



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

The influence of integration initiatives for inclusion

A study of female immigrants entry into the Swedish labour market

BUSN49 Degree Project in Managing People, Knowledge and Change

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Submitted on

19th May 2017

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Abstract

- Title:** The influence of integration initiatives for inclusion – a study of female immigrants entry into the labour market.
- University:** Lund University School of Economics and Management
- Course:** BUSN49- Degree Project Master Level in Managing People, Knowledge & Change, Spring Semester 2017.
- Authors:** Clara Karlsson and Linnea Ranch
- Supervisor:** Jens Rennstam
- Key words:** Inclusion, female immigrants, integration initiatives, Swedish labour market.
- Purpose:** The purpose is to get a deeper understanding of the inclusive effects of integration initiatives, and the initiative's impact on female immigrants' entry into the Swedish labour market.
- Methodology:** The thesis uses an interpretative, abductive and qualitative research method. The empirical data consists of twelve interviews with female immigrants, participating in two different integration initiatives. Furthermore, three interviews with employees at the Swedish public employment agency were conducted. Additionally we did document analysis of the three organisations website.
- Findings:** Our empirical findings portrayed the three initiatives establishing different kinds of inclusion among the female immigrants. The Employment Agency was not able to provide the female immigrants with enough information regarding the Swedish labour market and its systems, and the inclusion, which was established, was named asymmetric inclusion. The women's club, implied meeting other women from similar cultures and established high feelings of belongingness among the women, and this inclusion was called family-based inclusion. The last initiative, the friends club, provided the female immigrants with informal contacts who had a good awareness about the Swedish labour market and could provide the women with information regarding the Swedish labour market systems. This inclusion was called bridging inclusion, and had the highest likelihood of bringing the female immigrants closer to the Swedish labour market.

Acknowledgements

First of all, we would like to thank our supervisor, Jens Rennstam, for taking the time and effort to provide us with intelligible feedback. In addition, we would like to thank the women and the employees at the Swedish Public Employment Agency for participating in our study and provided us with valuable insights. Thank you!

Clara Karlsson and Linnea Ranch

Lund, 19th May 2017

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1. Introduction

Never before has the Swedish Migration Agency received as many asylum applications as in 2015. In that year, approximately 163 000 people applied for asylum (Migrationsverket, 2016). Sweden's Public Employment Agency (further in this essay referred to as Employment Agency) is responsible for establishing a well-functioning labour market. The Employment Agency is an organisation whose obligations is decided by the Swedish Parliament and Government, and the large migrations to Sweden urged the Parliament in 2010 to establish a comprehensive program held by the Employment Agency, called the Establishment Reform (Arbetsförmedlingen¹, 2017). The purpose was to make it easier for newly arrived immigrants to establish themselves in the Swedish labour market, and one of the actions from the reform was to put more responsibility on the Employment Agency instead of municipalities. All participants need to have a residence permit either as a refugee or with a protection status. The aim of the reform is that the Employment Agency should be able to help the participants with finding work, education, accommodation and childcare in Sweden. The overarching goal of the reform is to enable the immigrants to make a living for themselves, as soon as possible. Around 58 % of the participants are men and 42% are women (Arbetsförmedlingen², 2017).

The Establishment reform is a highly disputed and contemporary issue for the Swedish society and labour market, with the aim of incorporating newly arrived immigrants to the labour market. However, despite the good intentions with a larger focus on newly arrived immigrants, another substantial problem exists, since women who have lived in Sweden for a longer period of time, still stand outside the labour market, without any employment (Statistics Sweden, 2014). The issue of female immigrants' absence on the Swedish labour market has been debated, and an investigation made by the Ministry of Employment (SoU, 2012:69) showed that the Swedish system for establishing immigrants in the Swedish labour market disadvantaged women and reduced their chances of being included in work activities. According to Statistics Sweden (2016) around 43 % of the female immigrants in the ages of 20-64, who arrived to Sweden in 2005, and hence lived in the country for approximately 10 years, are still unemployed.

In relation to this, the issue of whether or not the female immigrants feel included in or excluded from the Swedish labour market is highly relevant. Social inclusion and exclusion occur through practices and systems within a country. The extent to which an individual

experiences inclusion is dependent on several factors, such as institutional and political forces as well as informal practises and community socialisation (Visser, Theodore, Edwin, Melanders and Abel Valenzuela, 2017). Furthermore, studies regarding immigrants' presence on the Swedish labour market have been conducted, indicating gender differences. In addition, the studies showed that women were more likely to be excluded from the labour market, in comparison to men (Hedberg & Tammaru, 2013).

1.2 Problem statement

There have been many discussions regarding the Employment Agency's effectiveness and ability to provide immigrants with employment. The Employment Agency is held responsible for finding employment opportunities for immigrants, and results show that female immigrants are a disadvantaged group trying to enter the labour market (SoU, 2012:69).

The issue of not being able to incorporate women in the labour market has become a widely discussed issue within the Swedish government (Riksdagen, 2011). As a way of trying to incorporate women in the Swedish labour market, many integration initiatives have been created for immigrants, where the overarching goal is to try to integrate the immigrants in the Swedish society (Bäfvénberg, 2015). The activities vary, and could involve learning the Swedish language and networking with native inhabitants as well as cooking activities. Different initiators, such as for example non-profit organisations, municipalities or the government, arrange the integration initiatives.

Due to the discussions concerning female immigrants' entry into the labour market, we want to hear women's opinions about their participation in integration initiatives. In addition, we want to interview the employees at the Employment Agency, to get a background of the situation regarding female immigrants and their situation on the labour market. Our interest is to investigate integration initiatives further and see how they could have an influence on the female immigrants' process of entering the Swedish labour market, and in turn generate feelings of inclusion. Few studies have been conducted in this area, and there is a particular lack of studies which highlight and discuss female immigrants' perceptions and experiences.

1.3 Purpose and research question

The purpose of our study is to get a deeper understanding of the inclusive effects of integration initiatives, and the initiatives' impact on female immigrants entry into the Swedish labour market. To accomplish this, we have formulated the following research question:

How do female immigrants perceive their participation within integration initiatives?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Background

Female immigrants entry into the Swedish labour market is a highly societal issue, and therefore we have focused on theories regarding social inclusion and exclusion. Experiencing feelings of inclusion is an outcome of several factors interacting simultaneously. In other words, several parameters affect and determine the extent to which an individual feels included or excluded (Kabeer, 2005). Individuals could also feel included in different kinds of contexts, such as for example in various group formations. We are aware of this, and recognize that factors could affect individuals in different ways. However, in this thesis, we have focused mainly on studying feelings of inclusion related to the labour market. We want to see how the participation in different integration initiatives could influence feelings of inclusion on the Swedish labour market, among female participants. When we refer to integration initiatives, it entails organisations whose main purpose is to integrate immigrants into the Swedish society. These could be organized by different actors, such as governmental institutions or non-profit driven organisations. The activities within the integration initiatives differ, depending on the organisation, and could include for example work-preparatory activities or meetings with native inhabitants in order to practise the Swedish language.

The outline for this section will begin with presenting theories regarding social inclusion and exclusion. The forthcoming section will focus on inclusion within work groups. At the end, we will present studies and theories concerning the situation of female immigrants in the labour market.

2.2 Social inclusion and exclusion

In this section, we will present different concepts and definitions of social inclusion and exclusion. As the female immigrants' feelings of being included in the labour market are a highly societal issue, it falls natural to study inclusion in terms of social inclusion. The World Bank defines social inclusion as “the process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society” (Worldbank, 2013).

Furthermore, according to Visser et al (2017) social inclusion is a process which is developed in a complex interplay between groups, individuals and institutions at several scales. Individuals are expected to work with formal and informal practises, institutions and networks

in the society, in order to secure resources, which are necessary to ensure a good livelihood for themselves. Building on to this, being able to establish a secure livelihood is influenced by the capacity of individuals to access resources, but also on their reliance on different networks and institutions. As a consequence of this, social and economic opportunities available within a given society are formed by micro and macro level interactions between several factors such as the state and the market, but also civil society actors that provide individuals with recognition. Thus, the extent to which an individual experience inclusion or exclusion is formed within a complex ecology that is influenced by several factors. These factors are community socialisation, institutional and political forces, the extent to which laws and sanctions control group rights and opportunities across economical, political and social context. Furthermore, other factors are individuals' claims to rights and recognition and their ability to mainstream institutions. In addition, Kabeer states that (2005) the way and to what extent, both exclusion and inclusion are experienced, is very individual and depend on the multidimensional nature of peoples' identities.

Visser et al (2017) argue that given this complex ecology of experiencing inclusion or exclusion, individuals are never fully excluded from society. Instead, they face "constrained inclusion" where formal and informal practices and institutions "limits on the range of options open to individuals or groups for engaging in societal life" (Visser et al. 2017 cited in Kabeer, 2005, p. 195). According to Wood (2004) the processes could be disbenefiting for individuals as they could implicate an adverse incorporation to the society. This is the case when individuals who have experienced constrained inclusion are reliant on the institutions and practises that provide them with short-term, instant outcomes. Hence, the institutions defer and risk the chances for the individuals to secure important resources and preserving rights in the long term. In turn, being dependent on these institutions could be seen as an everlasting process of social exclusion for the marginalized groups, such as immigrants. In addition, Fangen (2010) claims that previous literature regarding inclusion usually tends to emphasise that you are either excluded or included from a particular group. However, in Fangen's view, inclusion and exclusion are more dynamic terms, and individuals can be excluded in one area and included in another.

Yanicki, Kushner, & Reutter (2015) write that being participative in community life could enhance individual's capabilities, and further improve their well-being. As individuals' lives are shaped and affected by economic, cultural and political aspects within the community they

are living in, Yanicki et al (2015) mean that feelings of social inclusion or exclusion could occur through practises and systems within the country, which are either enabling or hindering participation. Social inclusion implies that the individual feels valued, is being given recognition, and encouraged to foster new capabilities. Social exclusion, on the other hand, involves the feeling of being misrecognized, having limited freedom as well as limited opportunities for well-being. In other words, feelings of social inclusion or exclusion occur when individuals feel socially just or unjustly treated by the community's relational processes and existing structures.

Lastly, according to Díaz Andrade & Doolin (2016) gaining information is an important aspect in order to achieve inclusion. Furthermore, the immigrants' perceptions of how they experience social inclusion depend highly on to what extent they are able to access information and establish a comprehension of the new country's systems. In other words, if the immigrants do not have the possibility to access information and receive answers to questions they have, they could experience exclusion from the society.

2.3 Inclusion within the work group

The concept of inclusion has been studied within organisational studies, and by studying these theories we believe that we can create a deeper understanding of our objects of study and their feelings of inclusion. Since the female immigrants in our study are participating in different integration initiatives, we believe it is important to understand how they perceive their participation within these workgroups.

To begin with, according to Mor Barak and Cherin (1998) inclusion refers to what degree individuals can obtain information and resources, have the ability to affect decision-making processes and to what extent they are involved in work groups. Moreover, inclusion is focused on to what extent individuals are involved and their ability to contribute effectively to the organisation. However, according to Roberson (2006) inclusion is still under development and he further states that inclusion theory has been growing in the organisational literature, although inclusion literature has mainly been seen in social work and social psychology. Furthermore, Shore et al (2011) define inclusion as: *“the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness”* (Shore et al,

2011, p. 1265). Inclusion is strongly associated with being part of a group, and according to Turner (1975) there are many advantages associated with being an accepted member in a group. When individuals in a group feel that they are included, they attribute positive characteristics to other members in the group. However, if members in a group are perceived as too similar, the need for uniqueness is unfulfilled. In addition, the importance of the need for belongingness and uniqueness can vary depending on the context. There is a tension between belongingness and uniqueness and this is an underlying theme in the inclusion literature, but research has not focused enough on the necessity of balancing these two in order to understand inclusion (Shore et al, 2011).

Furthermore, Shore et al (2011) have created a framework (see Figure 1) in which they propose that uniqueness and belongingness work simultaneously to create a feeling of inclusion among individuals.

	Low Belongingness	High Belongingness
Low Value in Uniqueness	<p align="center">Exclusion</p> <p>Individual is not treated as an organizational insider with unique value in the work group but there are other employees or groups who are insiders.</p>	<p align="center">Assimilation</p> <p>Individual is treated as an insider in the work group when they conform to organizational/dominant culture norms and downplay uniqueness.</p>
High Value in Uniqueness	<p align="center">Differentiation</p> <p>Individual is not treated as an organizational insider in the work group but their unique characteristics are seen as valuable and required for group/ organization success.</p>	<p align="center">Inclusion</p> <p>Individual is treated as an insider and also allowed/encouraged to retain uniqueness within the work group.</p>

Figure 1: Inclusion framework (Shore et al, 2011, p.1266)

As seen in the framework, to create inclusion a high value in uniqueness is needed, as well as a high belongingness. If an individual is treated as an insider and experience belongingness, at the same time as he or she is encouraged to retain uniqueness, the participant can experience feelings of inclusion. If the participant is not able to experience uniqueness within the group, he or she will not feel inclusion, instead the individual will experience assimilation, or exclusion depending on the grade of belongingness.

Moreover, Shore et al (2011) mention some contextual factors, which can contribute to inclusion. They point out that this is not an exhaustive list of directions for future research, but rather a starting point for it within this field. Three contextual factors are mentioned: climate, inclusive leadership and inclusive practices. A climate of inclusion refer to a consistency in the treatment of all social groups when it comes to procedures, policies and actions of organisational agents. Inclusive leadership investigate the fact that very little research focus on the internal organisational processes that create inclusion rather than mere quantitative research of diversity. From this, researchers have begun to establish the importance of top management when it comes to values. These values can affect the type of practices which promote or undermine inclusion. Inclusive practices, are usually seen as the possibility to engage in decision making and access information. However, Shore et al (2011) further emphasise that inclusive practices should focus on the practices that enhance the satisfaction of uniqueness and belongingness.

Lastly, according to Sabharwal (2014) individuals often compare themselves with others they think they are similar with. This functions as an attempt to create or maintain a positive self-image. The comparison can in turn create perceptions of inclusion or exclusion depending on what social interactions people engage in. This could be aligned with Shore et al (2011) who write that in order for individuals to fulfil a basic need of belonging, they seek inclusion in a group where they feel secure and are accepted.

2.4 Female immigrants on the labour market

After discussing different theories regarding social inclusion and exclusion, and inclusion within work groups, this part will focus on immigrants on the labour market.

To give a short background of immigrants on the Swedish labour market, statistics show that the employment rate for foreign born inhabitants are lower than domestic born inhabitants. In the year of 2014, the employment rate for individuals in the age of 20-64 who were foreign born was 67,8%, while corresponding numbers for domestic born individuals were 83,1% (Statistics Sweden, 2016). In relation to this, Rydgren (2004) discusses immigrants situation in the Swedish labour market, and claims that employers often stereotype certain ethnic groups, and thus exclude them from the labour market. Creating stereotypes implies that the

employer attributes a certain set of characteristics on all individuals from the same ethnicity. This stereotyping and discrimination has in turn made the Swedish labour market unequal and established obstacles for certain ethnicities to establish themselves on the labour market (Rydgren, 2004).

Moreover, Hedberg and Tammaru (2013) conducted a study regarding immigrants arriving to Sweden and their entry into the labour market. The study consisted of the 1993 immigrant cohort, and individuals who did not have a job immediately after arrival. The results showed that after the participants had been residents in Sweden for ten years, one third of the immigrants were still not part of the labour market. It was shown that individuals with higher education were more likely to find an employment than less educated individuals. Some of the attributes that improved the immigrants' opportunities to be employed were, according to the authors, being young, male and having a higher education. Furthermore, Hedberg and Tammaru (2013) found gender differences, and it was shown that women were more likely to be excluded from the labour market, in comparison to men. Also, contributing to this statement, it was shown that during the ten years the study was conducted, almost 40 percent of the women who took part in the study had never worked since arrival. As a way of improving the issue of the discrimination of female workers on the labour market, Hedberg and Tammaru (2013) suggest that more focus within labour market policies should be put on creating job opportunities for women. Many of the female immigrants originate from countries where women often are not established on the labour market, and thus need more tools and aid to be able to establish themselves in the new country. Krabec (2016) presents other possible recommendations regarding immigrants' way into the labour market. For example, it is necessary to have integration strategies and by that learn from failures in the past and not only rely on different multicultural approaches. Furthermore, it is essential to not only prepare immigrants linguistically but also culturally, socially and economically. Krabec (2016) further emphasise the importance to get immigrants into the labour market. By doing so, individuals will face social recognition and become more independent from the government.

Other studies confirm the results of female discrimination, and highlight some motivating factors to why women often are excluded from the labour market. For example, Schrover, van der Leun and Quispel (2007) discuss factors which could have an impact, such as for example social norms and customs between men and women working in the countries of origin. Also,

the structure of the labour market in the host country and its approach towards men and women could affect female immigrants' entry into the labour market. Another factor that makes men more visible in the labour market is the commonness for men to be self-employed and being entrepreneurs in the new country, in comparison to women (Schrover et al, 2007).

Building on to the aspects of female immigrants being either included or excluded from the labour market, Fangen (2010) states that there are some elements of self-exclusion among young female immigrants. Female immigrants have a decline in their employment over time, whereas the case is the opposite for women who do not have an immigration background. A reason for this could be the fact that women with immigrant backgrounds prioritise to stay at home and take care of the household and children, rather than engage in "official employment". Also, according to Hansen (1997) more than 50 percent of job recruitments go through informal channels. This lead to problems among young immigrants of the first generation, since they often do not have the network that can lead to the right employment opportunities (Wiborg, 2006). In addition, Fangen (2010) writes that immigrants can achieve job opportunities through contacts from others of the same country of origin, however this ethnic network does not often give access to stable and well-paid jobs.

Corresponding to this, Bevelander and Lundh (2007) have discussed the issue of immigrants not coming in contact with the new country's society and labour market, and propose that whether or not immigrants are able to enter the labour market depend on their social capital together with their personal characteristics. Social capital involves to what extent individuals are involved in networks. More specifically, what kind of networks the individuals are involved in and how they are able to use these to gain access to the labour market is determinant for the social capital. In general, immigrants have a weaker social capital, and use their own ethnic network to try to establish themselves in the new country, due to the commonness of finding large groups in the society from similar ethnic backgrounds.

2.5 Summary of literature review

In this section we will give a brief summary of our literature review and its main points. To begin with, theories regarding social inclusion and exclusion were firstly presented. The process for inclusion is developed in a complex interplay between groups, individuals, and institutions at several places. Furthermore, the extent to which an individual experience inclusion or exclusion is formed within a complex ecology, which is influenced by several factors (Visser et al, 2017). For instance, these factors could be community socialisation, institutional and political forces, the extent to which laws and sanctions control group rights and opportunities across economical, political and social context. Furthermore, factors such as individuals' claims to rights and recognition and having an ability to mainstream institutions, could also have an impact on individuals experience of inclusion or exclusion. In addition, being able to gain information is an important aspect in order to achieve inclusion. Immigrants' perceptions of how they experience social inclusion are highly dependent on the extent they are able to access information and establish a comprehension of the new country's systems (Díaz Andrade & Doolin, 2016).

In addition, theories regarding inclusion within workgroups were presented. To begin with, Shore et al (2011) define inclusion within workgroups as *“the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness”* (Shore et al, 2011, p. 1265). To explain this definition, in order for an individual to feel inclusion a high value in uniqueness is needed, as well as a high belongingness. If an individual is treated as an insider and experience belongingness, at the same time as he or she is encouraged to experience uniqueness, the participant can feel inclusion. If the participant is not able to retain uniqueness within the group, he or she will not experience inclusion. Instead, the individual will experience assimilation or exclusion depending on the grade of belongingness. Moreover, inclusion within workgroups or organisations involve to what degree individuals are able to obtain information and resources, have the ability to affect decision-making processes and to what extent they are involved in work groups. Stated differently, inclusion within workgroups depend on the extent individuals are able to contribute effectively to the organisation (Mor Barak & Cherin, 1998).

Lastly, studies concerning female immigrants position on the labour market were presented. Hedberg and Tammaru (2013) studied immigrants' presence on the Swedish labour market, and found gender differences which showed that women were more likely to be excluded from the labour market, in comparison to men. Moreover, many immigrants lack contacts on the labour market and they do not have the network that can lead to the right employment opportunities (Wiborg, 2006). In relation to this, Fangen (2010) writes that immigrants can achieve job opportunities through contacts from others of the same country of origin. This resembles an ethnic network, which often do not give access to stable and well paid jobs. This relates to Bevelander and Lundh (2007), who discuss the issue of immigrants not coming in contact with the new country's society and labour market, and propose that whether or not immigrants are able to enter the labour market depend on their social capital together with their personal characteristics. Social capital involves to what extent individuals the female immigrants are involved in networks, which could provide them with access to the labour market. Bevelander and Lundhs's study (2007) showed that immigrants often have a weaker social capital, and use their own ethnic network to try to establish themselves in the new country.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach

The purpose of our study was to get a deeper understanding of the inclusive effects of integration initiatives, and the initiative's impact on female immigrants' entry into the Swedish labour market. To approach this purpose our study is grounded in the interpretive traditions. In contrast to positivist traditions, all interpretative traditions emerge from an approach where human interpretation is the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world (Prasad, 2005). According to Morgan (1980) this paradigm assumes that sense making is created by social constructions and the social reality of individuals does not exist in an objective sense. The ontology connected to this paradigm implies that the reality is subjective to multiple meanings as there is no objective truth (Prasad, 2005). This is applicable in our study, as the women we have interviewed perceive their reality and experiences in different ways. The interpretative paradigm is appropriate in our study as we will try to explore and interpret how female immigrants and employees at the Employment Agency perceive the integration initiatives. Furthermore, by using the interpretive paradigm we developed a deeper understanding of our participants' reality by getting a greater comprehension of their meanings and views. Hence, we did not aim to find any explanations of causal connections in our study, instead we wanted to focus on understanding our interviewees underlying perceptions.

As we wanted to study individuals' perceptions and understandings, we analysed our collected empirical data from a hermeneutic perspective. According to Alvesson & Sköldberg (2000) hermeneutics remains pervasive in qualitative research and the main concept of hermeneutics can be described in terms of intuition, interpretation and insights. A main theme in hermeneutics is that the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole. This is useful for us, since we wanted to analyse our study in a wider context. We therefore alternated between understanding individuals points of view and how our empirical data could be connected to scholars of inclusion and integration theory. This resembles the hermeneutic circle, as we will start at one part and then alternate between part and whole (Prasad, 2005). Hence, having a hermeneutic perspective brought us a greater understanding of our empirical material.

3.2 Research design

In order to approach our research question we performed a qualitative study. Some key characteristics of qualitative research design are that the researcher is the centre of data gathering and analysis. Moreover, in this type of research there is a strive to understand individuals' meanings and perceptions (Merriam, 2009). As mentioned before, individuals experience reality differently due to their own constructions and interpretations of the world. Therefore, when it comes to understanding individuals' perceptions of integration initiatives, we believed that a qualitative study was best suited. This aligns with our paradigm, as qualitative research, according to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000), is mainly interpretative. With qualitative research we were able to go into depth and find a deeper understanding in our interviewees' perceptions.

Furthermore, we used an abductive approach in our study. According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) this means that the inductive and the deductive approach are combined. Using an inductive approach means that the researcher first gathers data and then constructs hypotheses, theories and concepts. Adopting a deductive approach, on the other hand, means that the hypotheses are tested by empirical data (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). During our process we studied theories regarding female immigrants' situations in the Swedish labour market as well as theories regarding inclusion before we gathered data. However, after we had gathered our empirical material we adjusted our theoretical framework due to our empirical findings. In this way, we were able to discover new interpretations in our empirical material and could contribute with a broader understanding of our subject.

3.3 The object of study - Three integration initiatives

To approach our purpose and research question we chose to look further into three different integration initiatives. These consisted of the Employment Agency, and two other integration initiatives, which were given fictive names, the women's club, and the friends club. The three initiatives were studied in order to see how they were able to contribute to inclusion of the female immigrants in the labour market. Below, the descriptions of the three integration initiatives are presented.

The Employment Agency

The Employment Agency is a Swedish governmental agency, which is responsible for the public employment service in Sweden. The organisation's main responsibility is to facilitate meetings with job-seekers and employers, in particular individuals who have difficulties with finding jobs themselves (Arbetsförmedlingen³, 2017). We envisioned this as an integration initiative, since it is the organisation which holds the largest responsibility for incorporating immigrants into the Swedish labour market. To get a comprehensive understanding of the Employment Agency's work, we performed document studies, in the form of the organisation's website. Furthermore, we conducted three interviews with employees working closely with female immigrants. The document study and interviews were conducted in order to establish a background of the female immigrants' situation in the labour market. Additionally, it was important for us to understand how the employees perceived their work with female immigrants.

The women's club

The second integration initiative has been given the fictive name "the women's club". This organisation wanted to be anonymous and because of this, the information which we present from the organisation has been gathered from our conducted interviews and from the organisation's website. We believe that due to the organisation's anonymity, we have been able to see the initiative from a critical view, which we believe has created a nuanced analysis. This integration initiative was similar to a women's cooperative where female immigrants could participate in different activities such as sewing, cooking and needle working. The purpose of the initiative was to integrate female immigrants into the Swedish society by providing them with work preparatory activities. More specifically, one of the goals was to bring the female immigrants closer to the Swedish labour market, and at best establish employment opportunities for the participants (The organisation's website). We conducted six interviews with female participants within this initiative, and the majority of the women originated from the Middle East. The women were between the ages of 28-55 and had been living in Sweden for a variety of years, between 2 to 26 years. In addition, the women had different educational backgrounds, however the majority of the women had no higher education.

The friends club

The third integration initiative has been given the fictive name “the friends club”. Similarly to the women’s club, this initiative wanted to stay anonymous, and the information presented in this thesis has been gathered from the organisation’s website and the conducted interviews. This integration initiative was a non-profit organisation with the purpose of integrating immigrants into the Swedish society, by matching a Swedish speaking person, familiar with the Swedish society, with an immigrant. It is up to the immigrant and the Swedish speaking person to decide how often they want to meet, and no compensation is given (The organisation’s website). We conducted six interviews with female immigrants participating in this initiative, and the majority of the interviewees originated from the Middle East. The women were in the ages between 22-45, and had been living in Sweden for 2 to 15 years. The educational backgrounds among the women within this initiative, were in general higher than within the women’s club. However, some of the women still lacked education higher than higher than secondary school. We are aware that the women’s educational background could have an impact on their perception of the inclusive effects. However, we believe that the female immigrants educational backgrounds did not affect our findings remarkable as they could be seen as moderately comparable.

3.3.1 Interview guide

Below, a chart is presented which describes our interview objects. At the Employment Agency we conducted three interviews with employees who worked with establishing immigrants into the Swedish labour market. These will be described as A, B and C. Additionally, we interviewed women participating in two different kinds of integration initiatives, which will be described as the women’s club and the friends club. We gave the women fictive names, in order to keep them anonymous.

The Employment Agency	Employee A	Employee B	Employee C			
The women’s club	Sarah	Anna	Elisabeth	Emma	Shannon	Maria
The friends club	Charlotte	Emily	Victoria	Lisa	Sophie	Rebecca

3.4 Data collection method

We have mainly used primary data in our study, in the form of interviews. We saw interviews as an appropriate way to collect data to answer our research question. According to Kvale (1996) interviewing is a good way to understand individuals' experiences and their meaning of it. Conducting interviews corresponds with using an interpretative approach, which is suitable for us, as we aim to develop a deeper understanding and discover new interpretations from our interviewees.

3.4.1 Sampling

Our approach of gathering empirical material and setting up interviews with our respondents could be described as some form of snowball sampling (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This was the case for our interviewees at the Employment Agency, as well as our female immigrants at the integration initiatives. First of all, we contacted the Employment Agency, and were appointed a contact person who worked with female immigrants and had a deep insight in the establishment of immigrants. As a start, we had a first introductory meeting with this person, and later on, a formal interview. This person further introduced us to two other staff members, who also focused their work on immigrants' entry into the labour market. Concerning our interviews with the female immigrants, we first contacted the women's club, where we were appointed to meet a staff member, who further introduced us to some of the female immigrants who participated in the initiative. In regards to the friends club, we contacted the management team, who in turn introduced us to women who were willing to participate in our study.

3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

We performed semi-structured interviews, which enabled us to have a theme of questions to follow, while still having the opportunity to go deeper into certain areas brought up by the interviewees (Kvale, 1996). These themes of questions could be compared with an interview guide, which was important to have, in order to make sure we addressed the main interests for our study.

The interviews with the employees at the Employment Agency allowed a flexibility to be open for new insights, and lasted around an hour each. When the employees brought up different aspects of their experiences, we asked follow-up questions, and discussed those

matters further. The interviews with the female immigrants were also conducted in a semi-structured way, where themes of questions were asked at the same time as the women had the possibility to share their experiences and perceptions. However, some difficulties were experienced with these interviews, which required us to make smaller adaptations, which will be described in the section below.

3.4.3 Adjusted semi-structured interviews for the female immigrants

Regarding the interviews we held with the female immigrants, our intention was to perform similar semi-structured interviews, as we conducted with the employees at the Employment Agency. This was possible for a few of the interviews, however, due to language difficulties among some of the women, we did not have the possibility to perform strict semi-structured interviews. We had a theme of questions to follow, similar to an interview-guide, but due to the language difficulties we were forced to have more open conversations with the women, and we tried to explain things slowly and thoroughly with easier words, when it was possible. However, this should not be seen as something negative, as we perceived it as the women appreciated these open conversations, and we believe it made them feel more comfortable with us. This comfort, made them talk more freely to us and share their personal experiences.

Most of the interviews with the women were conducted in Swedish, and some in English, as it depended on the women's preferences and language skills. Furthermore, we paid particular attention to the women's body language and gestures, as these could give a deeper understanding of what they tried to communicate, during situations where they were not able to give full explanations in speech.

3.4.4 Secondary data

To investigate our research question further we used secondary data. We analysed different textual materials such as the Employment Agency's official website and documents from the Swedish Government regarding immigrants in the labour market. These documents were examined, as we wanted to get a deeper understanding regarding the political and formal situation that female immigrants encounter in Sweden. Since immigrants' entry into the Swedish labour market is highly influenced from political and authoritarian decisions, we found it important to obtain knowledge within this area. In addition, we used secondary data

from the integration initiatives, in the form of the organisations' websites, as a way to gain information regarding the initiatives and their purposes.

3.4.5 Using different kinds of data

Our way of using different kinds of data could be seen as a form of triangulation. According to Denzin (1978) triangulation refers to the usage of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research. By using triangulation we could develop a comprehensive understanding of our studied phenomena. Our intention with using different kinds of data was to get a deeper understanding and highlight different aspects of how integration initiatives could influence the inclusion of female immigrants entry into the Swedish labour market. Moreover, our way of interviewing different kinds of respondents to study the same phenomena, is called multi-vocality (Tracy, 2010). This brought us the advantage to develop a broader and more comprehensive understanding of our topic, since we were able to hear different opinions. In this way, we have studied the influence of integration initiatives for women in a multidimensional way. This is an advantage to us, since we wanted to develop a broad understanding of our phenomena.

3.5 Data analysis

We analysed our collected empirical material throughout three different steps, sorting, reducing and arguing (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). As our data consisted mainly of our interview material, our first task was to transcribe the material. As most of our interviews were conducted in Swedish, our transcriptions were performed in this language as well, however later on in the process we translated the most suitable parts for our thesis to English. After the transcriptions, the process of sorting our material began. Here, we tried to recognize patterns and similarities and through these thematise and code our material. We thematised our empirical material through narrowing down the texts into smaller parts and identifying key words which were suitable for our topic. By accomplishing this, we read the transcriptions several times, in order to make sure not to miss anything (Ryan & Bernhard, 2003). Since we used an abductive approach, we studied our literature review at the same time as we did our analysis, hence our way of identifying themes has to some extent been affected by our theoretical preconceptions (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). In addition, in order to find new aspects of our material, and alternative themes, we tried to interpret our material from a somewhat critical view (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000). After organising our

material into different themes, we focused on analysing the themes that were most appropriate for our study, and most likely to answer our research question. After the identification of the most suitable parts for our study, we reduced the material to these themes. At the end, we focused on which findings we could distinguish from our empirical material. After identifying these, the process of arguing began. In order to portray our findings in a credible way, we chose quotes that supported and strengthened our arguments the most.

3.6 Reflexivity

Throughout the process we have tried to be aware and critical of our own interpretations and understandings as researchers. According to Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2000) researchers are affected by different factors such as underlying beliefs and preconceptions, which in turn can affect our interpretations of the collected empirical material. Thus, in order to be reflexive, we needed to consider how we constructed our research, but also how we socially construct ourselves. We especially needed to consider how we observed and interpreted our material. To present a natural view of the empirical material we tried to be aware of our underlying beliefs while still interpreting the data in a critical way (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000). Furthermore, we have been able to limit the bias, as we were two individuals writing the thesis, hence we did not interpret the research material alone. In order to avoid influencing each other too much, we individually went through the empirical material, and afterwards discussed our interpretations of the material with each other. We tried to have an open mind during our interpretations, and present our findings as fairly as possible, since none of us had any former in-depth knowledge in this subject. However, our subject is, as stated before, highly contemporary and well discussed in media, which could have influenced our insights and interpretations.

3.7 Validity & Reliability

Validity and reliability are two important concepts during research, as they impact the quality and credibility of a study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A study's validity concerns the integrity of the conclusions drawn from the research that has been conducted. In addition, the validity concerns to what extent the method used for the study is suitable for the topic and thus representable. In our case, since we have interviewed two parts, the employees at the Employment Agency, as well as female immigrants, we believe our results have a high level of validity. This goes in line with Bryman and Bell (2011) who claim that using different

kinds of sources could be beneficial when trying to achieve a higher level of validity of the study. In addition to studying both employees as well as female immigrants, we have analysed secondary data in the form of documents and websites. The secondary data was gathered from the Employment Agency and the Swedish Government, as well as the two other integration initiatives, since we believed it was important for us to understand every initiative accurately. The Employment Agency's work procedures are highly affected by laws and regulations implemented by the Swedish Government, which was important for us to comprehend.

As mentioned previously, studying different sources of data, such as primary and secondary data could be resembled as a form of triangulation (Denzin, 1978). This is something that raises the level of validity of our study. Other aspects, which could impact a study's validity, are if respondents are affected by external factors (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This could apply for the employees at the Employment Agency, since they work in the public sector, and hence have strict guidelines from the Swedish Government to follow. Consequently, it is uncertain whether or not they felt the ability to be critical towards their employer. However, our perception of the interviews at the Employment Agency was that the respondents did share critical thoughts about their work.

Moving forward to the concept of reliability, it is applicable in qualitative as well as quantitative methods. A study's reliability concerns the replicability of the results, in other words it concerns whether or not other researchers would have achieved the same results if they studied the same or similar settings (Bryman and Bell, 2011). As we have had an interpretative approach in our study, it is uncertain if other researchers would have achieved the same results if they conducted a similar study. However, to achieve a high reliability, we have tried to draw well-grounded and motivated conclusions from the empirical material. Furthermore, we have tried to be creative, flexible and sensible to our material during our analysis(Seale,1999).

4. Empirical findings and analysis:

Three integration initiatives generating asymmetric inclusion, family-based inclusion and bridging inclusion

The outline of this section will be structured as follows. Firstly, we will present the Employment Agency's perceptions of female immigrants and their way towards the labour market. Their views are acknowledged and presented in order to get a deeper understanding of female immigrants' situation in the labour market. Secondly, we will present women's perceptions regarding their participation within three different integration initiatives: the Employment Agency, the women's club and the friends club.

4.1 The Employment Agency's perceptions of female immigrants

The Employment Agency is a Swedish governmental agency, which is responsible for the public employment service in Sweden. The organisation's main responsibility is to facilitate meetings with job seekers and introduce them to employers, in particular individuals who have difficulties with finding jobs themselves (Arbetsförmedlingen³, 2017). Three interviews were conducted with employees at the Employment Agency, working closely with immigrants. These interviews concerned their interpretations and thoughts of why female immigrants are a disadvantaged group in the labour market. The employees also described their work tasks, and the tremendous amount of paperwork and administration, since many new immigrants arrived every week.

4.1.2 Difficulty with getting women into the labour market

During the interviews, it became clear that every employee found it more difficult to get women into the labour market than men. The following quotes describe this:

One problem that I have discovered, is that it could take quite a while before women actually get in, because there is a lot of maternity leave. I actually believe that men have an easier time, as they often have the mind-set of knowing that 'I need to network, I need to meet employers'. While women often have the mind-set of 'Help me, help me, help me' (Employee A)

In their countries of origin, these sorts of systems do not exist. The first thing they hear from their compatriots, when they arrive to Sweden, is: 'Take maternal leave instead of working and stay at home'. For some women this could be an indulgence, but it only delays the establishment. (Employee C)

One of the biggest challenges in my job is when our value systems conflict, and I am especially referring to women. In particular women who have not had a paid job, who have lived in a society where women stay at home and take care of the children. (Employee B)

During the interviews it became clear to us that women are the ones who take the largest responsibility for the children, whereas the men often focus on having an employment. It should be mentioned that this is probably not unique for the women arriving to Sweden, as this is an established issue among Swedish inhabitants as well. However, this is something the employees expressed a particular concern about, and it could be seen as one of the reasons, which hinders the establishment of female immigrants in the labour market. Furthermore, Employee A described a difference existing between men and women, in the quote: “*women often have the mind-set of ‘help me, help me, help me’*” where women were portrayed as a group which required a lot of help, and did not take any initiative on their own. Instead, they were seen as dependent on the employees at the Employment Agency, and trusted that they would give them the help they needed. Men, on the other hand, were described as a group, which was driven and had the mind-set of knowing that they needed to work hard, in order to enter the labour market. We could see tendencies of the employees depicting women as a homogenous group, in which everyone required the same kind of help. For instance, when Employee B says, “*I am especially referring to women*” the expression and tone emphasised that women were all seen as one group separated from the men. We believe that this mind-set could lead to the fact that women are being given help as a group and not individually. This could in turn be problematic as every woman has different prerequisites and needs individual guidance and help in order to come closer to the labour market.

4.1.3 Large focus on explaining the system

Our next finding portrays the employees' need of spending a large amount of time and effort on explaining, to the women, how the Swedish labour market system worked. The following quotes indicate this.

Many times it is like explaining a whole new world to them. Because this is something they are not used to /.../ We explain basic things to them, such as how they can approach the Swedish system, in order for them to get to know what kind of options they have. (Employee C)

I can sit and explain something very clearly, something which we might find obvious, such as it being natural to work in order to get paid and make a living for oneself, but the people I meet can sometimes not even read or write. How am I then going to explain this to people who have only been working within the four walls of their home...These cultural clashes, are very hard to handle. (Employee A)

We try to explain things very clearly to them. Before they come here they have often heard things of how the system functions, which many times are not accurate, so when they get here we have to explain things to them, it could be all kinds of things... but sometimes it is difficult. (Employee B)

Many times, the immigrants are affected from hearsays from their compatriots. Women often come here and make statements, which they have heard from people in their surroundings. In these situations, I have many times been forced to explain how it really functions in Sweden, and give them correct information. (Employee C)

The quotes show that the employees needed to put effort in explaining the system to the immigrants and they sometimes experienced difficulties with this, as the employees seemed to perceive the immigrants' previous worlds as differing extensively from how the Swedish society functioned. During the interviews, the employees explicated their focus on trying to explain things to the female immigrants. Every employee emphasised that giving information

and trying to explain different aspects to the female immigrants, was very time-consuming. Because of this, we understand it being a central part in their work. We could also see some frustration among the employees, for instance as Employee C expresses: “*We try to explain thing very clearly to them /.../ but sometimes it is difficult*”. The tone changed when Employee B made this claim, and we could notice a bit of hopelessness in the employee’s voice. Furthermore, we realised from the employees that female immigrants often had been affected by hearsays from their compatriots. In many cases, the information they had received from their compatriots was incorrect, which urged the employees to focus on explaining the correct information. We believe that this could create misunderstandings among the female immigrants.

During the interviews we noticed that the employees needed to explain additional aspects of the society, besides how the labour market system functioned. This was seen in Employee C’s expression of “*we have to explain things to them, it could be all kinds of things*”. When we asked the employee what kind of things they needed to explain, the employee laughed and said “*literally all kinds of things*”. This reinforces our perception that the Employment Agency had to focus extensively on giving information, both within the labour market, but also in areas, which were not necessarily connected to the labour market.

4.2 The female immigrants’ perceptions of the Employment Agency - an initiative contributing with asymmetric inclusion

4.2.1 Female immigrants expressing an inability to receive help

The following section describes the female immigrants perceptions regarding the Employment Agency, and their services. Our respondents for this section consist of women from the women’s club and the friends club, who were currently, or had previously been taking part in the Employment Agency’s activities. A dejected situation is depicted, where the women did not feel like they received the help they wanted, and lacked information and guidance from the employees.

I would like to say that I have not received any help from the Employment Agency. I have not been able to get help, but I do not know how it is for others. (Elisabeth, the women’s club)

The Employment Agency cannot help you. (Maria, the women's club)

The Employment Agency can not help you with finding jobs, nor can they explain to you how applying for jobs in Sweden works.. They work for you, they are not your friends. But within [the friends club] I can ask people as a friend, can you help me, or can you explain to me how I can apply for jobs in Sweden? (Rebecca, the friends club)

The quotes above describe an ineffectiveness within the Employment Agency, where Maria and Elisabeth claim that they have not received any help from the organisation. When we asked them what kind of help they requested, they were not able to answer the question if they required more explanations regarding the labour market, or mainly the system in general. We could see tendencies that some of the women did not know what they wanted, or what they could expect from the Employment Agency. This aligns with Employee A' perception of women usually not being very driven nor having any clear future job prospects. Of course, there could be several reasons to why the women were not able to explain what they wanted or felt, such as language difficulties or personal traits. However, this inclines a need for more guidance from the Employment Agency, in order to establish an understanding of what the women can expect from the agency's services.

However, Rebecca was more determined and could present a clearer view of the Employment Agency and its services. One particular issue she brought up was their lack of time to answer questions and help with explaining the system. For example, when Rebecca mentions "*they work for you, they are not your friends*", we interpret that Rebecca is experiencing a tension between her and the Employment Agency. In our view, it seems to be quite natural that the two parts are not friends, as the employees and the job seekers have a more formal, professional relationship. However, since Rebecca mentions this, we believe that she could have experienced previous situations with authority figures, which have affected her perception of the system. Also, the quote indicates that she seemed to believe that the employees mainly did their duties, since it was their job, not because they were genuinely willing to help the immigrants with finding jobs. This could further be seen, as she is distrustful and sceptical towards the system, and its ability of finding job seekers employments. Furthermore, Rebecca contrasts the Employment Agency against the initiative

she is participating in, the friends club, and she displays the latter as more helpful in terms of explaining how things function in the labour market. The ability to receive help and explanations could be seen as something she feels is important, and hence is lacking from the Employment Agency.

4.2.2 Asymmetric information transfer

The lack of information and need of further explanations and guidance regarding how the labour market worked, was something several of the women urged, as they explained their wish of receiving further information concerning how to proceed in the process towards the labour market.

It is not just the Employment Agency, it is the entire system, it is slow. And I think the employees need to be better at giving advice, and guiding people. I have spent a lot of time on doing research which I could have spent on studying Swedish or looking for jobs, because no one has explained things to me. (Sophie, the friends club)

I came to Sweden two years ago, and six months ago I registered at the Employment Agency. I should not have to stay one and a half year in a country to learn about a system and meet friends. I think, that if you want to learn the Swedish system you need to be in contact with a part, which is separated from the government, or the Employment Agency, someone who can explain the system. (Emma, the women's club)

I think that if you want to learn about the system, you have to have a contact, I mean apart from the Employment Agency. Someone who can explain the system. (Lisa, the friends club)

It is remarkable that almost every woman described a need for someone outside the Employment Agency, who could explain how the labour market functioned in Sweden. The lack of information and understanding of the system could be seen as one of the biggest issues the women perceived with the Employment Agency. Moreover, the Employment Agency

seemed to function mainly as an authority, which was not able to provide the immigrants with any deeper help or explanations of how things in the labour market functioned.

The women perceived the information they were provided with, as not sufficient for them to establish a larger understanding of the labour market. We could see that an asymmetry in the information transfer existed, since we during our interviews with the employees noticed them spending a large amount of time on explaining things to the immigrants. Thus, the employees' perceptions' regarding their extensive work on explaining the system, seemed to contradict the women's perception of the help they were given. Hence, this information transfer did not seem to function properly, as the women and the employees had contrasting views on how much information the women received. Accessing the right information could affect an individual's perception of inclusion (Díaz Andrade & Doolin, 2016). As a consequence of the asymmetric information transfer between the Employment Agency and the female immigrants, we could see the distinct impact it had on the inclusion.

4.2.3 Asymmetric inclusion

We consider the inclusion for the women in this initiative being asymmetric for several reasons. To begin with, being able to access information and having an understanding of how a country's institutions and systems work, is seen as an important aspect in order to achieve inclusion (Díaz Andrade & Doolin, 2016). However, these women did not perceive themselves to be able to access and receive the information they needed, concerning the labour market. As a consequence of this, the women's perceptions of feeling inclusion were affected. The inclusion could therefore be seen as asymmetric, since the information flow which existed was uneven, and hence impacted the feelings of inclusion correspondingly. In addition, inclusion is seen as a process (Visser et al, 2017) and having an essential understanding of the Swedish labour market needs to be fulfilled in order to pursue the process towards finding an employment. However, the women perceived this part of the process as insufficient and therefore the process towards inclusion was affected. Due to this part of the process being incomplete, and the inclusion thus being negatively affected, we believe that this reinforces our interpretation that the inclusion could be seen as asymmetrical.

In addition, several aspects affect how an individual feels inclusion, hence it is not possible for us to draw the conclusion that the women do not perceive any inclusion at the labour

market at all, since we have mainly focused on the aspect of receiving information. The women take part in the Employment Agency's activities, besides their participation within the two other integration initiatives, due to this, we believe that the women are asymmetrically included in the labour market. Furthermore, in view of the women's perceptions of the Employment Agency, we believe that the Employment Agency could contribute with asymmetric inclusion during the female immigrants entry into the Swedish labour market.

We can see several consequences of the asymmetrical inclusion. The Employment Agency holds the greatest responsibility of trying to integrate immigrants into the Swedish labour market. However, our empirical findings showed that the female immigrants did not perceive their services as helpful in terms of bringing them closer to the Swedish labour market. This could be seen as critical, due to the Employment Agency's obligation of introducing immigrants to the Swedish labour market. Furthermore, we can see that possible outcomes could be that if information cannot be received from them, there is a risk that disinformation emerges. For example, the women might look for the information in other places, such as from their compatriots. Being provided with information and having an understanding of the society in which an individual lives, is important to feel inclusion.

4.3 The female immigrants' perceptions of the women's club - an initiative contributing with family-based inclusion

This section will focus on the female immigrants perceptions regarding the women's club, and its activities. During our interviews with women participating in this initiative, we found that they perceived the initiative as a place to experience social belongingness and feelings of being a family.

4.3.1 The women's club

The women's club was similar to a women's cooperative where female immigrants could participate in different activities such as sewing, cooking and needle working. The initiative's purpose was to provide female immigrants who stood far away from the labour market with work preparatory activities. At best, this could create job opportunities. The participants could stay at the initiative for a maximum of six months but were able to apply for an extended stay, and in that case stay for an additional three months. The participants worked at the initiative during office hours, and were getting a monthly compensation for their participation. Several

actors, such as governmental institutions and private investors, funded the initiative. In addition, the initiative was partly funded by the organisation's daily operations, which consisted of the sales from their handcrafts and revenues from their lunch business (the Organisation's website).

4.3.2 Feelings of social belongingness

Many of the women described that they had been at home for a long period of time, and taking care of their children and household.

I have previously only stayed at home taking care of my children, but now when they have grown up, I want to do something, because it is boring to just stay at home. Here, I have the chance to meet a lot of people, and socialise and be part of this fellowship. (Shannon, the women's club)

I have been living in Sweden for 25 years, but during all these years I have been at home taking care of my children. Now, my children have grown up, and I feel that I need to start talking Swedish and meet people in the Swedish society. (Maria, the women's club)

The majority of the women had never had a paid job before, as they had been at home with their children, and conducted household chores. This initiative gave them an opportunity to meet people outside of their home, while also being able to socialise and work with women who originated from similar backgrounds. Additional quotes described the feelings of being part of a family.

We are like a family here, and we have one thing in common, which is that we are women and we are from similar backgrounds. (Elisabeth, the women's club)

Here, we are like a family, if I have a problem I can talk to anyone and they will listen. We talk to each other, and sometimes we are stressed with all that is going on, and in these cases it is very helpful to have my friends here to talk to. (Sarah, the women's club)

This project means a lot to me. Here, I have the fellowship with other women who know me, who are from similar cultures. And we definitely have one thing in common, which is that we are women, who are in this together. We have something that brings us together, and I believe 99% of all of us here have given birth, so we know what it is like to stay at home. But I do not want to stay at home, because then I get depressed. (Shannon, the women's club)

The women expressed a gratitude to their participation in the initiative, as they explained it giving them a feeling of belongingness in a group outside their own family. Moreover, the majority of the women brought up the social aspect as the most rewarding factor from this initiative. Many of the women perceived themselves as being part of a big family when participating in the initiative. The initiative further seemed to bring the women closer to each other and gave them an opportunity to talk about the problems they encountered in Sweden. For instance, as Sarah mentions, *“sometimes we are stressed with all that is going on”*, we interpreted this as she, together with her female participants, felt troubled about the work situation they were in. We further interpreted that Sarah showed an awareness of knowing that the women's club was not a long-term solution to her situation in the labour market. Moreover, due to her distress, she seemed to appreciate having someone to share and discuss this situation with. In addition, Shannon mentions *“we are in this together”* which implies that the women within this initiative are in the same situation, in which the circumstances bring them closer to each other.

We could see indications of these feelings of being a united group, having negative implications, as it could lead to the women seeing themselves as a precluded group. This could further entail the women portraying themselves as a distinct group, situated far away from the Swedish labour market. The following quotes made by Anna and Sarah reinforces this interpretation:

I have not worked that much in Sweden, maybe because I am from the Middle East and a woman. (Anna, the women's club)

I am an immigrant and a woman, because of that I feel a certain belonging with the other women here, because they know me. (Sarah, the women's club)

These quotes further emphasise that the women are a separated group, which could imply that the women characterize themselves as a group with even smaller prospects of finding an employment in the future, than what actually might be the case. In other words, they distance themselves even further away from the labour market. As a consequence, the fellowship does not necessarily bring the motivation towards finding a job, which the women need. To build on to this, Anna mentions that she has not worked much in Sweden, and she believed the reasons for this being a combination of her foreign background and her gender. While Anna made this statement she did not mention any other factors which could have contributed to her not working in Sweden, and she seemed convinced that these two aspects were the most salient ones. This corresponds with our interpretation of the women seeing themselves as a precluded group.

4.3.3 The women's perceptions of finding an employment

The social aspects and feelings of belonging to a group were the two most significant aspects which the women highlighted as outcomes from the initiative. The women did not talk much about future work possibilities or how the initiative could help them towards entering the labour market. Instead, these areas were merely brought up when we asked direct questions regarding this matter. This surprised us, as one of the initiative's aims was to integrate immigrants in the Swedish society, and provide them with work preparatory activities, which in turn could result in a future employment. In the light of the interviews with the women, they were not sure how likely it was to get an employment after the initiative, which the following quotes describe:

I know that the aim of the project is to put the participants into labour, but I doubt how many people it is who actually receive an employment..." (Emma, the women's club)

I hope this project can open up future job possibilities, but I do not think that the employees and the participants here can help me with that, since we are all in the same situation. (Anna, the women's club)

We have been told that we need to search for jobs ourselves, the initiative cannot help us to find a job. We can only try out different activities here, such as cooking or sewing, and in this way I can learn new skills (Maria, the women's club)

After the interviews we started to question how the women's club could bring the women closer to the labour market. Some of the women seemed to be aware of the initiative's limitations, as they expressed a concern of whether or not the project and its participants were able to provide them with job opportunities. The women in this initiative did not seem to interact with individuals who had a good awareness about the Swedish system and labour market. Following this, when Anna says, "*we are all in the same situation*", we interpret it, as she does not perceive it as very helpful to get to know other women with similar backgrounds, in terms of getting closer to the labour market. Hence, she appears to have a slightly sceptic view of her possibilities of receiving an employment after her participation in the project. This interpretation was also reinforced as she during the interview was very positive to the project itself, however during the discussions of how the project could lead to future job opportunities, she appeared to be a bit cynical and her positive attitude towards the initiative seemed to disappear.

4.3.4 Family-based inclusion within the women's club

The women within this initiative highlighted the social aspects as being most important, and they described that they felt a social belongingness within the group. Meeting women from similar backgrounds and cultures, seemed to bring the women closer to each other, and was something the participants seemed to appreciate. On the grounds of the women perceiving themselves as a family and sharing a social belongingness within the group, we interpret this as a family-based inclusion, as their situation could be compared with being in a family. In addition, the women resemble a family since they had the ability to share their personal experiences and current situations with each other. Moreover, the feelings of family-based inclusion were strengthened among the women, due to them being part of a group which could be seen as precluded from the rest of the society. Furthermore, we believe that this initiative implied a family-based inclusion as we found that the feelings of inclusion which the women experienced, were merely applicable in the workgroup, as they did not seem to perceive any inclusion within the Swedish labour market. This could be seen as several of the

women expressed doubts whether the initiative was able to bring them closer to the labour market.

Additionally, we could notice several consequences from this kind of inclusion. First of all, we interpret one negative factor from the family-based inclusion being that the women might distinguish themselves as a distinct group. Since the group consists of women from similar backgrounds without any particular work experience or education, they could be depicted as a precluded group, situated far away from the Swedish labour market. In turn, this could have negative consequences as the women might lose the encouragement to search for jobs, and instead create feelings of hopelessness. However, positive outcomes were shown from this inclusion as well. The interviewees described that the women's club brought them feelings of well being, which we believed was one of the causes of the family-based inclusion. We shall not diminish this factor as an important outcome, as well being could be seen as a prerequisite to have the will and strength to enter the labour market. In other words, the feelings of well being, which the family-based inclusion brought the women, could have an impact on their motivation towards finding an employment in the future.

4.4 The female immigrants' perceptions of the friends club - an initiative contributing with bridging inclusion

This section will portray the friends club and how the female participants within it perceived its activities. The female immigrants highlighted the informal contacts as important, since they could bring an important understanding of the Swedish labour market and system.

4.4.1 The friends club

The third initiative, the friends club, was a non-profit organisation with the purpose of integrating immigrants to the Swedish society, by matching a Swedish speaking individual, familiar with the Swedish society, with an immigrant. The immigrant and the Swedish inhabitant go through several interviews, before they are paired up, as the organisation wants to create a successful match, which thus has a higher likelihood of establishing an enduring relationship. It is up to every pair to decide how often they want to meet up and no compensation is paid. In addition, the organisation arranges different kinds of activities for the immigrants, such as for example going to museums or going hiking, as a way of introducing them to the Swedish society (The organisation's website).

4.4.2 The importance to meet Swedish inhabitants

During the interviews we noticed the importance for female immigrants of getting in touch with people familiar with the Swedish language, culture and labour market. The following quotes describe this.

If you want to start living in a country, you have to learn their language, you know, to understand their culture and it is easier if you get in touch with Swedish people. (Sophie, the friends club)

I am very happy that I have been able to meet my Swedish friend. She has helped me a lot in Sweden. She has helped me with understanding the Swedish culture and system more clearly. (Rebecca, the friends club)

I do not have a network since I am new in this country. This project helps me to be more social and it has helped me to find more friends. It feels like it can help me further in life. For example, if I graduate from an education, my Swedish friend can say 'Oh, I heard this company is looking for employees'. It definitely helps to be friend with someone Swedish. (Emily, the friends club)

My Swedish friend [at the friend's club] works in the same industry, which I would like to work with in the future. I believe she can provide me with important contacts. This is very helpful to me. (Lisa, the friends club)

The quotes highlight the importance of meeting Swedish inhabitants, and how it could bring an opportunity to meet individuals who have a good awareness about the Swedish labour market. This initiative provided the immigrants with an informal way of meeting people, and the help they were given seemed to be appreciated. Moreover, we saw that the women seemed to believe that the initiative could act as a platform to transfer them closer to the labour market. This was interpreted as the Swedish inhabitants' knowledge and insights could give the women a larger and presumably helpful network, regarding finding an employment. This network could work as an indirect way to the labour market, as the women got a larger

awareness and insights of the Swedish labour market. In addition, they were able to ask questions in an informal way. For example, Emily highlights the importance of having informal contacts, and she brings up an example when it could be beneficial: “ *Oh, I heard this company is looking for employees*”. We make the interpretation that the initiative in itself might not lead to job opportunities, but rather the broader knowledge that it provides regarding the labour market and its system. In addition, Lisa believed that this initiative could give access to important contacts within the labour market. We saw that by having informal contacts, the women could broaden their awareness of the labour market, and possibly establish important contacts. In turn, this could transfer the women closer to the labour market.

4.4.3 No previous contact with Swedish inhabitants

Many of the women within the friends club had lived in Sweden for several years and expressed that they prior to the initiative, had never been in contact with Swedish people, except authority figures. The following quote describes this:

I had never really talked to any Swedish person, besides my Swedish teacher at Komvux, before I joined here [the friends club]. He was the one who recommended me to join the initiative, to find a Swedish friend to talk to and hang out with. I have not regretted this once, and I do not think I would have met someone Swedish yet, if it was not for the initiative. (Victoria, the friends club)

All the women we interviewed, in general, seemed to be hesitant towards their possibility to get in contact with Swedish people. We made this interpretation as practically no one had been in contact with Swedish people, prior to the initiative. Also, Victoria’s statement of “*I do not think I would have met someone Swedish if it was not for the initiative*” is very strong, and emphasises how difficult it is, as an immigrant, to meet people who are well established within the Swedish society. Contributing to this is the fact that many women, as mentioned above, stressed their gratitude towards finally meeting someone that was well familiar with the Swedish system. One particular quote which made a strong impact, was when a participant, Charlotte, was telling the story about a situation she experienced with her niece, who had been living in Sweden for a couple of years. Charlotte had been given free theatre

tickets for herself and a relative, from the initiative, and after the theatre show, the niece made the following statement:

Tonight, I finally realised that I live in Sweden. In my surroundings everyone speaks Arabic. But here [at the theatre] there were real Swedish people. Previously I have not understood that I live in Sweden, but tonight, it all came clear to me. (Niece to Charlotte, the friends club)

This quote is noticeable as it shows that some women might not even experience that they are a part of the Swedish society. This reinforces the existence of a distance between female immigrants, and people who are established in Sweden. Thus, there is a need for integrating activities, which makes it possible for natives and immigrants to engage with each other. In regard to the quote above, the distance between the niece and the Swedish society seem to be diminished, as she gets the opportunity to participate in a situation, where natives are a majority, as this is something unusual for her. Hence, we see that this initiative could diminish the distance between female immigrants and natives and hopefully reduce the gap between female immigrants and the Swedish labour market.

4.4.4 Bridging inclusion

In the friends club, the distance between the women and the Swedish society seemed to be decreased, as they got the opportunity to meet individuals from a group which they previously had been distanced from. Furthermore, the women perceived these new relationships as important, as they were able to provide them with a larger awareness of the Swedish labour market. In the light of the women's' descriptions, we interpret the inclusion as bridging. We interpret that the initiative is generating a bridging inclusion, since it diminishes the gap between the female immigrants and the Swedish society. The gap was decreased since the initiative generated informal contacts who were established and had a good awareness of the Swedish labour market. These informal contacts could provide the immigrants with personal advice and a greater understanding of the labour market. At best, the relationships between the female immigrants and the Swedish inhabitants could lead to future contacts on the labour market. This could in turn lead to a network, connected to the Swedish labour market. Stated differently, we found that the friends club did not bring a direct inclusion to the labour

market, but instead created prerequisites, which could lead to possibilities for entering the labour market in the future.

4.4.5 Bridging inclusion - bringing the women closer to the labour market

To conclude, when comparing the friends club with the two other integration initiatives, we saw the friends club established the most beneficial outcomes regarding bringing the women closer to the labour market. First of all, this initiative could be seen as more advantageous regarding network effects for the immigrants, as it provided them with individuals who were established on the labour market. This is not a guarantee for the women to receive an employment, although it could provide them with a deeper understanding of how the labour market functions, and transfer them closer to it. Whereas, within the women's club, the existing network was not able to provide the same kind of contacts with individuals who were well familiar with the labour market, since it consisted of women from similar backgrounds.

Moreover, when contrasting the friends club with the Employment Agency, the friends club implied a two-way communication between the female immigrants and the native inhabitants, as they were given time to establish a relationship and exchange knowledge and experiences. In this way, the information flow, within the friends club, had greater chances of being successful. Whereas at the Employment Agency, there seemed to be a one-way communication, since the employees expressed that they spent a great amount of time explaining the system. In view of this comparison, the friends club and its bridging inclusion was the integration initiative, which had the largest likelihood of bringing the female immigrants closer to the Swedish labour market.

5. Discussion

5.1 The Employment Agency - Asymmetric inclusion

As described from our interviews with the female immigrants, our main finding was that the female immigrants requested more explanations and information from the Employment Agency. They perceived it, as they did not receive enough help and information to approach the labour market. In addition, they described an unawareness of how the Swedish labour market system functioned, which should have been articulated by the Employment Agency. We could not see any difference between the participants from the two other initiatives, as both parts expressed similar views concerning the Employment Agency and them not providing enough help.

As mentioned in the empirical findings, we could notice an asymmetry regarding the information transfer between the employees and the female immigrants. Our interviews with the employees at the Employment Agency indicated that they spent a great amount of time explaining the system and providing immigrants with information, as this was one of their main work tasks. However, the women did not perceive that they received sufficient information regarding the Swedish labour market and the system. Thus, this showed the existence of a shortage in the information transfer, as the employees and the women had different perceptions regarding this matter. Díaz Andrade and Doolin (2016) claim that individuals' experiences of social inclusion are highly dependent on the extent they are able to access information and understand a country's system. In other words, if the immigrants do not have the possibility to access information and receive answers to questions they have, they could experience exclusion from the society. In our empirical study, the women perceived the information, which they received from the Employment Agency as inadequate. We could see tendencies of this being aligned with Díaz Andrade and Doolin's (2016) study regarding the importance of accessing information. We noticed the importance of accessing information among the women, and we believe their perception of them not receiving enough information contributed to them feeling asymmetrically included.

5.1.2 Possible outcomes of asymmetric inclusion

Furthermore, consequences of the asymmetric inclusion were that the women searched for information elsewhere, besides the Employment Agency. Presumably, they turned to their friends or relatives to gain information, as they might not have any other contacts to ask. This

could in turn give rise to an ethnic network, where there is a risk that disinformation occurs. Fangen (2010) writes about ethnic networks and claims that immigrants can achieve job opportunities through contacts from similar countries of origin. However, these ethnic networks do not often give access to stable and well paid jobs. We could not see any indications in our empirical material that ethnic network could give access to job opportunities as Fangen (2010) mentions. Instead, we could see that ethnic networks were not valued or effective in the Swedish labour market, in terms of establishing job opportunities. Furthermore, our empirical material portrayed an additional consequence from the ethnic networks. The ethnic network could create disinformation, as the immigrants often tend to engage within these networks, and the information, which is shared, does not always contain information, which is correct. This leads to a vicious circle, as the information circles mainly within the network, and thus affects the women who will receive inadequate information.

Moving forward, our empirical material showed that the two other integration initiatives, the women's club and the friends club, could be seen as informal practices, which contributed with smooth and accessible information for the female immigrants. The two initiatives seemed to adjust the asymmetry in the information transfer with the Employment Agency, by providing informal contacts who were able to give personal answers and recommendations to immigrants concerns. However, the female immigrants' perceptions of the Employment Agency are still problematic, since the Employment Agency holds the largest responsibility for integrating immigrants into the labour market, and should be able to provide a functional information system. Stated differently, other integration initiatives should not be a substitute for obtaining information about the Swedish labour market system.

5.1.3 The process of receiving information important

Moreover, Visser et al (2017) write that inclusion is a complex mechanism and in the light of this, individuals are never fully excluded from the society, instead they face “constrained inclusion” where formal and informal practices and institutions “limits on the range of options open to individuals or groups for engaging in societal life” (Visser et al. 2017 cited in Kabeer, 2005, p. 195). Against this background, the women are not excluded simply because they lack information regarding the system and labour market, which they should obtain from institutions and formal practices. However, since inclusion could be seen as a process (Visser et al, 2017) receiving correct information and having an understanding of the system is a

prerequisite in order to continue the process towards the labour market. This implies that the women are not excluded because they lack enough information, but rather because the lack of information hinders them from getting closer to the labour market.

However, if the situation had been the contrary, and the Employment Agency had established a symmetric information transfer, it is not given that the female immigrants had experienced inclusion in the labour market. This is due to the fact that inclusion is a process, influenced by several factors, such as groups, informal practices and institutions. These factors need to interact in order to make an individual feel inclusion (Visser et al, 2017). If the female immigrants had experienced a symmetric information transfer, this could have implied that they had relied too much on the Employment Agency's services and activities. This would in turn have created an inclusion that would mainly have been short-termed, since it would have meant that the women were too dependent on institutional services, hence the institutional forces would have been the major aspects within this interplay. However, we do believe that the process towards inclusion would have been more beneficial and resulted in a faster process for the women to enter the labour market if the information transfer had been symmetric.

Finally, the Employment Agency was not able to provide the women with information and giving them an understanding of how the Swedish institutions and systems work, which is seen as important aspects in order to achieve inclusion (Díaz Andrade & Doolin, 2016). As a consequence, the women's perceptions of feeling inclusion were affected. The inclusion could further be seen as asymmetric, since the information flow, which existed, was uneven, and hence impacted the feelings of inclusion correspondingly. Furthermore, consequences of the asymmetric inclusion have been described in this section. Due to the asymmetric inclusion, we interpreted it as the women searched for information elsewhere, besides the Employment Agency. Presumably, they turned to their friends or relatives to gain information, which could resemble an ethnic network. One concern we interpreted from this was that these networks often contained inadequate information. This could in turn lead to difficulties entering the labour market, due to the misunderstandings of the Swedish labour market. In addition, individuals are never fully excluded (Visser et al, 2017). This confirms with our study, where the women did not seem to perceive themselves as excluded, due to the fact that the women participated in the Employment Agency's activities. This strengthens the view of the women being asymmetrically included.

5.2 The women's club - family-based inclusion

Our findings from the women's club indicated that the women perceived the initiative as a place to experience social belongingness, and the majority of the women brought up the social aspects as the most rewarding factor from this initiative. Several of the women perceived themselves as being part of a family when participating in the initiative. Moreover, a fellowship existed among the women and we could clearly see that the women perceived belongingness within the workgroup.

5.2.1 Inclusion achieved without the criteria of uniqueness fulfilled

In the light of Shore et al's framework (2011), our findings indicated that the women experienced inclusion within the workgroup, without fulfilling Shore's criteria of feeling uniqueness. According to Shore et al (2011) inclusion is defined as: *"the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the work group through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness"* (Shore et al, 2011, p. 1265). Shore et al's framework and definition of inclusion implies that in order for an individual to feel included, he or she needs to experience both belongingness as well as uniqueness. However, our findings show that these two factors do not necessarily need to be fulfilled, in order to feel inclusion. As mentioned in our empirical material, the participants in the women's club highlighted and described feelings of belonging to a particular group as very important to them. For instance, the majority of the women mentioned that the initiative was like a family to them, and the social aspects were incredibly significant. Due to this, we made the interpretation that belongingness was fulfilled. However, we could not find any substantial confirmation, which showed that feelings of uniqueness were fulfilled among the women at the initiative. Most of the women originated from similar backgrounds and were in similar situations, which diminished the characteristics of uniqueness. Many of the women had never before been in a work group similar to this, as many had been at home doing household chores. As a consequence to this, they experienced inclusion, as this new situation implied that they started to feel belongingness within a group, distinguished from their family, at the same time as they performed a job and received financial compensation. This could in turn be seen as a unique situation for the women, even though the homogeneity of the group indicates that the women themselves do not possess unique characteristics, according to Shore et al's (2011) framework. We found that the criterion of feeling uniqueness was hard to achieve, in the situation for the women. Despite

this, they demonstrated tendencies of feeling included in the workgroup. Due to this, our empirical results indicate that the criteria of uniqueness, within Shore et al's model (2011) does not have to be fulfilled, in order for an individual to feel included.

It might not be possible for us to generalise this analysis to other contexts, however our findings made us question the possibility to achieve Shore et al's (2011) criteria of uniqueness within workgroups in general. Demonstrating and being recognized for possessing unique characteristics appears to be very hard, which thus would result in very few individuals feeling included in a particular group according to Shore et al's framework (2011).

5.2.2 Female immigrants and ethnic networks

It is important to note that our findings showed that the inclusion the female immigrants experienced was merely applicable in their workgroup, and they did not seem to perceive any inclusion within the Swedish labour market. This further strengthened our view of this initiative contributing with family-based inclusion. Furthermore, several of the women expressed doubts towards the initiative's ability of bringing them closer to the labour market. Concerns as "*we are all in the same situation*" were expressed and displayed as reasons to why it was doubtful that other participants could lead to job possibilities. As mentioned previously, the women were engaged in a situation where all participants originated from similar backgrounds. This could be compared with Bevelander and Lundh (2007) who discuss ethnic networks. They suggest that the extent to which immigrants are able to enter the labour market is highly dependent on one's social capital and personal characteristics. Social capital is seen as the kind of networks individuals are involved in, and to what degree they can use these in order to gain access to the labour market. Immigrants have a debilitated social capital and therefore use their own ethnic network in order to try to establish themselves on the labour market. We could see that the women's club provided the female immigrants with an extended network. However, this network and social capital did not seem to be valued in the Swedish labour market. The network consisted of contacts, who were not established within the Swedish labour market, and consequently did not have the possibility to bring the women closer to the labour market.

A possible consequence for the female immigrants, who engage in the women's club, is that their ethnic network will expand, and hence not increase their chances of developing a

network, which is more connected to the Swedish labour market. In turn, it could hinder the women from engaging in other networks, and possibly also to meet other individuals who have more connections with the Swedish labour market, such as for example Swedish inhabitants. For instance, we noted that a considerable amount of the participants within the women's club, had lived in Sweden for several years, and despite this, they had only socialised with individuals from similar cultures. Hence, this shows how hard it is to break a pattern, and seek new relationships outside what one feels comfortable with and is used to.

5.2.3 Family-based inclusion and its relation to the labour market

We have acknowledged that this initiative contributed with a family-based inclusion, since the women perceived themselves as a family and all participants shared a social belongingness within the work group. The group consisted of women from similar backgrounds, who experienced similar situations. Furthermore, they had the ability to share their personal experiences and current situations with each other, which also signified the existence of a family-based inclusion. However, this kind of inclusion could be seen as limited, as it was merely situated within the work group, and it is equivocal how the inclusion could be extended towards the labour market.

Furthermore, in the light of our empirical findings, we believe ourselves seeing that the type of inclusion, which was established within this initiative, was not the most optimal. The majority of the theories concerning inclusion envision it as something desirable, which everyone or every organisation should want to achieve. However, in regards to the situation, which the women are currently in, with the ambition to find an employment, the kind of inclusion, which is created at the women's club, is not the most optimal inclusion. The family-based inclusion does not have the possibility to bring the women closer to the labour market, instead it could be seen as something that distances them even further away from the labour market. To explicate, as we mentioned in our empirical findings, if the women perceive themselves as a precluded group, from the labour market, they might situate themselves in an excluded position of the labour market, and hence diminish their chances of getting an employment in the future.

5.3 The friends club - bridging inclusion

We found that the women perceived it as important to get in contact with individuals who were established in the Swedish society. The friends club was beneficial for the female immigrants as it provided them with the opportunity to meet people who were familiar with and had a good awareness of the Swedish labour market.

5.3.1 Women seeking contact with Swedish inhabitants

The women highlighted that this initiative brought them important relationships as it provided them with individuals who had lived in Sweden for several years, and had good insights of the Swedish labour market. Hence, what kind of network the women were provided with was of high importance. Furthermore, many women emphasised that they had never been in contact with Swedish inhabitants except authority figures, which could further be an indication of the importance. However, the women expressed their will to meet Swedish inhabitants. This insight contradicts Shore et al's (2011) point of individuals often seeking inclusion to a group which they feel secure and accepted in, in order to fulfil a basic need of belongingness. In other words, Shore et al's statement (2011) does not correspond with our findings within the friends club, since Swedish inhabitants could be portrayed as a group situated far away from their regular social community. In other words, this was not a group, which they could be described as feeling secure within.

According to Visser et al (2017) inclusion is a process developed in a complex interplay between groups, individuals and institutions at several scales. Furthermore, if individuals are too reliant on institutions this could defer the chances for individuals to secure important resources and preserving rights in the long term. One possible outcome we could see from the friends club and its informal contacts, is the possibility of diminishing the reliance on institutions, and thereby result in a long-term solution. If informal practices, such as this initiative, can play a significant role for the immigrants, perhaps the reliance on other establishments, such as governmental institutions as the Employment Agency, can decline. Hence, if an individual were solely part of the Employment Agency, the individual would most likely establish a short-term solution to inclusion, as several aspects working together constitute a long-term and stable inclusion.

Moreover, the friends club seemed to decrease the distance between the female immigrants and the Swedish society, since they got the opportunity to meet individuals from a group, which they previously had been relatively separated from. In view of the women's descriptions, we interpreted the inclusion as bridging. The initiative generated a bridging inclusion, since it diminished the gap between the female immigrants and the Swedish society. The gap was decreased since the initiative generated informal contacts who were established and had a good awareness of the Swedish labour market. With the help of the informal contacts, the immigrants could receive personal advice and a greater understanding of the system and labour market.

When comparing this initiative with the Employment Agency we could outline several findings. The main purpose for the Employment Agency is to provide the female immigrants with a basic understanding of how the Swedish labour market functions. In addition, the friends club did also establish an understanding of the labour market among the immigrants. However, the female immigrants noted dissimilarities between the two integration initiatives and the two initiatives' ability to provide them with information. We interpreted this being due to the Employment Agency's authoritarian approach, which was conquered by the friends club's informal manner of explaining things. This finding is significant, as the two initiatives are both intended to assist with help and information. Despite that the Employment Agency is a governmental institution with the main task of providing immigrants with knowledge of the labour market, the women portrayed the friends club as the most worthwhile initiative, in terms of establishing an understanding of these matters, which hence resulted in a bridging inclusion of the labour market.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

Our empirical results depicted three different kinds of integration initiatives, which each resulted in establishing different feelings of inclusion for the women. These different kinds of inclusion were: asymmetric inclusion, family-based inclusion and bridging inclusion. Following, our research question is presented, and in the section below we will present our findings, which address this question.

How do female immigrants perceive their participation within integration initiatives?

To begin with, we interpreted the female immigrants' participation and interaction with the Employment Agency generating an asymmetric inclusion. Being able to access information and having an understanding of how a country's institutions and systems work, is seen as an important aspect in order to achieve inclusion (Díaz Andrade and Doolin, 2016). The female immigrants did not perceive themselves to be able to access and receive the information they needed concerning the labour market, from the Employment Agency. The inclusion could subsequently be seen as asymmetric, since the information flow, which existed, was uneven, and hence impacted the feelings of inclusion correspondingly. Due to the female immigrants being part of the Employment Agency's activities, while at the same time lacking an understanding of Swedish labour market system, we believe that the women felt an asymmetric inclusion on the labour market.

Secondly, within the women's club, we interpreted that the female immigrants experienced a family-based inclusion. We made this interpretation since the women highlighted the social aspects as the most important, and described themselves feeling a social belongingness to the group. The group consisted of women from similar backgrounds, who experienced similar situations. The women resembled a family since they had the ability to share their personal experiences and current situations with each other. We believe that this initiative implied a family-based inclusion as we found that the feelings of inclusion which the women experienced, was merely applicable in their workgroup, and they did not seem to perceive any inclusion within the Swedish labour market.

Lastly, we interpreted that the friends club created a bridging inclusion among the female immigrants. We made this interpretation, since it diminished the gap between the female immigrants and the Swedish society. The gap was decreased since the initiative generated informal contacts who were established and had a good awareness of the Swedish labour market. Furthermore, this initiative did not bring a direct inclusion to the labour market, but instead created prerequisites, which could lead to possibilities of entering the labour market in the future. To clarify, the bridging inclusion showed the largest possibility of leading the female immigrants closer to the labour market in the future, in comparison to the other two.

As mentioned, the issue of not being able to incorporate women in the labour market is a widely discussed issue within the Swedish government (Riksdagen, 2011). One way of trying to incorporate women in the Swedish labour market has been through integration initiatives. Our study implicates that integration initiatives have inclusive effects on female immigrants. However, the integration initiatives impacted the women's entry into the Swedish labour market differently. We acknowledged that the integration initiatives contributed with different types of inclusion. Stated differently, each of the integration initiatives generated a particular kind of inclusion, which in turn affected the women correspondingly. Hence, similar to what other scholars suggest, we believe that individuals are never fully excluded or included, instead individuals will perceive different grades and types of inclusion. We believe that it is important to recognize that different kinds of inclusion exist, which in turn lead to diverse outcomes. This could be drawn to a societal level, as other integration initiatives, with similar integrating purposes for immigrants, would probably establish other kinds of inclusion among the immigrants. The difficulty lies within determining which kind of inclusion will be most beneficial in order to facilitate the female immigrants' entry into the labour market.

6.2 Contributions

We conducted a study in a research area that has not been extensively explored. The majority of the other studies concerning immigration and the Swedish labour market have not examined and focused on the immigrants' perceptions and feelings concerning their situation. In this way, we have been able to contribute with personal insights from immigrants and share their points of view in our study. We believe that we contribute with new insights regarding how integration initiatives could lead to different kinds of inclusion, since our results demonstrated three kinds of inclusion, asymmetric inclusion, family-based inclusion and

bridging inclusion. We consider these three kinds of inclusion being valuable to existing literature as well as to the community, since they indicate that integration initiatives could lead to different kinds of inclusion for female immigrants on the labour market. Our result further showed that an individual is never fully excluded or included in any situation or context. In other words, our study highlights aspects, which could contribute to a larger understanding of the female immigrants perceptions of how they are included in the Swedish labour market. This could have implications for how different actors in the society could use integration initiatives in order to improve the female immigrants entry into the labour market.

6.3 Research implications

Our study could be seen as limited due to a few constraints, which will be described below. To begin with, the different kinds of inclusion which our empirical findings have resulted in, could be seen as mainly applicable within the three integration initiatives which we have studied. In other words, it is not certain that other researchers would find similar forms of inclusion, if they studied the same or similar initiatives. Since we have conducted a qualitative study, our empirical material has consisted of female immigrants personal perceptions, which implicates that the study's reliability might be limited. However, we still believe that our results show high validity. Furthermore, since inclusion for female immigrants is a result of several factors influencing the women simultaneously, we could see some limitations in our research as we have merely focused on the factor of how integration initiatives could affect the women's perceptions of inclusion. For instance, we could have investigated further how other factors in the society such as educational possibilities, the Swedish Social insurance Agency or accommodation possibilities would have affected the women in order to achieve inclusion. Lastly, one limitation to our study could be its applicability in other countries outside the Scandinavian region. Countries within Scandinavia consist of strong institutional forces, which have affected our empirical results, and hence it is unsure whether or not similar studies within other countries would have achieved similar results.

6.4 Further research

As a result of our implications and empirical contributions, we believe that this research area has several aspects, which could be investigated further. As we have performed a study with an interpretative focus, with female immigrants being the focal point, we have gained important insights. However, the study is far from exhaustive and we believe that following

future investigations would be worthwhile, as there have not been many studies conducted regarding female immigrants perceptions of their entry into the Swedish labour market. This topic could be approached in several different ways, and since our study has focused on how integration initiatives could create feelings of inclusion for female immigrants in the labour market, further research could focus on female immigrants perceptions of the Swedish labour market, in general. Moreover, as we have had a relatively wide selection of female immigrants, future scholars could narrow down the selection, and focus on particular groups, such as for example highlighting different age-groups or ethnic groups. This would create an in-depth knowledge about the particular group, which could have important implications for the Swedish labour market.

Furthermore, we also call for more research to explore different kinds of inclusion. Many of the previous studies have had a focus on either inclusion or exclusion, and the majority of them emphasise that inclusion is something desirable. However, we acknowledged in our study that all inclusion might not be beneficial. For instance, in the case of the women's club, family-based inclusion was not the most optimal inclusion in order for them to achieve inclusion at the labour market. This indicates that future research could focus on how different kinds of inclusion are achieved and what implications this have for the individuals involved.

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Appendix 1: Interview guidelines - employees at the Employment Agency

Background

1. Could you tell us a little bit about yourself. Name, age, education?
2. Could you tell us about you work tasks at the Employment Agency?

General questions about the employees' work at the Employment Agency

3. Could you tell us about the Employment Agency's work with bringing immigrants to the Swedish labour market?
4. What is your personal opinion about your work?
5. What positive aspects do you see from your work?
6. What negative aspects do you see from your work?
5. What do you perceive as the biggest challenges when working with bringing immigrants to the Swedish labour market?
6. What kind of response do you receive from the immigrants who take part of your services and activities?
7. Do you think the immigrants perceive themselves as more part of the Swedish labour market after their participation within your services and activities? If yes, how?
8. Do you see any opportunities for development regarding the Employment Agency's work with bringing immigrants to the Swedish labour market? If yes, which?

The employees' perceptions of female immigrants

9. Do you see any difference regarding men and women who participate within the Employment Agency?
10. Does the handling of men and women differ, in terms of trying to bring them closer to the labour market?
11. Are there any specific activities within your services which are aimed mainly for women or for men?
12. Do you perceive any difference regarding men and women's will and motivation to work?
13. Based on reports we have read, female immigrants do not receive as much help to find an employment, in comparison to men? Is this something you have perceived during your time at the Employment Agency?

The employees' perceptions of integration initiatives

14. What is your perception of integration initiatives besides the Employment Agency?
15. Do you have any perception regarding how female immigrants perceive these other integration initiatives?
16. Do you think other integration initiatives could help female immigrants feel part of the Swedish labour market?
17. Could you see any similarities/differences regarding other integration initiatives and the Employment Agency, in terms of bringing female immigrants closer to the labour market?

Appendix 2: Interview guidelines – female immigrants

Background

1. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? Name, age?
2. When did you arrive to Sweden?

The women's participation within the Employment Agency

1. For how long had you been living in Sweden before you registered at the Employment Agency?
2. What is your perception of the Employment Agency?
3. Were the employees at the Employment Agency able to help you?
4. Which activities were you involved in? And what did you think of them?
5. Did the activities help you come closer to the labour market?
6. What positive aspects do you see from your participation within the Employment Agency?
7. What negative aspects do you see from your participation within the Employment Agency?
8. Did you miss anything that you wish the Employment should have tried to help you with?
9. Did the Employment Agency and its activities, correspond to the expectations you had, before you registered at the agency?

The women's participation within the women's club and the friends club

1. Could you tell us a bit about the initiative you are part of? What does it entail and how are you involved in it?
2. How did you get in contact with this initiative?
3. Why did you enter this initiative?
4. What expectations did you have before you started at the initiative? Have them been met?
5. What does this initiative mean to you?
6. Has this initiative helped you in any way? If yes, how?
7. Which positive/negative aspects do you perceive from this initiative?

8. Would you recommend other immigrants to participate in similar initiatives? If yes, why?
9. In which ways can similar initiatives to this, help other female immigrants?
10. Do you think this initiative can bring you closer to the Swedish society? If yes, how?
10. Do you think this initiative could bring you closer to the Swedish labour market? If yes, how?
11. Do you feel more part of the Swedish labour market now, than prior to the initiative?