | 23 |
| 3.2 Gender Schema theory | 24 |
| 3.3 Expectancy-Value Theory | 25 |
| 4 Analysis | 29 |

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 4.1 | Parent's aspirations | 29 |
| 4.2 | Freedom through education | 31 |
| 4.2.1 | Gender norms in between cultures | 32 |
| 4.2.2 | Free education as a driving force | 34 |
| 4.3 | Stigmatization and disproving prejudices | 35 |
| 4.4 | Only minority student in class..... | 39 |
| 5 | <i>Summary of findings and conclusion.....</i> | 41 |
| | <i>Bibliography.....</i> | 42 |
| | Online sources | 49 |

List of Figures

Figures

Figure 1: Personer med erhvervskompetencegivende uddannelse. 2019

Figure 2: The process of deduction

Figure 3: Forms of capital

Tables

Table 1: Recruitment of participants

Table 2: Participants and characteristics of the group

1 Introduction

In Denmark, when measuring successful integration, the assessment of different factors is carried out. One of these factors is the educational development of the second-generation immigrants. The position of second-generation immigrants in the danish education system is unequal to that of their Danish counterpart. However, some similarities such as gender gap is notable in both groups. In the case of second-generation male and females, the educational gap seems to be of a greater extent, compared to ethnic Danes in the same age group (Indvandrerne i Danmark, 2020). By definition, second generation immigrants refer to the offspring of immigrants born in the country of migration (Danmarks statistik, 2021). One could argue that this group have had the same starting point as ethnic Danes in regard to education. This could lead to the argument, that other variables, beyond gender, must be included to explain the reason for the difference between the two groups. To detect such variables, this thesis operates with a main hypothesis, stating that second-generation females are motivated by the high educational expectations their parents have on their behalf.

Fieldwork from a danish primary school has observed that minority children are stigmatized on the basis of their gender (Gilliam, 2008). This has led to findings which argue that minority boys are likely to reject the cultural capital of the school which results to them being labelled troublemakers, while minority girls in general seem to have better relationships with their teachers (Gilliam, 2008). Thus, the second hypothesis includes gender as a factor in the women's path through the educational system. Moreover, cultural capital is included as a dimension which may influence the second-generation female's educational career.

1.1 Problem formulation

This thesis seeks to explore why more second-generation females have become integrated into the Danish education system. Based on semi-structured interviews with four second-generation females, the purpose is to understand some of the underlying elements which may drive this development. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to existing literature on the development of the second-generation immigrants within education in a Danish context, thus, the following problem formulation is posed:

Why have non-Western second-generation female immigrants become more integrated into the Danish education system?

Hypotheses

- 1. Second-generation females are motivated by the high expectations their parents have for their educational achievements.*
- 2. Gender may be a factor in the women's path through the educational system*
- 3. The cultural capital of the non-Western second-generation females clash with the dominant culture in the educational sphere.*

1.1 Immigration in a Danish context

Up until the 1960s, Denmark had been a rather homogeneous society, primarily with immigrants from other western countries (Bejder, 2016) Due to economic growth and labor market changes in the late 1960s and 1970s, Denmark experienced an inflow of labor driven migrants “guestworkers”, from the Middle East, Pakistan and North Africa (Olwig and Paerregaard, 2011; Casey, 2014). When the unemployment rate increased in the 1970s, an immediate labor immigration stop was put into effect, however, many of the guest workers decided to settle permanently and were joined by their family through family reunification programs. Thus, the immigrant's presence in the Danish society continued to increase and by 1978 the group which had totaled 12.000 had now, with their families, increased to 35.000, when adding refugees to the category, the total number was 45.000 (Stenild and Martens, 2009, p. 12).

In the 1980s and 1990s Denmark experienced an influx of refugee seekers from countries such as Vietnam, Iran, Iraq, the Balkans, Somalia etc. in addition, foreign students and skilled professionals had also started to consider Denmark as a desirable destination (Entzinger, 1990; Olwig and Paerregaard, 2011). The total number of immigrants and descendants in the Danish society has risen by 9 percent since the 1980s – from 0,3 in 1980 to 14,0 percent in 2021. However, the group with the largest increase in Danish society since 1980, is that of the non-Western immigrants and offspring, from 1.0 percent to 8,9 percent in 2021 (Det nationale integrationsbarometer, 2021).

1.1.1 Government responses to immigration and integration

As the immigrants transformed into permanent members of the Danish society, they gradually caught the attention of policymakers and by the end of the 1970s, the term integration was used in the public discourse (Stenild and Martens, 2009). Policies which previously focused on transitory

accommodations and repatriation, now, had to facilitate the transition of immigrants into the Danish society, beyond the labour market (Ibid). Although the term integration had been known to the Danish language since the nineteenth century, it had yet to be fully conceptualized. Integration was closely associated with ‘‘incorporation’’, ‘‘absorption’’, ‘‘assimilation’’ or ‘‘adaptation’’ of a component into the whole (Ollwig and Paerregaard, 2011). The utilization of integration in the Danish public debate was uncommon till the mid-twentieth century, where it appeared in different aspects of societal development. In the course of the 1950s and 1960s, the term was deployed in relation to economic, political, and military integration of Europe, while later on, it became synonymous with the European Common Market. A redefinition occurred in the aftermath of the economic recession and the large influx of immigrants and refugees, where the term was used by policymakers, journalists and social scientist in referring to the process of incorporating these individuals into the Danish society (Ibid). Integration was a matter of public concern in the 1990s, where the demand was for a rather clear definition of the term in the sphere of immigrants and their incorporation into the Danish welfare system. The concept had gained greater momentum by the end of the 1990s and beginning of 2000 where the dominant perception of non-Western immigrants and refugees was, that they had an understanding of democracy, participation, and labour market, which differed from that of the majority population. This caught the attention of politicians, academics, and the Danish public which initiated the linkage between ‘‘integration’’ and ‘‘problem’’(Emerek, 2003; Penninx et. al. 2006; Casey, 2014).

Due to internal conflicts in the Danish government, caused by unequal division of immigrants and refugees across the different municipalities, a new integration law was presented in 1999 (Stenild, K. Martens, A. 2009) which was a first of its kind, a collective legislation on the integration efforts. At the core of the ‘‘integration problem’’ lays the conflict of culture. The general attitude among the majority population was, that the culture of the non-Western immigrants’ clashes with core Danish values (Gudrun Jensen 2001, Ollwig and Paerregaard 2011; Sjørslev, 2011). With the transition of power in 2001, the path to successful integration was to be found through labour market participation. Thus, initiatives to speed up the process from language attainment to labour-ready, were implemented, as well as the utilization of any qualifications that the migrant might have brought with them. Moreover, an interaction between the educational system and the employers/firms were established to facilitate the transition e.g., through internships (Stenild and Martens, 2009).

Following the politicization of immigration and integration and due to the shift in political power, the tendencies, which also maps the situation in the neighboring countries, allows for the linkage between “integration” and “problem” to grow even stronger.

1.1.2 Snapshot of the second generation

Research on the contemporary second-generation in Europe became an area of interest in the 1990s, here the focus was on the second-generations inclusion in the social, educational, economic, cultural and inter-generational lives. Central to the literature on the second-generation is the educational attainment of the group within itself and in comparison, with their parents or to those with a non-migratory background (Chimienti et al., 2019, p. 4). The first European survey which collected first-hand data on the second-generation, TIES-Survey from 2007/8, showed how national differences played a dominant role in the second-generations educational outcomes. A comparative cross-national study of different ethnic groups in both a national and local context showed e.g., children of low-educated Turkish immigrants who attain a higher education diploma and went to university varied from 5 percent in Germany to almost 33 percent in Sweden and France (Schneider, 2016, p. 9). In the same group, Sweden (9 percent) and Switzerland (15 percent) showed the lowest number of early school leavers while Austria, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands showed numbers between 25 percent and 33 percent (Schneider, 2016, p. 9). While the survey demonstrated how contextual factors such as institutional arrangements in particular influence the educational outcomes of the second-generation, in addition, it includes aspects such as “what the children bring with them from home” (Schneider, 2016, p. 10). Analysis show that the educational and professional careers of second-generation females are conditioned by adequate educational opportunities, which if absent, allows for traditional patriarchal attitudes to intervene. However, if the right conditions are present, these women are very likely to pursue upward mobility and attain independence (Ibid).

1.1.3 The position of the Second Generation in Education

The position of the second generation in the Danish educational system stands clear, students with a minority background are outperformed by their native counterparts (Indvandrerne i Danmark, 2020). Indvandrerne i Danmark is an annual report carried out by Statistics Denmark which presents various statistics to offer a nuanced picture of the integration of immigrants and descendants in the Danish society. In the report “efterkommere” or descendants are defined as children born to immigrants in Denmark (Indvandrerne i Danmark, 2020). Measuring successful integration is an assessment which

includes factors such as education, which in Denmark, is marked by a gap between the second generation and their Danish counterparts. The report presents a section on the highest completed education for second-generation non-Western immigrants in Denmark in 2020. The choice of focusing on the 30-year-old age group is made on the grounds that the age represents a group that most likely have completed an education (Indvandrere i Danmark, 2020). As already stated, all descendants are per definition born in Denmark, nonetheless, there exist a notable difference between 30-year-old of non-Western descents and 30-year-olds ethnic Danes, when looking at their education level. The first noticeable gap in the highest completed educational level, is found among second-generation men and ethnic Danish men aged 30. Here, 33 percent of second-generation men have not completed an education higher than elementary school, while the number are 16 percent for their ethnic Danish peers. In contrast, the share among women is less striking with only 16 percent of the second-generation and 11 percent for ethnic Danish women (Ibid). The general picture is, that there is a gender gap in education, although the numbers vary depending on the age group and the specific education, women tend to constitute the highest share among those engaging with the educational system (Integrationsbarometer, 2020). However, the largest gap is to be found among the second-generation men and women aged 30. Within this group, 74 percent of the women have attained a vocationally oriented educational track while the numbers for their male counterparts are only 54 percent (Indvandrere i Danmark, 2020). Thus, the share with a vocationally oriented qualification among men is 21 percent higher for ethnic Danish men compared to second-generation non-Western males. Amongst the women, a slightly smaller difference of 9 percentage point is found (Ibid). The tendencies of the choices of educational paths vary among second-generation women, who tend to choose short-cycle higher education or medium-cycle higher education and their Danish counterparts who tend to follow a long cycle higher education (Ibid).

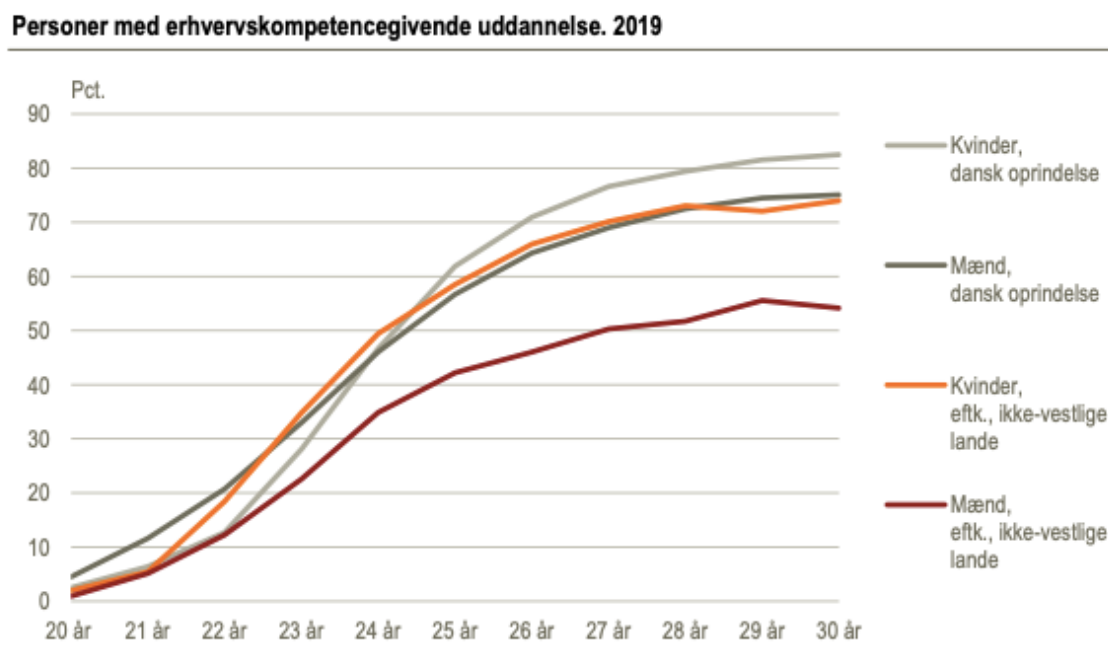


Figure 1 (Indvandrere i Danmark, 2020)

In the 16 to 19 age categories (2019 - 2020), 52,9 percent of the second-generation women were enrolled into a higher education program compared to only 35, 9 percent for their male counterparts (Integrationsbarometer, 2020). Moreover, with 35 percent, second-generation women constitute the highest share of those having completed a vocationally oriented qualification in the age group 20 to 24-year-olds. In the following age group, the attendance shifts and the gap between second-generation women and their Danish counterparts increases. The shift is especially noticeable in the long cycle higher education, among the 30-year old's, the attendance is 59 percent among ethnic Danish women and 53 percent among second-generation women (Indvandrere i Danmark, 2020). Multiple factors should be considered when reviewing these numbers, e.g., cultural differences, since it is rather common among second-generation women to continue to a vocationally oriented program right after the accomplishment of a youth education while peers with ethnic majority background tend to wait 1 to 2 years before reinterring the educational system and choose long cycle higher educations (Ibid). Generally, the education gap between the second-generation immigrants and native individuals seems to persist, nevertheless, the numbers above point to a positive development, especially among non-Western second-generation females who even outperform their Danish counterparts in the age group 20 to 24.

Some studies explain the gender gap by arguing that female students have higher educational and occupational expectations (Mau and Bikos, 2000). A comparative study by Morgan, found a similar pattern among White and African American females, who demonstrated higher educational expectations compared to their male counterparts from the same ethnic groups (Morgan, 1996). In line with Morgan, Mello has found similar gender differences among African American adolescence, finding that the females showed higher educational expectations than the males (Mello and Swanson, 2007). However, the gender differences and academic expectations can still be argued to be inconclusive, since other studies such as Mello's study on *Gender variation of educational and occupational expectations*, found similar educational expectations among female and male African Americans (Mello, 2008).

1.2 Definition of concept

1.2.1 Immigrants and descendants

The notion of 'second-generation' in Migration Studies refers to the offspring of migrants. The term is used to address the offspring of migrants who were either born in the country of immigration or those who migrated with their parents at a young age (entrance age for schooling), in Europe, the definition tends to vary depending on the national context. Witthol de Wenden, 2005, argues that the term 'second -generation' is both a description as well as an indicator of their exclusion, although members of this group, fall under the *jus soli* ('right of the soil') in the countries which practice the automatic right to citizenship of the country of birth (Witthol de Wenden, 2005). The Netherlands operates with two basic distinctions, being of Dutch descent or non-Dutch descent, while in France, placing any importance in ethnic background to French born citizens is considered problematic (Schneider, 2016, p. 4). In contrast to France, ethnicity is not an undesirable concept in the United Kingdom, where great importance is placed on the 'ethnic minorities' within the country's general 'ethnic makeup' (Schneider, 2016, p. 5).

The national differences present both negative and positive aspects. Although ascribing relevance of ethnic background to native-born citizens may prevent ethnic stereotyping it also presents obstacles, especially to research related to racism and discrimination experienced by native-born offspring of immigrants (Simone, 2003 - Schneider). The term which will be operationalized in this thesis is the following definition, "the second-generation refers to the offspring of immigrants who were born in the country migrated to by their parents" (Danmarks statistik, 2021).

1.2.2 Middle class and working class in Denmark

Belonging to the middle class in Denmark entails that your income is that of a person with a short-cycle higher education or a medium higher education. (klasesamfund.dk, 2021) Educations within this category are e.g., nurses, self-employed and individuals with management responsibility (klasesamfund.dk, 2021). The biggest group in the Danish society is the working class which contains skilled and unskilled workers (klasesamfund.dk, 2021). Members of this group are craftsmen, social and health assistant, cleaning assistance etc. (Ibid.).

2 Methodological reflections

In the following section, the methodological framework of the study is presented, including research strategy, design, challenges to the research, data collection and treatment, choice of methods and the role of the researcher.

2.1 Research strategy

A qualitative research strategy has been chosen for this thesis. Qualitative research “embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of individuals’ creation” (Bryman, 2012). The strategy was chosen due to its emphasis on words to help explore the behavior and perceptions of the object of attention with reference to a particular subject. Thus, it was preferred as a tool to help understand second-generation women’s affiliation with the Danish education system. The data generation method employed in this thesis involves exploring why second-generation female immigrants have become more integrated into the Danish, in their own words. Analyzing qualitative data provides insight into micro-processes of individuals through their stories and thereby may provide an understanding, in this case, of the underlying elements that may have driven second-generation females to an increased integration into the Danish education system (Seidman, 2006). The data was collected through semi-structured interviews while thematic content analysis was applied to explore patterns across the data provided by the participants in this thesis. The relationship between theory and research in this thesis is considered deductive. A deductive approach represents a view where the researcher deduces a hypothesis on the basis of knowledge about a particular domain and theoretical considerations (Bryman, 2012). Although qualitative research is usually associated

with generating theories rather than testing them, previous studies have demonstrated that it can also be utilized to test them (Bryman, 2012).

As described, the purpose of this thesis was inspired by observations on the increased participation of second-generation women in the education system, thus, to uncover possible mechanisms driving this development, a hypothesis was established. Although this thesis operates with a hypothesis, the intention was not to generalize the findings to a broader population. Rather, the aim was to present the experiences of the people interviewed in sufficient depth to offer understanding of the research question posed in this thesis (Seidman, 2006). The figure bellow demonstrates the deductive approach of the thesis.

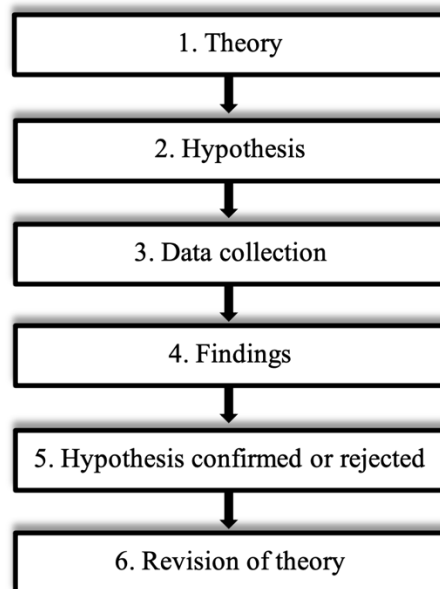


Figure 2: The process of deduction (Bryman, 2012)

The data material in this thesis is mainly of a qualitative nature, however, quantitative data in the form of secondary statistical data from Statistics Denmark and the Integration Barometer have also been utilized. The quantitative data was found necessary to establish a factual picture of the educational positioning of the majority and minority groups in Denmark.

2.2 Research design

To examine factors which may explain why second-generation females have become more integrated into the Danish education system, a case study was chosen as the study design in this thesis. The case

study allows for a comprehensive examination of the reasoning behind second-generation women's integration into the Danish education system, and ultimately to provide a better understanding of the qualitative paradigm in which the research finds itself.

A case study entails the detailed and comprehensive analysis of a specific case rather than it being a methodological decision, although it guides the process of the investigation. Moreover, a case study is not defined by any discipline or paradigmatic orientation which allows for its usage in most theoretical approaches (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). Since there is no single agreed upon definition of a case study, this research bases its understanding on the following definition “a case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry” (Stake, 2005, p. 444). Thus, a case study refers to the way research is carried out as well as the result of the research. The contribution of a case study approach is the holistic comprehension it offers to a problem, issue or phenomenon within its social context (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). Case study evidence include oral history, ethnography, document analysis and interviews. The latter was the choice of data in this thesis (Yin, 2008).

Case study operates within the tradition of “*verstehen*”, this allows for an understanding which “focuses on the meaning of human behaviour, the context of social interaction, an emphatic understanding based on subjective experience, and the connections between subjective states and behaviour” (Flyvbjerg, 1988, p. 4). In this tradition, the understanding of others is based on “sympathetic introspection and reflection from detailed description and observations” (Flyvbjerg, 1988, p. 4). Although a case study allows for an in depth understanding of the case studied, it must have a clear focus. Because this thesis operated within a deductive approach, the theoretical considerations guided the analysis of the data.

2.2.1 Challenges to the research

The challenge of the research could be argued to be its lack of representation. While internal validity may be achieved by utilizing a case study, this is not the case for external validity. “A case is just that – a case- and cannot be representative of a larger universe of cases” (de Vaus, 2001, p. 237). However, the purpose of this study was not to generalize the findings to a broader category of cases but rather, to the specific group or case.

Focus group was the initial choice of method in this thesis, however, this was not found suitable due to the current health situation (Covid-19), because it would have required more physical circumstances. According to Clifford et al., the purpose of a focus group is, “to attempt to simulate a

group of friends or people who have things in common and feel relaxed talking to each other.” (Clifford, 2016, p. 145). The method was found suitable since, creating a setting in which the participants could discuss this particular topic among each other, would have allowed the group to explore the subject from different perspectives. Although focus groups and semi structured interviews are both flexible in their nature, in that they can be carried out in person and online, this thesis did not choose the focus group as the suitable method. This was due to the belief that computer-mediated communication and group interactions would generate obstacles.

2.3 Data collection

As previously stated, this thesis is based on qualitative interviews with four participants. In the following section the data collection, analysis and the considerations related to these processes will be accounted for.

2.3.1 Semi structured interviews

The aim of the research was to examine why second-generation females have increased their integration into the Danish education system, consequently, to reveal underlying factors which may affect this development. To allow for a flexible approach to the interview process, and to permit a fluent verbal interchange between the participant and interviewer, semi structured interviews were selected as the means of data collection.

Semi structured interviews are considered well suited in exploring perceptions and experiences of the participants in regard to a complex and at times sensitive subject (Bryman, 2012). The semi structured interview is applicable to different research goals, due to its varying usage of questions, “prompts, and accompanying tools and resources to draw the participant more fully into the topic under study” (Galletta, 2013) Semi structured interviews draw on open-ended questions as well as theoretically bases questions, to allow the participants to narrate their story, rather than strictly answering structured questions (Coughlan, 2009). With an understanding that individuals perceive the social world subjectively, the semi-structured interview facilitates the exploration of individual perspectives (Galletta, 2013). Semi structured interviews are conversational and allow for the participants to respond to questions in their own language rather than ‘yes or no’ answers (Coughlan, 2009).

The semi structured interviews were carried out based on questions which covered specific themes, a process which is referred to as interview guide.

2.3.2 Interview guide

An interview guide has been defined as an outline of questions which direct the conversation towards the research subject during the interviews (Åstedt- Kurki and Heikkinen, 1994). To guide the interviews, questions were developed on the basis of themes which were identified through the theories. The identified themes laid grounds for participant oriented and open-ended questions to generate relevant data from the participants. The questions were posed to encourage the participants to talk about their specific life experiences in relation to gender norms and educational experiences. Although the interviews were conducted via live video (Zoom), the aim was to establish a calm and open atmosphere in which the participants could tell their stories rather than report them.

Semi-structured interview guides consist of two question elements, the main themes and the follow-up questions (Åstedt- Kurki & Heikkinen 1994). All the participants were asked questions based on the main theme of the research subject. The participants were encouraged to talk openly about their experiences and perceptions. These questions could be familiar to the participants, while simultaneously being central to the subject studied (Whiting, 2008). According to Atkinson, the interview process is an interplay between providing the participants with sufficient time to tell their story, asking more direct questions and asking follow-up questions if found necessary to increase the understanding (Atkinson, 1998, p. 31).

The purpose of follow-up questions is to break down the main themes for the participants and allow for a better understanding, while guiding the conversation towards the subject under study (Turner, 2010). Follow-up questions can be developed prior to the interview or during, based on the participants answers (Whiting 2008, Turner, 2010). Follow-up questions which are pre-designed may increase the consistency of the subject investigated while spontaneous questions help elaborate on particular elements in the interview which are of interest (Whiting, 2008)

2.3.3 Data treatment

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Afterwards, the data was examined and hand coded, to allow for the identification of core themes. Coding refers to the process where data is broken down into component parts which are then given labels. The data analysis process will be further elaborated in the qualitative data analysis section.

2.3.4 Selection and recruitment of participants

The recruitment of participants was planned to take place at a university for the pragmatic reason of recruiting second-generation females who were pursuing a long cycle higher education on campus. However, since this option was excluded due to the restrictions following COVID-19, social media was used as a platform to recruit participants.

Gelinas et al., distinguish between two types of social media recruitment, passive and active. Passive recruitment includes the distribution of recruitment materials such as ads, to attract participant, while active recruitment occurs when the research takes direct contact to the specific individual with the aim to recruit them. Active recruitment is carried out on the grounds of knowledge about the possible participant which would make them particularly eligible candidates (Gelinas et al., 2017). The participants in this study were recruited through passive and active recruitment on Instagram. The participants from the first round of recruitment responded to a story on Instagram, which included the study, the purpose and the specifications required of possible participant. The last participant was recruited through ‘direct message’ on Instagram, on the basis that she fit the criteria necessary; a second-generation female of Muslim descent, who was pursuing a university degree or had completed one. The table below presents an overview of how the participants were recruited.

Table 1: Recruitment of participants

| Participant | Method of recruitment |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Nadia | Instagram story |
| Sara | Instagram story |
| Fatima | Direct message |
| Nora | Instagram story |

The participants in this study cannot be viewed as representative of all second-generation female immigrants in Denmark, however that was never the intention of this study as the case study is not suited for generalizations (de Vaus, 2001). Rather, the purpose was to understand mechanisms driving this development through the words of the women under examination.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom. The participants were invited via email to enter a private video chat room at the prearranged date and time. Each interview started with the interviewer sharing

a screen with the participant to review a consent form and ensure the participant had full knowledge of the subject under study and treatment of data. According to Brinkmann, informed consent in qualitative research balances between the amount of information the participant receives and the ethics of the research (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). After verbal consent, the interviews started with the question:

“Can you start off by telling me your name, a bit about your background, where you were born and where you grew up?” (Nadia, 2021)

Following this question in which the participants were asked to present themselves, the interview guide would include follow-up questions to ensure that the participants background was well accounted for.

2.3.5 Background of informants

Table 2: Participants and characteristics of the group

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Born in Denmark</i> | <i>Education level</i> | <i>Number of siblings</i> |
|-------------|------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Nadia | 30 | Yes | Master’s degree | 1 |
| Sara | 29 | Yes | Bachelor’s degree | 1 |
| Fatima | 27 | Yes | Master’s degree | 5 |
| Nora | 26 | Yes | Bachelor’s degree | 1 |

The four participants in the data material are all second-generation immigrants, between the age group 26 – 30, born in Denmark with a Muslim background. The women’s parental backgrounds represent the following countries: Turkey, Iran, Algeria/Lebanon and Somalia. The women come from rather small sibling groups, except from one participant, who comes from a sibling group of five. All the participants are either pursuing a university degree or have already completed one. Nadia is a practicing lawyer while Fatima is head of a nursing home. Sara, who has already completed a bachelor’s in law, was at the time of the interviews finishing her bachelor’s in business and marketing. While Nora, the youngest participant was also in the midst of handing in her bachelor’s project in business law. Nadia was the only participant who was married.

2.3.6 The role of the researcher

According to Bryman, the meaning of social phenomena is produced and reproduced through social interactions (Bryman, 2012). As a second-generation immigrant of the same gender, I acknowledge how my background may have influenced my interpretations and the methods which have been found relevant in this thesis. Kvale refers to the interview setting as an asymmetric power relation between the interviewer and the participant. This is due to the leader role the interviewer is given as the person deciding the topic, the questions asked and guiding the interview process (Kvale, 2006). However, due to my background, gender and some common characteristics, Oakley argues, that the social distance can be minimized. Because we share a membership to the same minority group, a ‘non-hierarchical’ relationship may be established. This, according to Oakley, can create better grounds for understanding (Oakley, 1981).

2.4 Qualitative data analysis

The following section presents thematic analysis as the chosen strategy to analyse the qualitative data material in this thesis.

2.4.1 Thematic analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves segmenting, dividing and putting the data back together (Creswell, 2014). Thematic analysis was utilized to identify central patterns in the interview material. Based on the identified patterns, themes were developed to facilitate the analysis of the material. The following illustrates the procedure used to analyse the data in accordance with Creswell’s (2014) data analysis model in qualitative:

1. Organizing and transcribing the data: all the relevant aspects of the interview data were transcribed from audio to text.
2. Reading through the data: to achieve an in depth understanding of the overall meaning of the data, all transcribes were read thoroughly, several times. This step determines the ability to identify relevant codes and themes.

3. Generating codes and themes: coding is the process in which the text material is segmented to highlight the meaning of the information. The segments are then labelled with terms which describe the data, moreover, the theory was taken into consideration in this procedure.
4. The interpretation of the themes: following the structure and presentation of the interview data, the coded data was interpreted on the basis of the researchers “own cultural, history and experiences” while comparing the findings with the information extracted from the theories (Creswell, 2009, 189).

The content of the thematic analysis is based on the segments detected in the data material from the transcribed interviews. Four significant themes were identified in the second-generation females’ experiences from the Danish education system. The following themes emerged through the identification of notable topics in the participants narration:

- Parent’s aspirations
- Freedom through education
- Stigmatization and disproving prejudice
- The only foreigner in class

The themes were formed with the theoretical framework in mind.

3 Theory

The following section provides a theoretical lens through which the research question can be examined. Based on observations, the following theories are utilized in this thesis to help discover possible elements which play a role in motivating the second-generation females increased integration into the Danish education system.

3.1 Cultural Capital and Educational Success

Pierre Bourdieu has introduced three theoretical concepts: cultural capital, cultural field, and habitus (Huang, 2019). The concept of capital he further categories into four forms: economic capital, social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital (Huang, 2019). This thesis will mainly focus on the cultural capital.

The theory of cultural capital was introduced by Bourdieu (1977,1984) as a critique of human capital theory and other theories which claim that educational achievements are only the result of inherited abilities and talent. Bourdieu states that the child's cultural resources depend on the cultural capital owned by the family, similarly to economic capital which is not equally distributed. Thus, families of different classes cannot provide their children with the same number of resources for their cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu and Passeron argue that the differences in cultural capital and class inequalities are reproduced through the education system. The cultural capital of the school is only received by those who are provided with the necessary linguistic and cultural competences to comprehend the content which only reflects the values, perspectives, ideologies etc. of the dominant class (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Although the education system claims to offer equal and "neutral" transmission of knowledge, Bourdieu and Passeron claim that the education system reproduces class inequality and cultural capital which essentially conserves the established social hierarchy (Ibid). Thus, education is promoted by the inherited cultural capital from the parents which occurs either passively through the exposure to the parents' cultural capital or actively through the parents' decision to pass it down (Cheung and Andersen, 2003; Lareau 2003). This cultural capital is then fixed to what Bourdieu refers to as the children's *habitus* i.e., their knowledge, language, and behavior (Dumais, 2002). This intergenerationally transfer of cultural capital provides the children with skills to demonstrate their cultural endowments, which the education system is programed to recognize as well as reward. These underlying structures cause, in this case, teachers to misinterpret cultural capital into academic ability, causing an upward bias which

may yield advantages such as preferential treatment by teachers and peers (Dumais 2006; Farkas et al., 1990).

However, Webb et al. suggest that lower class migrant families may break the cycle by investing their resources into their children's education. Bourdieu views this action as 'gambling' and deems it unlikely to succeed (Huang, 2019). Although a lower-class migrant family may invest in their children's education, the children's success is predetermined by their habitus. Webb et al. state that the habitus of the children "...disqualify them from success, both in the sense that the children will signal, in everything they do and say, their unsuitability for higher education, and as a corollary, the children will themselves recognize this, and more or less expect failure (Webb et al., 2002, p.24).

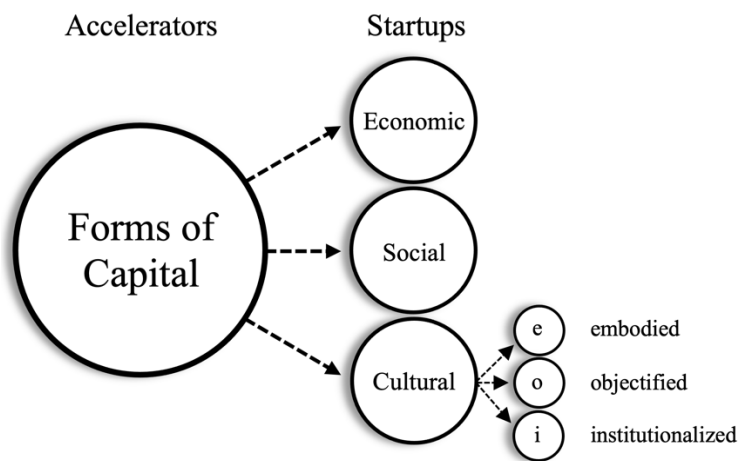


Figure 3 (Bourdieu, 1986)

3.1.1 The concept of habitus

The concept of habitus has a central role in Bourdieu's theories, since it concerns itself with the way "in which individuals 'become themselves' – develop attitudes and dispositions – and on the other hand, the ways in which those individuals engage in practices...." (Webb et al., 2002, p. xii - xiii). Moreover, the concept includes the resource of knowledge which according to Bourdieu is gained from the specific culture that the individual is exposed to (Bourdieu, 1990). By way of example, a second-generation female immigrant, from the working class will according to Bourdieu have a class-based comprehension of the world, an understanding which will differ from that of a middle-class ethnic majority female. The different understandings of the world are reflected in the individual's behavior, attitudes and values (Huang, 2019). Accordingly, habitus can be understood as a number of dispositions which influences the expectations individuals have of social life.

Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus puts forward a framework through which individuals' behaviours and performance can be understood. Gilliam (2008) has conducted fieldwork in the Danish elementary school, to understand why second-generation boys habitually are labeled as difficult and why they defy teachers as the authority in the educational sphere (Gilliam, 2008). In line with Bourdieu's cultural capital concept, Gilliam argues that the teachers unintentionally discriminate minority children, who are not recognized because their cultural capital is not that of, what Bourdieu calls 'the dominant class' which the educational system approves and rewards (Gilliam, 2008). This is exemplified through observations of how ethnic Danes, especially those from the middle class, are highlighted as the 'good example', have the right explanations and ability to do so in detail but most importantly, how they speak 'standard Danish' which is considered the intelligent language in school (Ibid). Due to the underlying cultural structures which frame the teaching, more than often, minority children engage less in class because their input is regarded as irrelevant or illegitimate. Accordingly, some children keep a low profile, others are bored while some resort to trouble making. Gilliam argues that minority boys who give up on the cultural capital 'game' in the educational system, instead, challenge the teacher's authority and definition of capital (Ibid). In the search for status, these boys look inwards, especially within groups and seek dominance among the boys, this concept is captured in what Connell (2005) terms hegemonic masculinity.

While Gilliam argues that the lack of acknowledgment drives minority boys towards confrontation with the established authority and cultural capital of the educational system, minority girls seem to have a different experience (Gilliam, 2008). Gilliam observes that minority girls have better relationships with their teachers, who consider them as 'sweet girls' although they may not be considered particularly skilled in their academic performance (Gilliam, 2008). Swedish studies on the educational system (Lahdenperäs, 1997 and Parszyks, 1999) has found that ethnic minority students, more than often, consider themselves different from majority students, and are labeled as a 'problematic student category' by the teachers (Lahdenperäs, 1997).

3.2 Gender Schema theory

To explore why second-generation females have become more integrated into the Danish education system Sandra Bem's gender schema theory (1981) is the process from which children learn about female and male attributes through the culture they are raised in, this turns into the process society translates masculinity and femininity into male and female. A schema is defined as a "cognitive structure, a network of associations that organizes and guides an individual's perception." (Bem,

1981, p. 355). Gender schema theory was introduced by Sandra Bem in her 1981 paper, *Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing*. In it, she argues that adults apply schematic selectivity which she describes as a filter through which attributes not fitting the gender-appropriate norms are discarded. By way of example, adult's way fails to notice how strong a little girl has become or "(..) how nurturant a little boy is becoming, despite their readiness to note precisely these attributes in the "appropriate" sex" (Bem, 1981, p. 355). Gender schema theory is also applicable to adults, by way of example, a woman may be a very driven manager in the work sphere but simultaneously be traditional in the role she plays in the domestic sphere (Bussey and Bandura, 1999). According to Bem, children reproduce schematic selectivity which serves as a lens through which the child seek certain scripts for same- sex activities, becoming more aware of the differences between boys and girl (Bem, 1981). The gender schema theory serves as a standard for individuals to regulate gender attitudes and behaviors to conform with what society and culture deem as masculine and feminine. (Bem, 1981).

The process through which society alters male and female into masculine and feminine characteristics is what Bem terms sex typing (Bem, 1981). Individuals who are sex-typed may consider themselves different from other people based on their self-concept and behaviour which is affected by gender (Ibid). To measure such processes, Bem developed the Sex-Role inventory (BSRI). BSRI suggest four different categories which individuals may fall into: androgynous (high masculine/high feminine), masculine (high masculine/ low feminine), feminine (high feminine/ low masculine), or undifferentiated individuals i.e., they don't process information based on any of the above mentioned (Vinney, 2019).

3.3 Expectancy-Value Theory

Factors which may be of particular interest in the academic achievements of adolescents, have had a central position in the study of adolescent development (Bandura, 1996). In the field of adolescent development and academic achievements, factor such as, socioeconomic, familial, peer and self-processes have been studied as sources of influence which shape academic achievements (Bandura, 1996). Bandura et al. have found a correlation between the educational aspiration's parents hold for their children and the children's academic achievements. The parents' ability to promote their children's academic development and educational aspirations, enhance the children's self-efficiency and self-aspirations which in turn contribute to the child's academic achievements (Bandura, 1996). While the parents' aspirations foster direct belief in the child's abilities and academic achievements,

according to Bandura, it also fosters acceptance among peers, reduces depression and difficult behaviour which may compromise the child productive engagement in academic pursuits (Ibid).

To demonstrate such causalities Bandura et al. proposed the model below which outlines the causal structures of the patterns of influence.

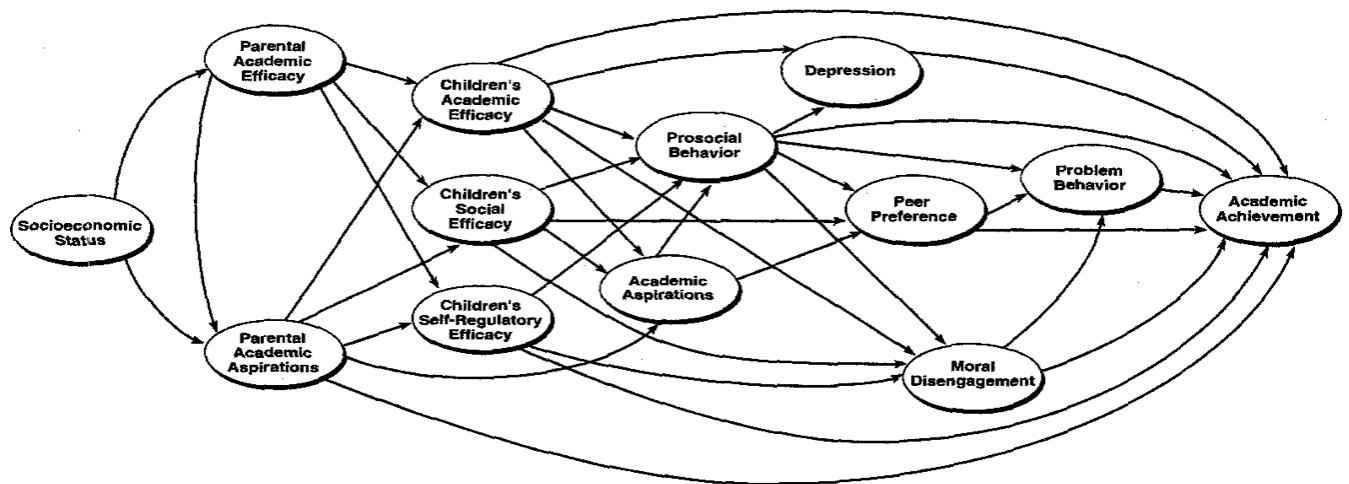


Figure 4 (Bandura, 1996, p. 1207)

The conceptual model presents several patterns of influences, however, this theory section will only concern itself with the impact of the families socioeconomic status and parental beliefs.

The first pattern of influences in the conceptual model relates to the impact the family's socioeconomic status has on their belief systems. Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986, 1995) states, that socioeconomic factors, such as economic hardship, influences the child's development paths (Bandura, 1996). According to the conceptual model, increased socioeconomic status leads to "parental academic aspirations for their children and parents' sense of efficacy that they can promote their children's academic development" (Bandura, 1996, p. 1207). The study points to a direct link between the family's socioeconomic status and the children's academic achievements. Stating that "the higher the families' economic status the higher the academic and occupational aspirations they have for their children" (Bandura, 1996, p. 1215).

The second pattern specifies the influence the parental beliefs have on the child's perception of its own academic capabilities and educational vision. The model demonstrates that parental aspirations and perceived efficiency, is directly connected to the child's sense of academic capability and aspirations (Bandura, 1996). Parents who play an active role in enhancing their child's "educability" automatically have higher educational aspirations for their children. Bandura concludes that parental

aspirations are directly linked to the child's educational achievements, as the child's academic self-esteem is shaped by it. Moreover, indirect effects of the parental aspirations are argued to be found in the child's ability to "ward off peer pressure for detrimental pursuits and lessening their involvement in problem behaviours that can detract from academic activities (Bandura, 1996, p. 1215). Smith (1981) found that social structure and the interpersonal environment seem to impact adolescent's tendency to adopt parental educational expectations (Smith, 1981). Smith compared the children's expectations, children's understanding of parent's expectations, and parent's actual expectations (Smith, 1981). Smith found that the children's expectations were strongly connected with their understanding of their parents' expectations. Thus, an agreement between the children's and parents' expectations was positively associated with the children's academic performance (Smith, 1981). In a study of low-income adolescents, Benner and Mistry find that parent's as well as teachers' expectations, independently, influenced adolescent's academic outcome (Benner and Mistry, 2007). Aldous's (2006) study on the performance of immigrant children in middle school years, supports the notion that children's educational achievements are influenced by parental support and "by believing their children can succeed in higher education endeavours" (Aldous, 2006). Moreover, the study indicates that immigrant parents can encourage educational achievements through daily interpersonal interactions with their children. With ambitions on behalf of their children and conversations about what is going on in school, and talks about their children's future education, immigrant parents can encourage their children's educational achievement, in spite of their ethnicity or social class (Aldous, 2006). Aldous includes "number of siblings" as a variable which may influence the children's school performance. This is argued to be due to the possibility of siblings having to compete with each other for the parent's attention, which may have an effect on the parent-child relation. However, Aldous also presents a study among Vietnamese families which finds that siblings may substitute for parental help in relation to schoolwork in such circumstances (Aldous, 2006).

Expectancy-Value Theory (2002) provides a theoretical frame to better understand how internal and external factors affect individual's educational achievements (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). A central point to the expectancy-value theory (EVT) is that "expectancies and values are assumed to directly influence performance, persistence, and task choice" (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002, p. 118). The individuals' perceptions of expectations and values, which are influenced by their social context, (e.g., parental expectations) influence the individual's academic performance, persistence and the subject choice (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). Expectancy refers to the process of believing that performing one's tasks will yield a specific outcome (Eccles and Wigfield, 1995). Values are referred

to as the belief that the expected outcome or behavior is desirable (Feather, 1995). In this notion, values stand as the source that drive the individuals “task-specific beliefs such as ability beliefs, the perceived difficulty of different tasks, and individuals’ goals, self-schema, and affective memories” (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002, p. 69). Thus, expectancy and values are believed to be direct influencers of performance, effort and persistence (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). Moreover, Eccles and Wigfield argue that both depend on social influencers, such as parents. Young adults, such as the participants in this study, actively make decisions which mirrors both internal and external belief systems.

4 Analysis

The question of why second-generation females has increased their integration into the Danish education system, is a multifaceted one. This has become evident from the personal experiences of the participants interviewed in this thesis. The analysis builds on connective threads which were extracted from the study of the transcripts. These are divided into themes which stand as factors that may explain why these women have become more integrated into the danish educational system.

The analysis is divided into the following themes which also define the structure of the analysis:

- *Parent's aspirations*
- *Freedom through education*
- *Stigmatization and disproving prejudice*
- *The only foreigner in class*

4.1 Parent's aspirations

The participants personal experience in the Danish education system offers both similarities and differences. An element which is found present in all the interview transcripts, are the parents' educational aspirations for their children.

The participants parents are all ambitious on behalf of their children, although the majority do not have a long cycle higher education themselves. Only one out of the eight parents completed a long cycle higher education in Somalia.

The parents' expectations to the women's educational paths, is a factor which presents itself quite early in the women's lives. When asked which factors may have played a role in her choice to pursue a university degree, Nadia answered:

"I knew pretty early, already in elementary school, a time where none of my classmates talked about education or even knew what university was. Already in that age I knew I just had to go to a university, not what I wanted to study but that it had to be at a university" (Nadia, 2021)

Nadia states that her parents' expectations of her to pursue a university degree had been an underlying element in her choice to become a lawyer. Although it was not clearly defined what education they wished for her, certain educations weighted higher than others.

Nadia's choice between religious studies and law was made on the basis of what her mother deemed to be the better fit and what would bring the most prestige. Nadia presents a strong case of the outcome of the interpersonal parent and child environment which fosters positive academic performance among children. Nadia's expectations can be argued to be connected to the expectations she understood her parents to have for her, an agreement which, according to Nadia, has been an underlying element in her academic pursuance. Furthermore, Nadia's choice of education is directly influenced by her social context i.e., her mother and the occupational status which brings about social prestige both in the dominant society and within the minority county.

In line with Nadia, Sara also states that next to her being obedient, education was of great importance. In her case, these aspirations had brought both positive and negative repercussions. The high aspirations her father had for her educational career had led to her being a very disciplined student, turning school into:

“almost a hobby, I would spend my weekends doing homework” (Sara, 2021).

However, her father's academic aspirations had also led to a crisis. Sara had found herself pursuing an education for the wrong reasons, satisfying her father and the prestige an education in law would bring about. Sara's case demonstrates a negative outcome of high parental engagement and expectations to the child's academic pursuance. Although Sara experienced a crisis in her personal as well as academic career, one could argue that the high parental engagement and expectations had fostered grounds for Sara to continue her academic career, following the crisis. Similar to Nadia, Fatima and Nora also state that education was a matter of importance to their parents. Nora's parents had made it clear that it was expected of her to pursue a long cycle higher education. As Nadia, what she would study was never specified, what really mattered was that it was a university degree. However, she states:

“The most respected labels are doctors or lawyers, that is what would give your parents respect among other immigrant parents” (Nora, 2021).

Nadia also acknowledges the presence of a social pressure among minority groups in which educations are placed in a hierarchic, with the educations mentioned in the quote at top. However,

this does not seem to have been directly expected of her by her parents, thus that social context seems to be lacking in Nora's choice of education.

4.2 Freedom through education

As the previous theme, obtaining freedom by fulfilling the educational aspirations their parents had for them, seems to be another element which is found present in some of the participants narratives. When asked whether the participants had considered whether a university degree would give rise to more freedom, more than often, the answer was "yes, most definitely" (Nadia, int). Even though the majority of this particular sample represent women from lesser traditional homes, considering their Middle Eastern heritage, traditional norms seem to have been a struggle, especially for Sara:

"There was this expectation to how I was supposed to be a woman. Especially with a Muslim background. There were certain expectations, especially of my sex life. My parents wanted me to remain a virgin until I got married. I was also not expected to drink, although my dad would drink occasionally, he did not want us, as girls, to go clubbing and get drunk. So that was also a fight I had to take, they expected me to be obedient, to listen to my parents, and get a high education. Especially my dad, he was very fixated on education. Due to his background, he always felt that my sister and I had a world of possibilities and all the necessary conditions to become successful. And for him, success was equal to a long or high cycle education. That pressure turned into some crises I had to deal with later on in my life." (Sara, 2021).

Sara states that for her, pursuing an education in law automatically generated more freedom. Because of this prestige such an education brings with it, she was able to move out and more or less live her life as she chose to, her parents were no longer able to interfere:

"It would sort of cover up for all other choices which would not fit the picture." (Sara, 2021).

In line with Sara, Nadia states that becoming a lawyer was equal to freedom, arguing that there was nothing more they could have asked of her.

When asked whether obtaining an education was equivalent to more freedom, Fatima answered:

“Yes. I knew it would bring some mobility with it and that would allow me to travel and experience different places. I would not have worked in Norway if it was not for my education or travel to Somalia and Egypt, alone. Without an education, it would have been hard to sell all the traveling to my parents” (Fatima, 2021).

As mentioned in the quote above, for Fatima, who comes from the most traditional family, education provided her with the freedom to travel and move out, in relation to work in Norway. Because of her education, Fatima obtained freedom and independence, this freedom, she argues, would have been difficult to obtain outside of the educational realm. Fatima, the participant with the strongest religious background, states, that it was reflected in her upbringing. She was the only girl among 4 siblings of the opposite gender, which inherently formed her upbringing, gender wise. Because of her gender, Fatima was expected to carry out specific domestic chores, especially in the kitchen. Moreover, Fatima was expected to keep an overview of the household, while the gender appropriate expectations of her brothers were different:

” My brothers could do what they wanted, stay out till late and just do whatever. I was not allowed to stay out late - I was more supervised.” (Fatima, 2021)

4.2.1 Gender norms in between cultures

The quote above reveals how traditional gender appropriate norms have displayed themselves in Fatima’s upbringing. This may not be as evident in the other narratives, due to the fact that they come for families with girls only. However, cultural appropriated gender norms are to be found among the participants, to a greater or lesser extent. In relation to gender norms in one’s upbringing, Nadia positions herself between her Danish classmates and other females of immigrant descent, arguing that:

” I don’t know if I grew up with any specific gender norms. I mean, I did feel that I was maybe not allowed to do the same things as my classmates, although, I was allowed to do a lot compared to other foreign girls. E.g., I had to be home earlier than the others from parties, we did not talk openly about me drinking, although my parents knew. Of course, I had to sit and eat properly, my legs had to be gathered, but I feel like that was just my mom teaching us manners more than gender norms.” (Nadia, 2021)

Nora explains that gender specific characteristics were not a factor in her upbringing, especially in comparison with other girls with the same background. This, she argues, is due to the dominant role her mother played in their household:

“my mom wore the pants in that relationship. So she thought a lot about how the Danish culture was and how it was important for us to fit in. I never felt like I had to live up to anything but the normal norm. Sometimes my dad would question all the drinking or why I had to wear make-up that early. But my mom would just brush it off with “that is how it is” and “that’s what her friend do too”. She really did not want us to have a different experience than our friends, she used to pick us up after a night out.” (Nora, 2021)

In this narrative, Nora’s mother seems to actively make an effort to facilitate the integration of her child into the Danish way of life. With such circumstances, Nora argues that she did not consider education a means to obtain freedom, by way of example, moving out came as a natural step in relation to her studies. Rather than freedom, social mobility has proven to be a factor for her. Next to the prestige attached to a university degree, having the opportunity to “crawl up” the social ladder, compared to her parents starting point, has been a motivating factor. Financial stability, disproving prejudices and “*escaping the stigmatization*” have for her, as well as some of the other participants, been a driving force.

According to the Gender Schema theory, Nora’s mother has not applied schematic selectivity i.e., the filter through which attributes not fitting the gender-appropriate norms are discarded (Bem, 1981). The existence of gender appropriate behavior may have been more evident, as can be argued for the other two cases, if the participants had siblings of the opposite gender.

Nadia recognizes the difference it may have had on the gender norms in her family, if she had had a brother. As Nora, Nadia’s mother also seems to have had a dominant role within the family. Although Nadia recognizes that a brother may have had some effect on her upbringing, she argues that due to the fact that her mother came to Denmark at an early age (12 years), she would have provided them with an equal upbringing despite of their genders.

In the following, Nadia exemplifies the role a brother might have had within the family by referring to her cousins who have brothers:

“there is something about older brothers, or brothers in general taking some kind of a protector role. Maybe he would have felt that he had to take care of my sister and me. But when I look at my cousins who have brothers, I feel there is more control. My cousins often ask their sisters “where do you think you are going in that dress” they ask their mom the same (..)”. (Nadia, 2021)

However, due to factors such as being exposed to the Danish culture early in one’s life, such as Nadia’s mother, or being a dominant figure within the family, such as Nora’s mother, can be argued to be factors which may have regulated their gender attitudes and behavior, to replicate that of the host society and culture.

4.2.2 Free education as a driving force

When asked whether the participants would have pursued a long cycle higher education if it cost money, the participants can be divided into two groups. Fatima and Nora argue that having to pay for school would create some difficulties, in the form of finances and pressure. While Nadia and Sara state, that their parental expectations and ambitions would have paved the way.

Due to the fact that it is only her and her sister, Nadia does not think that having to pay for her education would have been an issue, she states that they, her together with her family, would have managed. Sara, one of the participants who experienced immense pressure from home in relation to education answered:

” No, I do not think so. My parents would have paid. Money would not have stopped my dad’s ambitions for us.” (Sara, 2021)

In line with Sara, Fatima also expresses how important education was for her parents, however, she admits that her educational path may not have been as straight forward, since finances would have played a role:

“I would probably have taken some years off to work and save up and really have considered my financial situation. The road would not have been this straightforward” (Fatima, 2021).

Nora explains:

” I think it could be a factor which would make you doubt your own abilities, what if I fail an exam, would that just mean money out the window”. (Nora, 2021)

As the quote demonstrates, if money had been an aspect, Nora would have felt pressure to perform. Thus, she states that for her, free education has been a factor, a factor which made continuing her studies a natural step. When regarding the participants answers in relation to their parents educational and occupational background, in Denmark, two social classes are identified, middle and working class. According to klasesamfund.dk, 2021, Nadia and Sara can be argued to belong to the middle-class while Fatima and Nora belong to the working class. Accordingly, the social background can be argued to be a factor which may lead to the conclusion that, for certain classes, free education is of the essence.

4.3 Stigmatization and disproving prejudices

Nadia presents the case of a second-generation immigrant who has experienced the least prejudices and stigmatization in the Danish educational system, compared to the other participants. When asked about her recollections of school growing up, she had generally had a good experience. She recollects good relations between her and the teachers as well as the classmates. She states that there was no differentiation in the way the teachers behaved towards her compared to students with an ethnic majority background. However, when asked if she had ever felt different due to her background, she recollected the following:

” There was this one time, I had a Danish teacher who said to me “it is clear that Danish is not your mother tongue” where I answered, “but it is”, cause that’s how I feel. Yes, we did talk Turkish at home but I view Danish as my mother tongue, it is in Danish that I can really express myself.”
(Nadia, 2021)

Nadia’s teacher recognizes a distinction in her linguistic pronunciation which he attempts to explain by stating that due to her background, Danish was most likely not her mother tongue. However,

according to herself, Danish is her mother tongue, as stated above, it is the language in which her vocabulary is the largest. Here the teacher refers to what Bourdieu identifies as her habitus, more specifically, language. Language is one of the skills which are transferred to the child and together with knowledge and behavior, these constitute elements through which the child may demonstrate cultural ability, which the school system, and thereunder the teachers, are programmed to identify and reward (Dumais, 2002).

However, in high school, Nadia did experience an identity crisis, mainly due to the fact that she looked different from the majority. But also, in relation to cultural differences between, in this case the Turkish and Danish.

Sara, on the other hand, experienced intense prejudices and stigmatization, both of her and her family. She did not have any good memories of her time in primary school. She dealt with an identity crisis, because she was caught in between two cultures. She did not live up to her parents' expectations but neither did she fit in, in the Danish primary school where she was bullied. Moreover, she explains how she had to fight and rebel growing up, because of her Muslim background, although she describes her parents as liberal and openminded, there was this cultural clash.

"(..)the relation to the teachers was awful. I had some friends even though I was bullied but there was a hierarchy, there were the 'in' and 'outsiders'. I was an outsider because I was different but also because I was brown in a class with only whites. I also feel like my teachers had a stereotyped understanding of me and my family. They were almost shocked when they met my parents and realized that they were educated because, we did not fit the stereotype they knew from the media.

But still I was forced into that stereotype, it was very strange." (Sara, 2021)

As narrated above, Sara did not have a good relationship to her teachers in primary school. She explains how there existed a hierarchy in the class and why she was bullied. Furthermore, Sara recollects being treated differently from the Danish students, by having to talk about her background, a task which she does not think a child should be given. In primary school Sara felt stigmatized, she felt that she had to disprove the presumptions of her. She argues that performing well academically was a means to disprove the prejudices and the stereotyping. While describing her difficulties growing up, Sara states the following:

” I know that it is not us, the girls, who have the hardest time but when the media portrays us in a specific way, it is very hard to ignore. It is cognitive bias that e.g., my teachers had. I do not think they realized what they put on me compared to others ” (Sara, 2021)

Fatima had a dual recollection of her experience in primary school. Similar to all the other participants, Fatima was the only second-generation immigrant in her class, an experience which she describes as:

” I think it was fine. I don’t know if I am a single case, but I think I may have been naïve back then. I do not think that I registered everything. But I had good relations to everyone around me, my danish friends. We remained close many years after I moved away. I would describe that time, as really good ” (Fatima, 2021)

Nevertheless, later in primary school, Fatima was transferred to a school in Ikast, where the ethnic diversity was much larger than what she had previously experienced. She argues that her relationship with the teachers changed and she felt stigmatized. This, she states, was due to the fact that she and other minority children had formed groups within the class:

” I attended 8th and 9th grade in Ikast and there I met a lot of other immigrant children and we did make our own little groups within the class and I was stigmatized. When I discussed high school with my teacher, he did not find me qualified. He also did not find some of my other non danish friends unqualified. I feel like the decision was unfair, I knew that I was qualified. I have never had a hard time with school, I was never behind or anything like that. So, I had a hard time understanding his argument.” (Fatima, 2021).

Forming groups within the class, consisting of minority students only, can in accordance with Bourdieu’s concept be a reaction to the dominant cultural capital which is approved in school. In her fieldwork from a 4th grade class in Denmark, Gilllham finds that the teachers appreciate and reward the behavior of the ethnic, middle class students. Especially, their ability to formulate themselves in detail and in ‘standard Danish’ which the teachers consider to be the intelligent language in this

context (Gilliam, 2008). Thus, lacking or as in the case of Nadia having an accent, is not appreciated in school and may even lead to unintentional discrimination of minority children.

While Fatima does not recollect having experienced discrimination until she found herself in a group with other minorities, Nora explains an incidence in the early classes in primary school where she was treated different compared to her ethnic danish classmates:

"I spoke danish when I could talk, so I had never had any difficulties with reading or writing. But I remember, I think it was in the 3rd. or 4th grade we were divided into reading groups where we were divided according to our reading abilities. So, you would receive a reading body who was on the same level. I remember that because I was not on the best level, like those who were the best, I was sent to do extra reading with a teacher. It was a help yes, but there was no reason for it. Any of the other kids who were on my level could have been sent to do extra reading". (Nora, 2021)

As the quote demonstrates, Nora felt discriminated by her teacher on the basis of here minority background. As she states, there were others on the same reading level as her, however, she was the only one who was sent to receive extra classes.

This discrimination was only reinforced when she, as Sara, moved to a class with a larger presence of minority students. Here, she felt that they, because of their background were grouped and categorized "as lacking". They were pulled out in the middle of class, and in front of the other classmates, something which Nora found embarrassing. Moreover, she experienced a hierarchical division in class, placing the Danes at top and then the minority students:

"I felt like we were looked at as not being good enough, in such an obvious way". (Nora, 2021)

Nora has also experienced stereotyped prejudices from her fellow students at the university. She explains how she has been present while her fellow students have used insulting words such as "perkere" when referring to other minorities. This, she argues, occurs because, they do not consider her to fit that category:

"people always think that you are the exception". (Nora, 2021)

Moreover, she states that because of her background, it seems as if she is not viewed independently, there is no space for her to be an individual.

Another pattern which appears in the participants' narration as a motivating factor, is the urge to disprove the prejudices which are present for second-generation immigrant.

Nora states that education is a tool through which prejudices, and stigmatization can be disproved or avoided. And in many ways, to prove that as a second-generation immigrant, you are not academically challenged compared to ethnic Danes. For her, disproving the discrimination and categorization as different and lacking by her teachers, has also been a motivating factor:

“I have also thought about proving my teachers from high school wrong- if they could only see me today, I have a bachelor and I am on my way to get a masters”. (Nora, in)

Moreover, in her narrative of why second-generation females are increasing their presence within the education system, Nora includes factors such as the media and parental background. Nora argues that due to the negative tale of immigrants and descendants, some may feel the urge to better their circumstances and self-image. Nora refers to her parents' migration process as a motion which should bring about change for the better:

“I feel like I have to prove that it was not all for nothing. I am taking advantage of the possibilities available, for my own sake but also to show society that we are not all a burden”. (Nora).

4.4 Only minority student in class

All the participants were, at some point, the only minority students in their class. To some, this was viewed as an advantage, while others argue that it made them stand out. When asked whether being surrounded by Danes only, may have affected her educational career, Fatima answers:

“I feel like I went under the radar, I feel like I was not ‘discovered’ so I definitely think it did a lot for me.” (Fatima, 2021)

Fatima explains that she felt undiscovered, because she was the only minority student and was not a troublemaker, as stated above, she went under the radar. She argues that by not being “visibly

different” she was not met with any difficulties such as stigmatization. In her opinion, this would have been the case, if there had been more students with her background. A scenario which occurred when she moved to an ethnically diverse class later on. In line with Fatima, Nadia felt comfortable as the only student with a minority background in her class, she even states that it may have shaped her in many ways. Although she does not connect her educational achievement with the fact that there were only ethnic Danes in her class, she states that immigrants and descendant in groups, have a way of influencing each other. By contrast, Sara and Nora felt differentiated because of their minority background in classrooms where the majority were Danes. Both participants felt stigmatized because of it and Nora even felt the stigma grow as she moved to a class with a larger ethnic diversity. While the women did not all have straight forward transitions from primary school to high school, they all attended and graduated high school. Two of the participants were admitted on the grounds of their grades, while the other two were not deemed capable. However, Nadia and Fatima did not let the rejection define their future as they took matters into their own hands and got admitted into high school through entrance exams.

5 Summary of findings and conclusion

This thesis sought to examine why non-western second-generation female immigrants have increased their integration into the Danish education system. The four categories presented above, parent's aspirations, freedom through education, stigmatization and disproving prejudice, and the only foreigner in class, lay the foundation of this analysis. The categories were all identified in the data material obtained through semi-structured interviews with four second-generation females.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the participants parent's expectations to their educational achievements are directly connected. All four participants stated that their parents expected them to pursue a degree, most preferably a university degree. The parents were all ambitious on behalf of their children, some to a larger extent, which in one case illustrated the downside to parental expectations.

Secondly, it can be concluded that to some of these women, education is a means through which freedom can be achieved. Some of the participants clearly expressed a pre-existing assumption of education being a tool to obtain more freedom, freedom from the parents' traditional norms and freedom in the sense of being able to move out or travel alone. Thirdly, the analysis has shown that although the participants have already completed a university degree or are in the midst of doing so, their educational paths have not been free from stigmatization or prejudices. However, the very same experiences of stigmatization and prejudices, are found to be a motivator in some of the participant's educational careers. Finally, the analysis has shown, that all the participants, at some point in their educational career, had found themselves to be the only student with a minority background in class. To some, this was viewed as a positive factor which has influenced their academic pursuance, while others state that it made them stand out, and in one case. Outside of the four categories, the analysis has shown a correlation between dominant maternal figures and more freedom to engage in social activities with their peers and freedom from gender appropriate norms.

To address the hypotheses posed in this thesis directly, a strong correlation was found between parental educational expectations and the women's educational achievements. It cannot be concluded that the women's gender is of any importance in relation to the women's academic achievements. Finally, in some cases, it could be argued that the cultural capital of the women clashes with the dominant cultural capital.

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