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Personal Experiences of Somali Women in Uddevalla

- A comparative case study on Somali women's understandings of their experiences in the integration process

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Abstract

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In connection to an existing research project, Micro-migration and Integration with relevance for Uddevalla, this study aims to analyse and compare the subjective understandings of Somali women's experiences in the integration process in the Swedish society. Integration is a multifaceted and ongoing process in which the self-understandings of this notion is bound to change over time in relation to socio-economic and cultural contexts. In light of this, the thesis employs a comparative case study that is based on data collected through focus group discussions with newly arrived women and women who have stayed in Sweden for a longer time. The analytical framework utilizes acculturation theory to study what traces of integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization can be identified in the self-understandings and how they develop over time. Some of the conclusions from the study by the interviewees notify language being crucial. Both groups understand that Swedish constitutes a step in the overall process for establishment and the newly arrived women showed an awareness about it being the ultimate factor that can speed up their own integration process. The findings of the research include that there is a deviation of the understandings between the groups when it comes to housing and identity. The group of newly arrived women with the exception of one participant, indicated a clear separation in regard to both aspects above whereas the women who have lived in Sweden for 9-10 years showed clear traces of integration. Hence, in the beginning of the integration process a person might have a theoretical understanding that indicates separation but experience a discursive shift towards the lens of integration.

Key words: Self-understandings, Somali women, Integration process, Time development, Acculturation theory

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List of abbreviations

AF - Arbetsförmedlingen (Swedish Public Employment Service)

MI- Migrationsverket (Swedish Migration Agency)

SCB - Statistiska Centralbyrån (Statistics Sweden)

SFI - Svenska För Invandrare (Swedish For Immigrants)

SVT - Sveriges television (Swedish National Television Broadcaster)

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR - The UN High Commissioner for Refugees

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1. Introduction

The term integration can be understood as the end result of a process and as the process itself (UNHCR, 2009). According to the site of County Administrative Boards of Sweden (2016), which contains information about the Swedish society for newly arrived immigrants, the definition is formulated as follow: "Integration is about feeling belonging to society. This means that everyone should feel as part of Swedish society. Integration is about meeting different groups in society and exchanging one another". The UN High Commissioner for Refugees highlights integration as a multifaceted and an on-going process in which economic, social and cultural dimensions are interrelated (UNHCR, 2009). However, the integration policies in Sweden have a tendency to mainly focus on the economic aspect in relation to a successful integration (Lindahl, 2018). Therefore, discussions about labour market appear to be at the centre of precious scholarships within the field of integration. In 2012, the Swedish Government assigned Framtidskommissionen with the task to investigate the social challenges that ethnic groups are experiencing in regards to integration. According to the study, Somali immigrants are considered to experience more difficulties to adjust to the Swedish society, as well as being furthest from the labour market compared to other immigrant groups in Sweden. In addition, the findings of their study showed that Somali women are especially affected by high unemployment rate and faced with difficulties to adjust into the Swedish society (Carlson, 2012). This thesis recognises the importance of the labour market in the integration process, however, this is not the main focus since it overlooks the whole spectrum which takes other factors into consideration.

There is a contribution from conducting a study on a micro-level that focus on the perceptions of one of these groups as it provides with a deeper understanding within the challenges of integration. In addition, the aspect of time will play a crucial role in this study as integration is viewed as the process itself. This kind of research appears to be limited and rarely explored in the current academic discourse. In light of this, the thesis has selected Somali women, a group of people that previous studies show is struggling to integrate in Sweden and therefore, is likely to give us the information we are looking for. In connection to an existing research project, Micro-migration and Integration, this study aims to give a voice to Somali women in Uddevalla. This is done by analysing the subjective understandings of their experiences in the

integration process. Integration is a multifaceted and ongoing process in which the self-understandings of this notion is bound to change over time in relation to socio-economic and cultural contexts. Moreover, it is argued that time is a key background factor for the overall success of the integration process. Hence, the longer you stayed in the country the greater probability it is that you are further along in your integration process (Carlson, 2012). Therefore, we intend to compare the self-understandings of newly arrived women and women who have stayed in Sweden for a longer time to examine what key concepts of acculturation can be identified and how they develop over time. The findings of this study can contribute to the overall debate on integration which we argue cannot be comprehensively discussed without the perceptions of the people who experience the process themselves. Furthermore, it provides the women to assess their own integration as well as outlining the needs of integration efforts which can be useful for the continuous integration work of the chosen area. The purpose is not to generalise the result but on the contrary, it aims to get a deeper understanding of these women's own perceptions of integration.

1.1 Disposition

The following chapter discusses previous literature of relevance to the topic of this study. In the theoretical approach, an explicit statement of theoretical assumption is demonstrated along with an analytical framework that relates to the research problem we are investigating. The theory used for this study is based on different types of acculturation that highlights the need to examine how those key concepts might differ under certain circumstances related to socio-economic and cultural contexts. The analytical framework entails operationalized variables that allows us to analyse traces of acculturation in order to fully comprehend the self-understandings of Somali women's experiences in the integration process. The aim of the study is explained furthermore with specific research questions. The mode of procedures is described next, where the research puzzle, strategy, limitations, data collection and data analysis, and ethical considerations are disclosed. The execution of this study is based on a qualitative method consisting of collected data through focus group discussions. Following to the methodology section, is the analysis that aim to answer the research questions of the study in relation to the theoretical framework along with main conclusions.

2. Literature review

This chapter provides with a review on two lines of scholarships that are relevant for this thesis; (1) Swedish integration and (2) Somali integration into Sweden. The scholarship on Swedish integration is extensive which focuses mostly on the labour market as an important aspect of integration, however, this is not the whole spectrum where subjective perceptions are rarely explored in the current academic discourse. The second line of scholarship reviews Somali integration into Sweden migration where previous researches identify Somali as a difficult group to integrate. This study aims to give a voice to Somali women from a micro level as it highlights the diversity within the challenges of integration which can contribute to the discussion on the multifaceted concept.

2.1 Swedish integration

When reviewing previous literature on integration in Sweden, there is an extensive result that concentrates on the economic aspect in relation to the integration process. The participation of immigrants in the labour market is of major concern for the receiving country and the most widely recognised indicator of their overall integration process (Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003:19). Previous researchers therefore rely mostly on comparable cross-country data and other quantitative surveys. However, integration of immigrants into host societies are rarely studied from other perspectives that employ a qualitative design. There is an increasing responsibility on the receiving society for achieving integration, a concept that is being contested among policymakers and scholars. In the dissertation "*Nästan Välkomna*", Carl Dahlström who is a professor of political science analyses the discrepancy between rhetoric and practice of immigrant policy in Sweden. He claims that all major immigrant policy measures were introduced in the 1960s and 1970s, and that no significant changes have occurred after that (Dahlström, 2004). In 1975, a national integration strategy was adopted, entailing three essential principles: freedom, equality and collaboration (Kamali 2006:348). Researcher Masoud Kamali who has been the leader of the governmental inquiry to "*Power, Integration and Structural Discrimination*", explains that since then, the integration work in Sweden has been characterized by the notion that integration only applies to immigrants. The general idea that the society can be divided into two groups, the Swedes and the immigrants, was established where Swedes were imagined to be integrated whereas the immigrants were regarded as a group that would be integrated into the Swedish society. This view of distinctive

integration has contributed to increased segregation and disintegration in the society he argues (Kamali 2006:348).

Anja Wiesbrock, a postdoctoral researcher and professor, argues that the integration policies in Sweden have been ambitious. Moreover, the Swedish integration programme is characterized by an increasing number of labour market related integration measures. Yet, the results of the success of integration measures, in particular in respect of labour market integration tends to be negative. According to the report, Sweden was one of the first countries that recognised the importance of immigrant integration due to its clear promotion of socio-economic inclusion and diversity. In 1996, the Swedish government announced a transition from an immigration policy to an integration policy where equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for everyone irrespective of their ethnic, background and social cohesion built on diversity, where each and everyone take their responsibility to uphold the law and respect the democratic values. Furthermore, in November 2009 the Swedish government presented a bill (Prop. 2009/10:60) suggesting reforms to the integration policy (lag (2010:197) om Etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända invandrare) which entered into force on 1 December 2010 to speed up the process of getting newly arrived immigrants into the labour market (Wiesbrock, 2011).

Initiated by the Swedish Government, Framtidskommissionen conducted a research on the labour market comparing Somali immigrant as a vulnerable group in Sweden, United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. The report shows that it takes longer for Somali immigrants to establish themselves in the labour market compared to other immigrant groups in Sweden. The main argument of the report states that education and time spent in the country are two crucial factors for immigrants' ability to establish themselves in the labour market. The higher the education and the longer you stayed in the country, the greater the probability of having an access to the labour market (Carlson, 2012).

It appears to be a consensus in previous scholarships about Somali immigrants being the immigrant group that struggles the most to integrate in Sweden. This assessment refers to their weak participation in the labour market and education system (Carlson, 2012). Pieter Bevelander and Inge Dahlstedt who are researchers at Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare, contribute to this discussion of integration in their article which analyses integration patterns mainly in the labour market during the period 1998-2008. Since the post Second World War, Sweden has been a destination for labour force migration

primarily from European countries, due to the rapid industrial and economic growth. Earlier migration streams are stated to have integrated relatively well, however, the current streams raise concern on the political agenda. The central aim of their article analyses two aspects of the integration of immigrant groups - participation in the educational system and labour market. The result tells us that Somali men and women have a lower enrolment level at the end of the period compared to the start. Possible reasons for this result are major migration to Sweden and difficulties of entering the educational system according to the article (Bevelander & Dahlstedt, 2012). The in-depth knowledge about integration patterns is a contribution to the improvement of integration policies, but lacks a further discussion on the reasons behind their struggles.

2.2 Somali integration into Sweden

Many researchers focus on Somali people living in Europe and the West who arrived after the civil war in 1990s as asylum-seekers or family reunions. On the civil war itself there are various amount of literature as it was the main factor why Somalis had to flee from their country (Kleist, 2008:1131). According to UNDP, about 15 percent of the Somali population which are estimated more than one million people live outside of the country, where the majority of them live in the neighbouring countries. However, many of them have settled in North America, Europe, Australia and elsewhere. As stated in an article on Somali migration by researcher Nauja Kleist, many Somalis are in marginalised situations in their country of residence where they are either unemployed or unable to use their education or job-related qualification. Moreover, they are characterized negatively by the media and are often described as a group that is difficult to integrate by politicians in their new countries of residence (Kleist, 2008:1131).

Authors of "*Somalier i Sverige - Mellan förtvivlan & hopp*", Benny Carlson and Abdi-Noor Mohamed provides with some insights of the challenges of migration and integration for Somalis in Sweden by introducing four Somali people's perceptions of integration. These four accounts describe external obstacles they face along their paths to Sweden and during their attempts to integrate into the society. Negative stereotypes combined with economic and social vulnerability are outlined as some of the challenges that Somali people encounter in the Swedish society. According to Statistics Sweden, about 66 000 people with Somali origin live in Sweden, making Somalis one of the largest groups to migrate to Sweden (SCB, 2017). The

authors argue that despite being one of the largest immigrant groups, the voices of Somali people are rarely heard in the Swedish debate (Carlson & Mohamed, 2013).

Previous scholarships have uncovered that immigrants from Somalia are the most difficult group to integrate into the Swedish society. In a reportage on Somali people's situation by SVT, Somali women are perceived to be even more vulnerable due to prejudices as one of the obstacles that hinder them to participate in the society (Karlsson, 2016). There is a limitation of previous scholarly work which often describes Somali immigrants and their challenges without incorporating their own perceptions of integration into the discussion.

Benny Carlson, a professor of Economic History at Lund University retrieve examples in his book, "*Somalier med framtidstro*", where Somalis are characterized by their entrepreneurship in Minnesota in the United States - a contrast to the image portrayed in Sweden. However, the research shows that Somali men are more involved in labour market than Somali women, which are some of the effects of the traditional family structures. Moreover, he states that men tend to move in a broad network and learn from each other about entrepreneurship in Minnesota in the US, where women require more education, training and information (Carlson, 2006).

2.3 Contribution to the debate

The review on previous research within the field of integration shows that integration measures have a strong focus on labour market in Sweden where quantitative methods are often used (Lindahl, 2018). This study intends to build on previous studies, however, by incorporating social and cultural dimensions interrelated with the economical aspect which provide with a potential value of the whole spectrum of integration. Furthermore, it is common to talk about immigrant groups as objects of integration rather than subjects, which is what this study aims to contribute with by bringing their own subjective understandings of integration from a micro level to the academic discourse. There is a limitation of previous research that explores the difficulties that Somali women encounter in Sweden and how they understand their own experiences in the integration process. This kind of insight could provide explanations to why this specific group are behind in the integration process, a concept we understand as multifaceted and an ongoing process. The time aspect is crucial for the investigation of what traces of acculturation can be identified and how they develop the self-understandings in relation to socio-economic and cultural contexts. In light of this, our study employs a comparative case study with the intent to analyse and compare Somali women's own understandings of their experiences in the integration process.

3. Theoretical approach

As discussed in the previous chapter, Somali immigrants are viewed as a difficult group to integrate and adjust to the cultures and traditions of their new home countries. Integration is a multifaceted and an ongoing process where economic, social and cultural dimensions are interrelated (UNHCR, 2009). In order to fulfil the aim on how Somali women understand their experiences in the integration process in the Swedish society, we use theoretical lenses that are built on theoretical approach and analytical framework which in detail outline the idea of what we intend to investigate and analyse.

In the following chapter, we identify different types of acculturation which highlights the need to examine how those key concepts changes and develops to fully comprehend the self-understandings of Somali women's experiences in the integration process. The chosen theory is the most appropriate for our study as it sheds light on different types of acculturation which is relevant to analyse understandings and experiences of integration. Furthermore, it will allow us to analyse how Somali women adopt these concepts socio-culturally. The analytical framework is used as a tool to identify traces of acculturation theory in order to analyse how Somali women understand their experiences in the integration process. This process is later aligned with new ideas and categories where an inductive approach is utilized which entails linking data and theory in a dynamic manner between induction and deduction (Bryman, 2011).

3.1 Acculturation

Acculturation is “the process whereby individuals learn about the rules and behaviour characteristics of another culture” (Hogg and Vaughan 2010:329). Acculturation is a dual process of physiological and cultural change which occurs as a contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (W. Berry, 2005). Immigrants' behaviour can be organized into four categories according to Canadian cross-cultural psychologist John Berry. Acculturation is crucial and relevant to integration as one has to learn the norms and cultures of the host countries. There are four categories of acculturation; integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization that are presented below. With the help of this theory, we intend to analyse and compare how Somali women understand their own experiences in the integration process in the Swedish society.

We have chosen to use the four categories of acculturation which will aid us to identify traces of the Somali-women's understandings of their experiences in the integration process. We will also investigate if their theoretical perception has shifted over time since integration is an ongoing process and as studies emphasize that time spent in a country is crucial for a successful integration. This provide our target group of Somali women with different options of acculturation.

- Integration- maintaining home culture but also relating to dominant culture
- Assimilation- giving up home culture and embracing dominant culture
- Separation-maintaining home culture and being isolated from dominant culture
- Marginalization - giving up home culture and failing to relate properly to dominant culture (Hogg and Vaughan 2010:330).

Firstly, Integration is when someone is interested in both cultural identities of their origin and from the host country. Assimilation is understood when one is completely absorbed into the host culture and lost their original culture. In other word, they are only interested in maintaining mainstream cultural identity. Separation is the opposite of assimilation where one maintains their original culture and that relationships with the host culture is not considered important. Consequently, they separate themselves from rest of the people of the host country. Marginalization is the loss of the original culture without establishing ties with the new culture. For example, in some countries, second or third generation youth demonstrate marginalization as they neither feel related to their original culture nor do they want or are allowed to establish strong ties with the host culture (Van de Vijver & Phalet, 2004)

Acculturation refers to migrants deliberately accept certain major elements of the cultural environment of the host country without abandoning their original cultural identity (Entzinger and Biezeveld, 2003:9). Alastair Ager and Alison Strang (2004) presented a report called *Indicators of Integration: final report*, in which they identify integration as a complex concept that is used by many but understood differently. According to the authors, integration is when an individual or group of immigrants are integrated within a society where they have achieved or fulfilled certain goals such as employment, housing, education, healthcare etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities (Ager and Strang 2004:9). In light of this, we intend to use acculturation theory in order to analyse how Somali women understand their own experiences of the integration process. Integration process takes

substantial time and requires patience. In many occasions, it clashes with the host country's expectation of assimilation (Hogg and Vaughan 2010). Algan, Bisin, Manning and Verdier (2012) who wrote a book called *Cultural Integration Of Immigrants In Europe*, claim the longer one stays in a country, the more likely they acquire the missing skills and information to catch up with natives. For that reason, it is important to look at the time spent in Sweden in order to fully comprehend the subjective understandings of Somali women in terms of similarities and differences in the integration process.

Many migrants greatly identify with their home country, even though most of their contacts lies in the country of residence (Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003:6). European Union defines integration as a two-way process in which both groups immigrants and natives do not need to give up their cultural identity but rather adjust and add shared dimension to their identity (Bijl and Verweij 2012:34). Thus, Sweden adopts a similar approach where all citizens have equal rights, opportunities and obligations and the aim is the coexistence of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Bijl and Verweij 2012:35).

There are several dimensions of integration such as socio-economic and cultural which this study intends to incorporate as our main themes (Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003:15).

3.2.1 Socio-economic integration

Socio-economic integration is an essential element for a successful integration which is connected with participation of migrants in the labour market as well as education and language skills. Income level is an indicator that is closely related to the labour market which shows whether immigrants are over-represented in low-skill jobs or if they receive similar income for the same type of work compared with non-migrants. Another key indicator to measure socioeconomic integration of migrants, is the level of use of social security, welfare and other social policy instruments. The closer the level is to the overall level for a population, the more it may indicate high integration. Additionally, gender difference is another crucial element, if the participation of women from among a certain group is below the participation of men which may be an expression of other problems women face (Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003:19-21). The level of education by migrant origins is often below that of non-migrants and dropout rates tend to be higher. While mastering the language(s) spoken in the recipient society seen as conditional for a successful integration, therefore it leads to most migrants' willingness to learn the language. Housing and residential

patterns affect the process of integration, for instance if migrants are concentrated in certain areas, it may lead to exclusion and creates segregation ((Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003:21).

The following elements of socio-economic integration as our first theme, provide a description of our operationalized variables which we will use in the analytical framework to look for traces in relation to our categories of acculturation.

Employment

Having an employment is a crucial element for a successful integration, as it is viewed as a way to get an income and be self-sufficient. Even though employment is important for migrants, it is also necessary to investigate what type of jobs immigrants obtain in a country, to find out whether they mainly dominate in low-skilled jobs or they are fairly treated and all kinds of jobs are accessible to them.

Education

Education plays a key role in the integration process and is also one of the important determinants of the labour force activity. For that reason, it is valuable to examine if higher education actually makes immigrants to integrate easily. Thus, some immigrants come from developing countries and when they arrive in Europe specially Sweden, their education need to be recognized by the authorities (Dahlstedt & Bevelander, 2010).

Accommodation

Housing is another important element of integration. Whether someone possess their residence indicates their wealth and income which can be directly related to integration. Housing patterns also shows if immigrants are concentrated in certain areas as a sign of segregation and the level of interaction between immigrants and natives of a country.

To conclude socio-economic integration, we are going to study how Somali women understand their experiences in the integration process in regard to the importance of employment, education and housing.

3.2.2 Cultural integration

Cultural integration means that immigrants adjust to the culture of their host countries while persevering their own. This indicator has been discussed to be difficult since the dominant or mainstream culture is not uniform and the same can be said for migrant cultures. It is difficult for some migrants to understand what is expected of them, especially when they come from a very different culture than the host country which can result into a lot of struggles and misunderstandings between immigrants and natives (Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003). The European Union (EU) attempt to create shared values among its member states, therefore migrants who move to another EU country such as Sweden may not experience a huge culture shock as those who come from developing countries would such as Somalia, in terms of rule of law, respect for democracy, gender equality and the separation between church and state. Identity is a crucial part of culture. Depending on the policy of the host countries that adopt either assimilation or integration, immigrants are encouraged to maintain their cultural identity or abandon it. Moreover, intermarriage is one of the most classical indicator of integration, in many cases marriage within one's own community means finding a spouse in the country of origin, especially certain communities from Muslim countries, which can be seen as slowing down the integration process (Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003).

The following elements of cultural integration as our second theme, provide a description of our operationalized variables which we will use in the analytical framework to detect traces of acculturation.

Cultural diversity

As mentioned above, cultures influence people's lives in many different ways: from the way they dress to the way they treat each other. Furthermore, some cultures are individualistic such as Western Europe and North American countries which place more emphasis on the satisfaction and expression of the individual's needs, while other cultures are collective and puts more emphasis on the identification of a person in relation to a group such as family, country and the expectations that are associated with being a member of that group. It is important to understand how people view and understand culture and its diversity (Carducci, 2012).

Identity

Identity is important for cultural integration as people identify themselves with a group of people. When immigrants are living in a country, they can either feel they are a part of that society and identify with that country or they may identify with their original countries. It is crucial to understand the impact identity may have on integration by investigating how immigrants understand their identities. To conclude, cultural integration is a very important indicator to be examined, discussed and debated in order to curb its problem (Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003: 22-24).

3.3 Analytical framework

Based on our theoretical approach, we are able to identify similar conclusions and number of shared factors that can be called integration. Integration can be understood as having an employment, education and being a part of the society. Another way to measure integration is the level of interaction between locals and immigrants and whether integration policies are designed in a way that enable immigrants and locals to meet halfway to reach a successful integration.

In our analytical framework we apply socio-economic and cultural integration as two main themes, where we construct operationalized variables and concepts that relates to these themes (e.g. housing, education, employment, language and identity), to study how Somali women understand their experiences in the integration process in terms of these contexts. In line with the two themes, we apply categories of acculturation to identity traces of integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization to examine how these are incorporated and in the women's understandings. There may be cases where separation is preferred based on the subjective understandings of their own experiences in the integration process. The intention is not to place the women in different categories based on one or two answers that are provided, but to have an in-depth discussion about their experiences in order to analyse and compare their understandings of integration.

1- Education is a fundamental human right; it is our guide throughout life. However, some countries have come far in their education system and provide free education for their citizens, while others do not provide this due to lack of resources or instability. Language is a key part of entering a new society because it gives the opportunity to further pursue their studies, finding an employment or just conduct an activity of daily grocery shopping.

Language is also important since it allows you to interact and establish relationships with other people than the people from your own country. Inclusive education strives for addressing the learning needs for people with special needs and the aim of inclusive education is to promote for all people so everyone gets the same chance to succeed in life (Kaur & Arora, 2014).

2- Cultural diversity: cultures differs from country to country, what considers acceptable in one culture might not be the same in another (Hogg and Vaughan 2010). Since there is no unilateral culture, one has to understand the role cultures play in the integration process. Countries that claim that they are multicultural, promote cultural diversity where people from different culture can live side by side in harmony. Cultures influence the way people think, feel and behave, however cultures are not rigid but change overtime through interactions with other cultures (Hogg and Vaughan 2010: 331-332).

3- Identity is a crucial part of cultural integration such as self-categorization and the importance of perceived group membership. Identity is defined as a sense of belonging to a particular cultural group and the feelings associated with this group membership. In multicultural society, it is possible for someone to identify themselves with the mainstream culture and with their ethnic culture at the same time. Identity integration may vary across immigrant groups due to their history, background characteristics and associated stereotypes. Some studies suggest the adaptive potential of identity integration depends on the perceived level of discrimination in the larger society (Schotte, Stanat & Edele, 2017).

4- Employment is an important dimension of a successful integration. Successful labour market participation is often understood as having paid employment. The increase of number of immigrant entrepreneurs in many countries illustrate that setting up their own businesses may also be an indication for successful integration (Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003:19)

5- Housing is another important dimension of integration. If migrants live in a poorer housing conditions than the rest of the population, this may be seen as sign of exclusion because the quality of housing is connected to the problem of segregation. The quality of housing also depends on the prices of housing, in some cities one can see different ethnic groups living different parts of the city. Moreover, asylum seekers, once they have been given a status, often get housing in rural areas and small towns (Entzinger and Biezeveld: 2003:21).

Socio-economic Integration	<u>Integration</u>	<u>Assimilation</u>	<u>Separation</u>	<u>Marginalization</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Employment · Housing · Education 				
Cultural integration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cultural diversity · Identity 				

4. Specified Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to analyse and compare the subjective understandings of Somali women's experiences in the integration process in the Swedish society. Integration is a multifaceted and ongoing process in which the self-understandings of this notion is bound to change over time in relation to socio-economic and cultural contexts. In light of this, the thesis applies acculturation theory to analyse and compare the development of the self-understandings of newly arrived women and women who have stayed in Sweden for a longer time. The purpose is not to generalise the result but on the contrary, it aims to generate a deeper understanding of these women's perception on integration.

The research questions are:

- What traces of acculturation can be identified in the understandings of Somali women's experiences in the integration process?
- How do these traces of acculturation develop over time in regard to socio-economic and cultural contexts?

5. Methodology

The execution of this study is based on a qualitative method consisting of collected data from focus groups sessions. Since the study aims to analyse and compare Somali women's understandings of their experiences in the integration process in the Swedish society, a qualitative method is preferable. The following chapter introduces the research design, strategy, limitations, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

5.1 Research Design

The aims of this study are to analyse and compare Somali women's understandings of their experiences in the integration process in the Swedish society. This is done through acculturation theory to examine what traces can be identified in the understandings of newly arrived women and women who have stayed in Sweden for a longer time in relation to socio-economic and cultural contexts. The focus is on the individual's subjective understanding and interpretation of the social reality and her environment. Therefore, a qualitative method was chosen in order to investigate the focus of the study through their lenses and to analyse their understandings of experiences in-depth. A qualitative study is conceptualized in a way to comprehend the context of the lived experiences of people and the meaning of their experiences (Alase, 2017:10). According to professor John W. Creswell, "qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014: 32).

The usage of surveys or other quantitative methods was not considered as suitable due to the formulated research questions of this thesis with its clear focus on personal experiences (Bryman, 2011). We concluded that interviews would be to an extent difficult to ensure that the individual gives an honest and thoughtful response and an accurate picture that captures the reality which would decrease the internal validity. Moreover, the logistics side of interviews was considered as a disadvantage as well as the complexity of interpretation within the short time period of ten weeks. The focus group method has the advantage of allowing people to interact during the discussion where they can exchange viewpoints and discuss disagreements which create wider ideas and perspectives. When a group of people discuss an issue together, they are likely to produce richer insights and a wider range of information than one would get from individual responses (Halperin & Heath, 2017:302). The usage of focus

group method is suitable in studies relating to social groups and it can aid people to articulate their thoughts more easily and provide with collective nature to marginalised people (Liamputtong, 2011). We expect the focus group discussions to establish more substance and consistency in the claims by a cohort, a group of people who share defining characteristics, which will provide with meaningful data and ensure a strong validity and reliability. There is a risk for groupthink, which makes interviews less bias than with a focus group, however, we decided to interview two small groups of 2-3 people separately in order to ensure that everyone will have the chance to speak and share their own personal experience. Other consequences with the focus group method concerns group dynamic and possible leadership roles where the speaking time of some attendees may be considerably higher than that of others. Therefore, it is necessary to take into consideration the crucial role that the moderator plays in handling a situation like that to make sure that all members participate, for instance by doing rounds (Halperin & Heath, 2017:302-303). Since the moderator is one of the researcher of this thesis and speaks the native language of the target group, it will prevent communication difficulties and also aid in comprehending the in-depth perceptions of the individuals.

The focus group sessions took place in Uddevalla, a municipality located in western Sweden. It is a middle sized municipality with a population of 55 763 (SCB, 2016) and is within range for the visits that are required of this study. By limiting the study to a specific target group and municipality, we had the opportunity to meet and build up trust with the respondents before the focus group sessions took place. A trustworthy relationship between researchers and interviewees may have a relaxed and positive effect during the interview (Bryman, 2011). The study can be seen as exploratory that begins deductively, where we identified conceptual analytical categories to aid us in what we search for in our theory chapter, to then gradually develop them with empirical material that is inductively, since the interviewees could decide which focus and direction to take and provide the study with new angles (Ryen, 2004).

By using a qualitative comparative case study, it generates a deep, first-hand understanding of what these women do in their social environment as well as shed lights on the issues they may experience and their own understandings of them. To statistically generalize the result in a broader sense proves to be limited, hence, a low external validity since any generalization only apply to the limited population of the study (Bryman, 2011). However, this is not necessary in order to answer our research questions. The aim is to provide an account of these

women's understandings of their experiences in the integration process. By linking the findings of the meaning Somali women ascribe to a social problem, to the concepts that support our theory it may be possible for an analytical generalization, meaning that the result of this study may be applicable for other women within the marginalized group.

5.2 Data Collection

The empirical material of this comparative case study was obtained from two focus groups with the help of an interview guide that entailed in-depth questions, allowing open and broad discussions. The focus groups consist of first-hand accounts with Somali women who are situated in the chosen area. The selection of women was made by our contact person who works as a "brobyggare", which means to be a bridge between different needs of individuals and community resources. This thesis conducted two separate focus group sessions of a duration of 1-1, 5 hours each. In our literature review, it is argued that time is a key background factor for immigrants' ability to not only establish themselves on the labour market but the overall success of the integration process (Carlson, 2012). Hence, the longer you stayed in the country the greater probability it is that you are further along in your integration process. Therefore, we interviewed three newly arrived as one focus group and two women who have lived in Sweden up to 9-10 years as another focus group. Other inclusion criteria were age 25-50, in order to ensure a longer life experience for the women that will enable them to answer the questions of the study. The criteria for time spent in Sweden up to 9-10 years is based on an increased opportunity for respondents to have taken part in Swedish society. The intention is to capture a subjective reality from each of the two focus groups in order to build a coherent justification of their claims that produces meaningful data from cohort and to increase its validity and reliability.

To aid us in the focus group sessions, questions were formulated in an interview guide (appendix). To use structured interviews would reduce access to the material that the respondents choose to highlight and the chance to ask follow-up questions (Bryman, 2017). Semi-structured questions were therefore conducted which consisted of few in-depth and open-ended questions with the flexibility to ask follow-up question and for the respondents to choose focus and direction. The focus group interviews were also conducted in Somali which allowed our interviewees to discuss and express themselves without restriction. Creswell mentions that there is a bias that researchers bring to the study as he says, "this self-reflection

creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers” (Creswell, 2014:252). We are aware that our interpretation of the findings is shaped by our background, culture, gender and socioeconomics. In regards to reliability as Creswell suggests, it is essential to document the procedures of their case study. Therefore, with the permission of the participants we recorded the interviews to ensure that all the data could be collected. Furthermore, the respondents were reassured that they were completely anonymous throughout the entire study (Creswell, 2014:252).

5.3 Data Analysis

With the research questions in mind, we analysed the material collected from the first-hand accounts from the two different groups to identify traces of acculturation with regard to socio-economic and cultural integration by using qualitative content analysis. Content analysis involves categorising and identifying themes that emerge from the data. It aims to elicit meaning from the collected data and draw conclusions with key findings. The material was analysed on a latent level where an interpretive analysis was concerned with the response and the underlying meaning to it (Halperin & Heath, 2017).

The first step of the process included general reviewing of the data from the focus groups. The review was done multiple times. The data was analysed in a thematic manner with socio-economic integration and cultural integration as the two main themes. Moreover, the analysing process had a main distinction between two groups. Based on each group’s content, the analytical framework aided in identifying traces of acculturation to analyse how Somali women understand their experiences in the integration process. Inductively, new ideas and categories emerged in addition which has been extracted and developed into general conclusions about them. The material is compiled in the analysis section where the themes based on the result of the study has been analysed to answer the research questions. It is important to take into account that rewording or quotations taken from a context can affect the analysis of the result. Therefore, an attempt to retain the respondents’ way of expressing themselves in the transcripts was done to strengthen the validity. However, some amendments of the transcripts were necessary to avoid misunderstandings. One of the researcher of the thesis, who has great knowledge of both Somali and Swedish culture, was the moderator of the focus group sessions. The difference in language and culture can play a major role in a study because questions and concepts are understood and interpreted in different ways. The transcription of the focus group discussions was translated from Somali to English in order for

both authors to be able to analyse the data. When translating between two languages there is a risk that the moderator's own explanations of the respondents' response will appear.

Therefore, it was taken into account that the analysing of the material may be subjective due to his pre-knowledge and understandings. However, the other researcher who does not speak Somali is external and attempted to remain objective and have a careful judgement in the analysing process to ensure an internal validity.

5.4 Ethical consideration

There are several ethical considerations to take into consideration when dealing with people, especially in our case that deals with a vulnerable group. Our interviewees were informed about the purpose of the study as well as their right to confidentiality and anonymity. They received information that they participate voluntarily in the study and that they can withdraw from it at any time without having to explain their reasons to the researchers (World Health Organization, 2011). Since the result will be published the participants were given fictitious names in the study to protect their privacy and avoid any tracings to them. Because we mention the location of where the interviews are conducted, we will not bring up personal information of the participants that would connect them to this study in order to protect their anonymity (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This information was given orally in Somali, their native language, and all participants gave their consent before the interviews started.

6. Analysis

In this section, we analyse the result of the focus group discussions which has a main distinction between two groups based on time spent in country. In relation to the main themes socio-economic integration and cultural integration we identify traces of acculturation to analyse and compare the participants' understandings of their experiences in the integration process. The analytical tools are based on our operationalized variables and concepts that relates to the two themes (e.g. housing, education, employment, language and identity) to examine what aspect of the participants' understandings has traces of integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization.

6.1 Group 1

Group one consists of three newly arrived women.

Hamdi (fictitious name) is 25 years old and has lived in Sweden for 3 years.

Kaltuun (fictitious name) is 40 years old and has lived in Sweden for 2 years.

Fardowsa (fictitious name) is 35 years and has lived in Sweden for 1, 5 years.

6.1.1 Socio-economic integration

The participants have not lived in Sweden for a long time but still discussed the importance of housing and residence in Sweden. Hamdi and Kaltuun have lived in various parts of Uddevalla but are currently living in Dalaberg. The main reason of moving away from other neighbourhoods to Dalaberg had to do with negative experiences with their neighbours which made them feel unsafe as Kaltuun explains:

“I have only slept well since I moved to Dalaberg. Before that, I was living in another place in Uddevalla where I had racist neighbours who knocked on the front-door in the middle of nights at several times and I had to call the police and also talked to social workers of Uddevalla municipality who finally helped me to move away”¹

Hamdi also talked about how one neighbour mistreated her. There were instances of this person putting trash into her mailbox and drawing the Nazi sign on her door which she reported to the police. In accordance with acculturation theory both Hamdi and Kaltuun's understanding of their experiences indicates separation as they now live in Dalaberg, an

¹ Kaltuun's original quote: Waxa sifiican useexday sidaan ugu soo guurey Dalaberg. Awal waxaan daganaa xafad kale oo Uddevalla kutaalo. Waxaana daris lahaa cunsuriyiin oo habeen badan albaabka igu soo garaceen ilaa aa boliiska ku dacwodo waxaana ku dacwoodey sooshiyaalka kamuunka oo ugu danbeen iga caawiyey inaa ka guuro xaafadaas.

immigrant neighbourhood, where they feel accepted and welcomed by other Somalis and immigrants. Separation is maintaining home culture and being isolated from dominant culture. Hence, they understand separation as the best choice for their current situation since they are new in Sweden and stresses the importance of feeling safe and secure. The third participant, Fardowsa, lives in Torp and had a different understanding of her experience where the Swedish neighbours were welcoming and helpful in her process to settle in. Fardowsa expressed that she is happy with her residence, even though there are no other Somalis, she feels safe and content.

“My neighbours are friendly, when I first moved to the neighbourhood, they visited me with a Somali interpreter and took us for ‘fika’ with their car for four days “²

Fardowsa expressed the desire to continue living in Torp because she believes that will help her to integrate more. Fardowsa says that living in Torp enables her integration process, especially for her children as they learn Swedish quickly by playing with other children in the neighbourhood. This participant showed some indications of integration which is likely to proceed over time as she continues living in that neighbourhood.

All of the newly arrived women go to SFI to learn Swedish, they all agreed on the importance of Swedish language, but criticized the way SFI is structured. Furthermore, Kaltuun talked about her experience of SFI where teachers treat all of the students the same way regardless of their individual need. Kaltuun says some of her classmates have advanced to higher levels while she remains on the lower level because they went to a higher education in their home countries than her. Therefore, teachers do not care whether some students need more help than others. Hamdi says

“Teachers are treating all of the students the same and don’t pay attention of our capabilities, we always get new homework whether or not we could solve the previous ones”³

All of the newly arrived women demonstrated traces of marginalization in regard to language as they require more help and support. The teachers do not consider whether they can read or

² Fardowsa’s original quote: Dariskeyga waa dad fiican. Markaan xaafada usoo guurey, wey isoo booqdeen oo waliba turjubaan bey wateen. Waxey nagu qadeen baaburkooda ilaa afar cisho oo fika nageyeen.

³ Hamdi’s original quote: Macalimiinta kuligeen isku si ee noola dhaqmaan, mana fiiriyaan qofkasta awoodiisa. Markasta su’aalo cusub ee na siyaan mana kala jeclo hadii aan xalinkarno su’aalihi hore iyo hadii kalaba.

write their own language, Somali, before learning Swedish. The SFI course is divided into four levels, A, B, C, D where A is the lowest while D is the highest. Immigrants are expected to complete all four levels within a limited time frame (Skolverket, 2018). All three participants expressed their complaint during the interview in regards to the time frame of SFI. Fardowsa says

“In SFI, I am still on the first level A, while people I started SFI with are either moved to level C and D or finished SFI because they already had strong academic foundation when they arrived in Sweden but I didn't, therefore I need more time”⁴

The participants are currently unemployed and focus on learning Swedish. They all emphasized the importance to learn Swedish in order to find an employment, communicate with Swedish people and to further understand and adjust to the new culture. The women's understanding of their experiences in relation to language as a part of socio-economic integration indicates marginalization. The women expressed the ambition to learn Swedish but feel victimized by the structure of SFI which does not take the individual learning capabilities into account. In Somalis, Hamdi and Fardowsa only went to school until third grade and Kaltuun never attended school. Despite this, they are in the same class as others who have advanced education in SFI.

The group also mentioned how difficult as Somali women with children, to study and stay focused. After school, they are busy with cooking, cleaning and taking care of their children which leaves limited time to study. The traditional family structures have a huge impact on the women and they struggle between two different cultures. There is the Somali culture which is patriarchal and encourages them to stay at home and take care of their families. Then there is the Swedish culture which advocate independency and same rights as men. These Somali women's understanding of their experiences in the integration process demonstrates several traces of marginalization in the socio-economic dimension. They are in constant battle with two different culture where their role as a woman who takes care of the children comes first. At the same time, there is a desire of learning Swedish in order to find an employment in Sweden. However, they emphasized on more integration efforts in terms of time and support within SFI.

⁴ Fardowsa's original quote: Esafiiga wali kalaaska A aa kujiraa, dadkii aan isla bilaabnay kalaas C ama D ee ugudbeen ama waaba dhameeyeen maxaa yeelay dadkaas aniga camal ma eheen oo dad wax horey usoo bartey aye ahayeen inteen Sweden imaan, sidaa darateed cawinaad badan aan ubaahanahay.

6.1.2 Cultural integration

The newly arrived women identify themselves as Somali and not Swedish. Neither do they feel home in Uddevalla. This statement is understandable, given the restricted time spent in Sweden as well as their limited abilities to communicate in Swedish. Furthermore, the women described Swedish culture where families are not close and neighbours do not interact with each other. This is a contrast to the Somali culture which they explain has more hospitality and close family bonds. Neighbours becomes like family who help and support each other. The women express the desire to maintain their Somali culture and not adopt the Swedish culture. They said

“We do not want to be Swedish but Somalis for our generosity and love for our families and neighbours”⁵

This is a clear example of separation. In terms of identity and culture, the participants understand their experiences as separation in the integration process as they expressed a strong desire to maintain their Somali identity and culture and not adopt Swedish culture nor its identity. Somalia is one of very few countries in the world which has a homogenous population which the same ethnicity, language, culture and religion (Harper, 2012) arguably has impacts on their ability to cope with a new multicultural society. The women’s fear of losing their Somali identity and culture lies within the Somali language itself. Linguistically, the terms of integration and assimilation have similar meanings in the Somali language “Isdhexgal”. While talking to the women about their experiences, they appeared to mix up these terms interchangeably.

⁵ Group one original quote: Soomalinimadeena ayaa rabnaa oo sweedhish inaa noqono ma rabno maxaa yeelay soomalida waa dad deeqsi ah oo isjecel had ee famil ama daris yihiin.

6.2 Group two

Group two consists of two women who have stayed a longer time in Sweden.

Layla(fictitious name) is 28 years old and has lived in Sweden for 10 years.

Halima(fictitious name) is 34 years old and has lived in Sweden for 9 years.

6.2.1 Socioeconomic integration

Residence is one of the most important issues that was discussed among our participants in this group. They have different experiences of living in different parts of Uddevalla. Layla and Halima, who have been in Sweden for 9 to 10 years expressed concerns of their current residence in Hovhult which they described as an immigrant community. According to the women, one of the reasons for them and other Somalis to move to Hovhult or Dalaberg from other parts of Uddevalla is the unfriendly reception they receive from some Swedish people. Halima and Layla both expressed a desire to integrate more by living in a mixed neighbourhood, however according to them they are forcibly segregated by housing companies due to their low income and queue points. They said,

“We could not get accommodation in nicer mixed neighbourhoods in Uddevalla for two reasons; first we need to have high queue points and second the rents are high, therefore we live in Hovhult”⁶

During the interview, Layla and Halima repeatedly mentioned the importance of residence for their integration process. They believe as an immigrant woman, they face many challenges in Sweden but as they improve their economy, they would like to move to a mixed neighbourhood. In accordance with acculturation theory, the women reveal traces of marginalization despite living in Sweden for 10 years, as they can neither afford to pay high rents nor have many queue points in order to get an accommodation in mixed neighbourhoods.

Halima and Layla speak Swedish and believe that it is the most crucial factor for immigrants to learn Swedish in order to become a part of the Swedish society. They argued, it allows someone to communicate with other people and build a network in Sweden. Halima and Layla are both integrated when it comes to the aspect of Swedish language and can easily

⁶ Group two original quote: Waa ka heli weynay guri xaafadaha isku dhexjirka dadka fiicanyahay maxaa yeelay shirkadaha guryaha waxee kugu xirayaan mida kobaad inaa dhibco badan heysati, tan labaadna kiradooda waa qaali. Saas darateed ayaan iskaga daganahay Hovhult.

communicate with the rest of the society. However, they acknowledge the difficulties that immigrants have with learning Swedish. Layla says

“When adults come to Sweden even those with higher education from their home countries, they still face difficulties with learning Swedish. Swedish language is very important and it is the key to everything”.⁷

Halima argues that Somalis who are illiterate have more difficulties than others in terms of learning Swedish and they need more help. Halima believes immigrants need to put in hard work and consistency in order to succeed in Sweden. Her own experience when first arriving to Sweden meant hard work and study because learning Swedish was a priority for her. Layla says, Somali people with higher education who come to Sweden have a particular problem compared to many other immigrants which is getting their qualifications or certificates evaluated. Sweden does not recognize any certificate issued in Somalia after the civil war (Swedish Council for Higher Education, 2018). This indicates, there is a trace of marginalization of Somalis as a group in Sweden as they have more difficulties than other immigrant groups to continue their studies or obtain employment with their qualifications which could be one of the reasons mentioned by many scholars in the literature review as Somalis being far behind in their integration process than other immigrants in Sweden.

Halima and Layla are concerned about the school in Dalaberg where the majority of students are immigrants and they claim they receive poor education and do not learn proper Swedish. In this case, some of their children attend school in other parts of Uddevalla because they believe they get a better education there. Thus, the women not only think residence is important for integration but point out the problems that residential segregation create such as segregated schools. This is an indication of marginalization, resulted by residential segregation that the women feel the need to send their children to schools far away from their homes in order to get a better education which according to them they cannot receive from Dalaberg's school.

Halima and Layla mention the importance of internship and how it increases the chances to an employment. Both women are employed, Halima works as a teacher and Layla works in the healthcare sector. They stressed the fact of doing an internship could be the first step of

⁷ Layla's original quote: Marka qofku da' weynyahay oo Sweden imaado, waxaa soo wajaho dhibaatooyin badan xaga luqada barashadeeda. Swedish waa muhiim waxuuna uyahay furaha waxkasta.

getting an employment. It is crucial to have a job when adjusting to a new society and to be self-sufficient which enables the individual to provide for themselves. Halima and Layla are socio-economically integrated as they have an income and are self-sufficient instead of relying on social welfare. Additionally, the participants of this group said that Somali women have more difficulties of finding jobs or getting educations than Somali men because of the traditional family structures of the Somali culture. The tradition where a male is supposed to be the breadwinner and a female is supposed to be a housekeeper follows Somalis to Sweden. Layla says

“You may see a Somali woman who has lived in Sweden for more than eight or nine years and has five, six or seven children who neither speaks Swedish nor works”.⁸

This confirms what previous scholar claims, that Somali women appear to be far out in the margin when it comes to labour market due to family structures as one of the obstacles that mentioned by our participants. According to the women, it is possible to break that circle of traditional family in Sweden, but not every Somali woman is ready to go through that process when there is a huge stigma associated by family members or Somali communities.

6.2.2 Cultural integration

Layla and Halima’s understanding of their experiences in the integration process are almost identical as they both have been in Sweden for 9 and 10 years. According to acculturation theory, the participants demonstrates traces of integration in terms of identity as they identify themselves as Somali and Swedish. They feel Somali because of their origin, culture, language while at the same time they feel Swedish because of their current residence, language, culture and sense of belonging to the Swedish society. Integration is maintaining one’s home culture but also relating to dominant culture of the host country. It is possible to be both Somali and Swedish and maintain their Somali culture and tradition while relating to the Swedish identity. Halima says

“No one is telling me to choose only one culture, I can wear the hijab and dress as Somali woman but still feel Swedish”.⁹

⁸ Layla’s original quote: Waxaa laga yaaba inaa aragtid qof haween oo daganeed Sweden ilaa s8 ama 9 sano oo 5, 6 ama 7 ilmood heysato oo waligeed shaqeynin aanan ku hadlin Swedish.

⁹ Halima’s original quote: Qof igu qasbeyso malahay inaa Swedish ama Somali mid doorto. Anoo jalbaabkeysa wato aa hadana Swedish noqon karaa.

Layla says when she travels abroad and meets other Swedish people, she feels more connected to them than any other nationalities because of the common language, shared culture and residence. This indicates that Layla understand her own experiences in the integration process as integrated and views herself as both Somali and Swedish. Furthermore, citizenship is very important for immigrants in order to get same rights as native people and it also provides additional opportunities that one would not get otherwise. Layla and Halima are Swedish citizens and that gives them a sense of belonging to the Swedish society and they can travel to many places without restrictions, and are eligible to vote in parliamentary elections (Migrationsverket 2017)

Layla and Halima agreed that Swedish culture has many positive aspects. Swedish people are hard-workers and most of them treat other people well and with respect. Also they do not interfere with other people's lives where everyone is free to practice their own religion and culture. The group also highlighted the positive aspects from their own culture where hospitality is important and neighbours become like family who take care of each other. Halima and Layla strive to embody the positive aspects of both cultures by working hard and show generosity and hospitality at the same time. Halima and Layla show indications of being culturally integrated with a relation to both cultures. Furthermore, these women have not followed the otherwise customary family structures that imposes on them, by working and being independent as well as being able to entrust their children to day-care and school.

Neither Layla nor Halima feel home in Uddevalla. They felt more home in previous cities where they lived in mixed neighbourhoods that had more frequent interaction between immigrants and Swedish people. Residents in previous lived cities showed a lot of hospitality that made the women feel home and welcomed. According to the women, they would have felt home in Uddevalla if they had lived in a mixed and multicultural neighbourhood and not in Hovhult which is a segregated place. The women feel not only segregated from Swedish people but isolated from other immigrant groups in the area as they elucidated as the women said, there is no interaction between immigrant groups, for instance Somalis only hang out with other Somalis and don't interact with other immigrants, therefore according to them, they have no choice but to be with other Somalis. This is a sign of marginalization where the women feel segregated and isolated. Hence, feeling home for them is intertwined with their residential location and whether it is a segregated or multicultural neighbourhood. It is possible they feel more home as they change their current residence.

Halima and Layla stated a noticeable change in how Swedish people in general appear to be more influenced by media today, as they hear and see negative images and stories of immigrants which might hinder them from interacting more. When Layla came to Sweden for 10 years ago the situation was different, Swedes were interested in Somali food and culture. Layla says

“I remember Swedish people were interested in our food and requested us to make some Somali food for their parties, they were also interested in our culture and asked many things about it”.¹⁰

Moreover, when Halima share with her colleagues that she lives in Dalaberg, she is met with concern since it is often portrayed as dangerous place by media.

6.3 Summary

After the discussions with each focus group, it was apparent how integration must be seen as a process that requires time. The longer you stayed in a country the more likely it is for the person to understand their experiences as integrated in several aspects of the integration process, as the participants who has lived in Sweden up to 9-10 years indicated. The self-understandings between the two groups signify a change and development in relation to socio-economic and cultural contexts where time is the key factor. Integration is an ongoing process and therefore requires time. Newly arrived immigrants may prefer to live in place where their countrymen are, but after some time when they speak the language, have an employment and are further along in the integration process, they may desire to integrate more and move to another neighbourhood.

We applied the analytical framework to analyse and compare the women’s understanding of their experiences in socio-economic and cultural integration to detect traces of integration, assimilation, separation or marginalization. Newly arrived women show traces of separation in regard to the cultural dimension as they expressed the desire to only maintain the Somali culture and identity. This is possible to change over time as they progress in the society and learn Swedish. Moreover, the newly arrived women also demonstrates some traces of

¹⁰ Layla’s original quote: Waxaan xasuusta dadka Swedishka oo xiiseenjirey cuntadeena oona naga dalban jirey inaa cunto Somali usameyno markee xaflado qabaan. Waxee kaloo xiiseyn jireen dhaqankeena oo su’aalo xiiso leh naga weydiin jireen.

marginalization in regard to the socio-economic dimension with their statements about SFI where they are behind in the learning process and need more time and support due to almost non-existing education from Somalia. Moreover, as Somali women with children, they emphasized that they have to take care of their children at home, therefore it takes more than the estimated hours of SFI to learn Swedish. The other group that has lived in Sweden for a longer time expressed concerns of their residence where they feel segregated. Therefore, we detect traces of forced separation and marginalization due to their low income and quote points that are required in order to get a first-hand contract in a multicultural neighbourhood. The understandings of their experiences in regard to cultural integration and socio-economic dimensions indicated clear integration, except for residence.

7. Conclusion

This thesis investigated how Somali women understand their own experiences in the integration process, and what traces of integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization exist in socio-economic and cultural contexts that are bound to change over time. Some of the conclusions from the study by the interviewees notify language being crucial for cultural integration but also social-economic integration in order to find an employment and create a sense of belonging. Both groups understand that Swedish constitute a step in the overall process for establishment and the newly arrived women showed an awareness about it being the ultimate factor that can speed up their own integration process.

The findings of the research include that there is a deviation of the understandings between the two groups in terms of housing and identity. Emerging from the analysis is the perception that the newly arrived women with the exception of one respondent, understand their experiences within the lens of separation in regard to both aspects above. However, the women who have lived in Sweden for 9-10 years indicated a clear trace of integration as a theoretical understanding. Limited language skills, lack of information and communication, uncertainty about their rights or lack of trust in the society are examples of factors why newly arrived immigrants usually seek support and information from families, friends or acquaintances which ultimately lead to a slowdown of their integration process. The result showed that integration is a multifaceted and ongoing process, where traces of acculturation change and develop the self-understanding of the integration process as time progresses. A positive development is visible over time with the women who have lived in Sweden for 9-10 years, who strongly understand their experiences within the lens of integration in regard to housing. Hence, in the beginning of the integration process a person might have a theoretical understanding that indicates separation but experience a discursive shift towards the lens of integration. Language is the main key to an employment but contributes to other aspects as well. In regard to this, the newly arrived women were far behind compared to the women of the other group who both spoke Swedish well and were employed. The newly arrived women had traces of marginalization, however, the comparison between the two groups indicates that someone who is in a marginalized situation can still become integrated. The importance of time but also hard work resulted into clear traces of integration in the understandings of the women who have lived in Sweden for 10 years. The determination of the newly arrived women to learn Swedish might be the first step in their process to integrate. It is possible for

these women to realize themselves through education and the labour market to become independent and a part of the Swedish society.

Previous scholarships have uncovered that immigrants from Somalia are the most difficult group to integrate into the Swedish society, where Somali women are perceived even more vulnerable. This study aimed to give a voice to Somali women from a micro-level to understand the gap of perceptions and the challenges of integration they encounter. Moreover, we have identified the traces of acculturation of the participants' understandings and were able to demonstrate a positive development that was visible over time in regard to socio-economic and cultural contexts. It is established that integration is a multifaceted concept, where perceptions of the people who experience themselves are vital for the discussion.

7.1 Suggestions for further study

This study was limited to the experiences of two groups of women from Somalia, newly arrived and participants who have lived in Sweden for a longer time, situated in a middle-sized city in Sweden. It is possible that other self-understandings of experiences exist concerning the integration process in the Swedish society, which have not been presented in this study. These could be equally important for the comprehension of the integration process and integration efforts that are required. Therefore, it is imperative to collect more first-hand accounts in order to give voices to these women of a seemingly marginalized group. This could be done by conducting studies on Somali women in other cities to examine if they experience similar or different challenges of their integration process. Furthermore, there are other immigrant women who are also affected by difficulties of adjusting to the Swedish culture as Somali women. Therefore, a research concerning immigrant women from similar backgrounds and cultures could be suggested to explore their experiences in terms of similarities and differences from a holistic perspective.

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10. Appendix

Name:

Age:

1- Socio-economic integration

Housing

- 1- Do you all live in the same area?
- 2- What are your experiences of living there?
- 3- Are there other places in the city you would rather live in?
- 4- How important is housing for integration?

Education

- What is your education level?
- What is your experience of the Swedish language?
- Is it important to speak Swedish for a successful integration?
- Do you receive help with learning Swedish?

Employment

- Do you think having a job is important for integration?
- What is the importance of having a job?
- What do you think is necessary for an immigrant to get a job?
- Do you think internship "Praktik" is a good start of finding a job?
- Do Somali women experience more obstacles than Somali men in finding job?

2- Cultural integration

- Do you see yourself as Somali, Swedish or both?
- What does it mean for you to be Somali?
- What are your thoughts of the Swedish culture?
- The importance to maintain your own culture?
- Would you prefer living in a concentrated area with other Somalis, a mixed area or predominantly Swedish area of your city?
- Do you feel home in (Uddevalla)?





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