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Discrimination and Social Exclusion in Sweden in the Age of Globalization

The Case Study of Thai Migrants

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Abstract

International migration facilitated by contemporary globalization has brought about feelings of insecurity in terms of identity for both the host societies as well as incoming immigrants posing a major obstacle in host countries to integrate immigrants into society. In such context, social exclusion and discrimination can occur. The author argues that this is not a one-directional process. In order to better understand this, psycho-political concepts have been employed to explain how socio-cultural boundaries are hardened in the context of globalization by the feeling of ontological insecurity, which in turn has intensified social exclusion and discrimination and how social exclusion and discrimination exist with help of in-group and out-group biases developed in the social identification process. With the case study of Thai migrants in Sweden, this thesis aims to investigate the two following questions: 1) How do Thai migrants in Sweden react to ontological insecurity caused by migration? And 2) How do Thai migrants experience social exclusion and discrimination in daily life? The author relies on the data from semi-structured interviews that he conducted with ten Thai migrants who have a Swedish permanent residency.

Key words: ontological insecurity, social identity theory, migrants, social exclusion, Sweden

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1 Introduction

Sweden is known for its high standard of living and rather liberal immigration policy. The fact that the country attracts immigrants of various kinds and forms is thus not so surprising. Sweden has a long history of immigration from different countries. Together with its approach to integration, Sweden has become the multicultural society we know today. Moreover, globalization has made it even easier for people to cross borders and for different cultures to encounter one another at close proximity. Consequently, nation states, which originally serve to protect its citizens from external threats, be it physical (by armed troops) or psychological (by creating national identities), have been increasingly challenged by the force of globalization as it weakens this ability. The attempt to restore a sense of security can create anti-immigrant sentiment on one hand and culminate in the resurgence of nationalism and the rise of extreme-right political parties on the other. The parliamentary success of the Sweden Democrats is an excellent example of this and reflects the increasing trend of nationalist, anti-immigrant sentiment in the country.

Contrary to the stagnating general trend of immigration in Sweden since 1990, the number of Thai migrants moving to Sweden has increased by over 30 percent (Niedomysl et al., 2010), with most of these immigrants being women. However, there is relatively little research done to document the impacts of the process above and other relevant issues faced by this group of migrants. Thus, this thesis is interested in investigating how migrant groups, in particular Thai migrants, have experienced the acts of exclusion and discrimination in Sweden. To answer these, the author employs psycho-political theories. He argues that the cultural boundaries between Thai migrants and native Swedes have been hardened due to the feeling of ontological insecurity and that Thai migrants are socially excluded and discriminated against with help of in-group and out-group biases.

1.1 Objective of the Research

This thesis has an aim to provide better understanding of Thai migrant groups in Sweden in terms of their situation relating to social exclusion and discrimination in different aspects of life. This includes how they negotiate their identity abroad and how they face acts of social exclusion and discrimination. Note that this thesis is not seeking to claim that Swedes discriminate against immigrants in general, but to show how the existential anxiety and ontological insecurity caused by

migration can create a hostile living environment for immigrants regardless of where they are as well as how such environment functions. The empirical evidence that the author has chosen to focus on is the case of the Thai migrants in Sweden because the author himself is a Thai citizen who was studying in Sweden at the time of writing.

1.2 Research Question

The thesis will attempt to answer the following main research questions:

- 1) How do Thai migrants in Sweden react to ontological insecurity caused by migration? and
- 2) How do Thai migrants experience social exclusion and discrimination in daily life?

1.3 Disposition

This paper consists of six chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction to the research topic as well as elaborates the aims and the main research questions. The second chapter provides a brief look into the background and previous research regarding the explored topics, which include the background of Thai immigration to Sweden and the policy approach of the Swedish government to integration and immigration. The chapter ends with looking at a wider dimension at the rise of nationalism and far-right political parties in Europe. The third chapter deals with the methodology of the research entailing details about the research design, sampling technique, ethical consideration, limitation, and method to data analysis. The next chapter puts forward the theories that serve as a guideline and a framework in the research analysis. The fifth chapter presents the results of the research by analyzing the data collected by the chosen methodology according to the proposed theoretical framework. Lastly, the sixth chapter concludes the research by providing a concise summary of the research including the answers to research questions as well as recommendations for future research on the topic.

2 Previous Research

This section provides an overview of previous studies and literature regarding Thai immigration to Sweden, the Swedish government's approach and policy towards immigration and integration, and the general rising trend of a far-right movement and associated parties across Europe. The section ends with a brief history of the Sweden Democrats, who represents the anti-immigrant voice and achieved a breakthrough success in the 2010 general election. This section aims to provide readers with a background to the topic's matter, such as where the Thai migrants stand compared to other groups of migrants in Sweden, how the Swedish government's approach to immigration might or might not have contributed to a more severe cultural and social segregation within Swedish society, and how this can be linked to a broader picture within Europe.

2.1 Thai Immigration to Sweden

Types of immigration to Sweden vary a lot. The Thai migrant group in Sweden portrays a rather different picture and particularity in terms of their pattern of immigration. Unlike most other migrants that come to Sweden due to economic or political reasons, Thai migrants come to Sweden mainly due to marriage with native Swedes, thus, constituting another form of migration: marriage migration. In contrast to family reunification immigration, 'marriage immigration' is indicated by an imbalance ratio between male and female migrant population in the country.

Table 1 Foreign-Born Persons in Sweden in 2013

Country of Birth	Men	Women	Total	Ratio of Women (%)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	28,031	28,773	56,804	50.65
Finland	64,443	96,686	161,129	60.01
Germany	23,014	25,973	48,987	53.02
Iran	35,198	32,013	67,211	47.63
Iraq	69,426	59,520	128,946	46.16
Philippines	2,576	8,892	11,468	77.53
Poland	34,200	43,975	78,175	56.25
Thailand	8,026	28,948	36,974	78.29

Turkey	25,193	20,483	45,676	44.84
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Source: Statistiska Centralbyrån, www.scb.se

Table 1 shows the number of male and female immigrants in Sweden as of 2013 according to the country of birth. As we can see, whereas the number of female foreign-born immigrants of all countries is high, with the exception of Thailand and Philippines, the female ratio to the whole population is more or less balanced. Thailand and the Philippines show a striking imbalance in the female-to-male immigrant population, where both almost reach 80 %. Yet, the absolute number of the Filipina migrants in Sweden is far less significant compared to the Thais (8,892 and 28,984 respectively). This means that the Thai migrant communities in Sweden are highly female-dominant and, therefore, the nature of immigration is gendered. Furthermore, although, the immigration of Thai people to marry native Swedes began several decades ago in the 1970s (Alm Stenflo, 2001), in the past decade alone the number of Thai migrants has increased threefold in parallel with the 37 % increase in marriage migration, which atypical of the general stagnating trend of immigration to Sweden. One possible, though not adequate, reason could be related to Thailand being a consistently popular holiday destination among the Swedes.

2.2 Swedish Government's Immigration and Integration Policy

Before the 1970s, a period which was dominated by economic migration, Sweden's immigration policy was significantly influenced by social democratic thought as the government of the time assumed that the migrants would stay. An egalitarian approach was adopted to ensure that immigrants were to have the same rights and opportunities to achieve the same living standards as the host citizens (Focus Migration, 2009). Major migrant group's mother tongues were used in schools as well as in printed materials in the public libraries (Benito, 2007: 336 in Focus Migration, 2009). However, as the nature and pattern of immigration changed from an economic to a conflict-related one (refugees and asylum-seekers) starting from the 1980s, the government began to feel burdened which resulted in immigration law, along with integration law, in Sweden becoming stricter. Persons who were granted the right to stay in the country under humanitarian reasons are now entitled to attend the state-sponsored Swedish language course, which shows the government's attempt to integrate immigrants more into the labour market, as well as the importance of Swedish language in job recruitment.

In spite of being internationally recognized as successful and ambitious, Sweden's approach to immigration and integration is also criticized as being counterproductive. Catarina Kinnvall and Paul Nesbitt-Larking (2011) call this kind of policy approach "group-based culturalism", which is characterized by the encouragement of multiculturalism and recognition of community rights.

Subsequently, those policies have served to reinforce the mental, social, and cultural boundaries between “us” (the Swedes) and “them” (the immigrants) as they provided the migrant groups with cultural rights but without genuine access to political, social, and economic institutions. Thus, Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking explain that (Muslim) migrants in Sweden regularly experience “economic exclusion and social closure”, which include “housing segregation, economic marginalization, illegal economic activities, the formation of gangs, and a culture of violence” (Larsson, 2007 in Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011: 38). Moreover, Beth Hollenbeck (2009) has confirmed that there exists social exclusion in such forms as a geographical fragmentation of culture or housing segregation. In the southern Swedish city of Malmö, the most diverse city in terms of immigrant groups where she conducted her study, certain districts like Rosengård, Fosie, and Södra Innerstaden have a higher concentration of immigrants than do others, while Swedish families live more densely in Limhamn-Bunkeflo and Oxie District.

2.3 The Rise of Nationalism and Radical Far-right parties in Europe and Sweden

The idea of nationalism in Europe is not a new phenomenon and can be dated back perhaps at least as far as the concept of the nation-state itself. The accelerated globalization in this past decade, however, with power shifting upwards to supranational institutions like the European Union as well as downwards to local communities, global movement made easier like never before (travel, migration, information and communication technology, etc.) and the interconnectedness of the world’s economies, has also given rise to nationalism as a resistant counter-globalization force, which serve to re-strengthen the blurring state boundaries.

Mădălina Calance (2012) has analyzed various surveys that reveal what Europeans think about the European Union, immigrants, and unemployment. She argues that in the 1990s many people used to favourably believe that the European Union was necessary for the protection of the European national, cultural, and historical identities from non-European superpowers. In contrast to this however, in 2008 there was a much greater fear of identity loss due to globalization-induced factors such as economic recession, unemployment, and immigration. Consequently, it is deemed unsurprising that immigrants are perceived by host country’s citizens as a threat for stealing their jobs and taking away their national identities.

One response to reverse the trend is the emergence, or perhaps more accurately the re-emergence, of nationalist far-right parties across Europe. Although the terminology used for these parties vary a lot (eg. extreme right, far right, radical right, national populism, ethno-nationalism, etc.) (Mudde, 2007: 11-12 in Knoblock, 2010), the overarching goals of these parties can be identified as

to reform immigration policies, reverse the European Integration process, and protect their national identities (STARTFOR, 2011 in Calance, 2012). Calance (2012) explains that economic recession often leads to stronger nationalist sentiment for example the rise of the nationalist governments of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini during the 1929-1933 crisis. Likewise, the current global recession has facilitated the coming of nationalist, populist, xenophobic parties in many European countries such as Finland, Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Italy, France, Denmark, and Sweden, who represent the Europeans who feel 'threatened' by globalization.

For Anders Widfeldt (2004 in Knoblock, 2010), however, the history of nationalist far-right parties can be divided into three main periods. The first period is between 1945-1955, where parties' and movements' origin were rooted in the First and Second World War. This includes the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* formed in 1946, usually regarded as an heir to Mussolini's National Fascist Party. The second period is between 1955-1980 with economic agenda more in the forefront. A classic example is The Progress Party (*Fremskridtspartiet*) in Denmark founded in 1971. The third period is starting from 1980s onwards. The nationalist far-right parties in this period are characterized by an emphasis on immigration skepticism and safeguarding cultural and national identities. Furthermore, Widfeldt suspects that another period has possibly begun in the recent years where these far-right parties started to have stronger direct and indirect influences on the European politics.

Jens Rydgren (2005: 413, 2007: 243-244 in Knoblock, 2010) explains that the success of these parties is a result of the move from the old tradition of the extreme right based on biological racism to a political framework of ethno-pluralism, which is the belief that different peoples should be separated in order to preserve their national identity and avoid cultural extinction.

2.3.1 The Sweden Democrats

The Sweden Democrats or *Sverigedemokraterna* (abbreviated SD) was founded in 1988 as a continuation of the Sweden Party (*Sverigepartiet*). The Sweden Democrats has become the leading far-right party in Sweden after it has crossed, for the first time in history, the four percent threshold necessary for parliamentary representation. Despite its affiliation with neo-Nazi movements in the past, in the recent years the party has been striving to soften its image to gain wider electoral support by denying its links with neo-Nazi activities (Widfeldt 2000, 496 in Knoblock, 2010). Moreover, even though the party is skeptical of representative democracy, they do not necessarily present themselves as an opponent of this system as they are aware that it offers them more of a chance of winning an election (Widfeldt, 2004: 11, 27, Rydgren, 2004: 23 in Knoblock, 2010). Under the current leadership of Jimmie Åkesson, this reform has continued as some of the more controversial points are now reformulated differently or are not present in official statements any longer (Knoblock, 2010). Rydgren summarises the development of the Sweden Democrats as "a downright populist radical right

party, which combines ethno-nationalism, xenophobia, right-wing authoritarianism in socio-cultural issues and a populist critique of the political system". (Rydgren 2004: 198 in Knobblock, 2010).

3 Theoretical Framework

This section presents a brief definition of the relevant key terms, which are social exclusion and discrimination, to show how the author operationalizes them throughout his research and the theoretical concepts that will be used to analyze the situation of social exclusion and discrimination of Thai migrants in Sweden, these being ontological security and social identity theory.

3.1 Definition of Terms

The terms “social exclusion” and “discrimination” appear mostly together in this thesis. In spite of relatedness, the author does not intend to treat the two words as one of the same thing.

3.1.1 Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a concept that is originated in Europe in the 1960s (Silver, 1994) and used now widely to indicate various forms of social disadvantage and relegation to the fringe of society in different aspects and disciplines such as education, sociology, psychology, politics, and economics. Sometimes, it is also referred to as “marginalizaion”. It is a complex process that systematically denies certain groups’ or communities’ access to rights, opportunities, and resources that are key to social integration (Institute on Social Exclusion). Giuliana Parodi and Dario Sciulli (2012: 2), “social exclusion is interpreted both as a static situation of deprivation and as a process leading to it”. For the case of Thai migrants, this can be, for instance, how they are not welcomed by the host society, how they lack equal academic and economic opportunities.

3.1.2 Discrimination

According to Cambridge Dictionary, discrimination is the prejudicial treatment of an individual or group based on their actual or perceived membership in a certain group or category, “in a way that is worse than the way people are usually treated”. Similar to social exclusion, acts of discrimination restrict members of one group from opportunities or privileges that are available to another group, which in turn leads to the exclusion of the individual or entities

based on logical or irrational decision making. Indeed, this thesis treats discrimination more as prejudicial treatment, which Thai migrants have encountered during their time in Sweden. It can either be verbal statements or physical acts or the body gestures such as negative attitudes and stereotypes, violence, and harassment carried out by individuals or institutions (eg. media or government institutions).

When linked to the employed theoretical framework, which will be discussed more in detail below, social exclusion is more of a result of the response of groups in society to ontological insecurity, while discrimination is arisen from the in-group and out-group biases to boost the sense of self-esteem of the membership of each particular group. However, the line is often blurred and, more often than not, they overlap with each other. That is why the author decided to put them together for practical reason. Also, elaborating on the differences between the two is not the main objective of this research.

3.2 Globalization and Ontological (In)Security

The interrelated concept of ontological (in)security along with existential anxiety was introduced to social science from psychology by Antony Giddens (1991) as a crucial part of the theory of human existence. Ontological security refers to a “person’s fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety” (Giddens, 1991: 38–39). Thus, Giddens argues that the search for ontological security serves as the protection against existential anxiety. Furthermore, there is an intimate link between security and identity. Based on Erikson, Kinnvall (2004: 746) further explains that identity is regarded as “an anxiety-controlling mechanism reinforcing a sense of trust, predictability, and control in reaction to disruptive change by reestablishing a previous identity or formulating a new one”.

The emergence of the nation-state system through the building of national identity serves perfectly to create a secured environment for the individuals residing within the bounded territory against existential anxiety, which may be caused by ‘outsiders’. However, as globalization forces have intensified in the past decade, they have brought about difficult challenges to nation-states in many different ways. Despite being a complex phenomenon, Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011: 3) captured the definition of globalization very well as “explosion - a centrifugal scattering of elements of structure, culture, practice, and discourse out from the center to the peripheries and margins – and as implosion – the crumbling and disintegration of the same elements as a consequence of their very universality”. It is noteworthy that globalization is not merely a political phenomenon but that its impacts stretch across different aspects of lives; economic, cultural, ideological, and psychological. It is a compression of space and time at a deeply global level facilitating the movement of people, ideas, data,

finance, etc., movements which, in turn, erode the ability of nation-states in securing their borders thereby making them more vulnerable. At the same time, globalization can be felt at an individual level in the sense that it is “manifest in increasing rootlessness and loss of stability as people experience the effects of capitalist development, media overflow, structural adjustment policies, privatization, urbanization, unemployment, forced migration, and other similar transformative forces” (Kinnvall, 2004: 743). Both Giddens and Kinnvall point out to this close connection between globalization and individual’s ontological security. Kinnvall (2004: 744) explains that “these global changes have meant that an increasing number of people now lack the protective cocoon of relational ties that shielded community members and groups in the past”, while Giddens says that globalization breaks down “the protective framework of the small community and of tradition replacing these with many larger, impersonal organizations. The individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which she or he lacks the psychological support and the sense of security provided by more traditional settings. (Giddens, 1991: 33)

Migration is an excellent example portraying this picture. The existential anxiety is not only felt by the incoming immigrants, it is also felt by the host community members at the same time. On one hand, the immigrants have been removed from their countries with familiar culture and traditions and placed into one which is foreign. On the other hand, the fear of losing one’s unique cultural identities to a multicultural identity and having their jobs stolen by immigrants is a reference commonly made by the locals. In response to this, Kinnvall (2004: 742) suggests that this fear of being stripped of one’s old privileges “has engendered the growth of new local identities” which are often tied to nationalism or religion because they “are two such causes or “identity-signifiers” that are more likely than other identity constructions to provide answers to those in need. As argued here, nationalism and religion supply particularly powerful stories and beliefs because of their ability to convey a picture of security, stability, and simple answers.

3.2.1 The Politics of Retreatism, Essentialism, and Engagement

In response to ontological insecurity, the immigrants develop a strategy to negotiate their identity in a new environment. Catarina Kinnvall and Paul Nesbitt-Larking (2011) categorize the immigrants’ identity strategies into three groups: retreatism, essentialism, and engagement.

1. Retreatism

Retreatism is an identity strategy that is usually adopted by the immigrants who do not want to be outstanding and be noticed. This strategy is mainly prominent among the first-generation immigrants in former colonial powers such as France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking (2011: 123) argue that the reasons why the immigrants had chosen to adopt this strategy are “experiences of isolation, displacement, and often fear”.

2. Essentialism

Essentialism as an identity strategy is adopted by the immigrants who are experiencing existential anxiety and ontological insecurity. It is a reaction and resistance to the consequences of globalization force such as modernization, secularization, terrorism, and migration, hence, could lead to social violence and group conflicts (Erikson, 1964 in Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011). The majority of Muslim migrants in Europe and Canada are categorized as essentialists.

3. Engagement

Contrary to the elusiveness of retreatist and the confrontationality of the essentialist, the engagementalist identity strategy seeks to negotiate their identity through openness and collaboration with the different identities. Dialogue becomes a basis for the engagement, where immigrants can feel that their voice is heard and counted in the political decision-making process. This is only possible in societies that value both individual freedom and group expressivity, for instance, those promoting deep and genuine multiculturalism and cosmopolitanity, because they tend to open up to radically different cultural norms. Canada is an example of such society, whereas Sweden remains a partially multiculturalism as Muslims in Sweden still are malintegrated and avoid engagement in Swedish politics and society (Carlbom, 2006: 248 in Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 2011).

The concept of ontological insecurity as well as the identity strategies are important for the research topic because it shows us how the process of social exclusion and discrimination occurs in the context of migration and what effects it has on the identity of the immigrants. The following section about social identity theory complementarily explains how social occlusion and discrimination operate in everyday life.

3.3 Social Identity Theory

Another theory that the author utilizes to explain the Thai migrants' experience regarding discrimination and racism in Sweden is the Social Identity Theory (SIT), which is proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that there are three cognitive processes, which are Social Categorization, Social Identification, and Social Comparison, that lead individuals to be a part of a particular group or membership, either in small arbitrary categorization or larger scope like national identity.

1. Social Categorization

Social Categorization is the first process and it involves categorizing people including ourselves in order to understand their (our) role in the society as well as how we engage with one another. Social categories can be, for instance,

skin colors, nationality, religion, and occupations. According to McLeod (2008), without these categories we cannot function in a normal manner as the appropriate behaviors of social members are determined by the norms of the social categories to which they belong. Furthermore, he also adds that each individual can associate himself/herself with many groups.

2. Social Identification

Social Identification comes at the second stage and it is a stage where we adopt the identities of the group(s) that we have previously chosen to categorize ourselves with. Consequently, we begin to act the way in which we believe that group acts, which conforms to the norm of the group. Already at this stage, an emotional significance to our identification with a group and the self-esteem are established and tied with the group membership.

3. Social Comparison

The last stage is Social Comparison. After we have categorized and identified ourselves with a certain group, we then need to compare it with other groups so that our self-esteem can be maintained. According to McLeod (2008), “competition and hostility between groups is thus not only a matter of competing for resources like jobs but also the result of competing identities”.

As we can see, the affiliation of a group is an important source of pride and self-esteem, which, in turn, creates an in-group (us) and out-group (them) because one tends to compare oneself with an out-group membership in order to maintain such feelings. As a result, a set of in-group distinctiveness and biases has emerged to the extent that they enhance the status of the group to which he/she belongs while undermining the other. Thus, social identity theory essentially seeks to explain the intergroup behavior. Discrimination and prejudice towards out-group members are nothing but a common practice reflecting this process. Putting into the context of globalization, such behavior can be reflected in (ultra-) nationalism, racism, and discrimination towards minority groups such as immigrants as cultures ‘clash’ with one another more easily and at a closer proximity due to freer movement across borders of people, data, and information.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

Semi-structured interview (SSI) was chosen as the mode of data collection. It is a method of inquiry “in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions” (Given, 2008: 810). Unlike structured interviews and unstructured interviews, the semi-structured interviews reach the middle ground to allow the informants to be the center of the conversation and to be able to elaborate and reflect on their experience and priorities of issues more freely, while allowing the interviewer to gain adequate control of the direction of information extracted.

For the construction of the interview questions, the author employed simple and clear questions in order to avoid leading questions and technical terms as the interviewees vary in their academic and professional background. The thematic questions, the most important questions of the interview, are formulated in a descriptive form: ‘what happened then?’ ‘How did you feel when..?’, etc. This is to induce spontaneous descriptions grounded in the interviewed person’s own reality (Kvale, 2007). The thematic questions are divided roughly into the following themes: Ontological Insecurity, the Stereotypes of Thai migrants in Sweden, Social Exclusion in Daily Life, and Social Exclusion in Employment. The why-questions are generally avoided, if possible, because they are upon the analysis of the interviewer and they induce an analysis of the experience, which leads to a modification of the answers. However, in cases where a why-question still was needed for further explanation, the interviewer tried to pose it in the end so that the analytical thinking don't effect any earlier answers.

As far as the interview process is concerned, after having received the contact information through the chosen sampling technique (explained in the following section), the interviewer, firstly, approached the potential interviewees by phone or Facebook messages to make an appointment. He also briefly explained to them about what the research entails and its aims. Moreover, He gave them a set of key questions which he would like to ask so that they had time prior to the actual interview to reflect on their experiences. At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer introduced himself and his research once again and asked for their permission to record the interview. By starting with some soft questions about personal information to get to know each other, a safe and attentive atmosphere and relationship is then established between interviewer and interviewee (Kvale, 2007). As a result, interviewees feel more motivated to share their stories, which increases the validity of the data. Since the interview is set out

to be in a rather informal format, the interviewer hardly interrupted the flow of information. Instead, he asked them to further explain or clarify the points that the interviewees had raised. In the end, the interviewer wrapped up the interview by saying “That was all my questions. Is there anything you have thought of or want to add?” That leaves the SSI open-ended for inductive input (Esaiasson et al 2012:264-7). All interviews were conducted in Thai as to allow the interviewees to fully communicate in their mother tongue.

4.2 Sampling

The Snowball Sampling Technique, the use of “a small pool of initial informants to nominate other participants who meet the eligibility criteria for a study” (Given, 2008: 815), was used to select samples. The sample is, hence, not random. Under certain circumstances, it is hardly possible to draw a random sample because “there is no accessible sampling frame for the population from which the sample is to be taken and that the difficulty of creating such a sampling frame means that such an approach is the only feasible one” (Bryman, 2008: 184-185). However, I am convinced this is a very suitable method because, first of all, the Thai migrants who live in Sweden, particularly in Skåne region, have a strong, close-knit community. In this regard, Wat Sanghabaramee, the only Thai Buddhist temple in Skåne situated in Eslöv, acts as a center, around which community-building activities take place through religious ceremonies and traditions. The reason being, for migrants, the temple serves as a space beyond merely religious function as Pattaporn Chuenglertsiri (2011) points out that it also has a transnational function, where migrants feel connected to their homeland. Secondly, the topics of the interview could be sensitive and traumatic for some people, which required a level of trust. With reference from someone the interviewees already knew, the interviewees could share their experience more openly. Furthermore, the Snowball Sampling Technique also diminished the refusal rate and enabled the interviewer to crosscheck information from one respondent to another (Cornelius, 2003).

I have conducted interviews with 10 first-generation Thai migrants who have a Swedish permanent residence permit during the period between 3 – 16 April 2014. The number of the interviewees was sufficient to show the common patterns regarding the Thai migrants’ experience of social exclusion, while allowing enough time for the author to analyze the data. All of the interviewees were female due to the sampling technique, although the author has attempted to access Thai male migrants. This was because a vast majority of Thai population in Sweden is women. Their age, marital status, academic background, length of stay, and occupation vary to ensure the representativeness of the data. The youngest and oldest ages were 23 years and 62 years, respectively. In terms of academic background, the lowest education level was 4th grade, while the highest was Ph.D. The length of stay ranges from 3 up to 34 years allowing a comparison over time. Also, I place an emphasis on the first-generation migrants because of the

assumption that they could compare both their own culture and the host culture and that they have experienced a radical transition due to migration. Geographically, all recruited interviewees have their current residence in Scania (Skåne) Region as it is due to the proximity of the researcher's location and to the sampling technique. However, a few of them have previously resided in other parts of Sweden such as Göteborg and Västerås.

4.3 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration were taken into account throughout the entire process of data collection. First, in terms of consent for the use of voice recording device, the interviewer verbally asked the interviewees for their permission to record the whole conversation, or particular parts. He decided not to use the consent form because he wanted to avoid creating an unnecessarily formal atmosphere at the interview. Furthermore, for the purpose of identity protection, the interviewer made the decision not to disclose the real names of any of the interviewees in his thesis as the topic could be considered sensitive and compromise the willingness of information sharing. Instead, he clarified to them that the obtained names would only be used privately by the researcher and possibly the examiners and would not be revealed further without a formal approval. Hence, there has been no objection with regards to the use of voice recorder.

4.4 Limitation/Trustworthiness

1) Generalizability

Conducting a qualitative interview like this one has posed some challenges in terms of the generalizability of the findings. In contrast to quantitative research methods, qualitative research methods is carried out "in a specific milieu (a case study) whose representativeness is unknown and probably unknowable, so that the generalizability of the findings is also unknown" (Bryman, 2004: 100). Besides, the result of the use of the Snowball sampling technique was that the subjects are located in a rather limited geographical area, which begs the question about the representativeness of the data of the Thai migrants in Sweden as a whole (Bryman, 2008).

2) Self-Glorification

While the research mainly seeks to identify how Thai migrants in Sweden are made 'the others' by the Swedish natives, it is important to always be aware that the same process applies to the Swedish people by the Thai migrants as well. The so-called 'Self-Glorification', thus, can happen when the interviewees (the Thai migrants) perceive themselves as having a better image than what the Swedish

society think of them or better than other migrant groups. The interviewer has observed that the Thai migrants who have been interviewed for this research were often less critical about themselves and more judgmental of the host society. At the same time, they also often compared themselves with the Muslim migrants in Sweden and that they perceived themselves in a better position. Acknowledging this and taking this factor into account could increase the reliability of the data.

3) Insider Standpoint

I agree with Alan Bryman (2004: 96) that “it is only by getting close to their subjects and becoming an insider that they can view the world as a participant in that setting”. Indeed, it is essentially beneficial for the interviewer as someone who shared a similar cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious background with the interviewees both in terms of the level of openness and understanding of the subjects. However, it is not without its costs. As Bryman (2004) argues, the researcher loses his/her awareness of being a researcher and is seduced by the participant’s perspective. Likewise, O’Reilly (2009) has pointed out the similar concern for ethnographers regarding their involvement in the issue. Hence, being a Thai native myself means that I must always remember to reflect on my double role. It is considered essential to strike a balance between the roles as a researcher and an insider and keep a professional distance when necessary to avoid any biases.

4.5 Data Analysis

Upon the completion of data collection, the analysis stage began. The first step was to go back and listen to the voice recordings to identify the themes of the information according to the theoretical framework and categorize it accordingly. The themes that I used were as follow:

- Ontological Insecurities.
 - Opinion about Thailand, Thai culture, Thai language, and Buddhism. This entails how their feelings, perception, and behavior of/regarding to their home country, its culture, and religion have changed after migration, which reflects what kind of identity strategy they have adopted.
 - Experience in big cities compared to smaller cities (if the interviewee had spent some time living in another city). This allows the author to assume if multicultural cities have higher tensions between natives and immigrants.
- In-Group and Out-Group Biases
 - Experiences and Opinions about social exclusion and/or discrimination towards Thai migrants. This theme includes how the interviewees see the situation regarding social exclusion and/or discrimination faced by Thai migrants and whether they have had any direct experiences to share. Such experiences can be

characterized by how they are treated by Swedes in society or within husband's family, for example.

- Stereotypes of Thai Women. Whether the interviewees have had experiences/encounters with stereotypes of Thai women will be put under this theme.
- Experiences in Employment. This theme covers both job finding, job opportunities available to Thai migrants, recruitment process, as well as working environment. This shows us what the obstacles and challenges are for Thai migrants in getting job and in working with their Swedish employers and colleagues.

The categorized and refined data from each interview was then compared to reveal common patterns, which respond with the research questions (Mikkelsen 2005).

5 Results and Analysis

In this section, findings and data acquired from the proposed methods will be analyzed and presented based on the chosen theoretical lens in correspondance with the reseach questions, which are: 1) How do Thai migrants in Sweden react to ontological insecurity caused by migration? And 2) How do Thai migrants experience social exclusion and discrimination in daily life?

5.1 Feeling ontologically insecured

According to the interviews held with Thai migrants, it has been shown that the feeling of ontological insecurity is felt by both Thai migrants and native Swedes. While the author has obtained direct accounts from the Thai migrants on their side, we could make an assumption for Swedes that they, too, experience insecurity from how their feeling of insecurity transforms to hostility in bigger cities, where a lot of immigrants live.

5.1.1 The Insecured Thais: The Essentialist Identity Strategy

As they are all first-generation migrants, the Thai migrants interviewed has been trying to avoid conflicts and remain under radar while remaining unintegrated in Swedish society. At the same time however, they have also chosen to strengtened their own (Thai) identity in response to ontological insecurity that they have experienced as they have relocated, either voluntarily or not, to Sweden, where new culture, language, and religion prevail. Their adopted identity strategy, hence, is regarded as more essentialist rather than retreatist, even though the degree of the conflictedness has not been so visible and intense compared to the situation of the Muslim migrants as elaborated by Kinnvall and Nesbit-Larking (2011). However, it is likely to intensify if their sense of insecurity is not alleviated. The following section will portray how the Thai migrants interviewed have attempted to restore their sense of security by strengthening their own identities.

The Thai identities or the Thainess qualities that are referred to by the interviewees are the Thai culture, Thai traditions, and the Thai language. Moreover, being Thai also usually includes the Buddhist religion as it plays an important part in every step of a Thai person's life from cradle to graveyard. In many circumstances in the interviews, being a Buddhist and being Thai are more or less treated as equivalent.

A senior Thai woman (IN9), who has lived in Sweden for over 30 years, has shared with me her fear of losing the Buddhist religion, thus her Thai identity, in the first years after she had moved to Sweden and how she gained it back as well as her strong intention to keep her children and grandchildren close to the religion. We can see how she equated Thai culture to the Buddhist religion.

I value it (Thai culture) much more. The first 4-5 years, I started to feel Buddhism was fading from my mind. So later I invited a venerable monk from Thailand to install a Buddhist statue and shrine on the second floor of my house. Afterwards, my mind has been focusing on the religion and using it as something to rely on. I try to teach my offspring about our religion so they'll never forget it. I think our Thai religion (Buddhism) is very good because we can get along with every religion.

Furthermore, she (IN9) also explained that she and a few of her friends were actively engaged in building a Buddhist community among the Thai migrants in Southern Sweden before the construction of the Thai Buddhist temple in Eslöv in 2007 by inviting a venerable Thai monk from a temple in Stockholm to perform religious ceremonies at her house and collecting donation for poor temples in rural Thailand.

Another interviewee (IN8) expressed similar stronger relationship with the Buddhist religion that had developed after she had moved to Sweden.

For me, being somewhat near the yellow cloth (referring to the color of monk's clothes, an analogy for the Buddhist religion) soothes my soul, even though I do not have time to go to the temple (in Eslöv). Instead, I do pray everyday before the bedtime at home (in Sweden). In Thailand, I never prayed because Buddhism was already omnipresent in the society but here it is not like that. There is only one temple, which is not so close and a trip there also costs some money [...] I have been praying everyday in the last 10 years.

The other Thai migrants that I conducted interviews with (IN1, IN3, IN4, IN6, IN10) have also maintained a strong tie with Buddhism as they regularly visit and participate in religious ceremonies at the Thai temple in Eslöv or keep the Buddhist teachings as the principle for living. For instance, IN6 has said that:

As a Buddhist, I keep my religious teachings as a principle for living, not disturbing other living creatures [...] I continue living here as if I would back home in Thailand.

As far as the Thai language is concerned, all interviewees except those who do not have or plan to have children with their Swedish partner in Sweden (IN1, IN2, IN3, IN4, IN6, IN8, and IN9) intend to raise or have raised their children bilingually. The reason for it is that the Thai language helps the children connect with their Thai mother and her culture more easily. The Thai migrants felt that it is important for their children to learn the Thai psyche and values, such as the respect for parents and grandparents and humbleness, which would be incomprehensible without the ability to speak and understand the language (IN6).

5.1.2 The Insecured Swedes: The Difference Between Big Cities and Small Towns

Even though I have exclusively conducted interviews with Thai migrants who live in Sweden, their experience also strongly suggested that Swedes, too, experience insecurity especially those who live in big cities. Big cities such as Malmö and Gothenburg often host a higher percentage of foreign citizens and thus results in cities which are more multicultural in nature, facilitating the emergence of ontological insecurity in a way not found in smaller towns. As such, this phenomenon is reflected through a hostile environment and heightened tensions that occur between the immigrants and the native citizens.

4 out of the 10 interviewees (IN2, IN3, IN8, and IN10) used to live in a bigger city and have explicitly mentioned in the interview that they prefer smaller towns to bigger cities because they felt that they were safer there and people were nicer to them. IN2, who moved to Sweden when she was 13, reported that:

I started school in Gothenburg [...] I do not like Gothenburg at all because I felt like they did not like foreigners there. It is a big city with many immigrants. There exist a lot of biases against foreigners. I was verbally bullied by my classmates [...] The environment was not nice. So my (step-) dad wanted me and my mom to move to our summerhouse. Then, the experience was totally different. The house was out on the countryside. The people were curious about my culture and they were eager to teach me their language. It is like they have fewer biases because they have had fewer contact with foreigners. I also got along with my classmates very well.

Likewise, IN3, who moved to Sweden in 2010 for her Master's studies at Lund University, said that:

I first found an accommodation in Malmö because I could not find an accommodation here (Lund). It is not far from the Central Station but it was an immigrant neighborhood. It did not really feel like Sweden there [...] About late 2010/beginning 2011, there was news about an immigrant who was shot dead at a bus stop at midnight and other victims even when they were in their own room. One of them was a Swede who had black hair because he/she was mistaken for an immigrant. So I started to feel panic. I immediately closed the curtain as soon as I got home and I tried to go home before sunset. I did not really know what was going on. All I knew was that the immigrants were the target group and that I could not stay there any longer. In the end, a perpetrator was arrested. He is a racist Swede man, who did not like foreigners†.*

* The interviewee referred to the murder of Trez West Persson, a 20-year-old Swedish woman, who was shot dead in October 2010 by the new 'laser man' with the same weapon used in up to 15-20 other shooting attempts. The main targets were immigrants and Persson was the only victim without a migrant background. The motive was unclear, although the police assumed that it was a mistake. [Read more at: <http://www.dagbladet.no/2010/10/24/nyheter/utenriks/sverige/drap/13977867/>]

† The perpetrator was arrested in November 2014. He is dubbed 'the new laser man' because the incidents showed similar pattern to the racially-motivated attacks by John Ausonius, the laser man', who carried out racially-motivated attacks in Stockholm area in 1991-92. The laser in his nickname referred to the laser sight of the weapon that Ausonius used to commit the crimes. [Read more at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/nov/07/malmo-race-shooting-arrest> and <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11606019>]

Another interviewee (IN8) expresses her preference of Lund:

I love Lund. It is better. After the divorce with my first husband, I moved to Malmö with my second husband [...] I was not happy there [...] People here (Lund) have a very good heart. People in Malmö in my opinion were more aggressive. I could not handle living there. In Lund, at night, I did not have to fear that someone might attack me on the way home. In Malmö, when it gets late, I did not dare going out because it was scary.

According to the interviews, it has become evident that big cities, in which multiculturalism thrives, provide an unsafe environment for immigrants- though this is not due to the fact that Swedes naturally do not like foreigners. Rather, it is the exposure to multiculturalism itself that has created tensions between different groups of people and this is reflected both through direct and indirect acts of violence and exclusion such as crimes, housing segregation, or merely holding an unwelcome attitude towards the other.

5.2 In-group and Out-group Biases

Social identity theory has helped us understand how different people, who categorize and identify themselves with different groups, interact with each other through in-group and out-group biases. Such biases occur as a result of an effort to boost the sense of self-esteem and pride from the membership of a particular group such as Swedes, Thais, etc. Depending on the group of people we are talking to, these biases can translate to various forms, for example, discriminatory practices and actions associated with social exclusion by the host society members. At the same time, it is also important to bear in mind that the foreigners (immigrants) in the society have as well developed certain in-group and out-group biases between themselves and other groups: it is therefore a multi-layered process. This section will be divided into two main parts. The first part is about how the Thai migrants are treated as an out-group, thus, excluded and discriminated against by Swedes in various aspects. The second one is about how the Thai migrants treat themselves as an in-group and the other immigrants as an out-group.

5.2.1 Thai migrants as an Out-group

The Thai migrants interviewed have faced discrimination and social exclusion in various aspects of life as a result of out-group biases by the Swedes. According to the interviews, those aspects are the stereotypes of Thai women, the Media, and Employment.

5.2.1.1. The Stereotypes

Perhaps the most frequent form of discrimination that the Thai migrants, particularly female, encounter is related to the stereotypes. This statement holds a high degree of validity in the experience of the Thai women in Sweden, although they do not consider themselves as according to the stereotypes.

All interviewees have agreed that Swedes generally do hold a negative image of Thai women in line with the common stereotypes of Thai women, which include sex worker, maid, massage lady, money-oriented and a disempowered woman exploited by rich Western men. However, their experience varies according to their location they live in, and the academic background and occupation of both themselves and the Swedes they come into contact with.

For the Interviewees who have studied or are a current university student in Sweden (IN1, IN2, IN3), especially in a university city such as Lund, none of them have had a direct experience of discrimination related stereotypes of Thai women while studying or living in Lund. IN2, who met her current Swedish boyfriend here and continued living in Sweden after her study, talked about life as a Thai student:

I do not know much about what the Swedes think of Thai migrants in general. Probably because I have studied and lived in Lund so my social life is surrounded by people with university degree. I do not know anyone (Swedish) who do not have a university degree.

Sometimes, nonetheless, they could pick it up indirectly from casual jokes about their country, Thai massage, and sex tourism. “*They (her boyfriend’s friends) thought it was funny to make jokes about the ‘happy ending’ at the Thai massage parlors to me but it wasn’t at all*” (IN2).

Furthermore, as soon as they go out of the university city, the protection from holding a student status is gone and change becomes palpable. IN2 adds:

While I was waiting for the train in Eslöv, a Swedish uncle came to me as he heard me talk in a foreign language and asked if I was a student. I said yes then he told me that he himself did not like immigrants but he did not have any problems with students like me.

For other Thai migrants, who have moved to Sweden under different circumstances, they have had more common experience related to discrimination due to these stereotypes. An interviewee (IN8), who did not have a high academic degree, has shared her experience that she was once approached by a Swedish man in Malmö asking have sex because he saw that she was a Thai woman. She said “*I think they (Swedish men) think we are all easy*”. Moreover, she also blamed the stereotypes for the failed marriage with her first Swedish husband.

My (ex) husband forced me to get an abortion 3 times. I was a naïve, rural girl. My husband had many friends who were married to Thai women. They talked bad about me. My husband, who was quite young back then only 22-23 years old, believed in them. He did not believe that the babies in my belly were his. I went to school in the morning and entered work at a restaurant (as a dishwasher) in the evening. How could I find time to meet other people? For my second pregnancy, we conceived during our vacation in

Greece. We were together almost 24 hours a day but he thought I was fooling around. I can never forgive him for this.

Another interviewee (IN7) with similar background also reported that Thai women were usually regarded as money-chasers. She said that even her own husband doubted if she married him for money.

IN10 experienced a similar situation with someone in the family who did not trust her sincerity for marrying another family member.

I had an issue with the sister of my husband. My husband is much older than me (29 years). She thought I wanted to deceive her brother because she did not understand why a young woman like me would marry him. She did not mention it to me directly though. To my face, she would talk and act nicely to me. However, behind my back, she had been bad-talking about me to my husband so much that it affected our relationship. I found out about it because one day my husband could not hold the frustration so he asked me directly. I asked him to put his trust in me. I never had such intention. I moved here because I really loved him and wanted to build a family together. His sister used to visit him every summer and stayed at his house but since I moved in with my husband, she stopped staying at his place because she did not like me due to her prejudices towards me.

Another interviewee (IN6), who has a quite respectable job as an assistant manager at a franchised restaurant in Lund, said that personally she was never looked down by her Swedish friends and family. However, she was quite close with her father-in-law and her husband was afraid that her frequent visit to her father-in-law's house would send a wrong message to the neighbors (that she was his father's young Thai wife, and not his son's).

Lastly, IN4 talked about her experience at Komvux Lund in 2007:

When I was studying in Komvux in 2007, I joined the International Day's activity, where people from different countries participated. It was a workshop discussing the topic of cultural differences. A Swedish male teacher directly addressed to me in front of other students from over 10 nationalities there: 'You are from Thailand, right? Is it true that Thai women can be bought through postal service?' I did not believe that he asked the question because he wanted to know the answer or to start a debate because he knew the answer very well in his heart about the mail-order bride from Thailand. As a fact, all developing countries have prostitution problem not only Thailand. Why did he chooseto ask that question me personally? What was his intention? What did he try to make me feel? I am convinced it was a racial bias and an attack to my personal integrity. I took it personally and I admit that I could not control my anger [...] In the end, I had to quit that course.

5.2.1.2. The Media

Media can serve as a tool to reinforce and spread certain stereotypes among the public. Many interviewees believed that the Swedish mainstream media is biased against the Thai women in Sweden as it further promotes the negative images of Thai women. IN3 informed the author:

Media is only showing one side of the story. For example, showing Pattaya or other sex tourism spots in Thailand [...] Or news related to Thai migrants in Sweden is often about sex service and prostitution. Like last year there was news about police raiding a Thai massage parlor and arresting the owner because they also offered sex service to customers. And then there were news about police disguised as customer buying sex from Thai women. This has become a common picture in the media and strengthened the stereotypes of Thai women.

The following statement of IN10 was in accordance with that of IN3 above that the Swedish media plays a role in strengthening the stereotypes of Thai women. She also added that the media has a great effect on those who rely on it as the sole source of information about Thailand.

Some people have good attitudes about Thailand because they have visited the country [...]. Many people that I have met have been to Thailand so they are familiar with the Thai culture. But for those who haven't, they receive the information about Thailand through internet and television. Especially the Swedish television. I do not understand why they only talk about bar girls [...] and Thai women here would get so upset and sad in the morning because their colleagues would ask them about it.

5.2.1.3. Employment

Last but certainly not least, employment is an area proven to be mostly restricted to Thai migrants for various reasons.

Firstly, the language serves as a main barrier in getting jobs. IN3, who has got her Master's degree from Lund University and continued living with her Swedish partner in Sweden, explained:

It is difficult if you cannot speak Swedish fluently. I can communicate in Swedish but it is not enough if you want a good job in a company. Your Swedish language skill must be very close to native level.

The situation with the language has not changed much in the past 30 years. IN9, who has lived in Sweden the longest, recalled her experience:

Finding job was easy if you knew the language [...] Back then, even if you spoke English, they would look down on you and they would not teach work to you [...] My colleagues and employers started to like me better when I was able to speak Swedish.

Sometimes, even for jobs that do not require Swedish knowledge, Swedish is still preferred. IN10's experience reflects that fact:

In the beginning, my Swedish was still not so good. I went for an interview for a job that required someone who could speak English. When I got there, they asked me if I preferred to have an interview in Swedish or English. I said I would like to try Swedish first and if it didn't work, we could change. They were really happy because they said they would prefer Swedish as well. That was when I learned (the importance of Swedish).

At the same time, the author has found a notably different pattern in the interviewees' opinion regarding Swedish language. That is, the lower the education level the interviewee has, the less important they perceive the Swedish language skill. The reason is because the kinds of jobs that they look for require less communication and contact with other people, thus less language skill. For instance, a female interviewee (IN8), who had a 4th-grade education from Thailand, said:

If we are not picky, it is not so difficult. Most Thai people take cleaning job because we do not need to talk to people. Just look at the floor. There is no need for previous experience or language skills.

Likewise, IN7, who had a similar level of education, has also accepted two labour-intensive jobs, which were a job in a fir tree farm and a cleaning job, because she had neither a good level of education nor knowledge of Swedish language.

Secondly, many interviewees emphasized how important one's name is for recruitment process. Often, Swedish names attract the attention of and are preferred by potential employers than are foreign ones. IN3 told the author:

I believe there is a discrimination when it comes to finding job. At the HR department, they would screen out CVs with a foreign name without even looking into the qualifications. There was a Greek guy who experimented in submitting two CV: one with Swedish and the other with Greek name, to different companies. The result was that the CV with a Swedish name got called for a job interview by more employers. Names certainly plays a part in finding job.

IN10 was recommended by her friends to change her name:

There are many Thai people who could not find jobs here so they changed their name to Swedish. They often try to persuade me to do the same. If I knew in the beginning, I might consider doing it but now it's too late already.

However, there is no clear evidence that suggests that changing names would facilitate the job-hunting process as, according to IN1, the employer would still be able to see that he/she has had a foreign background.

I am looking for jobs at the moment. I believe the discrimination (in recruitment) is real. Even though I have changed my name and lastname to Swedish already, but it would not help because if they look into my CV, they still can see that I have a foreign background. I got my Bachelor's degree from Thailand.

Apart from the language and the name, another difficulty is the prejudice in the workplace, either with regards to the capabilities of Thai migrants or their academic degrees from Thailand.

It is therefore not uncommon that many Thai migrants have to go further to have their capability acknowledged when starting a new job. This mostly happens to Thai skilled labourers, those with university degrees. The interviewees (IN2, IN4, and IN6) have reported that they had to prove themselves harder during the "informal" probation period compared to the Swedes in order to obtain acceptance from the Swedish bosses and subordinates. An experience from an interviewee (IN6) is:

When he (the manager) has decided to hire me as his assistant, my Swedish was not good. The subordinates were not confident in me if I, as a foreigner who neither understood nor spoke their language, could work as their boss. But I showed them that I could do it. Then came new (Swedish) subordinates and the cycle starts over.

In school, an experience from another interviewee (IN2) suggests that it is not so different.

They (Swedes) will only accept you when you are superior to them. Like in school, when my classmates saw that I did well in Maths, they started to approach me more [...] It did take some time.

As mentioned earlier, also problematic is the academic degree that the Thai migrants carried from home. Often, it is not acknowledged or treated as equal as the degrees from Sweden. Note that this section is not intended to argue which of the country's education system is better than the other. The author merely aims to point out the situation that the interviewees faced. An interviewee (IN10) points out the problem with the credibility, or lack thereof, of the Thai degrees:

First when I moved here, I did not start looking for jobs right away because I knew it would be impossible without the Swedish language skill. Besides, our degree is also not fully acknowledged by them. I had my Bachelor's degrees from back home. Officially on papers, it should be valued equally but in practice it is not 100% in my impression. [...] I had to repeat a Bachelor's degrees here then continued with Master's.

Likewise, IN4, who has a degree and career in teaching, explained:

I was unemployed for two years [...] With the same qualifications, we have to try three to four times as hard as they do to get the same position. The job opportunity is not equal for everyone and that's what we have to accept. I started off with being an unpaid volunteer. I walked right to an educational institution. I told them I had a teacher's degree. I could take care and handle children. Please give me work even without money [...] Later, I could use this experience and reference from the employer for my current job. They (Swedes) tend to listen to their own people more. Otherwise, it would have been much more difficult. They see us lower than them.

5.2.2 The Other Immigrant Groups as an Outgroup

The Thai migrants themselves have also identified themselves separately with the other immigrant groups, mostly the 'Muslim ones', by developing certain ingroup-outgroup biases against them. Many interviewees (IN1, IN3, IN6, IN8, IN9, IN10) believe that Thai migrants are seen in a better position than Muslim migrants because Thai migrants are more willing to integrate into the society including learning the language and do not cause troubles to the host societies. This goes to the extent of the interviewed suggesting that the discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment among Swedes are justifiable.

For instance:

We (Asians) still have efforts to integrate into society. Unlike Muslim people. They do not try to understand the culture of the host they are living in. Asian people are more likely to follow the rules. (IN1)

They (the Muslim migrants) do not bring anything good to the society. They do not work but rely on the Swedish Tax money. Some them are not trying to adapt to the Swedish society. The Swedish society has to adapt to them because of their religion [...] The Swedes do not say it out loud but it is reflected in the rising popularity of the SD party. The SD politicians have been threatened through violence like house bombings, etc. It is done by those Muslim immigrants. (IN10)

As a social science student, I have been taught that discrimination and racism are bad. But since I live here longer, I sort of understand the Swedes better why they do not like the immigrants. (IN3)s

IN9 explains the religious difference of the Thai migrants and the others:

We (Buddhists) can get along with any religions. We can go to Christian churches or Islamic mosque. I have no problem with that. But Muslim people will never come to our temple. The same goes for Christians. I think Buddhism is very good that way. It has no discrimination

Interestingly, these biases still persist even though none of the interviewees except IN3 had any direct contact or connection with the Muslim migrants that they referred to in the interviews. The author is convinced that such practices merely serve to increase the self-esteem of the member of the Thai migrant group in Sweden in response to the negative attitudes that the Swedes have towards migrants as a whole.

6 Conclusion

To investigate the situation and questions related to social exclusion and discrimination that the immigrants in Sweden face require an understanding in psycho-political aspects, especially in the contemporary globalization era, where cross-border movement of people is vastly facilitated and cultures are brought into close proximity. The focus of thesis has been on the Thai migrant groups in Sweden, whereas the theoretical concept of ontological insecurity and social identity theory serve as the theoretical framework and guideline throughout the entire research analysis. The aims of the research were to answer the questions about how ontological insecurities brought about by migration have an effect on identities of Thai migrants in Sweden and on the social boundary between groups in society and how the Thai migrants experience social exclusion and discrimination in different aspects of life. The concept of ontological insecurity helped explain how social exclusion is developed, while social identity theory, particularly the use of in-group and out-group biases, allowed us to understand how it works.

The author argues that the process of social exclusion and discrimination is not unidirectional but interactive and multi-leveled, in which both the host citizens and the immigrants take an active role in excluding one another in order to restore a sense of ontological security through the creation of in-group and out-group biases. By conducting semi-structured interviews with ten samples in April 2014, this hypothesis has then been tested and confirmed. In the case of the Thai migrants, they have adopted the essentialist identity strategy, which has resulted in their identities, including feeling more proud of their own culture, language, and religion, being strengthened. Their attempt to do so goes beyond themselves to cover others, such as their children, and to build a stronger Thai/Buddhist community in Sweden too. On the other hand, the ontological insecurities on the Swedish side are indirectly revealed through the difference in hostility towards foreigners between bigger, more multicultural cities and small towns. The experience of many interviewees showed that living in big cities such as Malmö and Gothenburg, where many immigrants live, felt less safe compared to smaller towns, which could be assumed that migration has also had a similar effect on the host society members.

In terms of the concrete experience regarding social exclusion and discrimination analyzed through social identity theory with help of in-group and out-group biases, the interviews have shown that social exclusion and discrimination occurs with the Thai migrants in the areas related to the stereotypes of Thai women, the Swedish media, and employment. First of all, Thai women are often associated with sex services, uneducated poor women, and money-chasers. Furthermore, the interviews suggested that the experience varied depending on

where Thai migrants live and what they do. In Lund as a university city, for instance, the stereotypes are much less common. However, as soon as Thai migrants leave the city, the change becomes palpable. Secondly, most Thai migrants reported that the Swedish media is biased against them. The Swedish media plays a part in reinforcing the existing stereotypes of Thai (female) migrants by solely showing one side of the story, such as sex tourism and prostitution. Lastly, employment is another area, in which Thai migrants face difficulties. Apart from the Swedish language skills that serve as a barrier in getting jobs for many Thai migrants especially the skilled labourers, their academic background and working potential are often not as well acknowledged by Swedish employers and colleagues either. At the end of the section, the thesis also points out how the Thai migrants distanced themselves from the rest of the immigrants in Sweden to boost the sense of self-esteem in response to the rising anti-immigrant sentiment among Swedes.

Due to logistical constraints, this thesis was only able to portray one side of the story as the interviews were only held with the Thai migrants. In order to fully understand the psycho-political aspects of social exclusion and discrimination in Sweden, which is an interactive process between groups in society, it is crucial to get data from the other groups involved as well. Moreover, conducting a content analysis in the Swedish media would shed some insightful information about the role that the Swedish media plays in reinforcing prejudices and biases against Thai migrants. That being said, the author hopes that this research will serve as a good foundation and starting point for, and to stimulate interest in, future investigations into this topic.

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Interviewee Profiles

Interview No./Gender/Age	Location	Year of Arrival	Education Level	Occupation	Date of Interview
IN1/F/29	Västerås/Lund	2007	Ph.D	Unemployed	3 Apr 14
IN2/F/23	Göteborg/Lund	2004	Current Master's Student	Student	3 Apr 14
IN3/F/28	Malmö/Lund	2010	Master's	Unemployed	4 Apr 14
IN4/F/48	Klågerup	1997 (2.5 years), 2006 – now	Bachelor's	Teacher (state)	4 Apr 14
IN5/F/42	Hyllie	2011	Bachelor's	Housewife	4 Apr 14
IN6/F/36	Lund	2007		Assistant Manager, Burger King	9 Apr 14
IN7/F/35	Bjärred	2009	Gymnasium	Cleaning Lady	9 Apr 14
IN8/F/35	Lund	1999	Grade 4	Unemployed	15 Apr 14
IN9/F/62	Östra Odarslöv	1980	Grade 6	Food Preparer (Elderly Home)	16 Apr 14
IN10/F/33	Lund	2007	Master's	Teacher	16 Apr 14

8 Appendices

8.1 Interview Guide

Interview no:

Date & Time:

Location:

- i. Introduction
 - a. Thanking the interviewee
 - b. Introduction myself, my study, and my research project
 - c. Explaining about confidentiality, anonymity (including the permission to use a voice recording device).
- ii. Personal Information
 - a. Name
 - b. Age
 - c. Marital status
 - d. Education level
 - e. Occupation before and after moving to Sweden
 - f. Year of arrival in Sweden
 - g. Reason(s) to move to Sweden
- iii. Perceived images of Sweden and Swedes and Thai migrants
 - a. What did you think of Sweden and Swedes before moving here?
 - b. How have your opinions changed after moving to Sweden?
 - c. What do you think are the stereotypes of Thai people that Swedes have?
 - d. How do you think the media portrays the images of Thai people?
- iv. Ontological insecurity
 - a. How has moving to Sweden affected you psychologically?
 - b. Have you been able to maintain and practice your cultural and religious traditions in Sweden?
 - c. What similarities and differences do you see between your culture and the Swedish culture?
 - d. What do you think of the Thai culture and traditions? Do you feel proud of them?
 - e. What do you think of Thailand? Do you love Thailand more than before?

- f. Have you been able to build up a social network among your own community in Sweden?
 - g. Have you been able to build up a social network among Swedes?
 - h. How do you spend your free time and with whom?
 - i. Do you regularly participate in religious activities at the temple? Have you become more active after you have moved to Sweden?
- v. Experience in Daily Life
- a. How do you find your experience living in Sweden since you have lived here?
 - b. How are you treated/welcomed by the host society, family members, neighbors, etc?
- vi. Experience in Employment
- a. How was/is your experience related to job finding in Sweden? Any particular challenges/difficulties?
 - b. Do you feel like you have equal job opportunities as other people when it comes to employment?
- vii. Closing
- a. Thank you
 - b. That was all my questions. Is there anything you have thought of or want to add?