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# Statelessness in Denmark

## Abstract

The research aims at analyzing whether strict citizenship laws in Denmark lead to stigmatization among stateless people. The study hypothesized that stringent naturalization laws could lead to stigmatization among the stateless population. Qualitative research interviews were conducted with stateless people and social workers and experts in the field of statelessness to test this hypothesis. In addition, the analysis involved Goffman's and Link & Phelan's Stigmatization Concepts and Jenkin's Identity Concepts. In contrast to the hypothesis, the study showed that stringent citizenship laws do not stigmatize stateless people. However, they can lead to economic burdens because of the temporary residence permits, which other foreigners also possess. The research also discovered that stigmatization is a feeling stateless people have because they lack citizenship. Acquiring Danish citizenship would make the stateless people feel more normal and positive about themselves but not necessarily strengthen their connection to Denmark or weaken their attachment to their origin.

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RELATIONS

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## **Statelessness in Denmark**

### **1. Introduction**

Statelessness is when an individual is not recognized as a citizen by any country in the world. Nationality is usually established based on the person's birthplace or his/her parents' birthplace or citizenship. The loss of nationality can be attributed to different reasons. It can be the case when a country "ceases to exist" as a result of wars, for example, or when a new government amends its nationality laws in a way that excludes certain groups of people from their right to citizenship (UNHCR, 2021). For example, the Palestinian-Israeli War of 1948 has led to the emergence of millions of stateless Palestinians who fled their homes. Another example is the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which left hundreds of thousands of stateless people in Europe in countries like Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia (Golovneva, 2019).

A stateless person has less or no rights in the host country, in some instances. The laws and regulations in certain countries have resulted in generations of inherited statelessness. For example, in most Arab countries, it is only possible for fathers to pass their citizenship to their children. For instance, if the mother only has citizenship in one of the Arab countries, and the father is a stateless Palestinian or a stateless Kurd, their children will be born and stay stateless as long as they live in the concerned country (UNHCR, 2014, p. 1).

In Europe, statelessness is mainly related to whether a country has a statelessness determination procedure and facilitates the naturalization of stateless people living in its territory. It is estimated that there are currently more than 500,000 stateless people living in Europe (European Network on Statelessness, 2021). Many stateless people who live in Europe do not have a legal status and live in limbo for a long time. This is because they have to prove that they are stateless. However, most countries in Europe do not give legal status to stateless people merely based on their statelessness. This means that even if a stateless person proved that he or she is stateless, this does not guarantee them the right to legal status in the host country (European Migration Network, 2020, p. 8).

Furthermore, stateless persons who receive legal status in Europe through other grounds, such as asylum, remain stateless for a long time in some countries like Denmark. Denmark has

strict nationality laws. The naturalization process is not “adopted by law, but negotiated and agreed upon by political parties representing a majority in Parliament” (Ersbøll, 2015).

Living without citizenship for many years can have detrimental effects on stateless people, such as stigmatization and lack of belonging to a homeland. Therefore, this project will study statelessness in Denmark, where acquiring citizenship is filled with obstacles. Denmark has stringent nationality laws, even for stateless people (Kohn, 2012), despite the fact that Denmark has acceded to the United Nations’ 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions (UNHCR, 2018). It is estimated that, according to a 2019 report on statelessness in Denmark, the country hosts around 8000 stateless people (UNHCR, 2019, p. 18).

Therefore, the analysis will include a list of the naturalization laws in Denmark. Afterward, the project will study whether these strict laws lead to the stigmatization of stateless people in the country. The project will therefore include qualitative interviews with stateless people living in Denmark. The project will also involve data from interviews with social workers and researchers in this field, such as Eva Ersbøll and Janne Franck. Eva is an expert researcher in human rights, citizenship, and statelessness at the Institute for Human Rights<sup>1</sup>. Janne has worked as a social advisor for refugees and stateless people in Helsingør Municipality. Along with these primary data obtained from interviews, the project will also use secondary data, such as articles and journals.

The analysis process will indulge Erving Goffman’s (2009) and Link & Phelan’s (2001) *Stigmatization* concepts, in addition to Richard Jenkins’ (2014) *Social Identity* concept.

## 1.1 Research Question

*Do the strict Danish Naturalization Laws create stigmatization among stateless people in Denmark?*

This research aims to study whether the strict citizenship laws in Denmark lead to the stigmatization of stateless people. The research will start by analyzing the naturalization laws in Denmark. Afterward, the study will involve first-hand data obtained from qualitative interviews with stateless people. The interviews will inquire about the stateless people’s encounters with

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Danish citizens and Danish authorities and the extent to which they feel included in or excluded from society, economically and socially. The interviews with the stateless people will also involve their perception of themselves and other people's perception of them as stateless people.

The primary data, as mentioned before, will also consist of interviews conducted with social workers and researchers, such as Eva Ersbøll and Janne Franck. Data from secondary sources, such as articles tackling statelessness in Denmark, will also play a significant role in analyzing whether the strict naturalization laws in Denmark create stigmatization among the stateless people in the country.

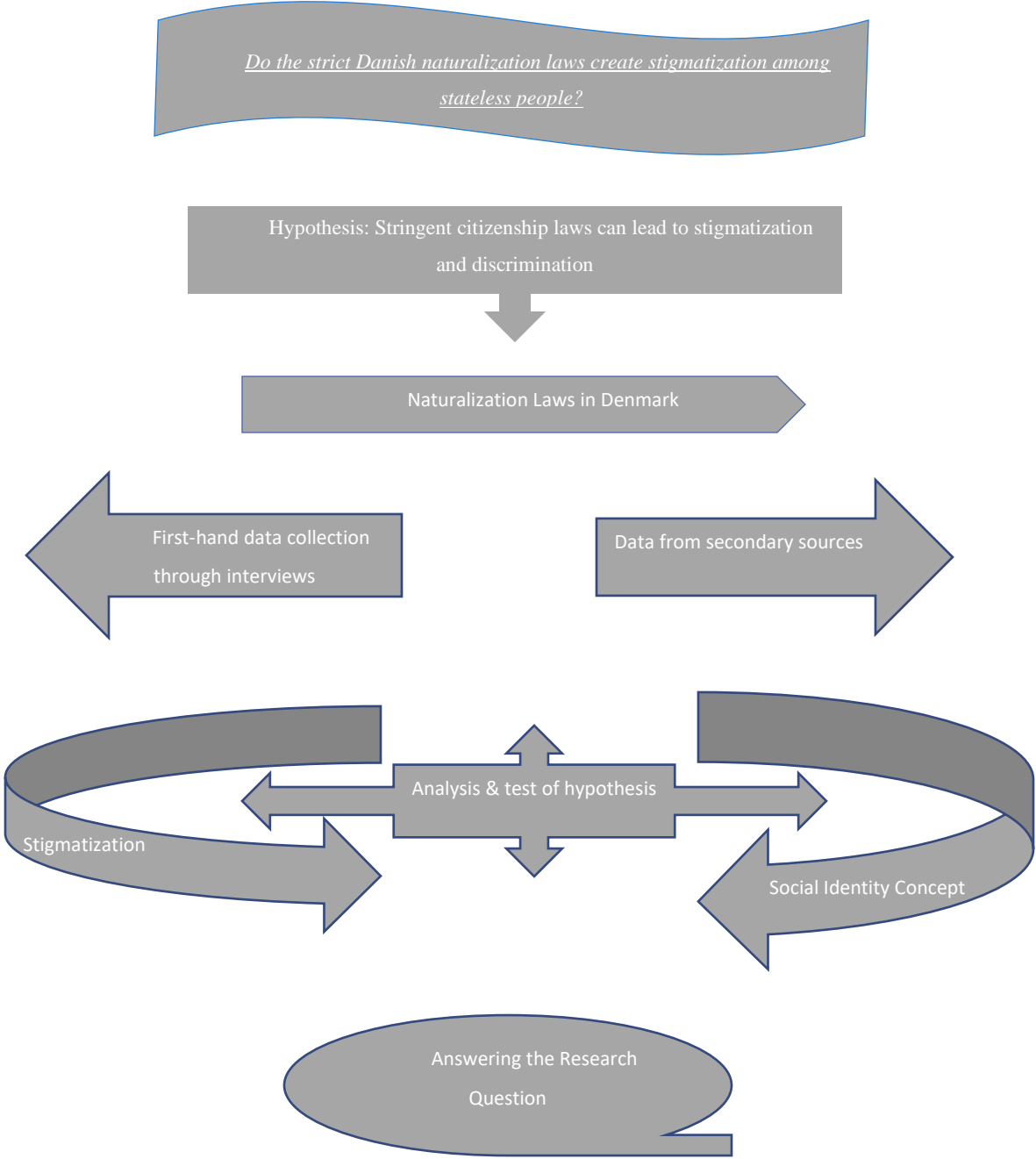
Therefore, the fetched data will be analyzed using the *Stigmatization* approach of Erving Goffman on the one hand and Link & Phelan's on the other. Moreover, Richard Jenkins' *Social Identity* concept will also be considered when analyzing the identities of the stateless people concerned. The answer to the research question will not only revolve around a mere 'yes' or 'no' outcome. It will also include an analysis of the different aspects of the theoretical frameworks regarding our data, which might lead to different positive and negative results. The researcher expects variant results among stateless people when tackling different elements, such as the economic and social performance, belonging to Denmark or lack of which, etc. However, the researcher does not rule out the possibility that some stateless people might feel completely stigmatized or not stigmatized at all.

### ***1.2 Hypothesis***

This research hypothesizes that strict citizenship laws in Denmark lead to stigmatization and discrimination against stateless people. The long path towards citizenship in Denmark might negatively affect the stateless people living in the country. This hypothesis will be tested using the theoretical concepts mentioned above to analyze the primary and secondary data fetched from the interviews with the stateless people and the social workers and researchers, in addition to secondary data tackling the issue.

The research design will look as follows:

**Research Plan**



### 1.3 Methodology

Statelessness has been an area of interest for me to study as a stateless person myself, and for its importance, as everyone should have the right to citizenship. Regarding this research, it was challenging for me to interview other stateless people and exclude myself as a stateless person and take my role only as a researcher. This is in the sense that I needed to avoid bias and do the research objectively. Furthermore, as a Development and International Relations student, I recognize that this is the right program to study laws, policies, and human rights issues. The field of International Relations is also characterized by involving diverse and intercultural aspects and beings. The stateless population consists of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities. Therefore, research tackling statelessness can add significant and relevant knowledge and input to the Faculty of Politics and Society.

However, despite the disadvantage of being stateless myself and having to avoid bias, there were, on the other hand, few advantages. I quickly found stateless people to interview and build trust with as someone who shares the same struggle. The interviewees were, therefore, comfortable sharing their experiences and views with me. Moreover, I speak the same native language, Arabic, which these stateless people in this research speak. Speaking in one's native language can provide a more relaxing atmosphere regarding these interviews, especially when it comes to feeling comfortable sharing sensitive information. The advantage here is that only two of these stateless people speak fluent English, and even though the other four speak Danish fluently, it still does not live up to the first and native language level. Therefore, I will be conducting the interviews in Arabic but will provide an English transcription for them in *Appendix 1*.

Hence, the interviewees in this research will consist of six stateless people, four of whom are refugees, one has a work permit, and the other lives in Denmark based on family reunification with a Danish citizen.

Due to this research's size and time limit, I deemed it feasible to interview only six stateless people. This is why it was essential to include interviews with expert researchers and social workers working with stateless people and input from secondary sources and literature produced by other researchers and scholars.

Thus, the qualitative research interview will consist of 18 questions listed in the *interview guideline* section of this chapter. The interview questions are selected based on the aim of this project, which is to study whether the strict citizenship laws in Denmark create stigmatization among the stateless people. Together with the secondary literature, the qualitative interview data will be analyzed using three theoretical concepts, namely Goffman's and Link and Phelan's concept of *stigmatization* and Richard Jenkins's *identity* concept. These theoretical concepts are selected because of their relevance to the objectives of this research, which are mentioned above. A more detailed explanation about the inclusion of each theoretical framework will be discussed next.

The analysis will start by giving an overview of the naturalization laws in Denmark so that the reader can get an insight into the procedure of acquiring Danish citizenship for stateless people. The naturalization laws will also be analyzed to determine whether stateless people have a facilitated procedure compared to other foreigners.

Next, the stateless people's and the social workers' responses in the interviews will be included briefly in the analysis but provided fully in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, respectively. The reason for summarizing the interviews is to have only relevant data for this research that will be analyzed afterward.

After that, Goffman's *stigmatization* concept will start the analytical study of the data at hand. The reason behind including Goffman's stigmatization concept is because Goffman provides three elements that can help analyze stigmatized people, which are, in our case, the stateless people. The stateless people will be therefore the "stigmatized," the Danes will be categorized as the "normal," while the "wise" will be attributed to the Danes who sympathize with the stateless people and who are "accepted" by the latter (Goffman, 2009, ch. 1).

Afterward, the analysis will involve Link & Phelan's more expanded concept of stigmatization. Their concept adds more aspects to the issue. They introduce four components where one can lead to the other. For example, stateless people can be "distinguished" and "labeled," and such labels can bear "negative attributes" with them. These negative attributes can lead to "separating" and excluding the stateless people from other citizens in society and can place them in the "them" category. This can result in discrimination against the stateless people



and can have detrimental effects on their social and economic status (Link & Phelan, 2001, pp. 366-72).

Next, the identity issue is vital for this research for its significance for stateless people. This is because it can be difficult for stateless people to identify who they are or how other people identify them. Is their identity based on their birthplace, their parents', their current country of residence, or none of these? The method of analyzing the stateless people's identity using Jenkin's identity concept incorporates the stigmatization aspect. For example, a crucial question that will arise during the first part of the analysis is whether strict citizenship laws in Denmark lead to stigmatization among stateless people, which is why the stigmatization part of the analysis is intentionally placed before the identity part. Then, the identity part will be based on whether stigmatization or non-stigmatization among stateless people negatively or positively affects their perception of their identities, respectively. For example, if a stateless person is stigmatized, would this stigmatization have a negative impact on their perception of their identity? Jenkin's Identity Concept will also involve questions such as whether negative stereotypes, analyzed through Link & Phelan's components, affect the stateless people's motivation to assimilate into the host society. In addition, this part of the analysis will also look into whether the Danes' perception of the stateless people shapes their treatment of the latter.

These questions, among others discussed, will comprise the second part of the analysis regarding the identity issue.

#### **a. Qualitative Research Method**

Qualitative Research is a "means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem." Qualitative research studies a particular issue with the use of "words" obtained from interviews. The interviews usually include open-ended types of questions (Creswell, 2009, p. 3-4). The procedure of analyzing the data obtained from interviews is often part of case study analysis. The researcher inspects the answers provided by the interviewees and uses them in the relevant "context" of the research problem (De Vaus, 2001, p. 10). This analysis process aims at producing "interpretation" of the data collected in the quest for studying a specific situation or phenomenon (Creswell, 2009, p. 4).

Therefore, for this research, a qualitative research approach is deemed necessary to study the impact of the stringent citizenship laws in Denmark on the stigmatization of the stateless people in the country. Moreover, including a set of open-ended questions for the stateless people to answer can provide an effective approach for exploring statelessness in Denmark and conducting a detailed analysis of the situation at hand.

A semi-structured interview will comprise the qualitative data to be produced in this research. Semi-structured interviews are characterized as open, flexible, and structured to allow the interviewees to bring up new input for the study at hand. A semi-structured interview usually starts with general questions and then digs deeper into the specifics. Ergo, the aim of conducting a semi-structured interview is to allocate information regarding a specific topic from a population sample. Therefore, general information collected in a semi-structured interview can also be used to tackle a relevant and specific issue (FAO, 2021).

In addition, Bryman (2016) explains that semi-structured interviewing provides the researcher with the necessary methods to obtain “open-ended” data throughout the research process. Semi-structured interviews, according to Bryman, help answer research questions in a “less explicit form” than that of structured interviews, for example. Therefore, semi-structured interviews can provide a tool for forming “open-minded” research, where the researcher is less strict about having specific answers to his or her questions. In addition, it allows the interviewees to feel more relaxed and comfortable about giving their answers more freely and less formally (p. 10).

However, even though the interviewees in this research will get the same planned questions, these interviews are not structured. Nevertheless, these research interviews are neither casual nor random and free. This is because, in this research, the interviewees will have the opportunity to give their opinions and personal views fully on the topic but according to previously planned questions. This is considered as one of the advantages of conducting semi-structured interviews. Another advantage of conducting semi-structured interviews is that they enable the researcher to prepare their questions beforehand. Semi-structured interviews also allow the interviewer to collect “reliable and comparable qualitative data.” The answers provided by the interviewees in a semi-structured interview can also provide explanations for the interviewee’s prerequisites for giving a specific answer. Therefore, a semi-structured interview shares attributes from both

structured and unstructured interviews and comes as a result in between the two (Keller & Conradin, 2020, p. 1).

Nonetheless, despite its advantages, a semi-structured interview can also have several disadvantages. For example, ensuring confidentiality can be difficult as some participants might be hesitant to share sensitive information. Moreover, semi-structured interviews can be time-consuming and require enormous effort on the researcher's part, especially regarding analyzing the acquired data. This is because the researcher might need to conduct as many interviews as possible to be able to yield results through comparing responses from different interviewees (Keller & Conradin, 2020, p. 1).

As this research will involve interviewing six stateless people, it may not be feasible to deduct representative results from these data. Thus it can be impossible to generalize the findings of these interviews on the issue at hand. Flick (2011) mentions that in qualitative research, the researcher is usually not interested “in guaranteeing representativity by random sampling of participants.” Instead, in qualitative research, “researchers select participants purposively and integrate small numbers of cases according to their relevance.” While in qualitative research “a few cases are studied,” they are “analyzed extensively.” In qualitative research, it is possible to study a phenomenon in as much detail as possible (p. 12). It is, therefore, necessary when conducting qualitative research to complement the results using secondary data and samples. The problem of representativity can consequently emerge from generalizing from a small number of samples. The qualitative interviews with six stateless people on their own will, hence, not represent an ultimate answer to our research question. Considering the timeframe within which a master’s thesis should be written, it is deemed impossible to collect responses and samples from thousands of stateless people living in Denmark. As a result, to get reliable results, the research will also involve data and literature from secondary sources and interviews with social workers and researchers engaged in this field, such as Eva Ersbøll and Janne Franck.

Nevertheless, the interviews conducted consisted only of stateless Palestinians. The intention was not to target a specific ethnic group, as this will counter the cultural and ethnic diversity aspect of stateless people mentioned above. However, it was expected that the participants would primarily, though not wholly, consist of stateless Palestinians, as they comprise the largest groups of stateless people in Denmark (UNHCR, 2019; UNA, 2013). This is

not seen as an issue in itself, as stateless people would be treated the same in Denmark regardless of whether they are stateless Palestinians, stateless Bedoons, stateless Kurds, stateless Nepalese, or stateless Rohingya. Thus, the researcher believes that the interviews solely with Palestinians should not create a biased result. This is especially the case as the research will also include the social workers' input. The social workers have experience with different stateless people, including Palestinians, Bedoons, Kurds, and Nepalese. However, it could have added more diversity to the research, especially regarding the perception of one's identity. Do Kurds, who also constitute a significant number of stateless people in Denmark (UNHCR, 2019, p. 17), feel more connected to their Kurdish identity than to the Syrian one, where they were born and lived? Are Bedoons more connected to their Kuwaiti identity as the majority were born and lived in Kuwait (Human Rights Watch, 1995), compared to the Palestinians where many of whom were born and lived outside of Palestine and fled from the Lebanese Civil War in the 1980s (Søndergaard, 2011) or the Syrian Civil War in 2011 (United Nations, 2019)?

However, the interviews with expert researchers and social workers working with stateless people will differ in structure from the interviews with stateless people. As mentioned before, the interviews with stateless people will consist of semi-structured questions that are open and flexible, yet formal and follow the same order with the same questions for all participants. On the other hand, the interviews with the researchers and social workers will not involve a set of previously planned questions. The interviews will mainly involve our research question directly. Hence, the researchers and social workers will be asked to give their objective input regarding whether strict citizenship laws lead to stigmatization and discrimination among the stateless people in Denmark. Therefore, the researchers and social workers will share their experience as experts in working with stateless people. Involving experts in this area is essential in this research, where generalizations cannot solely be made from conducting qualitative interviews with six stateless people. This is why this research will also use secondary data from articles and cases addressing statelessness.

#### **b. Interview Guide with the Stateless People**

*The qualitative interview with the stateless people will consist of the following questions.*

1. *What is your age and gender?*<sup>2</sup>
2. *How long have you been in Denmark?*
3. *What are the legal grounds of your residence as a stateless person in Denmark?*
4. *Do you perceive yourself as a normal person with good self-esteem and confidence despite your statelessness?*
5. *Do you feel that without citizenship, you lack dignity and honor as an individual?*
6. *Do you think people tend to perceive you and treat you differently because of your status as stateless?*
7. *Do Danish citizens sympathize with you because of your statelessness?*
8. *Do you think Denmark has a moral obligation to naturalize you faster than individuals who already have citizenship?*
9. *Do you perceive the Danish legislation regarding citizenship as a problem, especially for you as stateless?*
10. *Do you experience any discrimination from the authorities as a result of your statelessness? Do you feel that you have the same rights and obligations as others, regardless of what the laws and policies guarantee?*
11. *Do you experience discrimination from the Danes in your everyday life due to your statelessness?*
12. *Do you feel marginalized from active participation in society like other citizens because of your statelessness? Do you feel excluded and in the out-group?*
13. *Do you think that your statelessness has a negative impact on your economic performance?*
14. *Do you feel that your statelessness impacts your social integrity and relationships with other people?*

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<sup>2</sup> Knowing the age and gender of the stateless person is necessary in this research as they can determine the type of protection a stateless person has, in case their legal residence in the country was gained through asylum.

*15. Do you feel that people negatively look at you because of your statelessness?*

*16. Do you feel motivated to improve your image as a stateless person if others attribute negative stereotypes and labels to you?*

*17. Do you think of Denmark as your new homeland? If not, and if you became a Danish citizen, would this change the way you perceive Denmark as your new home?*

*18. If you became a Danish citizen, would this affect how you perceive yourself and your identity?*

## **2 Theoretical Framework**

This chapter will consist of the theoretical framework that this research will involve. As mentioned before, the study will test our hypothesis using Ervin Goffman's & Link & Phelan's Stigmatization concepts and Richard Jenkin's Social Identity Concept.

### ***2.1 Stigmatization***

#### **2.1.1 Erving Goffman's Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity**

Coined by Goffman (2009), this approach deals with social identity by perceiving the "stigmas" people build when they encounter strangers for the first time. A "stigma," according to Goffman, transforms people's perception of others from being normal persons into "tainted, discounted one[s]." This is especially the case when a stigma has a large negative impact on the persons involved, where he refers to it as "a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap." For Goffman, individuals can have different relations to stigma. He divides these relations to a stigma into three categories: "the stigmatized, the normal, and the wise." The "stigmatized" are those who have the stigma and are not perceived as normal by others. The "normals" are the individuals who are perceived by society as individuals without a stigma. The "wise" are the "normals" who sympathize with the "stigmatized" and who are "accepted" by the "stigmatized" (Goffman, 2009, ch. 1).

This part of the "stigmatization" concept will be used in this research to analyze whether the Danes perceive the stateless people as "stigmatized" or "normal." The analysis will also involve how stateless people view themselves in this context. Moreover, it is crucial to study the stateless people's experiences regarding their encounters with people in Denmark. Do they encounter a lot

of “wise” people, or do they feel mostly “stigmatized” by the “normals?” Is a society with less “wise” people more xenophobic?

This part of the stigmatization approach can enable us to analyze the real-life interactions between the Danes and the stateless people. This part, however, does not provide the analytical tools needed to inspect the different labeling and attributions evolved in society towards the stigmatized, which are the stateless people in our case. This is why various scholars have criticized Goffman’s concept as a concept that does not tackle socio-political aspects found in societies. For example, Simon Parker and Robert Aggleton argue that Goffman’s stigma does not shed light on the way people and authorities use stigma to create “social inequality” in society. They argue that the limitations in Goffman’s concept need to be addressed through developing a stigma concept that includes an understanding of the contemporary cultural, social, and economic problems that can emerge from stigmatization. They add that such an understanding can involve discrimination, racism, and social class as consequences of stigma (Tyler & Slater, 2018). This is where Link & Phelan’s concept comes into place. This critical overview of Goffman’s concept made me realize that this research must include Link & Phelan’s four components, which will be explained in the next section, to provide a deeper analysis of stigmatization.

Link & Phelan’s stigma concept has emerged to address the issue of stigma in modern societies. They argue that it is essential to include the problems of “power” and “discrimination” together when tackling stigma. Such inclusion can help us understand the struggle that the stigmatized individuals experience. Their four components constitute the discrimination that the stigmatized can be exposed to in a “power situation” (Gibbons & Birks, 2016, p. 260).

Another criticism of Goffman’s stigma underlines the latter’s focus on “microlevel interactions” between the normal and the stigmatized. For example, “microlevels interactions” focus on individual interactions rather than on the bigger picture and how stigmatization affects the stigmatized in the long run. For instance, it can mean the way stigmatization affects the stigmatized socially and economically (Link & Phelan, p. 382). This is why Link & Phelan’s components are necessary to complement Goffman’s concept regarding this research.

Moreover, Goffman’s “consistent focus on social dynamics at the micro-scale” means that his concept would not include elements that study the stigmatized people’s psychological

development as a result of their stigma. Had his concept consisted of psychological analytical aspects, it would have provided a base for analyzing the “identity-based inquir[ies]” of the stigmatized.

This research, however, is interested in knowing about the stateless people’s psychological status and identity perceptions as a result of stigmatization or non-stigmatization. For the size of this research and the timeframe within which it should be finalized, Goffman’s concept would have been complemented with John Berry’s (2006) Acculturation Theory. Berry’s theory involves studying the psychological and social effects resulting from the contact between the dominant groups and the minorities in society. The interesting aspect of Berry’s theory in this research would be the focus on the “acculturative stress” element that is concerned with studying the minorities’ levels of “uncertainty, anxiety, and depression” (Berry, 2006, p. 289).

However, I deemed it more feasible and important to include the identity concept over the psychological element, as the question of identity can be obscure when putting stateless people into account. Thus, this is where Jenkin’s *Social Identity* concept complements Goffman’s missing elements regarding this research to analyze whether stigmatization affects one’s perception of their identities.

Nevertheless, Goffman’s advocates defended his stigmatization concept from criticism by highlighting Goffman’s argument that his “understanding of stigma is ecological not psychological” in the first place. He sought to focus on the interactions between individuals rather than what goes around “behind the scenes.” His concept, thus, focuses on the “scene itself” (Brune et al., 2014). However, this research also seeks to analyze what goes around “behind the scenes.” Thus, it is deemed essential to explore identity aspects considering the stateless people, as mentioned before.

Goffman’s stigmatization concept, moreover, received criticism also from disability activists, who would use the stigma concept with their work with the disabled people who are perceived as stigmatized. They argue that Goffman perceives the stigmatized as “tainted” and weak, thus providing a dehumanized view of them. In a way, his concept outlines an idea that the stigmatized have to accept their “disability.” Goffman overlooked the potential and “resistance of the disabled people.” His ideas entail that stigma does not change or evolve over time, which means that the stigmatized will stay stigmatized, and there would be no room for change.



Looking at disabled people's rights nowadays can provide an example that the view on stigma changes over time (Brune et al., 2014).

In our research, stateless people can be stigmatized nowadays, but in the future, it can be the case that the issue of statelessness is resolved entirely and is no longer perceived as a stigma.

Other theories of interest for this topic of statelessness would have been Axel Honneth's (1995): *The Struggle for Recognition: Theory of Social Conflict*. Honneth's theory provides a ground for analyzing the lack of recognition that some members of society might experience, which hinders them from becoming active members of their societies. Honneth's theory focuses on the effects of the lack of recognition on the individuals' economic and social input (p. x). In this research, his theory could have been used to study how the stateless people's lack of recognition as citizens affects their economic and social performance. Would a full recognition of the stateless people as normal citizens through facilitated naturalization procedures positively impact their economic and social lives, for example? However, I chose Goffman's approach over Honneth's because Goffman's approach is more concrete. It involves real-life interactions and experiences between the normal and the stigmatized. Honneth, on the other hand, focuses in his approach on those who receive "emotional" and "cognitive support" from the dominant groups. Goffman's approach is relevant with all its elements to the research at hand and could be complemented with Link & Phelan's and Jenkin's approaches. In contrast, Honneth's approach includes irrelevant elements such as "abuse and rape" and "physical integrity" (Honneth, 1995, p. 129). These elements are not tenable in studying the cases of stateless people.

### ***2.1.2 Conceptualizing Stigma: Link & Phelan***

Link & Phelan recognizes Goffman's "observation that stigma can be seen as the relationship between 'attribute and a stereotype.'" Nonetheless, they complement this approach by adopting four "interrelated components" that, together, constitute the complete figure of a stigma and goes as a sequence where one component leads to the other (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 366-7).

#### **Component 1 – Distinguishing and Labeling**

People create labels to distinguish others. Irrelevant and overlooked differences include one's car color, while relevant and vital differences highlight one's skin color, gender, or IQ. For instance, black and white people, blind and sighted people, handicapped, etc. In the nineteenth century,

large faces were attributed to criminality. Thus, people who had large faces used to be stigmatized 100 years ago (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 367-8).

### **Component 2 – Associating Human Differences with Negative Attributes**

“This aspect of stigma involves a label and a stereotype, with the label linking a person to a set of undesirable characteristics that form the stereotype.” This was also underlined by Goffman’s first publication on the issue of stigma in 1963 (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 369). An example of this is the assumption that a mentally ill person can pose a threat to other people, whether in the past or the present. Such a stereotype can make other people distance themselves from the concerned person and stigmatize them (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 368-9).

### **Component 3 – Separating “US” from “Them”**

Component 3 revolves around dividing people into categories based on their labels and the associated negative attributes. For example, in the case of locals (normal) and immigrants (stigmatized), the separation happens based on the immigrants’ background. It leads to the rhetoric of “us” as locals and “them” as immigrants (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 370).

### **Component 4 – Status Loss and Discrimination**

The stigmatized people can experience discrimination, fewer rights, and lower status and income, for example. Thus, negative attributes and stereotyping can result in degrading a person’s position in a social hierarchy. However, according to Link and Phelan, discrimination is divided into two categories. The first is “individual discrimination,” where one person directly and openly discriminates against another based on “labeling,” “negative attributes,” and stereotypes by, for example, “refusing to rent an apartment” to them. On the other hand, the second is “structural discrimination,” which “refers to accumulated institutional practices that work to the disadvantage of racial minority groups even in the absence of individual prejudice or discrimination.” An example of this can be the case where a disabled person will not be considered for most jobs not because of his or her inability to perform the job, but as a result of the “disabling environment” that “humans have constructed” (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 372).

Link & Phelan's concept of stigmatization can be used in this research to study the stateless people’s feelings of belonging or non-belonging in Denmark. The analysis will look into their

experience of labeling and discrimination and whether they feel left out by the host society in case negative stereotypes were attributed to them as an out-group or “them.” Moreover, the analysis will include whether distinguishing and negative attributes impact their social and economic performance. Analyzing our data using these components is crucial for this research to understand the impact of these negative attributes and labels, if found, on stateless people.

## **2.2 Jenkin’s Identity Concept**

In his book *Social Identity (2014)*, Richard Jenkins identifies *identity* as people’s ability to recognize other people and other things. Identity constitutes people’s perceptions of themselves and others, others’ perceptions of us, and how we think other people perceive us (p. 6). The identity concept, therefore, is triggered when people and groups interact with each other through relationships. People identify themselves and others depending on the contexts within which they find themselves. For Jenkins, identifying people can shape how they will be treated (Jenkins, 2014, p. 6-7).

Thus, the identity concept constitutes categorizing people according to their differences and similarities. For example, the interactions between people lead to associating people with other people or things such as associating people coming from a particular region with a specific ideology or behavior, in the sense that such ideology comprises a significant part of those people’s identity (Jenkins, 2014, p. 18).

Moreover, one’s self-confidence or self-doubt also shapes one’s identity and perception of themselves (Jenkins, 2014, p. 51). Jenkins’ concept of Social Identity can help us analyze how stateless people identify themselves and who they are and how this identification and perception impact their view of their identities. Moreover, it will help us analyze how the Danes’ perception of the stateless people will affect their treatment of the latter.

Furthermore, negative stereotypes and labeling can also affect people’s perception of their identity and motivation to improve it. According to Jenkins, negative labels and stereotypes can make “individuals and groups with unsatisfactory social identity seek to restore or acquire positive identification via mobility, assimilation, creativity or competition” (Jenkins, 2014, p. 115). However, this part of his definition of identity cannot be taken for granted. This is because negative labeling can also have adverse effects on people’s identity and self-confidence. It can

also affect individuals' motivation to "assimilate" in society when they expect in advance that others perceive them negatively. This can either be applied to Jenkin's ideas or prove the opposite. However, this we will find out during the analysis of both the primary and secondary data.

### **3 Empirical Overview of the Problem**

The issue of statelessness is a global problem and not bound to a specific region. There are approximately 10 million stateless people worldwide, half a million of whom live in Europe (European Network on Statelessness, 2021). In Denmark, stateless people account for around 8,000 people (UNHCR, 2019, p. 18). Stateless people usually face discrimination and limited access to rights and benefits enjoyed by other citizens. In the case of Denmark, there is no statelessness determination process. This means that a residence permit is not given for the sole reason of being stateless. In the report *Mapping Stateless in Denmark* (2019), it is mentioned that "under current Danish law, statelessness alone does not as such serve as a ground for rights" (p. 50). The report notes that "statelessness may be an element that can weigh in an asylum procedure, but a residence right does not follow from being stateless only" (UNHCR, 2019, p. 53).

Legally residing stateless people in Denmark are thus, in most cases, also refugees and were therefore permitted to stay based on the situation in their former countries of residence. An example of this is the case of stateless Palestinians fleeing the 2011 Civil War in Syria. This means that if the legal grounds of giving stateless people residence in Denmark have ceased to exist, e.g., peace in the country of former habitual residence, stateless people might face deportation to countries where they were discriminated against already concerning their access to citizenship (Tucker, 2017, p. 6).

However, in Denmark, access to citizenship for stateless people happens earliest at eight years of residence. Denmark requires the applicant to hold permanent residency before applying for citizenship. This can result in an indefinite state of statelessness, whether when considering a long waiting time or forcing the stateless person to return to their country of former habitual residence (Tucker, 2016, pp. 6, 11). Spending many years in a country without citizenship can have detrimental effects on the lives of stateless people. Therefore, the aim of highlighting this

problem is to study whether strict naturalization laws in Denmark lead to stigmatization and discrimination among the stateless people living in the country.

## **4 Analysis**

This section will form the basis of the analysis of whether strict citizenship laws in Denmark create stigmatization among stateless people.

The analysis will start with outlining citizenship laws in Denmark. Afterward, the study will summarize the output given by the stateless people and the social workers in the conducted qualitative interviews. A fully detailed transcript of the interviews will be included in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, respectively.

Subsequently, interview data and data acquired from secondary sources will be analyzed using the theoretical frameworks provided in **Chapter 2** of this research. We have already hypothesized that stringent citizenship laws, which make stateless people live without citizenship for years, or in some cases, result in indefinite statelessness, can lead to stigmatization.

### **4.1 Naturalization Laws in Denmark**

This section will list in detail the citizenship requirements and process for stateless people in Denmark. It will also include the permanent residence requirements as it is a prerequisite to applying for Danish citizenship (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021). It can be one of the main obstacles for many people applying for Danish citizenship.

Danish naturalization laws are stringent, and Denmark is recognized as having the most challenging citizenship process in the Nordic countries (Rao, 2020), even for stateless people. This is despite the fact that Denmark is a signatory to both the 1961 and 1954 conventions on statelessness (UNHCR, 2018). The Danish citizenship requirements are listed as follows.

#### **a. Period of Residence**

In order for stateless people to be able to apply for Danish citizenship, they should have lived in Denmark for eight years without interruptions. Without interruptions means that the applicant should not have left Denmark on vacation for more than four weeks at one time or for a total of six weeks within a period of one year. Traveling for reasons such as education or working for a Danish organization abroad is not considered an interruption. Furthermore, the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and Integration states that it can be possible for an applicant to have a total of combined one year of residence interruption in the last 12 years before applying for citizenship. However, suppose the periods of traveling abroad exceed one year but are less than two years, it can also be possible to qualify for Danish citizenship. The applicant qualifies if he or she traveled for reasons such as study exchanges, military service<sup>3</sup> in the other country of citizenship, or visiting a family member suffering from a severe disease (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2020, p. 1).

Nonetheless, for other adult foreigners aged over 18, the residence requirement is nine years. Thus, stateless people only enjoy one year less waiting time before they can apply for citizenship. This also applies to refugees, where they can also apply for citizenship after eight years instead of nine (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021).

#### **b. Permanent Residence**

For an applicant to be eligible for Danish citizenship, they should be in possession of permanent residence in the country (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021). This can be seen as one of the main obstacles towards the path to acquiring Danish citizenship. This is because since the refugee crisis of 2015 and the rise of the popularity of the right-wing parties in Europe in general, and in Denmark to a larger extent in particular, the requirements for acquiring a permanent residence permit have dramatically changed and toughened (Delman, 2016). Before the refugee crisis, the conditions for getting a permanent residence permit were not easy in the first place but possible for many people. For example, if an individual lived in Denmark for five years, and has been economically independent for three years within the last five years before applying for permanent residence, and had a Danish language certificate level 1 (the lowest), they could get permanent residency. Education for a minimum of three years was also regarded as economic independence (Folketinget, 2015, p. 2).

However, the recent changes to the requirements have made it much more challenging to fulfill the requirements for permanent residence. For example, the residence requirement for applicants applying for permanent residency was increased from five years to eight years.

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<sup>3</sup> In some countries, such as Syria, some stateless people were required to do military service despite their statelessness (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2013, p. 4)

Moreover, education would not count anymore as economic independence, and the Danish language level increased to level 2. Criminality can also delay the possibility to apply for permanent residence for years, depending on the seriousness of the crime and the imprisonment period. Sentences that exceed six months prohibit the applicant from applying for a permanent residence permit for the rest of their lives (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2019).

In addition, the applicant for a permanent residence permit should not have “overdue debt” to the state and should not have received any social benefits in the last four years before applying for permanent residence. Student loans and loans received by banks do not, as a result, render the applicant ineligible for permanent residence. However, the difficult part lies in the condition that the applicant should have been working full-time for three years and a half in the last four years continuously. According to the Immigration Service, a full-time job is a minimum of paid 30 hours of work per week. Other requirements for permanent residence are that an applicant should not conceal his or her identity and citizenship information from the authorities, in addition to signing and “accepting” the “residence and self-support declaration” form<sup>4</sup> (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2019). The applicant should also be working at the time of his or her application processing period, which takes around ten months (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2019; accessed 16-03-2021).

However, in addition to these requirements, the applicant should fulfill two of the four “supplementing conditions.” First, these four conditions consist of possessing a Danish level 3 certificate equivalent to (CEFR)<sup>5</sup> B2 language level. The second supplementing condition is a longer period of a full-time job, which is four years in the last four years and a half when applying for permanent residence. The third supplementing condition is passing an “active citizenship” test or being a Danish club or organization member for a minimum of a year. The last supplementing condition is that the applicant should have a gross income of around 300,000 Danish Krone per year (2021 Level) in the latest two years before applying for permanent

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<sup>4</sup> The form includes the individuals’ acceptance of Danish values and norms, and respect for the Danish culture and society. It also includes individuals’ declaration that they will try their best to learn Danish and enter the labor market as fast as possible. It does also include that the residence permit is only extended when the reasons that it was given for are still in place. For example, if a refugee is no longer in need for protection as the situation got better in their home country or country of previous residence, they should acknowledge that the residence permit may not be extended.

<sup>5</sup> Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

residence (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2019). The requirement for higher income increases every year; hence the level is updated accordingly.

Therefore, it is obligatory to fulfill two of these supplementing conditions in addition to the base ones mentioned above. However, the Immigration Service states that if an applicant meets all four supplementing conditions, in addition to the base ones, they can apply for permanent residence after four years of living in Denmark (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2019).

These conditions, therefore, target mainly highly-skilled workers. It can be argued that many stateless people are not found within this category of highly skilled workers. This is not because stateless people lack the necessary intelligence level to be among the highly skilled workers. It can be the case that stateless people suffered discriminatory laws that prohibited them in the first place from access to education, job market, and equal opportunities in their previous countries of residence (Chickera & Whiteman, 2014, p. 58). It can also be argued that stateless people experience difficulty traveling legally as skilled workers because of their lack of citizenship and passports, in case they have had access to equal opportunities in their previous countries of residence. Ergo, most stateless people travel illegally seeking asylum. The number of stateless people in Denmark who are also recognized as refugees is 5283 stateless people from 1997 until the end of 2020 (Danmarks Statistik, 2021).

### **c. Clean Criminal Record**

As for the requirements for permanent residence, a person cannot apply for citizenship if they had been sentenced before. In the case of applying for citizenship, any sentence that exceeds one year prohibits individuals from applying for citizenship for the rest of their lives (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021).

However, fines are also considered an offense and will prohibit applicants for Danish citizenship from applying for a certain period. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Integration states that “a fine of 3000 Danish Krone or over will cause a delay of four years and six months from the time of conducting the offense” (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021). This part with regard to fines can also be argued to be very strict and can further delay the acquisition of Danish citizenship. Of course, authorities should not be lenient when it comes to criminality. However, setting a delay of four years and a half due to a fine of 3000 Danish Krone



can be perceived as controversial. This is because the rule revolves around any fines, for example, a traffic fine, which any Danish citizen can receive. Yet, the citizenship will not be withdrawn from Danish citizens for four years and a half as a result of the same fine. Hence, we can argue that the Danish government has different expectations from Danish citizens and applicants for Danish citizenship. The same can apply for the Danish citizenship test that the average Dane might have difficulty passing (Bilefsky, 2016) and which will be mentioned next.

#### **d. Danish Citizenship Test**

The Danish citizenship test was updated in 2015. It consists of questions about Danish society, culture, and history. The test is taken in a written form and consists of 40 questions, of which 32 should be answered correctly to pass. Many organizations criticize the test as very difficult to answer, even for Danes born and grown up in the country. The test was also criticized for including questions that date back centuries ago and have no relevance to contemporary Denmark (Bilefsky, 2016). The sole intention behind introducing these updates to the Danish test was to make it more challenging to acquire Danish citizenship. The then Integration Minister, Inger Støjberg, said that “to me, Danish citizenship is something very special. It’s something you need to earn and be willing to strive after. Therefore we will make it significantly harder to get Danish citizenship” (The Local, 2015).

#### **e. Self-support**

As the case with the requirements for permanent residence, a citizenship application is only considered eligible if the applicant has not received any social benefits in the latest two years before applying for citizenship. However, the applicant may only have received social benefits for a maximum of four months in total in the latest five years preceding the citizenship application. Nevertheless, the ministry states that receiving the state’s education scholarship, pension, and early pension does not count as receiving social benefits and does not render the applicant ineligible for Danish citizenship. Unemployment benefits do not prohibit a person from applying for citizenship. Still, when they exceed four months, they count against the period within which the applicant should have been self-sufficient (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021).

Therefore, acquiring Danish citizenship requires the applicant to have been working full-time for more than five years without lengthy interruptions. The employment requirement is three years and a half in the last four years. However, receiving social benefits will delay the process. Thus, practically, the applicant is required to be in a job for the whole period. As the requirements stay in place until the applicant has acquired citizenship, an individual should be in a job for around six years. This is because the citizenship application process takes approximately 16 months at the time being, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Integration (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021).

#### **f. Danish Language**

The Danish level required for fulfilling the Danish citizenship language requirement is Danish 3 (equivalent to B2). The only case where Danish 2 (B1) is accepted for Danish citizenship is when the applicant has not received social benefits for more than six months in the latest nine years before applying for citizenship (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021).

Furthermore, additional Danish citizenship conditions include none “overdue debt” to the state as the case is with permanent residence. Moreover, the applicant should also sign a declaration of loyalty to the Danish state. The declaration underlines the applicant’s respect for the Danish constitution, laws, values, culture, democracy, and society. Finally, if the application is accepted by the Danish Parliament’s members, the applicant should participate in a citizenship ceremony, which is the last requirement for acquiring Danish citizenship (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021).

In summary, the main obstacle towards acquiring Danish citizenship is that the applicant should be in possession of a permanent residence. This means, as a result, that a stateless person can no longer enjoy the shorter period of eight years for applying for citizenship. This is because even if the stateless person fulfilled all the requirements and applied for a permanent residence after eight years, it takes around ten months at the time being to process permanent residence applications by the Immigration Service, as mentioned before (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2019; accessed 16-03-2021). Therefore, this is the only difference between the application procedure for stateless people and other applicants; stateless people can apply for citizenship after eight years instead of nine years living in Denmark. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Integration, the application for “vulnerable groups” such as “children and stateless people” is

processed faster considering the UN Convention of 1961 on the Reduction of Statelessness and the UN Convention of 1989 on Children's Rights (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021).

Thus, one year earlier to apply for citizenship, though welcomed, is not considerable facilitation compared to other European countries such as the Netherlands, Norway, Ireland, and Greece, where stateless people can apply for citizenship after only three years of legal residence, and after four years in Sweden and Finland (Government of the Netherlands, 2021; UDI, 2021; Citizenship Information, 2021; Siopi, 2017; Migrationsverket, 2020; Maahanmuuttovirasto, 2021). Eight years is a long period for stateless people, not to mention the permanent residence and self-support requirements. This renders, as a result, such facilitation not useful for most stateless people.

Nevertheless, fulfilling the requirements for Danish citizenship does not guarantee that the applicant will acquire Danish citizenship. This is attributed to the fact that even though the entity responsible for processing citizenship applications is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Integration, the ministry's job is to check whether the applicant is eligible or not. If the applicant is eligible, the ministry forwards the application to the Danish Parliament (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2021). Thus, the decision is in the hands of the Danish Parliament's members. Each application is looked at individually. Hence, the procedure is "legislative rather than administrative – thus being intertwined with the political context" (Tucker, 2017, p. 7).

Finally, as the rules mentioned above apply to adult stateless people over 18, other rules apply to stateless children born in Denmark. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Integration, a child born stateless in Denmark, where his or her parents live in Denmark on a legal basis, can apply for Danish citizenship without fulfilling the standard requirements for adults. The conditions, however, are that the child should apply before he or she turns 18 and that he or she lives in Denmark (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2019). Moreover, a stateless person born in Denmark can still apply for Danish citizenship without fulfilling the standard requirements for adults if they applied after they turned 18 but before they turned 21. In this case, however, the conditions are that the stateless applicant should have five years of uninterrupted residence in Denmark when applying for citizenship or eight years of residence in total. Besides, the applicant should not have committed offenses against the state security or had a prison sentence of 5 years or more. The last requirement is that the stateless person should

always have been stateless, not by choice or renunciation of citizenship (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet, 2019).

Therefore, the hypothesis discussed in this project that strict citizenship laws create stigmatization among stateless people is based on the requirements mentioned above and the long process of acquiring Danish citizenship. Consequently, the analysis will test this hypothesis by looking at our data from the perspectives of Erving Goffman's and Link & Phelan's Stigmatization concepts and Jenkin's Social Identity Concept.

## **4.2 Responses Given by Stateless People in Denmark**

This section includes a summary of the stateless people's responses throughout the interviews. The data provided in this section are selected based on their relevance to the research and will be looked at using the theoretical frameworks addressed in Chapter 2. The complete and detailed transcription of the interviews is included in Appendix 1.

### **4.2.1 Interviewee 1**

Interviewee 1 is a 34-year-old male who has been living in Denmark for five years and a half. His legal ground in Denmark is based on his 1951 refugee status, which gave him a temporary residence permit. He states that being stateless negatively affects his confidence and self-esteem and that he feels less of a human, though people do not perceive and treat him differently based on his status as stateless. Moreover, he feels no sympathy from the Danes because they "do not talk about this issue." However, he thinks Denmark should give him citizenship faster so that the country lives up to its "claims that it respects human rights" (Appendix 1, p. 1). He "totally" perceives the Danish legislation regarding citizenship as problematic, and he also stresses the difficulty with obtaining even permanent residence, which makes him "feel threatened all the time." However, he does not experience discrimination from the authorities regarding his rights and obligations.

Regarding everyday life and discrimination on the part of the Danish population, he states that most people do not discriminate against him. He gave a 25% percent of people whom he feels discriminate against him. Nevertheless, his statelessness does not affect his active participation in society, though he is mainly engaged with people who belong to the same culture

and heritage. He attributes that to his assumption that it is hard “to mingle with Danes as a foreigner,” not because he is stateless (Appendix 1, p. 2).

However, he states that his statelessness “completely” affects his economic performance in a negative way. He gave an example where he cannot open a business account because he cannot present a national passport. He runs a mini-supermarket and can only accept cash from people. Without a business account, he cannot receive card payments, where “most people” in Denmark “do not have cash on them. They use cards instead” (Appendix 1, p. 2-3).

Nonetheless, his statelessness does not affect his social performance concerning his relationships with other people. Though, again, most of his relationships are with people who share the same language and culture. However, he feels that sometimes he is negatively looked at because of his statelessness, where some people told him that “you sold your homeland” or “your country does not exist.” However, he has a motivation always to show other people that stateless people “are hardworking people despite [their] struggle” (Appendix 1, p. 3).

Finally, he states that he perceives Denmark as his new homeland but “to some extent.” However, if he became a Danish citizen, he would “feel more linked to Denmark.” Getting Danish citizenship will improve his self-confidence and self-esteem. He will not stop perceiving himself as Palestinian, but being no longer stateless “will ... positively impact [his] perception of [himself] and [his] identity” (Appendix 1, p. 3-4).

#### **4.2.2 Interviewee 2**

Interviewee 2 is a 68-year-old woman who has been in Denmark for five years and a half. Her legal ground in Denmark is a temporary residence permit as a 1951 convention refugee. She states that she does not feel confident about herself because of her statelessness. She instead feels “lost and frustrated” because she lacks a homeland, which in turn makes her feel different from “other humans.” However, she does not think that people treat her differently and that the Danes she knows are “very good and sympathetic” with her (Appendix 1, p. 4).

Moreover, she thinks that Denmark should “of course” facilitate access to citizenship for stateless people and calls her situation “unfair” and that she feels that she “live[s] on the edge” of being deported anytime. Furthermore, she thinks the Danish legislation regarding citizenship is very problematic. She feels disappointed because she thought Denmark “care[d] about the rights

of vulnerable people who have been unlucky throughout their lives.” Nevertheless, she does not experience any discrimination from the authorities, and she is given the rights stated in the law. She adds, moreover, that most Danes she encounters in her everyday life are open-minded and positive. She can only feel discrimination from few people. However, she says that her status as stateless has no real effect on her participation in society, especially for someone her age.

Nevertheless, she states that her statelessness negatively impacts her economic performance. This is because she says that even though she is entitled to social welfare, she receives fewer benefits than Danish citizens due to the law changes after 2015, where benefits were “cut in half” (Appendix 1, p. 5).

However, her status as stateless has always affected her social performance. This is because she states that she feels that she is a “second-degree human being.” This feeling she had always had when she lived in Syria and her experience there made her persistent to being “hesitant to meet new people” for fear of being looked at as someone inferior. She adds, moreover, that lacking citizenship can trigger people to think that someone who is stateless is compared to someone who has no house or “live[s] on the streets,” which is why she feels that people might look at her in a negative way (Appendix 1, p. 6). However, she always feels motivated to show people that stateless people are hardworking and educated, not lacking “the potential” or the “ambitions” as some might assume.

Finally, she does not consider Denmark as her home country. If she got Danish citizenship, she would not feel more Danish. She would love to get Danish citizenship because it will give her the chance to “visit Palestine.” However, she would identify herself as a Danish citizen “abroad,” but her identity will remain a Palestinian person. The difference will be that she “would feel more confident and perceive [herself] better” as a human being “with citizenship and complete rights” (Appendix 1, p. 6-7).

### **4.2.3 Interviewee 3**

The third interviewee is a 20-year-old man who has been in Denmark for six years. He has a temporary residence permit as a 1951 Convention refugee. He states that his statelessness has no effect on his self-esteem and confidence. He adds, however, that he “feels less of a human being with fewer rights.” He believes that people do not tend to perceive him differently as a result of

his statelessness. Danes sympathize with him when they know that he is stateless, and “many of them are surprised and had no idea that “statelessness” exists in the world” (Appendix 1, p. 7).

He underlines, moreover, that Denmark should facilitate stateless people’s access to citizenship in the sense that stateless people have been “without citizenship since [they] were born” and deserve better treatment. Thus, he confirms that the Danish legislation regarding citizenship is problematic as he states that it is almost “impossible to achieve” (Appendix 1, p. 7-8).

However, he states that he feels he has rights like other people, though the government’s discourse is always “racist and discriminatory” against foreigners in general. Nevertheless, he thinks that the Danes are not discriminatory and has not encountered a bad situation throughout his six years in Denmark. He continues that he perceives himself as a “very active” member of society despite his statelessness. Nevertheless, he states that his statelessness might affect his economic performance in the future by around fifty percent. This is because his education would usually land a job in the police, military, or the government—the types of jobs where the applicant should be a Danish citizen.

When asked about his social performance, he stated that he is doing well socially, and his statelessness has no effect on his social life. Furthermore, he “[has] not experienced” a negative look towards him from people because of his statelessness, but he believes they might have “some negative thoughts” inside “their heads.” He gave an example that it might be the same case when perceiving someone who has no house or job.

Nonetheless, he believes that he has an “obligation” to show others that stateless people “engage in and integrate into societies through education, jobs, language, and relationships with others” (Appendix 1, p. 8-9).

Finally, he thinks of Denmark as his new home as Denmark “gave [him] protection.” However, acquiring Danish citizenship will strengthen his connection to Denmark as his new home. He will “feel ... more like a regular human being ... with full rights.” It will, he states, change his perception of himself in a positive way, but will not make him more distanced from his origin (Appendix 1, p. 9).

#### **4.2.4 Interviewee 4**

The fourth interviewee is a 23-year-old man who has been living in Denmark for six years as a 1951 convention refugee. The stateless refugee, despite his statelessness, feels confident about himself. He believes that he has dignity here in Denmark but recognizes that if he had Danish citizenship, he would feel more secure in the sense that he would have “a base and ground to stand on” (Appendix 1, p. 9-10). Moreover, he thinks people do not perceive or treat him differently when they realize that he is stateless. The Danes sympathize with him and believe that it is unfair that there are people living without citizenship. However, he perceives the Danish legislation regarding citizenship as totally problematic, not only for him but for everyone. For him as stateless, he thinks that it is “sad” that he “never had this feeling of being a citizen of a country” (Appendix 1, p. 10).

Nevertheless, he does not experience discrimination from the authorities, and he believes that he gets the rights that the law guarantees for him. However, he underlines that the rights he gets are guaranteed for him as a refugee, which means that if he wanted to claim rights just as a stateless without other grounds, he thinks he will not receive any. He adds, though, that as stateless, there could be a “more safe ground against deportation in the future.” Taking into account discrimination from the Danes in his daily life, he states that he has not encountered discrimination from the Danes because of his statelessness. He feels that he is included in the Danish society, and his statelessness does not affect his participation in society as an active member.

However, regarding the impact on his economic status as stateless, he thinks that his statelessness could have a “slight negative impact” on his employment opportunities in the future. He attributed that to his temporary residence permit, where employers might be hesitant to employ him for fear of “investing” in a person that might be deported at some point.

Nevertheless, considering the impact of statelessness on his social performance with other people, he believes that he engages with other people socially just like others without a problem. Moreover, he feels that other people think positively about him as stateless, and he “feels like a hero” because of the unfair circumstances he found himself in as stateless (Appendix 1, p. 11).

However, he states that he “tr[ies] his best to give” other people “a better picture than what they think” in case they attributed negative labels and stereotypes to him as stateless. Finally, he perceives Denmark as his new home, and acquiring Danish citizenship would not necessarily



make him feel more Dane, but he would “feel more connected to Denmark.” He recognizes that it would “make [his] life easier and make [him] feel better and safer” and “positive” in the sense that “a stateless” person will not be part of his identity anymore. He would feel like a normal human being, where he can identify himself as a Danish citizen of Palestinian origin, hence no longer a stateless Palestinian refugee (Appendix 1, p. 12).

#### **4.2.5 Interviewee 5**

Interviewee 5 is a 35-year-old woman who has been living in Denmark for six years. She came to Denmark on a work contract. Interviewee 5 states that she feels confident about herself and has not yet experienced a difference in how people treat her when they figure out that she is stateless. She mentions that some of the Danes she knows sympathize with her when they learn about her statelessness. However, she thinks that stateless people deserve to have a facilitated naturalization procedure. She thus confirms that the Danish legislation regarding naturalization is “very problematic” and “very unfair,” especially when compared with other European countries (Appendix 1, p. 12-3).

Nevertheless, she feels that she gets the rights she is “entitled to” as the laws state and never experienced discrimination from the Danish population. She feels active in Danish society despite her statelessness. She mentions that her statelessness has no negative impact on her economic situation unless she loses her job. She has a short timeframe to find a new job and keep her temporary residence permit.

Taking the social performance into account, interviewee 5 states that she feels she is doing well socially and with her relationships with other people. She has not experienced that other people look negatively at her because of her statelessness. However, she does not feel that she is willing to prove other people wrong if they attribute negative labeling and stereotypes to her as a stateless person. She put it in her words that “it is not [her] problem if people thought negatively about [her]” as a stateless woman (Appendix 1, p. 13-4).

Finally, she does not perceive Denmark as her new homeland because of these legislations. She states that getting Danish citizenship these days is far from becoming a reality. However, she mentions that if she got Danish citizenship, she would think of Denmark as her new home, as she considers citizenship as something “precious.” Nonetheless, getting Danish citizenship would not

mean that she would become less Palestinian. But she will feel more positive about herself as no longer a stateless person (Appendix 1, p. 14).

#### **4.2.6 Interviewee 6**

Interviewee 6 is a 28-year-old man who has lived in Denmark for five years. He came to Denmark on a family reunification visa. He states that he feels confident despite his statelessness and that people do not look at him differently when they figure out that he is stateless. He thinks that the Danes sympathize with him “to some extent” because of his statelessness. He mentions that it would be “fair” if stateless people had facilitated access to Danish citizenship and that the current Danish legislation regarding citizenship is “very absurd.” However, he feels that he gets the rights as stated in the laws but attributes that to his family reunification visa. Thus he is aware that just being stateless does not entitle him to special privileges. Nevertheless, he states that he has not experienced discrimination from the Danish population and feels active in society (Appendix 1, p. 14-5).

Regarding his economic performance, he states that his statelessness can have a “slight negative economic impact” on him as someone who would like to work as a policeman in the future. He adds that he might be in a situation where he has to pursue a different career if he could not get Danish citizenship. However, he believes that his social performance is not affected by his statelessness. He thinks that people do not tend to look at him negatively because of his statelessness. If this is the case, he confirms that he would be motivated to improve his image as a stateless person and show that stateless people are “hardworking and have qualifications just like other people” (Appendix 1, p. 15-6).

Finally, he feels that Denmark is his new home despite his statelessness. However, getting Danish citizenship will strengthen his feeling and make it more “tangible” with the rights and the advantages that are restricted to citizenship. Nevertheless, he will not feel less Palestinian, but Danish citizenship will give him a “positive feeling” about himself in that he will “no longer [be] stateless” (Appendix 1, p. 16).

### **4.3 Interviews with Social Workers**

This section summarizes the interviews conducted with the social workers who worked with stateless people. It will include information related to the research at hand, which will be

analyzed using the theoretical frameworks provided in Chapter 2. The fully transcribed interviews are included in Appendix 2.

#### **4.3.1 Interview with Eva Ersbøll**

Eva Ersbøll is an expert researcher in naturalization, statelessness, and integration. She states that the citizenship facilitation for adult stateless people in Denmark is of no substantial impact. This is because the stateless people have no problem waiting one extra year if they knew they would be eligible for Danish citizenship. She adds that the length of waiting is not the problem. Instead, it is the other stringent requirements that make it very difficult for stateless people and other foreigners to obtain Danish citizenship (Appendix 2, p. 2-3).

Regarding the stigmatization of stateless people in Denmark, Eva mentions that she believes that stateless people do not experience more stigmatization than other foreigners in general. She confirms, however, that the temporality of residence permits for stateless people can be an obstacle for them economically. Still, she adds that this also applies to other citizens who have temporary residence permits (Appendix 2, p. 3).

Nevertheless, she mentions that for stateless people, stigmatization is a “feeling” they have more than a “reality.” It is problematic to be stateless as one does not have full rights as other citizens. The stateless people feel it is more critical for them to have citizenship. That is why they can feel stigmatized because they do not have a homeland or citizenship. They are in a situation they have been in before, whereas, for other foreigners, it is a new negative experience because they enjoyed full rights in their home countries (Appendix 2, p. 3).

However, she says that stateless people have the same rights as other foreigners. Usually, this is the case because they have residence permits based on asylum or other legal grounds. They cannot get residence permits just because they are stateless. In other countries, it could be the case that stateless people do not have the right to work, for example. However, in Denmark, they have rights like others. The stateless people feel stigmatization as part of their identities. The Danish population would not know that someone is stateless unless the stateless person mentioned that. She thinks that if the Danes figured that out, they would not perceive the stateless people as abnormal humans. They would think of them as “unlucky” people (Appendix 2, p. 3).

Eva Ersbøll mentions that in the report *Mapping Stateless in Denmark* (2019)<sup>6</sup>, the stateless people, whether stateless Palestinians or stateless people from Bhutan and other places, all confirmed how important it is for someone to have citizenship, as it “means a lot to them” (Appendix 2, p. 3). She states that in this report, the UNHCR underlines the importance of the statelessness determination process as an essential procedure to ensure a secure ground for the rights of the stateless people and the path towards the acquisition of citizenship. The stateless people she met and interviewed feel that they want to experience democratic rights like other people and travel freely with a national passport and enjoy the feeling of being secure and having a homeland.

Thus, Eva concludes that even though stateless people enjoy rights like others, it is important for Denmark to make real facilitations for them to acquire Danish citizenship. It is also essential to establish a statelessness determination process so that stateless people can obtain residence permits based on their statelessness. This is because being stateless in itself can mean that one is more “exposed to persecution” than others, and one should be ensured equal rights and a stable future (Appendix 2, p. 4).

#### **4.3.2 Interview with Janne Grønberg Franck**

Janne has worked as a social advisor in Helsingør Municipality, where she provided legal and social aid to stateless people and refugees. Janne mentions that stateless people usually have rights and obligations like other people because they have asylum, family reunification residence permits, or work permits.

In Denmark, stateless people do not get a residence permit for the sole reason of being stateless. However, she states that those who established legal grounds through other ways do not have privileges. The advantage for them is that their children can get Danish citizenship after application if they were born in Denmark. Moreover, she also mentions that it can be more difficult to deport stateless people, especially that since 2019, the majority of stateless people eligible for asylum receive 1951 Convention status instead of temporary protection (Appendix 2, p. 1).

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<sup>6</sup> Eva Ersbøll, together with Paavo Savolainen, was a consultant for the report Mapping Statelessness in Denmark

However, regarding whether they feel stigmatized in Denmark, Janne states that a large portion of the Danish population is welcoming towards stateless people and sympathize with them. She believes that stateless people are not looked at negatively (Appendix 2, p. 1).

Nevertheless, she mentions that stateless people might have difficulty getting jobs because of their temporary residence permits. The temporary residence permit given even to stateless people can have negative economic consequences on them. However, she mentions that this also applies to all foreigners with temporary residence permits, not only the stateless people. She notes that some workplaces give them internships and employ them afterward, while others do not keep them after the end of their internships. She blames the Danish government for making immigration and citizenship rules very tough, even for stateless people. She adds that stateless people are always worried about their temporary status in the country, despite their Convention status, taking into account the stateless people who are also refugees. She mentions that many of them want to study and improve themselves, but instead, they are working full-time to get permanent residence and afterward citizenship, hopefully. She states that if they chose to study, they might spend a long time with a temporary residence permit, which would mean more prolonged periods of statelessness. She says that “they want really bad to have a homeland and be just like other people” (Appendix 2, p. 1-2).

#### **4.4 The *Stigmatization of Stateless People***

This section will form the analysis of the stigmatization of the stateless people in Denmark using Erving Goffman’s and Link & Phelan’s Stigmatization concepts. The following parts will analyze the primary data fetched from the conducted interviews with the stateless people and the interviews with the social workers who had direct contact with stateless people throughout their careers. This section will also look into secondary literature to build more credible grounds regarding the issue at hand, in the sense that qualitative research output would not solely yield representative results, as discussed in the methodology section.

##### **4.4.1 *Erving Goffman’s Stigmatization***

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Goffman’s approach to Stigmatization is divided into three categories: the “normals,” who are in our case, the Danes, the “stigmatized,” who are the stateless people, and the “wise,” who are the Danes who “sympathize” with the stateless people.

Goffman's concept of stigmatization does not dig deep in the specifics, such as whether one's stigma has a negative impact on their social or economic performance. This is where Link & Phelan's Stigmatization concept comes into place in the following sub-section of the analysis.

Therefore, this part of the analysis will look into how the Danes perceive the stateless people and how the stateless people see themselves, taking Goffman's categories into account.

First, if we start analyzing our primary data fetched from the conducted interviews with the stateless people, two of the stateless people interviewed, namely, interviewees 1 and 2, feel that their statelessness has a negative effect on their self-confidence and their perception of themselves as 'normal.' However, the other four interviewed stateless people, namely, interviewees 3, 4, 5, and 6, believe that they have good self-confidence about themselves despite their statelessness. However, interviewees 1, 2, and 3 share one thing in common; they feel less than human beings because of their statelessness. Interviewee 4, who feels normal about himself, confirms that with citizenship comes more dignity, while interviewees 5 and 6 believe that getting Danish citizenship would make a positive impact, which is dropping the 'statelessness' stigma (Appendix 1, p. 10).

However, all the stateless people interviewed, except for interviewee 1, state that the Danes sympathize with them when they know about their status. In the case of interviewee 1, he mentions that the Danes he encounters do not talk about the problem and thus do not show empathy towards him because of his status. Therefore, when categorizing with respect to Goffman's perspectives, many Danes can be categorized as "wise." According to the interviewed stateless people, the Danes are not oblivious to the issue or indifferent, and they "feel sorry" for the stateless people (Appendix 1). It is worth mentioning that some Danes had no idea that statelessness exists, as it can be hard to explain how someone can be born as or become stateless (Appendix 1, p. 7).

Nevertheless, most stateless people interviewed in this research feel non-normal. Their own words describe the feeling as being "less than a human being." Therefore, putting Goffman's categories into account, the majority of stateless people in Denmark interviewed in this research are well-aware of their stigma, called statelessness. This is because all the stateless people interviewed in this research confirm that they would feel more like human beings if they became Danish citizens (Appendix 1). The feeling of being non-normal and less of a human being can be

perceived as a stigma that the stateless people are born with and are looking forward to getting rid of at some point.

However, based on the interviewees' statements regarding their encounters with the Danes, the Danish society can be argued to be a somewhat "wise" society. All the interviewees confirm that their encounters with the Danish people are positive, with only a few examples of non-sympathy and discrimination. In other words, taking the stateless people's statements into account, the percentage of the "wise" is much higher than the mere "normals" in Denmark. Nonetheless, all the stateless people interviewed in this research recognize that the Danish legislation is problematic (Appendix 1). Interviewee 3, for example, states that the "government is racist and discriminatory" with all its immigration and naturalization laws (Appendix 1, p. 8). Interviewees 5 and 6 mention that the Danish legislation regarding citizenship is "very unfair" and "very absurd," respectively (Appendix 1, p. 13; p. 15). For the interviewees, the people are "wise," while the government is xenophobic and "trying [its] best to kick everyone out," as interviewee 3 mentioned (Appendix 1, p. 8).

However, let us take the social workers' and experts' input into account. They confirm that the Danes view the stateless people as "normal." For example, Janne Grønberg Franck, who has worked as a social advisor for stateless people and refugees in Helsingør Municipality, mentions that Danish people do not look negatively at stateless people just because they are stateless. For many, it is the other way round; they sympathize with them and help them out. She says that some Danes are not happy with foreigners in general, whether they are stateless or not. However, she adds that while a large portion of the population is welcoming and open, the Danish government, with its immigration and naturalization laws, is not welcoming towards the stateless people, among others (Appendix 2, p. 1-2).

Moreover, Eva Ersbøll, a research expert in citizenship, statelessness, migration, and integration, thinks that the Danes would perceive the stateless people as "unlucky" rather than not normal. She believes the Danes are not aware of that in most cases unless the stateless person mentions that; however, even when they mention that, the Danes would not look down on them. She thinks that only the stateless people perceive themselves as stigmatized, and they experience that most Danes see them as normal people (Appendix 2, p. 3-4).

Ergo, looking at Eva Ersbøll's and Janne Franck's statements from Goffman's perspective, it can be argued that Danes are "wise" for the most part since they accept the stateless people and perceive them as normal individuals. In contrast, with its laws and regulations, the government cannot be perceived as "wise" and accepting of them.

Nevertheless, looking at a case of 17 stateless people who were born in Denmark yet got a rejection on their Danish citizenship applications, it can be further argued that the Danish government does not live up to the international agreements and conventions it is part of. For example, these 17 stateless people were born in Denmark and got their applications rejected repeatedly in a period of 5 years, despite the fact that they are eligible for Danish citizenship. According to the 17 stateless people, this practice and the wrong processing of their application have had severe negative consequences on them. According to Christian Harlang, the lawyer of the 17 stateless people, the stateless people felt frustrated and stigmatized due to their persistent statelessness. The stateless people made a case against the Danish state, and during the trial, they stated that they had been rejected in many job interviews because of not having a Danish passport (Arbejderen, 2016).

It is mentioned in the *Mapping Statelessness in Denmark* (2019) report that "the seventeen stateless people took legal action against the Danish state and the then Ministers for Integration concerning damages for pain and suffering due to the wrongful refusals of their applications for Danish nationality up to 2010" (UNHCR, 2019, p. 40).

This case's results go hand in hand with the responses given by the stateless people interviewed in this research and the social workers' input in that the laws are very tough. Even in the case of eligibility for citizenship, it is still not a guarantee that one gets his or her application accepted. The government, as argued before, can also be considered in this case as unwelcoming and 'unwise.' This is because it was discovered later that the integration ministry and its officials were aware of both the UN 1961 Statelessness Convention and the UN 1989 Children's Convention. Yet, they decided not to grant Danish citizenship to the stateless people, which made the stateless people feel stigmatized (Geist & Dahlin, 2011).

All in all, from the perspective of Erving Goffman's stigmatization concept, it was argued that a large portion of the Danish population, who are the "wise" in this research, perceive the stateless people as normal. Still, stateless people do not perceive themselves as such. They feel



less of human beings because of their statelessness. The Danish government cannot be perceived as “wise” with its citizenship requirements and processing of citizenship applications.

Thus, in the eyes of the “wise” Danes, the stateless people are normal, accepted, and sympathized with. However, in the eyes of the stateless people, the stateless people feel their stigma of statelessness. Despite them encountering mostly the “wise,” it does not make them feel less “stigmatized.” However, the Danish government is not “wise” and does not show sympathy towards the stateless people, except for the stateless people born in the country of legally resident stateless parents.

#### ***4.4.2 Link & Phelan’s Stigmatization Components***

##### ***Component 1 – Distinguishing and Labeling***

This component studies whether people in Denmark create labels to distinguish stateless people (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 367-8). As discussed in the previous section, the stateless people mostly encounter “wise” Danes who perceive them as normal people. All the stateless people interviewed have had a positive experience with their encounters with the Danes, the “normals.” The answers ranged from little to no discrimination on the part of the Danes, where most agree that when discrimination takes place, it is just a few cases (Appendix 1). For example, interviewee 1 states that based on his encounters within the five years and a half he lived in Denmark, he can conclude that he encountered less than 25% discriminating Danes who made him feel different because of his statelessness. For most encounters, he does not think that people label or distinguish him. However, in some cases, he believes he is negatively labeled as someone who does not have a homeland (Appendix 1, p. 1-3).

Interviewee 2 explains that her experience, in general, is positive, and she rarely felt distinguished and labeled by the Danes because of her statelessness. She thinks, though, that some people might label her as someone without a house or someone who “lives on the streets” because she is stateless (Appendix 1, p. 4-6).

Interviewees 3, 4, 5, and 6 confirm that they have not encountered any distinguishment on the part of the Danes. Ergo they do not think they are being labeled because of their statelessness (Appendix 1, p. 7; p. 10; p. 13; p. 15). This goes hand in hand with the social workers’ statement about how they think the Danes perceive stateless people. Janne Grønberg Franck mentions that

few Danes think that all foreigners have no place in the country, but the majority are welcoming in nature. They do not negatively think of stateless people or perceive them differently, which is also a point that Eva Ersbøll has in common with Janne Franck (Appendix 2, p. 1; p. 3).

Thus, it can be argued that many Danes perceive stateless people as normal people. This argument is not based solely on the results that only two interviewees have experienced these labels while four interviewees have not. This is also because even among the two interviewees, namely interviewees 1 and 2, who experienced being labeled and distinguished, their answers confirmed that it is only very few cases and rare incidents. The stateless people interviewed in this research, as a result, and for the most part, do not feel that they are being distinguished by the Danes just because they are stateless. It is something the social workers also recognize.

### ***Component 2 – Associating Human Differences with Negative Attributes***

*Component 2* is concerned with analyzing whether the non-normal, who are different and, in our case, the stateless people, are associated with negative attributes (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 368-9).

The stateless people interviewed in this research confirm both cases of negative and positive attributes. Among the negative attributes, the stateless people stated that they are rare and, in some cases, mere assumptions. However, Link & Phelan's components are consequential, which means one component can lead to another. *Component 1*: "distinguishing and labeling" can lead to *component 2*: "negative attributes," and so on. For example, "associating human differences with negative attributes" can lead to the rhetoric of "separating 'us' and 'them'" (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 366).

Since many Danes do not distinguish and label stateless people, according to what was argued before, it is not expected that numerous cases of "negative attributes" to be found, consequently. As the results are mixed, few "negative attributes" can be found among the stateless people who experienced "distinguishing and negative labeling." For example, interviewee 1 experienced that some people attributed statelessness to "selling one's land" or lacking a homeland because the stateless people have not fought for it. He explains that he is not happy about this stereotype even though it only comes from few people (Appendix 1, p. 3). Interviewee 2 describes that she has not encountered anyone who explicitly attributed negative

stereotypes to her as stateless. Still, she can feel that people might think of stateless people as those who “live on the streets” as a result of their “negligence” (Appendix 1, p. 6).

Nevertheless, interviewee 3 states that he has not encountered Danes who attributed negative stereotypes to him because of his statelessness, though he assumes that people might implicitly have ideas such as when someone is jobless (Appendix 1, p. 8). However, interviewee 4 mentions that his experience with the Danes is entirely positive in this regard. He said that he “feel[s] like a hero” when he mentions to the Danes that he is stateless, and therefore he does not believe that they perceive him negatively because of his statelessness (Appendix 1, p. 11). Moreover, interviewees 5 and 6 also confirm that they have not experienced any negative reaction or treatment from the Danes because of their statelessness (Appendix 1, p. 14; p. 16).

The social workers’ input into the issue does not conflict with that of the stateless people. Eva Ersbøll and Janne Grønberg Franck mentioned that the Danes do not look negatively at the stateless people. They accept them and sympathize with them (Appendix 2, p. 1; p. 3). It can be argued from their input that the majority of the Danes they referred to would not attribute negative stereotypes to stateless people yet help them and sympathize with them at the same time. It would entail double standards, but this is not the case. For example, interviewee 1 experienced some negative attributes, as mentioned before. At the same time, he stated that the Danes he encountered and attributed negative stereotypes to him did not sympathize with him for being stateless (Appendix 1, p. 1).

### ***Component 3 – Separating “US” from “Them”***

*Component 3* is concerned with analyzing the “us” and “them” discourse, where the locals “us” avoid contact or relationships with the foreigners “them.” This can result in the exclusion and isolation of some foreigners (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 370). The majority of the stateless people interviewed in this research state that they do not feel that they experience the “us” and “them” rhetoric in Danish society. However, for interviewee 1, even though he feels included in the Danish society as an active person, he is most engaged with people who share his culture. According to him, this is not because he is stateless. Instead, he feels it is difficult to enter the locals’ social circle because the Danes are naturally hard to become friends with, he mentions (Appendix 1, p. 2).

Nevertheless, interviewees 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 feel included in the Danish society alongside the Danes and that their statelessness is not affecting their active participation in society. They feel they are not looked at as alienated members of society. Ergo, they think that they are part of the Danish society on an equal footing with others (Appendix 1, p. 5; p. 8; p. 11; p. 13; p. 15).

Moreover, Eva Ersbøll's and Janne Franck's statements around the issue further confirm that the "us" and "them" discourse is not prevalent in Denmark, putting the stateless people into account. This is because they mention that the Danes do not treat the stateless people as different because of their statelessness (Appendix 2, p. 1; p. 3). Janne Franck states, however, that there are exceptions where some Danes perceive every foreigner as different. Still, for most of the "wise" population, the stateless people are not included in the "them" and out-group category (Appendix 2, p. 1).

Consequently, *component 3* of Link & Phelan's approach is not tenable for this research. Link & Phelan explain that "distinguishing," "labeling," and "negative attributes" can result in the rhetoric of "us" and "them" in the society (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 370). Despite the rationale behind this component that it is expected that such discourse takes place in society, the responses given by the stateless people, in addition to the social workers' input, prove otherwise. The answers confirm that the stateless people do not feel excluded from Danish society despite some cases of "labeling," "negative attributes," and stereotypes.

However, does this apply to the fourth component? The *fourth component* is also concerned with the negative impacts of negative labeling and stereotypes on the stigmatized people's social and economic performance. The analysis of the following sub-section will look into the issue using the available data for this research.

#### ***Component 4 – Status Loss and Discrimination***

Link & Phelan (2001) explain that stigmatized people can have lower economic and social status and fewer rights compared to normal people. They mentioned that negative labeling and attributes could affect the stigmatized and take them to the bottom of the ladder of the social hierarchy. Link & Phelan's approach divides this stigmatization into two categories: "individual discrimination" and "structural discrimination." The first refers to the case where the normal people "directly" and openly discriminate against the stigmatized people based on negative

stereotypes. However, the second is when institutions form ideas and build practices that hinder the stigmatized from access to certain rights, jobs, or privileges (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 372).

If we begin with the “individual discrimination,” the results from the stateless people were consistent. It is mentioned before that the stateless people interviewed in this research agree that only a small portion of the Danish population is discriminating and distinguishing (Appendix 1). All the stateless people interviewed in this research feel accepted by the Danes. They feel that their statelessness does not have a significant effect on their social performance. Interviewees 3 and 4, for example, state clearly that they have made many friends and relationships with the Danes despite their statelessness (Appendix 1, p.8; p. 11). However, interviewee 1 states that he has also enjoyed his social life in Denmark, though mostly with people sharing his cultural heritage. He explains that this is not because the Danes are discriminating, as he mentions that only a few are. It is because it is not easy to make friends with the Danes in general as part of the Danish culture (Appendix 1, p. 2-3).

Moreover, interviewee 2 feels hesitant to indulge in relationships and meet new people even back in Syria. The feeling that she is a “second-degree human being” makes her unwilling to meet new people. She, as a result, does not attribute her poor social performance and status to the Danes’ rejection of her, which is not the case for her, she confirms. She believes, therefore, that her experience in Syria and her age now are some of the reasons for her weak social performance (Appendix 1, p. 4-6).

Furthermore, Janne Grønberg Franck, as a social worker, confirms that the Danes are welcoming towards the stateless people (Appendix 2, p. 1), as mentioned before. It would mean that excluding the stateless people from the social circles of the Danes would contradict the concept of acceptance, tolerance, and sympathy towards the stateless people. Thus, cases of “individual discrimination” due to “distinguishing” and “negative attributes” can be argued to be rare in Danish society. When found, however, they did not have a negative impact on the stateless people’s social status. In other words, it can be argued that when the dominant groups do not distinguish and label other minority groups, it can mean that the stateless people are respected in the eyes of the Danes. Consequently, the stateless people’s social status be argued to be not affected, putting “individual discrimination” into account. The stateless people confirm

their positive experience with the Danes and their active participation in the Danish society equally like other people.

Moreover, the stateless people have not experienced discrimination from the authorities either. All the stateless people believe that they get the rights they are entitled to (Appendix 1). However, it is essential to note that the stateless people in Denmark established their legal residence through other means, such as work, asylum, marriage, etc. As mentioned in the *Mapping Statelessness in Denmark* (2019) report, “the rights of stateless persons depend, like the rights of other foreigners, on the nature of their residence status;” therefore, they have no special privileges over other foreigners (p. 52).

Nevertheless, the stateless people’s responses entail that their statelessness can have a negative impact on their economic performance in some cases. It was mentioned before in the theory chapter an example of how a disabled person can get his or her job application rejected because of what is referred to as “accumulated institutional practices” that can negatively affect stigmatized people. For instance, in this research, interviewee 1 has had difficulty opening a business bank account because of his statelessness. According to him, for someone to open a business bank account, one must present a national passport, regardless of where one comes from. He mentions that as he does not have a national passport but instead a travel document, banks refuse to open a business bank account for him. In Syria, he had a travel document given to stateless Palestinian refugees. In Denmark, he has got a travel document issued to refugees or stateless people, in addition to people who cannot request a national passport from their home countries. Because he could not present a national passport, he can only accept “cash payments from customers.” He adds that as “most people do not have cash on them” in Denmark and that “they use cards instead,” what he earns from his mini-market is far less than what he would if he were not stateless (Appendix 1, p. 2-3).

This is a case of “structural discrimination,” where institutions form some “practices” that stigmatize some groups of people. Why would a national passport be accepted but not a travel document when both documents contain the same data and information regarding the person involved? The same goes for the question of why a person sitting in a wheelchair is expected not to be able to perform the same office tasks that a “normal” person can perform while sitting

behind his or her desk. The sole interpretation of such a situation, as Link & Phelan put it, is the “disabling environment” that “humans have constructed” (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 372).

However, another case of the negative impact on the stateless people’s economic performance that stems from “accumulated institutional practices” is the temporality of the stateless people’s residence permits in Denmark. Interviewee 4 gives an example of this case. He states that some employees might refuse to employ him with his temporary residence permit because of the assumption that he might lose his residence permit in the future (Appendix 1, p. 11). This can lead to a situation where the stateless person might have difficulty entering the job market, which is one of the core steps towards acquiring Danish citizenship. Because stateless people have no privileges regarding faster access to permanent residence or Danish citizenship, they can experience the same economic burdens that other foreigners with temporary residence permit experience. Thus, the companies’ and institutions’ assumptions, ideas, and negative attributes associated with holders of temporary residence permits might, in some cases, negatively affect some foreigners’ economic status, whether they are stateless or not.

Consequently, the economic burdens that some stateless people might experience cannot be mainly attributed to their statelessness, even in the case of interviewee 1. For example, interviewee 1 is also a refugee, which means that other refugees who cannot present a national passport will have the same experience as him. Moreover, this also applies to people who are not stateless but cannot have a passport issued to them by the authorities in their home country.

In the case of the temporary residence permit, other foreigners also receive temporary residence permits, which might negatively impact their economic performance. In both cases, it is not an issue that only stateless people experience. Ergo, we cannot conclude that stateless people experience economic burdens solely because they are stateless. What can be deduced from these two examples is that stateless people might experience economic burdens on the same level other foreigners and refugees might.

Moreover, as well as other non-Danish citizens, the stateless people have no privileges that allow them to work in specific jobs restricted only for Danish citizens or receive benefits only Danish citizens are entitled to. For example, if the stateless person is interested in employment in the state, military, or the police, such as interviewee 3, it can negatively affect their economic situation. Interviewee 3 mentioned that he is studying a field which direction requires him to be a

Danish citizen in order for him to be eligible for such jobs. This is also the case for any non-Danish citizen who is interested in those jobs. For a stateless person, however, he mentions that he “never had the chance for such jobs back in [his] previous country of residence because of [his] statelessness” (Appendix 1, p. 8). The same applies to interviewee 6, who is also interested in having a career in the future as a policeman (Appendix 2, p. 15).

Interviewee 2 confirms that had she had Danish citizenship, she would have received the social benefits that the Danes receive. She states that as an old woman who cannot work, she receives reduced benefits due to the previous government's changes in 2015. She says that her economic situation would have been much better, as politicians keep changing laws that target foreigners (Appendix 1, p. 5). However, the same also applies to other non-Danish citizens.

Moreover, Janne Grønberg Franck recognizes the negative impact of the strict immigration and naturalization laws in Denmark on the economic situation of the stateless people. She mentioned that the temporary residence permits the stateless people possess can make it difficult for them to enter the job market. However, she notes that the temporary residence permit's economic hurdle does also negatively affect other foreigners who also have temporary residence permits, whether they are stateless or not. Nevertheless, she confirms that even though some workplaces are helping refugees and stateless people enter the job market, some only offer them internships and refuse to employ them afterward (Appendix 2, p. 1-2).

With its negative impact on their economic status, this temporality is also affecting their decisions where some stateless people are opting out of starting education and trying to get employed instead. This is because education no longer counts as self-efficiency, as discussed before, which means stateless students will not obtain permanent residence, nor Danish citizenship, if they do not eventually work full-time (Appendix 2, p. 1-2; Folketinget, 2015).

Eva Ersbøll also mentions that while the temporality of the residence permits that the stateless people have can affect their job prospects, it can also affect other people with temporary residence permits. Thus, she recognizes the economic burdens stateless people might have because of their statelessness. Still, she also confirms that this also applies to other foreigners who do not have Danish citizenship. According to her, stateless people are not economically more stigmatized than other foreigners with temporary residence permits (Appendix 2, p. 3).



However, she also attributes this to the fact that stateless people in Denmark have residence permits as students, refugees, or family reunified people, which give them access to a lot of rights and obligations. Had they come to Denmark just for the sole reason of being stateless, would they have had very restricted and limited rights because of the lack of the statelessness determination process that gives them the right to stay in the country as stateless, as mentioned before (Appendix 2, p. 3; UNHCR, 2019, p. 55). In the report *Mapping Statelessness in Denmark* (2019), it is mentioned that “stateless persons who lack a residence permit – and who are not in the process of applying for asylum or a residence permit on other grounds (apart from statelessness) – do not have access to public relief” (UNHCR, 2019, p. 55).

These examples given by Janne Franck and Eva Ersbøll can apply to the cases of “structural discrimination.” The “accumulated institutional practices” can cause economic hardships and obstacles for stateless people with temporary residence permits. These financial burdens can be prevented if stateless people had facilitated access to Danish citizenship. However, it does not mean that other foreigners should not have facilitated access to citizenship and experience fewer economic hardships. But regarding the stateless people, they have already been deprived before of their right to work for the state, the police force, military, etc. They may have also already lived on a temporary basis in their countries of previous residence and felt insecure about their future. Thus, giving stateless people some privileges can prove beneficial for them and the society that became their new homes.

As argued before, however, since the path towards Danish citizenship is only possible through uninterrupted employment, fewer chances of accessing the job market due to temporary residence permits can make acquiring Danish citizenship even harder for stateless people. Economic burdens affect stateless people not because stateless people lack the required qualifications to enter the job market. Nor is it the case that the Danish people are discriminating, e.g., “individual discrimination.” It was mentioned before that “individual discrimination” as a result of “labeling” and “negative attributes” is rare in Denmark and does not as such impact the stateless people's social status. In other words, if a Danish employer refuses to employ a stateless person, the chances are that the employer is practicing “structural discrimination.”

According to what is presented in the data at hand, taking Link & Phelan's *component 4* into account, the cases for the reduced economic performance and social status among the stateless

people can be argued to result from “structural discrimination.” Ergo, it is the “accumulated institutional practices” that affect many stateless people as well as other foreigners. Hence, the same applies to other foreigners who possess temporary residence permits and foreigners who cannot present a national passport. Stateless people, like others, are given temporary residence permits (Tucker, 2017, p. 2). A person holding a temporary residence permit can be disadvantaged because their stay in the country is temporary and deemed not worth the investment and cost, as some institutions and companies might assume. Ergo, institutions form ideas, e.g., negative attributes that affect a target group of people. In this case, the negative impact is on foreigners holding temporary residence permits or those who cannot present a national passport.

Furthermore, cases of economic hardships were also confirmed regarding the 17 stateless people whose citizenship applications were rejected by Danish authorities despite their eligibility. The 17 stateless people, who filed a lawsuit against the Danish state, stated during the trial that their statelessness caused frustration and stigmatization, especially when they were rejected in various job interviews because they had not had Danish citizenship (Arbejderen, 2016). This case can be an example of the negative consequences of statelessness on the economic performance of the stateless people. However, some of these stateless people might already have permanent residence. A few years ago, permanent residence rules were much less strict than today, as mentioned before. Yet, the stateless people experienced economic stigmatization because of their lack of citizenship. This means that some employers will neither risk employing job seekers with permanent residence, as possessing permanent residence is still not a guarantee that someone would not be expelled from Denmark (Udlændingestyrelsen, 2019).

Regarding expulsion, the stateless people are not an exception either. Currently, in Denmark, stateless people are not protected against deportation. This is because, according to what stated in the report *Mapping Stateless in Denmark* (2019), “Denmark has made a reservation to Article 31 in the 1954 Convention, which states that ‘article 31 shall not oblige Denmark to grant to stateless people a status more favorable than that accorded to aliens in General’” (UNHRC, 2019, p. 51).

Article 31 (1) of the 1954 Statelessness Convention “prohibits States from expelling a stateless person” residing legally in the country. This means that stateless people can be expelled from Denmark and be returned to their previous country of residence. The only difference between stateless people and other foreigners in Denmark regarding expulsion is that stateless people have the right to stay seven days legally in the country after a decision on expulsion has been made (UNHCR, 2019, p. 51-2).

However, the consequences of the rejection of Danish citizenship even for eligible stateless people have had negative economic effects on them, thus confirming the responses given by the stateless people interviewed in this research, in addition to those of the social workers. Nevertheless, as this case of economic burdens of the 17 stateless people can also affect other non-Danish citizens and foreigners with temporary and permanent residence permits, it can be argued again that it does not form a basis for concluding that the stateless people can experience economic hardships just for their being stateless. It is discussed in this research that because of their lack of Danish citizenship, some stateless people might experience economic hurdles. Still, it can affect other foreigners who do not have Danish citizenship the same way it affects stateless people.

In summary, as “individual discrimination” is not prevalent in the “wise” Danish society, it has no impact on the social and economic performance of the stateless people. On the other hand, “structural discrimination” through “accumulated institutional practices,” such as ideas formed by institutions regarding foreigners, can have negative economic consequences on many disadvantaged foreigners with a temporary residence permit. An example of such ideas created by institutions is the negative attributes associated with temporary residents in that they are not worth the costs and investments because their future residence in the country is not guaranteed. The economic burdens can also affect foreigners who cannot present a national passport. Thus, “structural discrimination” can, in some cases, negatively affect the stateless people’s social and economic status the same way it might affect other foreigners.

#### **4.5 The Identity of Stateless People**

This section will tackle identity issues among stateless people. The purpose of including this section is to analyze whether stigmatization or non-stigmatization among stateless people affects their perception of their identities and shapes it differently. Therefore, Jenkin’s Identity Concept

will be looked at in correlation with the concept of stigmatization. For example, how does a stigmatized stateless person feel about their identity? Do they feel less Danish and more connected to their origin and stateless identity? Another question to be raised to build the analysis of this issue is whether cases of non-stigmatization shape a more consistent Danish identity despite the lack of Danish citizenship.

One of the critical elements that constitute Jenkin's Identity Concept is the stateless people's perception of themselves and how others perceive them, which have been analyzed in Erving Goffman's stigmatization categories. In this section, Jenkin's Identity Concept will be used to reflect upon the effects of perceiving oneself – and being perceived by others – as “normal” and “stigmatized” on the identity of the stateless people. Moreover, Jenkin's approach studies the impacts of negative labeling and stereotypes on people's efforts to improve their image, identity, and reputation. According to Jenkins, this has a positive effect on people with an “unsatisfactory social identity,” which increases their motivation to work hard and implant their footprint in society (Jenkins, 2014, p. 115).

As mentioned in the theory chapter, this cannot be taken for granted. There can be cases where negative labeling and stereotypes would have a negative impact on someone's motivation to blend into society when they think that others perceive them already negatively, not to mention their willingness to improve their reputation and image. Another important element in Jenkin's Identity Concept is how our perception of others can change our treatment of them. Therefore, the analysis will also include how the Danes' perception of the stateless people will shape their treatment of them. These elements will be analyzed using the data acquired from the stateless people, in addition to the social workers' input on the issue.

To begin with the stateless people's responses in the interviews conducted in this research, we can argue that there is a correlation between the level of stigmatization felt by the stateless persons and the effect on the stateless person's identity. The more the stateless person feels less confident about themselves, the more they feel “stigmatized” and less “normal.”

For example, interviewee 1 stated that he lacks self-esteem and perceives himself negatively because of his statelessness. For him, acquiring Danish citizenship would improve his confidence in himself and make him feel positive about himself as he will feel more normal and no longer stateless. He will still see himself as Palestinian, but instead of a stateless Palestinian, he will be

a normal Palestinian will full citizen rights in Denmark. His connection to Denmark will become stronger (Appendix 1, p. 1; p. 3-4). Interviewee 1, hence, feels stigmatized about his statelessness. He negatively perceives his identity. However, in interviewee 1's case, he strives to improve his image when he encounters negative labeling and stereotypes from others (Appendix 1, p. 3). Jenkin's approach to identity is applicable in interviewee 1's case, as Jenkins argues that negative stereotypes can motivate the affected groups to improve other's perceptions of them (Jenkins, 2014, p. 115). Interviewee 1 confirms that despite the stereotypes attributed to him, such as 'selling' his homeland, he is still willing to show others that he is hardworking and included in his new society (Appendix 1, p. 3).

Furthermore, interviewee 2 also experiences a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. She mentions that she feels "lost and frustrated" because she has not had a home in Syria or Denmark. She notes that her statelessness makes her perceive herself as less than a human and thus less normal. She identifies herself as a stateless Palestinian and feels the negativity that is bound to being stateless. Therefore, she would feel normal if she acquired Danish citizenship, but she will not feel more connected to Denmark. Her link to Denmark is weak, and it will not strengthen with her acquiring of Danish citizenship. Taking her identity into account, the difference for her is that she will feel more like a normal human being and thus no longer stateless. However, Jenkins' approach regarding negative labeling is also applicable in her case. As someone who assumes that people negatively attribute labels to her, such as "living without a house," interviewee 2 feels obligated to show people that stateless people are "educated, hardworking, and open-minded people" like other people (Appendix 1, p. 4-6).

Nevertheless, for interviewee 3, as mentioned before, his statelessness does not affect his self-confidence. He is studying in Denmark and feels very active in the country like other people. Interviewee 3 perceives himself positively and mentions that Denmark is already part of his identity despite his statelessness. However, he would feel more like a human being if he acquires Danish citizenship. His connection to Denmark will get stronger in the sense that his perception of Denmark as his homeland will also be documented and become a reality.

Nevertheless, becoming a Danish citizen will not mean that he will forget about his origin. Instead, he will no longer identify himself as stateless but a normal human being. Although he has not directly encountered negative labeling and stereotypes, he still thinks that in such cases,

he will “prove people wrong” and show them that stateless people can learn the language and take a job or education like other people (Appendix 1, p. 7-9).

Interviewee 4 shares the same experience as interviewee 3. He also feels that he has good self-confidence and is somewhat “normal.” Denmark is part of his identity, and he feels strongly connected to the country despite his statelessness. However, acquiring Danish citizenship would mean that he is no longer stateless, making him feel more like a human. His perception of himself will become more positive, yet he will not renounce his origin. He will, nevertheless, identify himself as a Danish citizen. Thus, interviewee 4 recognizes that statelessness makes his perception of his identity negative. Ergo, acquiring Danish citizenship will change his perception of himself positively. Moreover, he thinks that “it is important that individuals always give others a good picture and reputation” of themselves. For him, negative stereotypes should not negatively affect stateless people’s efforts to give others a good image and impression (Appendix 1, p. 10-2).

Furthermore, interviewee 5 states also that she feels she has good self-esteem. However, she does not feel that Danish authorities encourage her to think of Denmark as her new home because of the stringent naturalization laws. Nevertheless, she would feel at home if she acquired Danish citizenship in the sense that Denmark gave her something “precious,” as she refers to citizenship. Eva Ersbøll also confirms how crucial it is for stateless people, regardless of where they come from, to acquire citizenship (Appendix 2, p. 3). However, interviewee 5’s perception of herself as Palestinian would not change at all, but she will feel more positive about herself because she will no longer be stateless.

Nonetheless, interviewee 5 is the only case where Jenkin’s approach regarding improving one’s image in case negative stereotypes were attributed to them has not proved tenable. Interviewee 5 believes that she does not feel motivated to improve her image in front of people who might attribute negative labels and stereotypes to her as a stateless person. She thinks that this is “not [her] problem,” and while she is assimilated and active in the Danish society, she does not have to show that to other people (Appendix 1, p. 14).

Interviewee 6, however, feels that he is confident about himself and perceives Denmark as his new home. He believes that Danish citizenship will strengthen his feeling about Denmark as his new home because Danish citizenship will give him all the “tangible” advantages attached to

citizenship. He will, however, always perceive himself as Palestinian, but in that case more positively, as he would no longer be a stateless person. Unlike interviewee 5, however, interviewee 6, like all the other interviewees in this research, confirms that he feels motivated to give a good image and impression to people who think otherwise of stateless people. He states that stateless people are “hardworking and have qualifications.” Thus, he should prove that to others (Appendix 1, p. 16).

All in all, feeling stigmatized makes the stateless person think negatively about their identities. Some stateless people confirm that they feel like second-degree human beings, despite having a positive experience with the Danish population in their daily lives. Furthermore, for all the stateless people interviewed in this research, acquiring Danish citizenship will make them perceive themselves more positively, as they would no longer be stateless. Consequently, even the stateless people who have self-confidence and a good perception of themselves still feel the need to acquire Danish citizenship. For the stateless people, acquiring Danish citizenship will remove the statelessness stigma from their identities rather than strengthen their connection to Denmark or weaken their connection to their origin.

Most of the stateless people in this research think that in case negative labels and stereotypes were attributed to them, they would feel obligated to show a positive image about themselves. This is in the sense that they would feel more motivated to assimilate into their new environment through education, jobs, and active participation in the host society, and show that to people who might think negatively about them.

Moreover, in the previous sections, we discussed that the Danes perceive the stateless people, for the most part, as normal people, and in a positive way. This means that if we take Jenkin’s approach into account, the Danes would not be expected to treat the stateless people differently. This is because, according to Jenkins, the way we perceive others can shape the way we treat them, and if the Danes perceive the stateless people as “normal,” they will treat them as normal human beings (Jenkins, 2014, p. 6-7). The stateless people recognize that as most Danes perceive them as normal people, they feel that they are not treated differently than others because of their statelessness (See Appendix 1).

Eva Ersbøll and Janne Grønberg Franck also confirm that the Danes do not look differently at the stateless people, and thus they treat them equally like other humans (Appendix 2, p. 1-3).

However, as Danes themselves, who worked with stateless people, they recognize how worried the stateless people are about their future as temporary residents and how frustrated they feel about their identity. The stateless people were born in places where they could not acquire citizenship and came to a place where it is tough to acquire citizenship (Appendix 2, p. 3-4).

The feeling of being frustrated about one's identity when someone is stateless is also seen in the case of the 17 stateless people whose citizenship applications were rejected (Arbejderen, 2016). Persistent statelessness might not only have negative consequences on one's economic performance, as argued before. It can also negatively affect the stateless person's perception of their identities.

As a result, some stateless people feel stigmatized and non-normal about themselves and less human beings. However, Danes perceive them otherwise. They perceive them as "normal." These Danish people we already identified as the "wise." As argued before, the Danish society has plenty of "wise" individuals who perceive the stateless people as "normal" and accept them. However, confident and active stateless people feel less stigmatized about themselves but are also well aware of their statelessness as a negative characteristic and stigma. For example, interviewees 1 and 2 feel more stigmatized for their lack of self-confidence. Their perception of themselves as stigmatized and non-normal is stronger than interviewees 3, 4, 5, and 6.

However, all the stateless people interviewed in this research feel positive about becoming Danish citizens, as argued before. Statelessness would no longer be part of their identities. The stateless people stated that in this case, they would feel like regular human beings. In other words, they would feel "normal" and no longer "stigmatized."

Consequently, the perception of the majority of the stateless people of themselves currently is that of being "stigmatized," "less of human beings," and "second-degree human beings" (Appendix 1). However, throughout the analysis, the tangible impact of statelessness on the stateless people living in Denmark is mainly economic, but this also applies to other foreigners who do not have Danish citizenship. Ergo, the stateless people are not more stigmatized economically compared to other non-Danish citizens. Taking into account the stateless people's input in the interviews, and that of the social workers, in addition to the case of the rejected citizenship applications for the seventeen stateless people, the stateless people living in Denmark might have economic difficulties on the same level other foreigners might have.



Therefore, the stateless people in Denmark are treated like other foreigners. In other words, stateless people can experience economic burdens, but their statelessness is not the reason behind these financial difficulties. This is because other foreigners can equally experience the same burdens, which means that the economic burdens that stateless people experience are not because of their statelessness as legal residents. However, these burdens could be prevented if the Danish legislation included privileges and faster access to Danish citizenship for stateless people and less challenging requirements for all foreigners as well.

Thus, stateless people feel stigmatized about themselves because of their lack of citizenship, taking Goffman's perspective into account. Yet, they are aware that the Danes perceive them as normal people, according to their experience with the Danes. Eva Ersbøll mentions that stigmatization among stateless people is more of a "feeling than a reality" because they do not have a home country (Appendix 2, p. 3). Thus, the stigmatization of the stateless people in Denmark is only a feeling and a perception exhibited by the stateless people themselves, rather than how other people perceive and treat them.

Stateless people in Denmark, as a result, are not stigmatized because they enjoy the same rights and obligations as other foreigners with legal residence in the country. However, they do feel stigmatized because they do not have citizenship. This case can be referred to, in theoretical terms, as a case of self-stigmatization. Goffman refers to self-stigmatization as when individuals develop negative attitudes and thoughts about themselves, such as "self-hate and self-derogation" (Goffman, 2009, Ch. 1). Self-stigma, therefore, can have a negative impact on one's motivation and willingness to pursue their goals as a result of reduced self-esteem and self-efficacy (Corrigan et al, 2009, p. 76).

In our research, some stateless people who perceived themselves as stigmatized showed some signs of reduced self-esteem. But for the most part, their self-stigmatization had no negative impact on their willingness to pursue goals and prove their assimilation into their new society. This is because Goffman mainly applied this case to mentally ill and handicapped people. Although it can be relevant, his concept of self-stigmatization is not entirely tenable in our sample, hence not included in the theoretical chapter.

Therefore, it can be argued that stigmatization is a feeling they were born with rather than developed in Denmark. As it is only a perception that they have of themselves, in contrast to how

others view them and the rights they have like other foreigners, we can conclude that strict citizenship laws do not lead to stigmatization among stateless people in Denmark.

The temporality of the residence permits and the difficult path towards citizenship is problematic for them as well as for other foreigners in the country. The stateless people in Denmark enjoy equal rights like other foreigners, but this is due to the other legal grounds they have established in the country, whether through asylum, study, or marriage.

Further research would include, for example, cases of stateless people who came to Denmark from safe countries, yet where they had limited rights and difficult circumstances that drove them out of their previous countries of residence. With the lack of statelessness determination procedure in Denmark that guarantees the right to legal stay for stateless people, such research would yield different, perhaps negative, outcomes and results.

#### **4.6 Answering the Research Question**

The research resulted in different outcomes than what was hypothesized. We hypothesized that strict naturalization laws in Denmark would lead to stigmatization among stateless people. However, throughout the analysis, it has come to our knowledge that strict naturalization laws do not stigmatize stateless people. These laws can have the same negative impact on all foreigners, regardless of whether they are stateless or not. This negative impact is the case of economic burdens resulting from holding a temporary residence permit or the inability to present a national passport. The only difference between the other foreigners and the stateless people is that stateless people feel “stigmatized” because of their lack of citizenship. We concluded that it is the stateless people’s perception of themselves, rather than the Danes’ perception of them, at least when considering the majority of Danes.

In other words, when looking at their rights and obligations in Denmark, the stateless people are not discriminated against. The stateless people are treated the same way other foreigners are treated. This is because, as mentioned before, the stateless people have established legal residence in Denmark through asylum, study, work, or marriage. Had they come to Denmark for the sole reason of being stateless, they would not have received a residence permit. Denmark has not introduced a statelessness determination procedure that gives stateless people the right to reside in the country (Tucker, 2017, p. 6). In the case of legally residing stateless people, their

statelessness does not lead to stigmatization as they enjoy rights on the same footing with other foreigners.

Nevertheless, the strict naturalization laws can result in economic burdens on the stateless people as well as on other foreigners because of the temporary residence permits and the tough path toward the permanent residence, which is a prerequisite to acquiring Danish citizenship. As mentioned throughout the research, some employers may refuse to offer jobs to temporary residence holders because of the uncertainty of their residence and future in the country. Another example of the economic hurdle is when individuals choose a study program that can lead to a job in the state, the police force, or the military. Only Danish citizens are allowed to take such jobs (Politi, 2021).

In summary, strict citizenship laws in Denmark do not lead to stigmatization and discrimination among stateless people. Even though it is mentioned that stateless people feel stigmatized about themselves, we cannot conclude that strict naturalization laws stigmatize them. This is because, first, it is only how stateless people view themselves. The majority of the Danes do not view them as stigmatized. Second, stateless people with legal residence in Denmark enjoy the same rights as other foreigners. Thus, from Goffman's abstract perspective, stateless people are not viewed as "stigmatized" by other members of society. They are only viewed as such by themselves. Moreover, from the view of Link & Phelan's four components that work with the concrete situation of stigmatization, most stateless people in this research are active members of society. According to their input and that of the social workers, they have established themselves as normal active citizens in their new society. Thus, their economic and social status do not lie at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Lastly, taking Jenkin's Identity Concept, the majority of stateless are willing to show a positive image of their assimilation in the host society as active and resourceful members of their new society. Society views them as ordinary people and treats them accordingly.

Nevertheless, rigid naturalization laws can result in economic burdens, affecting both stateless people and foreigners. Ergo, it affects any foreigner, not only stateless people. Briefly, when found, cases of financial obstacles involve all non-Danish citizens the same way, whether they are stateless or not.

This can be prevented by introducing less strict naturalization laws to benefit the foreigners and the Danish society. Facilitating access to Danish citizenship for stateless people will make them feel normal rather than stigmatized. Acquiring Danish citizenship is the only way for stateless people to change their perception of themselves from stigmatized to normal.

#### **4.7 Findings that Emerged During the Analysis**

- The stateless people in Denmark, regardless of their legal status, feel stigmatized about themselves because of their lack of citizenship;
- The feeling of stigmatization, addressed throughout the analysis, is a mere abstract feeling exhibited by the stateless people themselves. It is not how others view them. Nor how the authorities treat them if they have established legal grounds in the country.
- The stateless people in Denmark are aware that most Danes view them as normal people and thus treat them equally;
- The stateless people feel insecure as a result of their temporary residence permits;
- Foreigners from third countries living in Denmark, regardless of whether they are stateless or not, feel unwelcome by the government and the politicians;
- According to the stateless people in Denmark, the majority of the Danish population are welcoming, unlike their politicians;
- The welcoming character of the majority of the Danish population has no positive effect on the stateless people's feeling of insecurity about their residence in the country;
- The stateless people confirm that Danish naturalization laws are very unfair and impossible to live up to;
- The majority of stateless people living in Denmark are of Palestinian origin;
- Statelessness does not cause stigmatization and discrimination in Denmark. It is only a self-perception of the stateless person's identity, thus abstract. But statelessness can cause economic burdens on the same level as other foreigners with temporary residence permit experience.

## 5 Conclusion

Even though statelessness is a global issue, it does not grab the headlines of newspapers and social media articles on the same level topics such as climate change and migration do. However, in recent years, the issue of statelessness has gained better recognition, especially with the UN's "I belong" campaign. The campaign started in 2014. It aims at ending statelessness by 2024 (UNHCR, 2014). Globally, it is estimated that there are around 10 million stateless people. In Europe, the numbers are roughly 500,000. There are about 8000 people in Denmark, most of whom are stateless Palestinians (UNHCR, 2018, p. 18; UNA, 2013).

Eight thousand people without citizenship in a progressive and democratic country can be viewed as a significant number. However, looking at the number from another perspective, it may not be a big hassle for the Danish state to facilitate access to citizenship for these 8000 people. It would not, moreover, cause a demographic change in the country. This is also because these stateless people, despite many of whom holding temporary residence permits, are to some extent de-facto permanent residents as there is no guarantee that their previous countries of residence would welcome them back. Therefore, strict naturalization laws, even for stateless people in a country like Denmark, can have a negative impact on these stateless people.

The research aimed to analyze whether rigid citizenship laws in Denmark lead to stigmatization among stateless people. The study hypothesized that such laws would create stigmatization. However, the results of the research turned out to be different than what was hypothesized. The research tackled the issue using three theoretical frameworks. From Goffman's stigmatization concept, most of the Danish population, the "normal," are also "wise" people who perceive the stateless people also as normal and accept them. On the other hand, the stateless people view themselves as "stigmatized" because of their lack of citizenship. However, they are aware that the majority of Danes see them as normal.

Link & Phelan's stigmatization concept further expanded our analysis of the issue. By looking at their four components, this part of the analysis allowed us to find out that most stateless people did not experience distinguishing and labeling. Neither have many of them, as a result, felt that the Danes associate negative attributes and stereotypes with them. However, there were still some examples where few stateless people stated that the Danish population labeled them and attributed negative stereotypes to them as stateless people. Taking Jenkin's Identity

Concept into account, the majority of the stateless people feel that they have an obligation to show a positive image about themselves and their assimilation in the host society if others attributed negative stereotypes to them. Furthermore, as most Danes perceive stateless people as normal, they treat them like other people, which was also confirmed by the stateless people and the social workers.

Nevertheless, the third component of Link & Phelan's concept did not apply to our research. This is because none of the stateless people felt the rhetoric of "us" and "them" in the Danish society. All of them felt included and active members of the Danish society. Regarding the fourth component, most stateless people confirm that their statelessness does not affect their social status. However, they are aware that their temporary residence permit might, in some cases, have a negative impact on their economic status, especially those seeking careers in positions restricted for Danish citizens. This result means that the financial burden does not only apply to stateless people. It also applies to any foreigner without Danish citizenship and holding a temporary residence permit.

Consequently, the rigid citizenship laws do not lead to stigmatization among stateless people. It is only a perception stateless people have of themselves. The negative effect is an economic burden in some cases, which also applies to other foreigners, as mentioned before, and not only because the person involved is stateless.

Ergo, statelessness makes the people involved feel stigmatized about themselves because they do not have what the other 8 billion people on this planet have. In other words, they do not feel like other human beings. From Goffman's perspective, they do not feel "normal"; they feel "stigmatized." This means that this is a feeling they have always had and not something they developed in Denmark. Their lack of citizenship does not make them forget about their roots but makes them associate their origin with statelessness. Acquiring Danish citizenship will make them feel normal and positive about themselves, keeping their original identity but associating it with a new homeland.

Even though the strict citizenship laws do not lead to stigmatization among stateless people, the temporary residence permits resulting from these rigid laws can also cause insecurity and frustration about their future in Denmark. The stateless people who established legal grounds in Denmark through asylum, study, or work can feel insecure about their stay in the country.

Without a statelessness determination procedure, the stateless people can face deportation to their previous countries of residence where they might have had fewer rights and difficult circumstances that drove them out of those countries. They might be returned to places where laws have made it impossible for them to acquire citizenship, and one of the contributing reasons for their current state of statelessness. A statelessness determination procedure in Denmark can safeguard the stateless people whose legal grounds in the country have ended. It will secure a safe home and future for the stateless people, whether they came legally to the country or sought asylum through legal or illegal entry. Finally, the stateless people deserve facilitated and faster access to Danish citizenship as acquiring citizenship for the first time would positively impact their perception of their identities. They would, ergo, feel normal about themselves, rather than stigmatized.

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