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Sense of Belonging among First-Generation Migrants: Educational Reproduction of Inequality in Sweden

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Abstract

In a globalized world, schools are becoming more diverse. Research has shown that feelings of belonging are important for the success of migrants in school. Mostly quantitative research has been carried out, however, and it has shown a relationship between belonging and educational achievement, academic motivation, and health-related issues. For this thesis, I use previous research as a stepping stone and explore how twelve first-generation migrant students that arrived in Sweden at different times in their lives narrate their experiences with belonging in Sweden. Using a phenomenological approach also provides insights into how various actors affect the migrant students' experiences and enables an in-depth comparison between how length of stay impacts the narratives. By shifting the focus on class to ethnic inequality, and adding elements of agency to the theoretical concept of social reproduction, as well as using the theoretical concepts of bright versus blurred boundaries and multiple belongings, I argue that even though scholars highlight the importance of belonging, and even though schools have a good potential of creating feelings of recognition and inclusion, the outcome, is that the migrant students in many situations rather experience feelings of exclusion. These findings are typical for migrants that could be classified as 1.5 generation migrants, who also showed more feelings of "inbetween-ness." The newer migrants have still not experienced boundary-crossing to the same degree, and instead showed other forms of belonging. The findings of the thesis are in line with research that have shown that there is a need to move beyond simple forms of belonging and extend the old understanding of viewing belonging along strictly national or ethnic lines.

Keywords: First-generation, multiple belongings, ethnic boundaries, reproduction of inequality in education, length of stay

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1. Introduction

In 2017, my Jordanian husband and I planned to move back to Sweden after living together in Jordan for a few years. The hardened political climate made it hard for us to move back to my home town, where he previously been exposed to racism. In fact, 34,5% voted for the Swedish Democrats in the last election in the village I used to go to school (SVT 2018). When I grew up there, there was not a single migrant attending my school. In fact, there were not many migrants at all in the whole village, except for the owners of the local pizzeria. The natural choice for us was instead to move to Malmö, a city famous in Sweden for its cosmopolitan appearance. Malmö also has several mosques, an Arabic Film Festival and neighborhoods which stores have signs in Arabic. My own years spent abroad with frequent visits to IKEA for grocery shopping around the holidays, and my membership in various expatriate groups on Facebook, made me think that Malmö was the obvious choice in order for my husband to feel welcomed and that he belonged.

Feelings of belonging is very important and one of the basic human needs (Ham, Yang, and Cha 2017, Biggart, O'Hare, and Connolly 2013, DeNicolo et al. 2017). Baumeister and Leary showed that the human need to belong spurs individuals to engage socially and form bonds. The lack of these bonds results in insufficiently met belongingness needs, which, in its turn, may result in several negative health related issues (Slaten et al. 2016), such as anxiety, depression and loneliness, as well as problems involving criminality and suicide (Baumeister and Leary 1995).

Societies need to be equipped with skills to promote social cohesion and to promote adaption among newly arrived migrants as well as local inhabitants. Schools and educational systems play an important role in order to equip its students with the tools needed to promote social unity (OECD 2015, 18). In a globalized world, schools are becoming more diverse. Students with various ethnicities are increasingly filling the different chairs in the classrooms in all countries.

Schools play an important role in the integration process (Holdaway and Alba 2013, 2, DeNicolo et al. 2017, 518), and have a big potential to improve the process of creating feelings of belonging in the host countries (Block et al. 2014, 1338, Arnesen and Lundahl 2006, 292). A sense of belonging among students also plays an important role in preventing delinquent behaviors and to promote prosocial behavior (Ham, Yang, and Cha 2017, 42), as well as it serves as motivation to stay in school and to reach for good educational achievement (Goodenow and Grady 1993).

Despite that the above-mentioned sources show that belonging is important, few studies have focused on the sense of belonging among migrant students. Scholars agree that the feeling of belonging is important for a good integration process (Ham, Yang, and Cha 2017, 41-42, Block et al. 2014, 1338, Nilsson Folke 2017, 13, Bunar 2001, 19, 279), but as I show in chapter two, there is still a lack of research in the field of migrants' experiences in regards to their sense of belonging. What is more, there has not been much comparative, qualitative research that includes the variable of length of stay. Furthermore, research has shown that there is a big difference between first and second-generation migrants, but we do not have much knowledge about the difference between first-generation migrants themselves. Moreover, if we only look at the connection between belonging and educational achievement, academic motivation, psychological health effects, and different policy analysis in a quantitative manner, we do not know how the migrants themselves express their feelings of belonging.

Sweden has received many refugees during recent years, especially in 2014 and 2015 (Migrationsverket n.d). The trend is not new, a lot of migrants have migrated to Sweden also during the last 70 years (Holdaway and Alba 2013, 3). Therefore, Sweden has schools that contain students arriving at different ages and have stayed different amount of years in Sweden. Many of these are, of course, children that need to be introduced to the school system.

In relation to feelings of belonging to a school, the most used definition in the literature is "the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others – especially teachers and other adults in the school social environment" (Goodenow and Grady 1993, 60-61, see for instance Slaten et al. 2016, DeNicolo et al. 2017), and it is important to research how migrant students experience belonging.

The aim of the thesis is, therefore, to analyze the students' own narratives of their feeling of belonging, ultimately answering the following research questions:

How do first-generation migrant students, that have spent different amount of years in Sweden, narrate their experiences with belonging in Sweden and in their Swedish schools? And, in which way do actors within the Swedish society affect the migrants' experiences with a sense of belonging?

By answering these questions, the thesis contributes to the field in three ways; firstly, it includes the aspect of the students' own views and experiences, which previously has been neglected to a large extent. Secondly, it adds to the considerably under-researched field of length of stay and

what effects it has on belonging. Finally, it contributes to the wider understanding of belonging in an educational environment.

1.1 Disposition

I start out by providing a review of the literature. I begin the review by a discussion about the situation for migrants in the cosmopolitan city of Malmö. Since the literature show that the city is experiencing problems with segregation in general, and with segregation in schools in particular, I move on to discuss empirical work on migrants' sense of belonging in schools. That field of research mostly consists of quantitative empirical findings based on statistical data and surveys that do little to explain the migrants' own narratives on their experiences with belonging. The qualitative research that I did find, however, shows that both students and teachers are actors and the Euro-centric curriculum is a structural factor that affects the students' sense of belonging in different ways. Finally, I show that even though we know that length of stay matters for the students' success in the educational system, there is still a need for more research about length of stay and the feeling of belonging among students in an educational environment.

In the third chapter of the thesis, I present, criticize, and integrate four usable theoretical concepts. First, I move beyond the focus on social class in Bourdieu's and Passeron's reproduction theory, and add aspects of ethnicity, as I aim to understand how the reproduction of ethnic inequality plays out in the educational system. Second, since the reproduction theory has been criticized for being too structural, I add Marco Antonsich's analytical framework, which shows how feelings of belonging can be claimed and granted by different actors on two opposite sides. Antonsich therefore also implicitly suggests that there is a boundary. Therefore, I move on to discuss Richard Alba's work on bright and blurred boundaries that I believe can assist explaining the migrants' feelings. Finally, since some migrants felt that they belong on both sides of the boundary simultaneously, or that they neither belong here nor there, I discussed Dalia Abdelhady's concept of diasporic identities and multiple belongings.

I move on to present my methodology in chapter four. Since I am interested in the respondents' experiences of belonging, my research belongs to the constructivist paradigm. I present the use of phenomenology as my research design and the use of qualitative, semi-structured interviews as my data collecting method. Since my question is comparative by nature, and my respondents had to have spent different amounts of years in Sweden, I explain that I used purposive sampling and, in regard to one respondent, even snowballing. I tried to be as aware of my background, and felt, and even heard from some respondents, that they could

relate to me as I previously lived in the Middle East, married a Jordanian man, and know how to speak Arabic. I further explain in the chapter that I gave my respondents' pseudonyms and that I do not reveal the names of their schools in the thesis to keep my confidentiality agreement with them. I used thematic analysis and found recurring themes in NVivo, by analyzing initially for codes, which were later incorporated into five themes.

In chapter five, I start out by presenting my twelve respondents briefly before I discuss the following five themes: role of the Swedish language, legal status and length of stay, role of the school, social life and belonging and feeling of "inbetween-ness. In the findings section, I also show the difference in the answers depending on length of stay and demonstrate how different aspects are affecting the respondents' feelings of belonging in various ways as well as how different actors influence their experiences.

In the subsequent chapter, I analyze my findings in light of the four theoretical concepts I use, as well as previous research. I first analyze how the migrants narrate their experiences with being separated into language introduction schools, their unjust treatment by teachers, their processes for applying to be off during Eid and the fact that non-western knowledge is not equally appreciated as western knowledge, and argue that the schools, in the form of its educational system, curriculum, and its teachers, play a vital role in reproducing ethnic inequalities as well as a bright boundary, which can affect migrant students feelings of belonging negatively. Second, I analyze the respondents' experiences with their social lives in Sweden and argue, in line with Abdelhady's findings, that there is a need to move beyond simple forms of belonging, and that it is not possible to explain belonging as a binary. Third, I demonstrate how the Swedish citizenship and the passport act as a domain for the institutionalization of an ethnic boundary as well as how legal status is related to belonging and how it can create feelings of insecurity, especially among the migrants that only stayed in Sweden for a few years so far. Finally, I discuss how length of stay also plays a role in belonging, not only within the realms of "inbetween-ness," educational system, and the individuals' legal status but also within the language theme.

In the conclusion, I answer how first-generation migrant students that have spent different amount of years in Sweden narrate their experiences with belonging in Sweden and in their Swedish schools. Furthermore, I answer how actors within the Swedish society affect the migrants' experiences with sense of belonging, by arguing that even though scholars are highlighting the importance of belonging, and even though schools have a good potential of creating feelings of belonging, the outcome, when listening to the migrant students own experiences, is that they in certain situations rather experience feelings of exclusion. These

findings were typical for those migrants that could be classified as 1.5 generation migrants, newer migrants had still not experienced boundary-crossing to the same extent, and instead showed other forms of belonging. The findings of the thesis are in line with research that shows the need to move beyond simple forms of belonging and extend the old understanding of viewing belonging along strictly national or ethnic lines.

2. Review of Literature

In an era of globalization, large cities are becoming more cosmopolitan and schools are becoming more diverse. Research has shown that feelings of belonging among migrant students are important for many reasons, which is discussed in this chapter. The existing literature about school belonging is two-folded; quantitative research has shown that there is a relationship between sense of belonging and, for example, various educational outcomes, while qualitative research has explored that relationship more in detail. What is more, even though research has suggested that scholars need to include the length of stay variable to the research field of belonging, that particular area of studies is still under-studied. Hence, I bring together the existing knowledge about migrants' sense of school belonging and length of stay in this literature review. I start to discuss migrants lives in the cosmopolitan city of Malmö, before entering the research field of school belonging among migrants. Due to the different character of the approaches' findings, section 2.2 is divided into two sub-sections, the first deals with quantitative studies and the latter discuss the status of the qualitative research. After that I engage with the literature on how length of stay affects a sense of belonging.

2.1 Migrants' lives in the Swedish cosmopolitan city Malmö

Malmö is Sweden's third largest city with more than 300,000 inhabitants and is located in the Swedish-Danish border region. During the economic crisis of the 1990s, the city was especially affected due to its industrial character, and the industrial focus of the economy led to high unemployment rates. Malmö needed to be restructured. The city was rebuilt, not only literally in terms of space, but also economically. Both the political and commercial leaders tried, and succeeded, to change the image of Malmö from being an industrial city to a cosmopolitan city, and during the last 30 years Malmö has received a lot of migrants (Povrzanovic Frykman 2016). In 2018, people from 186 countries lived in Malmö. Approximately 33 percent of the inhabitants in Malmö are born outside Sweden, which is more than in Stockholm and Gothenburg, where approximately 25 percent are foreign born (Malmö 2019).

The story of the restructuring also has a backside, however, and Malmö is also described as a very segregated city (Povrzanovic Frykman 2016). The segregation is also visible in the schools (Wigerfelt 2010, Andersson et al. 2004). Before the year 2000, the admission system in Sweden was based on residency. Students had priority to the school closest to their area of residency, and even though Sweden changed the admission system to its schools in the year 2000, as means of decreasing residential school segregation, the general pattern of segregation still exists (Strömpl, Kaldur, and Markina 2011). Research elsewhere show that scholars agree

that schools play an important role in the integration process (Holdaway and Alba 2013, 2), and have a big potential to improve the process of creating feelings of belonging in the host countries (Block et al. 2014, 1338, Arnesen and Lundahl 2006, 292). I therefore move on to discuss research on migrants' school belonging in the next sub-section.

2.2 Migrants' sense of belonging in schools

In relation to feelings of belonging to a school, the most used definition of school belonging is "the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others – especially teachers and other adults in the school social environment" (Goodenow and Grady 1993, 60-61, see for instance Slaten et al. 2016, DeNicolo et al. 2017). And while school belonging, in general, has been studied (for good literature review see Slaten et al. 2016), there is still a lack of research relating to school belonging among, for instance, minority groups (Slaten et al. 2016, 9). There is a difference in the character of the findings depending on if the research approach is qualitative or quantitative. I provide an account of existing literature in regard to both of these approaches to the research field in what follows.

2.2.1 The status of quantitative studies of migrants' school belonging

While looking at the existing research about migrants' sense of belonging in schools, I found out that most empirical work is quantitative, based on statistical data and/or surveys about educational achievement (Holdaway and Alba 2013, Schachner et al. 2019), academic motivation (Goodenow and Grady 1993), psychological health effects and likelihood of experiencing exclusion (Li and Jiang 2018, Plenty and Jonsson 2017), and different policy analysis or policy suggestions relating to the feeling of belonging and integration of migrant students or students with migrant backgrounds (Block et al. 2014, Arnesen and Lundahl 2006, DeNicolo et al. 2017, Ham, Yang, and Cha 2017).

While these studies concluded in little information about the migrants' own experiences with belonging, they nevertheless provided valuable information about the field of belonging. The findings of belonging among students have had various results in different studies. Minority ethnic groups have been found to have a lower feeling of belonging in schools than their peers originating from the host country (Ham, Yang, and Cha 2017, Biggart, O'Hare, and Connolly 2013). But studies have also found that the context is important, and in schools with a lot of immigrant students, the opposite can occur, which means that students with origins from the host country feel more excluded (Plenty and Jonsson 2017). While results may vary about which group feels excluded or more included, scholars agree on the importance of the sense of

belonging and integration in schools and its possibilities to affect the society at large and the immigrants' integration process (Ham, Yang, and Cha 2017, 41-42, Block et al. 2014, 1338, Nilsson Folke 2017, 13, Bunar 2001, 19, 279).

2.2.2 The status of qualitative studies of migrants' school belonging

As I mentioned, most of the research that has been carried out about school belonging is quantitative, but there are qualitative as well. First, a lot of the research that has been carried out recently about the students' own experiences in Sweden, revolves around language introduction classes, mainstream classes, and the transition from the first to the second. Even though the transfer of students to the mainstream schools aims to work in an inclusionary way, it sometimes has the opposite effect leading to students feeling excluded (Nilsson Folke 2016). Students feel segregated from society and long for their "real" schools and classes (Bunar and Bouakaz 2015), and feel locked in the educational system when they are outside the mainstream system (Nilsson Folke 2018). After the language introduction class, students advance to the regular classes during lower secondary school. Some of them have difficulties entering upper-secondary school and then must study in a language introduction program, which students experience as repetitive and even as a setback (Nilsson Folke 2018).

Another topic within belonging among migrant students in schools that a lot of the research revolves around is the role of the teachers. The teachers' skills often differ between language introduction classes and mainstream classes. In the language introduction class, the student receive help in their first language, and the teachers working in such schools are often equipped to work with second language learners. After the transition to the mainstream system, however, the help in the first language often decreases, and the teachers are less experienced teaching newly arrived students (Nilsson and Axelsson 2013, 158-159). What is worse, there is a tendency to allocate the responsibility for the newly arrived students' education to the introductory class or to the students themselves (Nilsson and Axelsson 2013).

While this has negative effects for students, research elsewhere about inclusion and exclusion for migrants in schools shows even worse consequences of teachers' behavior. A study that revolved around the role of teachers, compared first and second-generation Turkish youth in Canada and found that teachers played an important role in the exclusion process. Their racism, Islamophobia, and view of the Turkish students' English language skills were factors of discrimination (Kayaalp 2014). What is more, Kayaalp's research is in line with previous research that showed that migrants' educational credentials are not valued as highly as the students of the mainstream society since native-born students have learned the "right"

cultural and social capital in school (Nakhaie 2006). Kayaalp further argues that a more inclusive curriculum that is less Euro-centric, Judeo-Christian, middle-class, and white, can foster the minority youths' sense of belonging instead of exclusion (Kayaalp 2014). Similar conclusions have been reached in another study that promoted students to join student organizations and make resistance to the Euro-centric education that fails to provide feelings of belonging to all members of society, no matter the background of the individual. Furthermore, that study also encouraged researchers to move away from mere research of the connection between belonging and achievement, acculturation, and assimilation and instead contribute to research focusing on challenging the inequalities and viewing diversity as an asset instead of an obstacle (DeNicolo et al. 2017).

There are also studies showing positive examples. Keddie studied a school where approximately 30% of the students had either refugee or immigrant backgrounds, and the school's work for cultural recognition. Keddie writes that the success of the school was due to the school's culture of spreading the feeling of inclusion among the students with the aim of discovering their strengths, in addition to that, diversity was valued. Similar to the work done by DeNicolo et al., Keddie writes that the centering of the refugee student challenges the cultural domination of the mainstream assessment (Keddie 2012).

Research thus shows that both students and teachers are actors and the curriculum is a factor that can affect the students' sense of belonging. Even inclusionary intentions can work in exclusionary ways (see for instance Nilsson Folke 2016, about how the transfer of students to the mainstream classes can make students feel exclusion), and it is important to study the view of the students themselves in order to find out their experiences and the effect that their belonging, or lack of social inclusion, support and acceptance from teachers and adults in the school environment, has on them. In the next section, I discuss how length of stay affects sense of belonging.

2.3 Length of stay

Research has shown that there is a significant difference in how the first, second, and 1.5 generation migrants frame their post-migration experiences. What is more, while it is common for the first-generation to choose to migrate, it is more typical for the 1.5 generation migrant children to not participate in that decision. At the same time, there is a difference between 1.5 and second-generation children since the first migrated themselves, while the former constructed their identities in the new country (Vildaitė 2014). Furthermore, the older the children are when they migrate have consequences on how segregated they become later in life

(Böhlmark, Nordström Skans, and Åslund 2009, 13). Even though Böhlmark, Nordström Skans, and Åslund argued already in 2009 that the feeling of how belonging develops and when it emerges is limited (Böhlmark, Nordström Skans, and Åslund 2009, 5). I still found now ten years later, that there is not much research in this field. It is especially hard to find qualitative studies that investigate the migrant students' experiences of sense of belonging relating to length of stay.

Some quantitative studies, however, have shown that the age at migration is an important aspect of success in education (Cortes 2006, 122, Gonzalez 2003, 211). Another quantitative study found that the 1.5 generation had higher levels of school belonging than the second-generation in cases where they experienced good support from their peers (the researchers, like so many other scholars, define school belonging according to the previously mentioned definition in section 2.2 by Goodenow and Grady 1993). In cases in which they did not feel that they had as much peer support, however, the 1.5 generation had significantly lower levels of school belonging than the second-generation. They also found that support from adults significantly contributed to both generations' sense of school belonging (Gagné, Shapka, and Law 2014). More interesting is a study that, by the use of a mixed-methods approach, not only showed the existence of a relationship between belonging and length of stay but also that the 1.5 generation Lithuanian migrant youths living in Ireland narrated their belonging as fluid, dynamic and shifting (Vildaitė 2014). Importantly, these studies indicate that length of stay matters for the outcome for feelings of belonging.

Another quantitative study tries to measure the outcome of the assimilation process and sense of belonging with a longitudinal approach, investigating the impact of length of stay in the host country (See Paterno and Gabrielli 2014), but by using a quantitative approach they leave out the depth of the answers of the migrants' experiences. Asking students which preferred language they have, who they spend time with, and how it goes in school in a quantitative manner does not say anything about how the migrant students themselves construct their identities and view their sense of belonging, in the shape of feeling personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others. These results are important, but qualitative studies are needed to investigate these students' experiences with belonging further. In which way do peers and other adults affect the students' sense of belonging? What is more, the focus of the research on newly arrived students in Sweden, as often is defined according to the Swedish National Agency for Education's (Skolverket) definition as students who arrived within the last four years (Nilsson Folke 2017, 16), leaves out an important number of students that still are first-generation students, but arrived many years ago. With a focus beyond the difference

between first and second-generation, it is possible to detect differences in the feeling of belonging among the first-generation migrant students themselves. Researchers also need to dig deeper and understand how the different actors and dynamics are at play and how they influence the migrants' narratives.

2.4 Concluding remarks

While the literature review showed that scholars agree that belonging is important for the integration of migrant students to their schools and to society at large, the research is lacking in the field of migrant students' experiences with belonging. In fact, when I looked at empirical findings in that specific field, most of the studies are quantitative and measure belonging through surveys. Studies focusing on experiences with a sense of belonging in the form of feelings of personal acceptance, respect, inclusion and support by others, among migrant students are very few, and I agree with those scholars who write that more studies are needed in this field.

What I also showed in this literature review is that quantitative research has shown that length of stay matters in the integration process and that the knowledge about when and how feelings of belonging emerge is limited. Therefore, it is important to study experiences of the feeling of belonging among first-generation migrants that have stayed in the host country different amount of years in a qualitative manner. Not one study, as far as I am aware, has focused on comparing a sense of belonging among first-generation students in Sweden, that have had different length of stay. Due to the status of this research field, I want to look at how first-generation students, that have spent different amount of years in Sweden, narrate their experiences with belonging in Sweden and in their Swedish schools. I am also interested in how different actors in the Swedish society affect the migrants' experiences with belonging.

In the next section, I discuss theoretical frameworks that can help understand research relating to migrant students' sense of belonging further.

3. Theoretical framework

While looking at school belonging among migrants it is important to include Bourdieu's and Passeron's reproduction theory. The literature review showed that both teachers and a Euro-centric curriculum can affect how students describe their belonging and therefore it is important to look at both agency and structure. Since the reproduction theory is too focused on structural factors, I also include Antonsich's analytical framework of belonging, as it adds the agency aspect. Since my own findings showed that the respondents narrated their feelings of belonging in relation to a boundary, I also use Alba's concept of bright and blurred boundaries, and finally Abdelhady's concept of multiple belongings is useful to explain the "inbetween-ness" that the respondents spoke of. These above-mentioned theories are presented, criticized and integrated into each other in this section.

3.1 Social reproduction of inequality

Since I am looking at migrant students in a school setting, I think it is important to include Bourdieu's and Passeron's theoretical concept of reproduction. Bourdieu and Passeron explain the reproduction of social class in education. They argue that the traditional system of education "contributes irreplaceably towards perpetuating the structure of class relations and, simultaneously, legitimating it, by concealing the fact that the scholastic hierarchies it produces reproduce social hierarchies" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 205). Furthermore, by linking the educational system to cultural capital, it becomes clear that certain forms of knowledge are valued more than other types. Formal learning is, for instance, generally more valued than practical undertakings (Webb, Schirato, and Danaher 2002).

Bourdieu and Passeron thus show that the schools, very much contrary to the goal of promoting equality, reproduce social inequalities (Collins 2009, 34-35). Since I am looking at belonging for migrants, I would like to move beyond the reproduction of class membership. I agree with Collins, who argued that the Marxian paradigm of the study of social reproduction failed to include gender and race, as well as it ignored the agency and identity aspects of reproduction (Collins 2009). I am mainly concerned with reproduction of inequalities due to ethnicity, since the social reproduction of class has been dealt with extensively in the literature.

Two scholars that I argue have successfully integrated Bourdieu's concept of social reproduction with race is Douglas McKnight and Chandler Prentice. In their article, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital gets connected to Critical Race Theory. They argue that: "These privileges become reproduced in schools even as the schools rhetoric claims equal opportunity and fair play for all of its students" (McKnight and Chandler 2012, 94). Further on,

they also write that they believe and hope that teachers can oppose and overcome the already determined labels of race and class, as well as counter oppressive schooling (McKnight and Chandler 2012). I believe that their findings contribute to important and reassuring aspects of reproduction.

Since Bourdieu's and Passeron's reproduction theory has been criticized for being too focused on structure (Collins 2009), I also want to add a dimension of agency. In the next subsection, I, therefore, explain how belonging can be claimed and granted by different actors, as well as the difference of feeling belonging to a place and feeling belonging to a group of people.

3.2 Place-belongingness and politics of belonging

Identification through the recognition by others is an old idea. In 1934, George Herbert Mead already discussed it in his work *Mind, Self, & Society*. While speaking of the self, he writes that all selves are being formed by, or in terms of, the social process (Mead 1934, 201). Constructivist scholars agree that the binary, dichotomous concept of One and Other – where the former is the norm, and the latter is the degraded, suppressed and exiled other – is socially constructed and needs to be continuously performed and accepted by both sides (Beauvoir 2011, 6-7, Bauman 1991, 14).

Furthermore, recognition by others is important, and a person's identity is often influenced by the recognition, non-recognition or misrecognition from others, which can cause real harm, and even make groups or individuals adopt the negative view others have of them (Taylor 1994, 25-26, Fangen, Johansson, and Hammarén 2012, 7). In regard to identification and othering, constructivists agree that identity is continuously performed, and one's identity is dependent on the Other's and vice versa. One recent study aimed to elaborate theoretical concepts, and used among other theories, Antonsich analytical framework and Alba's bright vs. blurred boundaries, that I also use, and found out that what is missing for migrants to see themselves as nationals, is not commitment or attachment to the host country, but recognition from others (Simonsen 2018). Antonsich's analytical framework of how these mechanisms are at interplay in the process of identity formation is helpful to understand how the social process of belonging plays out.

In Antonsich's article *Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework*, he successfully provides what he promised, an analytical framework that defines belonging and makes it useful while analyzing identity. According to Antonsich, there are two analytical dimensions to belonging; place-belongingness and politics of belonging. He stresses the

importance of feeling at home in a place in the first dimension (Antonsich 2010, 645), and identifies five different factors that can help create a feeling of place-belongingness.

The first factor he calls auto-biographical, and it revolves around one's past history, childhood memories, ancestors' memories, and the continued presence of family members in a place. The second factor is relational, which means that one has personal and social ties to that place. The third factor has to do with culture, and the factor that is almost always considered the most important of the cultural factor he explains is language. Language is also connected to the other dimension of belonging, that Antonsich calls politics of belonging, due to its power to create the feeling of "us" and "them" and generate a sense of community.

Continuing on his first dimension, however, Antonsich mentions the economic factor as his fourth and writes that empirical studies have shown that refugees that built a professional life felt more belonging than those who worked in normal labor. The last factor he identified of the first dimension was of legal character. A vital dimension, for many, to be able to feel place-belongingness is to feel security in regard to one's legal status in a country. Again, he refers to empirical studies that have shown that there is a negative correlation between an insecure legal status and the feeling of place-belongingness (Antonsich 2010, 646-649).

Antonsich also explains the second dimension further. What Antonsich means with what he calls politics of belonging is that to be able to feel belonging, is not just a personal matter. It concerns the feeling of belonging to a group of people, and not only to a place. It is not only up to each and every one to decide whether or not that person belongs, but it also includes a social process. In order to belong, people of the host society also have to grant belonging. Antonsich divides the second dimension into two opposite sides; he argues that there is one side that wants to belong and therefore claims belonging, as well as the side of the people who already belong and therefore has the power to grant belonging to the new claimers. The separation between "us" and "them," as was mentioned in relation to language, is at the center of politics of belonging. Antonsich, therefore, relates belonging to social and individual identity since belonging to a place becomes connected to belonging to a group of people (Antonsich 2010).

Antonsich promotes an approach that is careful to use both place-belongingness and politics of belonging while conducting research. It is important to both see the personal matter as well as the social context that the process of belonging takes place in. He also concludes his framework by highlighting that people can feel multiple types of belongings at the same time, and it is not just a matter of feeling belonging to a territory or to a group (Antonsich 2010). His work thus suggests that there is a boundary between the different groups. In the next sub-section

I, therefore, add a theoretical concept of boundaries, and how people can cross them, as well as a theoretical concept that explains the “inbetween-ness” that migrants can feel, who does not feel they belong on either side of the boundary or simultaneously feel they belong to both sides of it.

3.3 Multiple belongings and ethnic boundaries

How to explain the character of identities that are formed in an era of globalization, which are formed in this international environment is debated within studies of transnationalism and diaspora. I have chosen to use the lens of diaspora because research connected to transnationalism has mainly focused on identities being formed during the continuing connection between the home- and host country (Abdelhady 2011, 2-5). Castles writes that transnational communities engage in a variety of economic, social, cultural, or political communications between more than one country, and transnational migrants are not, as assimilationists or multiculturalists suggest, determined to reside and stay as a permanent settler in the new society (Castles 2004, 863). In other words, transnationalism explains movement and communications between people in an era of globalization. But to really enable an analysis of how the respondents narrates their sense of belonging in the host country, another approach is required.

In line with Antonsich argument about the possibility to feel multiple types of belonging at the same time, Abdelhady shows in her work on the Lebanese diaspora (see Abdelhady 2011), that migrants can feel multiple types and layers of belonging. It is not a binary, and the migrant does not have to either feel belonging with the host country, or only feel belonging to the home country, rather, it is possible to feel inclusion and exclusion at the same time, and also feelings of “inbetween,” to neither belong here nor there (Abdelhady 2011). Assimilation theories or theories of multiculturalism do little to explain these diasporic identities because the ethnic identities and cultures are not disappearing. At the same time, the identities and cultures are not remaining what they were in their home countries either (Abdelhady 2011).

While Abdelhady worked with one diaspora, I am including the concept of diaspora in my analysis, even though my respondents come from several different nations and ethnicities in the Middle East. In that sense, I am not studying *one* diaspora like a nation or a community, rather I am using diaspora as a concept to explain the migrants’ experiences with belonging and their description of their identities as diasporic, rather than strictly along ethnic or national lines. As Abdelhady successfully showed, there is a need to move away from just simply thinking of national membership and instead frame our understanding around multiple belongings that

exceed limitations of grouping people together according to ethnic, national, religious, and class similarities (Abdelhady 2011).

Moving on to the theory about ethnic boundaries, Richard Alba built on the concepts of boundary crossing and boundary-blurring, which was initially introduced by Bauböck as well as Zolberg and Long. Alba explains that boundary crossing is a type of small-scale assimilation, in which the individual move from one group to another, but the boundary itself remains intact (Alba 2005). The process of boundary-blurring is instead connected to the alteration of important aspects in the receiving society (Midtbøen 2018).

Alba, as mentioned, built on those concepts and introduced the thought of boundaries being bright or blurred. When a boundary is bright, it is clear on which side of the boundary the individual belongs. He explains that when a person assimilates in a situation when the boundary is bright, the likelihood of the person experiencing feelings of conversion, disloyalty, and growing distance from peers is high. That is due to the departure that the individual is taking from the one group, in order for him/her to enter the other.

A blurred boundary is more ambiguous. The individual of the ethnic minority can either be seen as belonging simultaneously to groups of both sides of the boundary or sometimes as belonging to the one side and sometimes to the other. Alba explains that in that case, assimilation probably feels like an easier process for the individual since there is neither a need to make a choice to break out and depart from their ethnic origin group nor a need to choose to join the mainstream. The blurred boundary allows the individual to be a member of both groups simultaneously (Alba 2005). Alba's theory is not only structural, and agents have the power to affect the boundaries. Even though some migrants wish to be granted full membership in the mainstream society, however, ethnic or religious exclusion from the mainstream society can maintain the ethnic boundary (Midtbøen 2018).

Alba also highlights the institutionalization process of boundaries, and argues that it is hard for a boundary to be blurred in a place where actors daily live according to the differences in social status and the power that is associated with it and enact the differences that exist in the domains of language, religion, citizenship and race (Alba 2005). Alba's work on boundaries contributes to understanding the emotions my respondents have towards their belonging in the Swedish context and in the Swedish schools that they are attending. In the next section, I explain how I connect these concepts together and use them to analyze the respondents' narratives.

3.4 Concluding remarks

First, to understand how socialization in an educational environment works, I move beyond the focus on social class in Bourdieu's and Passeron's reproduction theory and add aspects of race. Second, since the reproduction theory has been criticized for being too structural, I add the notion of how feelings of belonging can be claimed and granted by different actors. Antonsich's framework of belonging suggests that there are two opposite sides of belonging, and therefore Alba's work on bright and blurred boundaries can assist in explaining why the migrants feel ambivalent at times. What is important to note, though, is that my aim is not to decide whether the boundary is blurred or bright, rather, I engage with the narratives and see how the respondents themselves speak of belonging, and by their detailed examples, position themselves according to the boundary and describe their views about the nature of the boundary.

Finally, since some migrants feel that they belong on both sides of the boundary simultaneously, or that they neither belong here nor there, I use Dalia Abdelhady's concept of diasporic identities and multiple belongings. These theoretical concepts are useful while discussing my findings, but before I start presenting them, I discuss methodical choices that I made while working with my thesis.

4. Methods

In this chapter, I describe my choice of method. After locating the research within the constructivist paradigm, I motivate the use of phenomenology as my research design. I discuss my choice of qualitative research and the semi-structured interview as a data collection method. Further on in the chapter, I also discuss ethical considerations, self-reflexivity and data analysis.

4.1 Research design and data collection method

Within the thesis research question, with its focus on first-generation migrants' experiences of their sense of belonging, lies the assumption that reality is socially constructed. The ontological assumption is that there exist many different realities, and the epistemological assumption is that the researcher and the respondent create understandings together (Denzin and Lincoln 2013, 26-27). My constructivist standpoint led me to engage in understanding how social reality gets constructed by the respondents (Neuman 2011, 43). I used phenomenology as my research design, as I aimed to describe the respondents' experiences with the phenomenon 'sense of belonging.' By conducting this design, I created a description of the phenomenon after finding the core of the respondents' experiences with this issue (Creswell 2013, 76-79, 2014, 14). I mainly was concerned with exploring the phenomenon and how the individuals experienced it. Since my research focus is to understand the essence of a lived phenomenon I find phenomenology a better approach than, for instance, narrative research that also has an interest concerning lived experiences, but instead focuses on exploring the lives of a few individuals (Creswell and Poth 2017, 67). In other words, I am more interested in studying the phenomenon 'sense of belonging' itself, than the individual lives of my respondents.

I collected qualitative data since it is useful for the study of attitudes and behaviors (Babbie 2013, 353). The validity of qualitative field research, argues Babbie, is superior to surveys and experiments, since it provides the depth of the meaning of the view of the respondent (Babbie 2013, 354-355). Twelve semi-structured interviews have been conducted. I chose to have semi-structured interviews because it gave me the flexibility needed for entering the individuals' thoughts and emotions, as well as providing some structure to enable an analytic comparison between the respondents' answers (Babbie 2013). As I aimed to understand how the respondents construct their realities, qualitative semi-structured interviews are beneficial. This type of research is needed since we still do not know when feelings of belonging emerge, and a lot of the research that has been carried out rather is of a quantitative nature, which lacks the depth of the respondents own words in regards of their lived experiences with feelings of belonging.

The interviews were conducted in Swedish in the cases in which the respondent had been in Sweden for more than three years. The interviews with the respondents that had been in Sweden for three years or less were conducted in Arabic. I personally conducted all the interviews myself since the use of an interpreter would limit direct contact with the respondents. For time-saving purposes, all interviews were directly transcribed to English. The interviews lasted between 28-85 minutes.

4.2 Sampling

The sampling process in qualitative research is often connected to the research question, with the purpose of answering the question. The research question, which has a variable concerning the migrants' length of stay in Sweden, therefore needed a purposive sampling method (Bryman 2016, 410). The twelve respondents were placed into the following three categories: respondents that had been in Sweden for more than seven years, respondents that stayed in Sweden three-seven years, and finally, respondents that had been in Sweden three years or less. This also responds to migrants that arrived before they entered adolescence, migrants that arrived in their early adolescence, and migrants that arrived in their late adolescence. Adolescence plays an important role in identity construction (Matthews, Banerjee, and Lauermann 2014). I found one participant through snowball sampling to reach a sufficient level of saturation in the first group of respondents, in the other categories, saturation was met after approximately four interviews, when I noticed that the answers started being repeated (Bryman 2016, 415-417). Five women and seven men were interviewed. Each group of respondents has both female and male participants. The age of the respondents varies, the youngest participants were 18 and the oldest was 21 years old.

There are three reasons why I limited myself to conduct interviews with migrants from the Middle East. First, a majority of the asylum seekers in recent years came from the Middle East. In Sweden during 2018, asylum seekers mainly came from Syria, which was the country of origin most of the asylum seekers had for the seventh year in a row. The second and third country of origin on the list of asylum seekers in Sweden are Iraq and Iran (SCB 2019). Second, the thesis is written within a master's program in Middle Eastern Studies, and finally, I am able to speak Arabic, which means that I can conduct interviews in that language. To answer the research question, the students need to have been in Sweden during different time lengths. Therefore, students currently in upper-secondary school are suitable for the study, since they are older and probably have reflected on their situation more than younger students.

4.3 Limitations and methodological reflections

One limitation is time related. The research is cross-sectional and examines a single point in time (Neuman 2011, 17) if there was more time, a longitudinal approach could have investigated the issue further. The research question would have changed then, however, and I would have looked at how the sense of belonging among the first-generation students followed or changed later on in their work life. After this discussion about limitations in time, special methodological reflections regarding access, ethical considerations, omission, and self-reflexivity will be discussed in the next three sub-sections.

4.3.1 Access

It proved to be hard for me to get access to respondents for my study. First, I tried to contact principals and teachers at Malmö's public upper-secondary schools, but only one employee from one school showed interest and helped me get a respondent that was interested in participating and fulfilled the criteria. That employee was originally thought to be a gatekeeper since I got to know her from a contact of mine. I then broadened my search and contacted different organizations and associations, such as cultural centers and soccer clubs, with little result. I even tried to have an advertisement on Facebook, targeting people in upper-secondary schools in Malmö who had connections to the Middle East, but it did not work.

Not until I e-mailed approximately 150 teachers and principals, I started getting participants. Almost all interest came from the independent upper-secondary schools, but since I did not target any particular type of upper-secondary school, it did not matter whether the respondents studied in public or in independent schools. Some teachers offered me to come to their classes and inform about my studies. One teacher asked me to talk during a lesson about social research methods and then ask people to participate in the research project; in that case, I prepared a lecture and got about 30 minutes of their class time. In one case, I got the possibility to sit in a study hall and talk to people who approached me about my study. In three cases, the employees themselves gave me contact details to interested participants. In one case, I used snowball sampling through one participant who knew another person who was interested in participating but was studying in another upper-secondary school.

4.3.2 Self-reflexivity and omissions

Qualitative field research has a disadvantage with regards to replicability. The researcher's interpretations of the respondent's answers are important, which means that if another

researcher would conduct the same research, the results could be different (Babbie 2013, 354-355). I was aware that my own personality could affect how I interpreted and analyzed the data, while I was conducting open-coding and thematic analysis and tried as much as possible to base the analysis on recurring themes. At the same time, my position as a researcher is distant from my respondents in the sense that I have not myself migrated to Sweden. Nevertheless, I have lived in the Middle East for more than two and a half years, and I have knowledge of Arabic. That means that it is easier for me to translate cultural behavior among Middle Easterners than people from other areas of the world.

In line with my social-constructivist approach and my phenomenological research design, I am mainly concerned with describing my respondents' experiences, and while interviewing I let them express their views by asking open questions, and by that decreased my own impact on their answers. However, as been stated, it is important to know that my position as a researcher have had an influence on the answers, as well as the questions I asked (Creswell 2014, 24-25). During the first couple of interviews when I asked the respondents about what their parents were working with in Sweden, I interpreted their body language and their answers that they did not like to talk about the occupation of their parents, which made me uncomfortable, as I did not want them to feel embarrassed. Eventually, I stopped asking my respondents about the occupation of their parents, which of course, has affected my results. I mention another example of how my results been affected by my position as a researcher below.

As a Swedish woman, I have gotten some different answers than if a Middle Eastern man or woman would have asked the questions, which I saw in, for instance, the answer that is written in the quote from Bahar in section 5.5 in this thesis, when she first criticized Swedish people but eventually twisted her answer and defended them. Babbie argues that the impact of the researcher is hard to avoid, but that it is important to be aware of it (Babbie 2013, 330-331). As means of trying to bridge this gap, the interviews were conducted without an interpreter, and in a language the student knew well (Swedish or Arabic). In order to make sure that my transcription and translation of those four interviews that I conducted in Arabic were made correct, I asked a native Arabic speaker to listen to and correct the transcripts. I was careful not to disclose any data about those respondents that could reveal who they were.

Before, after, and sometimes even during the interviews, I felt that the respondents could easily open up to me since I introduced myself as a student of Middle Eastern studies that had lived in the Middle East, speaks Arabic, and married a Jordanian. The exception was the interview with Hamza, but I think that he did not open up as easy as the others, not because of my position as a researcher, but because he seemed stressed. His phone also rang half-way in

the interview, and I got the impression that some friends were waiting for him outside. While conducting the interviews, I also had in mind that it was important to be aware of the things that are not said or done (Neuman 2011, 294). For that reason, I made sure to listen and observe actively.

4.3.3 Ethical considerations

The age of the respondents was set to be over 18 years, for the students to be able to give their own consent to participation. That is due to both ethical considerations and the research question. For confidential purposes, I use pseudonyms for the respondents and make sure to store the data safely. I have also chosen to not mention the names of the respondents' schools. The respondents themselves have identified as Iraqis, Palestinians, Syrian, Kurdish, etc. I have not given them an ethnic or national identity but rather asked them how they identify themselves. I have tried to be aware of ethical considerations by asking open questions and to carefully listen to their experiences with their feelings of belonging, rather than assign, or grant, feelings of inclusion or exclusion. However, in some cases, to create a good atmosphere during some of the interviews, I did acknowledge some of the respondents' impressive Swedish language skills, which I now, in retrospect, could have avoided.

4.4 Data analysis

I conducted a thematic analysis of the data collected. I used the program NVivo to code all the data. At first, I got 23 codes (or nodes as NVivo calls them) from which it was possible to identify five recurring key themes related to my research question (Bryman 2016, 586). I then used NVivo again to sort the data into five different themes. After that, I created a Word document in which I summarized what each respondent had said relating to the theme, as well as important quotes from the interviews. That document made it possible to make the analysis and see how the different groups of respondents had different experiences with a sense of belonging to Sweden. How did I then identify my themes? Ryan and Bernard suggest asking the question, "What is this expression an example of?" (Ryan and Bernard 2003, 87). And that is what I did during the analysis of the data. I also looked for differences and similarities in the respondents' discussions about different themes, and if length of stay affected the way these people describe their experiences (Ryan and Bernard 2003, 91).

4.5 Concluding remarks

In this section, I showed that my research belongs to the constructivist paradigm and that I use phenomenology as my research design since I am interested in the respondents' experience of the phenomenon 'sense of belonging.' Because of that I found it most useful to collect data through qualitative research and semi-structured interviews. Since the question is comparative by nature (due to the length of stay variable), I used purposive sampling and, in regard to one respondent, even snowballing. The impact of the researcher is hard to avoid, but I tried to be as much aware of my background as possible, and I felt, and even heard from some respondents, that they could relate to me as I have lived in the Middle East, speaks Arabic and married a Jordanian man. I was careful to store the data safely on my computer and gave the respondents pseudonyms and do not reveal the names of their schools in the thesis, to keep my confidentiality agreement with them. The respondents were able to give consent themselves since they were over 18 years. While analyzing the data, I used thematic analysis and found recurring themes so that I would increase the reliability of my research.

In the next section, I discuss the findings that the interviews resulted in.

5. Findings

In this section, I present five themes with the aim of answering how first-generation migrant students, that have spent different amounts of years in Sweden, describe their sense of belonging, and how different actors are affecting their experiences. School belonging, as I already mentioned, according to Goodenow and Grady, revolves around how students feel personally accepted, respected and included by others, especially by adults in the school environment (Goodenow and Grady 1993), and these are all aspects of belonging that was included in the interview guide.

It is also important to get a short introduction of the three different groups of respondents since the amount of years in Sweden plays a role in feelings of belonging. I provide this background information about the respondents' profiles before presenting the five themes: Role of the Swedish language, the residency type, and length of stay, the role of the school, social life and belonging, and feeling of "inbetween-ness." The analysis, in which I engage in previous literature and theoretical concepts, is found in section six of the thesis. In that section, I put the following findings into context of current knowledge about belonging and problematize their emotions.

5.1 Respondents' profiles

The three different groups of respondents are presented in a table in appendix 1, where information about age, gender, origin, how long time they spent in Sweden as well as what type of legal status they have in Sweden, is presented. In what follows, I provide a more detailed description of the respondents.

The first group contains Bahar, Tara, and Yousef, who all have spent more than seven years in Sweden. Even though they are born outside Sweden, they have done all, or almost all of their education in Sweden, which means they could be defined as belonging to the 1.5 generation (Holdaway and Alba 2013, 3). All three have Iraqi origins, which was not my intention. All those interviews were conducted in Swedish and had a good flow since both me and the respondents are fluent.

Bahar has spent 16 years in Sweden where she has done all her education. She identifies as Kurdish and Swedish. After her time in Swedish kindergarten, she went to a religious private school but did not like it, so she changed schools again, now she studies social science. She does not have much contact with her home country anymore and says that the reason might be that she came to Sweden before she started school. She believes it is important to keep contact with her relatives in her home country but feels that travelling back is like being on vacation,

people are different, and in her view, letting traditional values take too much space. She explained that she prefers her life in Sweden.

Tara has spent 15 years in Sweden where she has done almost all her education, the exception is one semester in 2015 when she studied in Iraqi Kurdistan. She also identifies as Kurdish and Swedish. She liked her first school, which was situated in a mosque, the most. She said that “it was there where one felt that one fit in.” Currently she is studying social science. She felt that the two months she and her family used to spend in Kurdistan every summer were not enough, and therefore moved back to Kurdistan for a while in 2015. She believes that the culture in Kurdistan is very different so she would not fit in there, but at the same time she does not feel like she fits in in Sweden either.

Yousef has spent between nine and ten years in Sweden at the time of the interview and identifies as both Iraqi and Swedish. He is not sure himself, since he came to Sweden when he was twelve, but also lived for two years in Denmark during his time in Europe. Yousef is currently studying to become a truck mechanic. He does not think that he fits in in Iraq because he is used to how it is in Sweden and enjoys the system in Sweden with rules that people generally tend to respect. He has not travelled back to Iraq after he left, but he still has contact with relatives that live there. He thinks that he does not spend time with Swedes due to the language introduction programs.

The second group of respondents has spent between three and seven years in Sweden and contains Mifleh, Amr, Hamza, Noora, and Adam. They all arrived in Sweden in their early adolescence, when they were 13-15 years old. All five interviews were conducted in Swedish. Since they all arrived in Sweden at a young age, they knew Swedish well.

Mifleh has been in Sweden for six years and identifies as Palestinian and Swedish. Currently, he studies to become a truck mechanic. Previously he also studied social science for one year and commerce for two years during his years in upper-secondary school. He has not been back in his home country after he left, but his family has. He preferred travelling with his friends to Spain, where he could go out and drink and have fun, instead of staying in with relatives. Mifleh thinks that it would be difficult for him to live in his home country again since he arrived in Sweden when he was thirteen and got used to it. In fact, he does not have much contact with people in Gaza anymore, and while his dad still keeps track of the soccer teams and players, Mifleh said he himself follows Malmö FF more.

Amr identifies as a Palestinian from Syria and studies social science. He spent almost four years in Sweden and said that he gets the most feeling of belonging to Sweden when he spends time with the defense educators, where he gets to spend time with Swedes, wear the

Swedish uniform and carry the Swedish flag. He thinks that Swedish schools lack nationalism as a subject and that Sweden needs to be united more as a country. While he has Swedish friends, he also thinks it is hard to get to know Swedish people and to understand the unwritten rules of how to behave while spending time with Swedes.

Hamza has spent four years in Sweden and was the only one in this group of respondents, as already been mentioned, that was still waiting for his Swedish citizenship at the time of the interview. He identifies as Syrian and studies social science. He arrived in Sweden with his brother, and his parents did not join until two years later. He has a lot of friends from different countries, but he does not have Swedish friends.

Noora has spent almost four years in Sweden and identified as Syrian. She currently studies natural science. There are no Swedes in her class, but she has Swedish friends that she spends time with whom she met in her work at a restaurant and in her former schools. She thinks she could feel more at home in Swedish society if people did not look at her in a strange way due to her headscarf, which sometimes happens. She tries to keep in contact with her relatives but also said that it is mostly her mother that takes care of those things.

Adam has spent five years in Sweden and identifies as Iraqi. He studies natural science. Even though Adam's brother and cousins still live in Iraq, he does not have much contact with them, because, in his view, there are cultural differences between them.

May, Hashem, Ammar, and Hanan make up the third group of respondents that all spent less than three years in Sweden. They all arrived in their late adolescence when they were 16-17 years old. All identify as Syrians, but again, this was not my intention, but statistically, the likelihood of migrants arriving in Sweden from Syria in recent years is, of course, elevated. All respondents in group three study language introduction. All four interviews were conducted in Arabic since I have been studying Arabic and lived in an Arabic speaking country longer than they have been in Sweden and studied Swedish.

May has spent two years in Sweden. She thinks that school probably affects her feeling of belonging the most. Outside school, she feels most belonging at home. She has a lot of friends and her sister in her school, and that affects her feeling of belonging to the school positively. Her temporary residency scares her.

Hashem has spent almost two years in Sweden. He is the brother of Hanan. He frames his feelings of belonging with Arabic friends around the process of getting to know them. He thinks that it is easier to get to know Arabs and that the process is quicker than to get to know people who do not share his own background.

Ammar has spent one year in Sweden and already studied in three schools. He used to dream of becoming a police officer but said that he now was trying to change his mind since he heard that it is hard to get into the police academy. Due to the war in Syria, he had to leave school and start working at a young age. At the time of the interview, he was trying to develop another dream. He thinks that it will take a few years for him to enter the Swedish society, and he is trying to get used to living far away from his mother, who lives in Lebanon since his father could not bring both his wives to Sweden.

Hanan has spent almost two years in Sweden. At the time of the interview, she was about to get married. She is the sister of Hashem. She felt more at home in her former school, where everyone had Arabic roots. She felt that she was among family and friends. In her current school, there are people from many different countries, who do not speak to her if she does not start the conversation with them. She thinks it is harder to make friends there.

After this brief introduction of the respondents, I start discussing the findings in the next sub-section.

5.2 Role of the Swedish language

The role of language for the feeling of inclusion is very important among the respondents. The way that language plays a role in belonging differs depending on which group of respondents are answering, but the fact that language is important is agreed by all.

My findings show that many of the respondents that have stayed in Sweden less than three years, express the goal to first focus on language and that work, social life and becoming part of the society would come after, more or less with the language. When comparing to respondents who have been in Sweden longer than seven years, it becomes evident that Yousef, Tara, and Bahar did not experience what the respondents in group three are hoping for. As portrayed in Tara's quote below, language can even be a tool for exclusion:

One thing that sometimes feels weird is when, maybe sort of, when one says something, and the Swedes just, oh, how good you are (vad duktig du är), you know that word in Swedish, so they think that you, you don't know. They get like chocked when you know something. So, I get very sad by it because one feels why wouldn't I know that, I have lived here my whole life [...]. so, I am practically born here, I was three years when I came, so why wouldn't I know that. But just because you are from another country, they think that you don't know that much.

As Tara described, being fluent in Swedish can make her feel excluded, since even though she is fluent, her classmates still get surprised when she knows some Swedish words. Also, for Amr, who has been in Sweden for almost four years, the Swedish language can work in exclusionary ways. Even though he has a lot of Swedish friends, one thing that still makes him feel that he liked his social life in Syria better than in Sweden is the fact that he still does not understand slang and some jokes in Swedish, as well as the hardness of reading between the lines and hear the things that are not being said.

The succeeding topic that keeps coming up in relation to the language factor of belonging is that language introduction schools, that have the aim to make integration work faster have had a negative effect on the feeling of belonging among the students. Many respondents describe that foreigners and Swedes spend time in their own respective groups, and Yousef explained that with reference to the language introduction programs, where the people get separated at an early stage, which later continues. Several respondents even said that they thought that their younger siblings would succeed better in life since they arrived in Sweden at a younger age, and some even said that it explicitly depended on the fact that their siblings did not have to study in a language introduction program.

Almost all respondents explained that they prefer the school where they can speak Swedish, and not use English or Arabic. However, many of them prefer a school that has both Swedish students and students with other origins. Of those who currently study in a language introduction program in upper-secondary school (May, Hashem, Ammar and Hanan), several mention that they prefer their current schools compared to previous schools with a majority of newly arrived students, in which many spoke their home-language with each other and spent time in their own group. Their current upper-secondary schools, even though a majority of the students still are born outside Sweden, or at least have origins from outside Sweden, have Swedish as the default language at school, which means that students usually speak Swedish to each other. Out of all twelve respondents, only Hanan felt more at home in the school with a majority of Arabs, since she could talk to anyone in Arabic and get understood.

As this sub-section of the findings has shown, language as a factor that affects the feeling of belonging is important. It also became clear that recently arrived respondents think that their integration and sense of belonging will come when they learn the language, but that the respondents that have stayed in Sweden longer point to the fact that language also can contribute to feelings of exclusion. Second, my findings show that the respondents do not like the system with language introduction schools because of its segregating nature. The default languages in those schools also usually were their native languages, which in most cases created

feelings of exclusion. As they moved to upper-secondary programs situated in an environment with both migrant students and Swedes, the default language tended to be Swedish more often, which almost all respondents preferred. These findings will be analyzed in section six. In the next sub-section, I present the next theme that revolves around the respondents' legal status.

5.3 The legal status and length of stay

When the respondents discussed their feeling of belonging, the type of residency or citizenship was mentioned as one factor affecting their feelings. They reflected on citizenship leading to being part of society. Further they mentioned the freedom of the Swedish passport, how it felt to be able to go on school trips with the classmates without being limited due to the possession of a different passport. But first and foremost, they discussed the feeling of security/insecurity, and how being a citizen, a permanent resident, or a temporary resident affected their feelings of belonging in positive or negative ways depending on the legal ground of their permits.

To start with the first topic, several respondents mentioned that they feel that they are part of society. In the first group, it was mentioned by both Tara and Bahar, who have had citizenship as long as they remember. Bahar added as well after expressing that she feels that she indeed is a part of the society: "That even if I don't look like a Swede, I have that nationality." Her words thus suggest that there is a boundary and that she belongs on both sides simultaneously, which is discussed more in the analysis. In the second group, three out of five respondents brought up feeling like a part of society. One of those who did not was Mifleh, and his discussion on how the citizenship has affected him is interesting, and show a connection to the theme of "inbetween-ness," that is further discussed in section 5.6:

So, it is the same thing, residency permit, and Swedish citizenship, it is the same thing in the beginning, one gets residency permit one is still a bit Swedish then, but then one gets citizenship, then one is Swedish then, now you are Swedish. But if you look at the background, one is not completely Swedish, one comes from another country, one is born in another country.

His answer also indicates the existence of a boundary, which is analyzed in the next chapter. In the third group of respondents, however, none mentioned feelings of being part of society. So, length of stay matters for the respondents' feelings of being part of society.

The second topic that was brought up by the respondents while I discussed the legal type of stay they had was how the feelings of insecurity/security affected their feeling of

belonging. Many times, they do not express worry about themselves, but for others, they know, especially their classmates. Out of all twelve respondents only May had a temporary residency at the time of the interview. She said that her temporary residency “scares me, to be honest.” After I asked more questions, she added the following about the difference of feelings of belonging between a citizen, a permanent resident and a temporary resident:

The one who has a Swedish nationality would say, that's it. I am a Swedish citizen, for example. The one who has a Swedish permanent residency, like almost he/she will become Swedish. But the one who has a temporary residency for example, maybe he/she is scared that one day he/she would return back maybe. Maybe they won't renew their residency, maybe they won't be able to take the nationality with time, so maybe this would. Like it's scary.

Of the other respondents in group three, also Hashem and Hanan share feelings that temporary residency would be scary since they could be sent home or to another country and has to restart from scratch or leave without finishing their ongoing studies. Ammar, who also belongs to group three and only stayed in Sweden for one year, mentioned four things that he needed to feel belonging, one of them being the citizenship. In his own words: “For number one, the language, and that one is educated, like, that one has a good situation, and one has work or so, in order to enter this society and get the citizenship or the passport.” In the analysis, this is connected to Alba's ethnic boundary theory.

In group two, Amr, who became a Swedish citizen a year and a half ago, and Hamza, who is waiting for his citizenship, talk about security or insecurity of legal status in general terms. However, none of the others of those respondents that stayed in Sweden between three to seven years mention this. And in the first group, Tara and Bahar do not talk about security or insecurity, while Yousef brings it up in relation to his classmates that feel worried about their legal status. Length of stay, therefore, also plays a role in the answers of my respondents on the topic of security and insecurity and legal status. The longer the respondent stayed, the less worried he/she is about the legal status.

Another topic that was brought up in connection to the passport was freedom, but only by the ones who already had the citizenship. They all offered similar explanations, but it is perhaps best explained in words by Adam when he got asked about his views about the difference between him and his classmates depending on the type of citizenship or a residency permit:

The simplest thing is, for example, if we should travel with the class, I don't think I will travel, I cannot travel as them. Because with this, what is it called [interviewer said: 'residency permit']. Yes, I don't think that one can go to all countries. So, it is a bit hard, but when one has the same passport as all the others have, a citizen, it is a bit easier to move freely.

Here, Adam provided a picture of a boundary that has effects on his movability. In the analysis section of the thesis, I problematize this further.

In this sub-section about legal status, I showed that length of stay matter for how the respondents describe their experiences, first, only the respondents that stayed the longest time in Sweden mentioned that they felt like they were part of society. Second, it was only the respondents that stayed the shortest time in Sweden that brought up having feelings of insecurity towards their legal status, and finally it was only the respondents who were Swedish citizens that brought up positive feelings of freedom of the passport. In addition to the relevance of length of stay, this theme also showed that legal status is connected to ethnic boundaries, which will be discussed in the analysis. In the next section, however, I move on to discuss the role the school has for the respondents' feelings of belonging.

5.4 Role of the school

The school plays a role in regard to the respondents feeling of belonging to Swedish society in four different ways. First, respondents feel included in the Swedish society through the 'inclusionary nature'¹ of the Swedish school and the fact that they spend a lot of their awake time in their respective schools, but it also shows that lack of recognition can provide the respondents with bad emotions. Second, the structure of the Swedish educational system is unfair, and values certain types of knowledge more than knowledge typically associated with non-western tradition. Third, teachers mostly have a positive impact on these feelings, but they can also spread feelings of exclusion. Finally, holidays play a role. Most respondents say that they understand that Sweden has its own national holidays, but some are feeling excluded because they have to apply to be free during their holidays. I explain each topic according to

¹ I use the term 'inclusionary nature' to describe the mandatory school system Sweden adopts. The respondents appreciated it due to the fact that it is mandatory for all, but also because it is available to all.

the respondents' own words more in detail in what follows, but the main analysis is taken part in section six.

First, several respondents talked about feeling included in Swedish society through their school and education. In regard to this topic, there is no difference in the answers depending on length of stay. All agree that education is important for feelings of inclusion, and the fact that Sweden offers free education is positive for the respondents, as it provides chances to succeed in life, which also adds to the narrative the students have about feelings of belonging through inclusion in the educational system. Several respondents also mention that most of their awake time is spent in school and that schools provide an area to meet people, which motivates the importance of the schools' power of granting belonging. The views from the respondents thus show that education and school are important for feelings of belonging, no matter if they arrived in Sweden as a young toddler or during adolescence. The inclusionary and mandatory nature of the Swedish school system and the fact that the respondents stay many hours in school are thus important aspects of the role school plays for feelings of belonging.

Second, the respondents point towards the unjust structure of the Swedish educational system. The Swedish school system has a merit credit system that traditionally has evaluated studies in, for instance, math and French, more than native languages like Arabic. This is further analyzed in light of the theory of reproduction and the theory of ethnic boundaries in the analysis. Merit credits that students receive in the upper-secondary school play an important role in their chances of entering university. Noora brought up this aspect for her feelings of inclusion when she said that she thinks it is good that Arabic now can give her merit credits. When I researched this, however, I could not find information about this new procedure. Otherwise, Arabic does not seem to be something that is generally appreciated, and was brought up, and even internalized by some of the respondents. For example, the following discussion I had with Yousef shows that he has not gotten recognition for his Arabic skills:

Pernilla: Do the teachers usually talk about that you know Arabic, in a positive way?

Yousef: No, no. Because Arabic is not as English. English, it is more that almost all countries know it, you know, and Arabic only Arabs know it

This discussion shows that Arabic is not valued the same way as, for instance, French or German and that Yousef even has internalized this view. The school's lack of recognition of

skills from other origins is further developed by Tara, when I asked her if anyone has been mean to her in school, she provided the following answer:

Not in [school B], but when I moved back from Kurdistan and got back to Sweden, then I wasn't allowed to get back to [school A]. I got really sad because I had one semester left of ninth grade, and I already passed that semester in Kurdistan, so one semester there, and I only had one semester left, and I felt, so I had grades on paper that I had passed the school there. And everything I had, I had translated them, and they said no you cannot come back here, I got really sad.

Tara's quote suggests that the Swedish educational structure is unfair. My aim here was not to engage in an evaluation of the academic level of different schools, what is evident here though, is that the Swedish school did not give her recognition by not acknowledging her education during her semester in Kurdistan. At the same time, she did mention one positive outcome of her stay in Kurdistan, because up until she left Sweden she had always studied Swedish as a foreign language, but when she got back to Sweden both her new classmates and her new teacher thought it was really strange that she did not study in an "ordinary" Swedish class. She got to do the national exam and got an A in Swedish. She then changed to an "ordinary" Swedish class, and reflects on her emotions in the following way:

It actually, I felt much better, because when one attended Swedish as a second language it felt like that, sort of, you could easily get A... they said that all the time, you don't need [to be], you know like, so specific, it is okay if you have spelling mistakes, they made it feel that it was so easy.

Again, Tara's quote shows how she has been denied recognition from her previous schools and how it has played a role in her feelings of belonging. The schools place the migrant students in relation to a boundary. Either you belong in an "ordinary" Swedish class, or you study Swedish as a foreign language. The misrecognition also plays out in the image that Swedish as a second language has. Teachers and peers in her school did not recognize Swedish as a second language as equally difficult. She did not feel personally accepted and recognized in this regard until a new teacher told her to do the national exam, the same exam that other Swedes takes, in which she got the best grade.

But it is not only the non-recognition of academic credentials or languages from other origins that are not evaluated in the same way as the traditional western knowledge that was brought up by the respondents. Typically, the respondents that stayed in Sweden the longest discussed the curriculum. However, here they also show that they internalized the traditional view of what type of knowledge and cultural capital should be valued in society. Bahar said, for instance, that her school does not include that much information about the history of the Middle East, but that she understands that since the course is limited. Tara, who recently studied a semester in Kurdistan said that her teacher did not show that much interest in what happened to her during her time in Kurdistan. When I asked her if she thinks that there would have been an increased interest if she would have studied in, for instance, the United States, she replied in the following way:

Yes, yes, indeed, they would have maybe asked more, or brought it up in the class also, that like, yes but [respondent says her own name] has lived there, and so, how was it there, how is it with, so compare, but they usually don't. If we talk crime, they usually compare it with, sort of, the United States and Sweden, but it would also be fun to know how it is in the Middle East, how they view crime, because that is also different.

She gives yet another example of when the teacher talked about housewives as something historic and ancient, and Bahar pointed out that housewives still exist in her society. Her teacher did not give her recognition. She just said yes and moved on. Bahar said that she thinks that it is sad that they favor parts of the world like this, and by doing that, the students do not get a fair picture of the world. When I spoke to newer migrants about the curriculum, they thought it was okay to have a focus on Europe since they previously already learned a lot about the Middle East. None of them spoke about it being a problem that could cause feelings of exclusion.

Third, the respondents often mention the role of the teachers for their feeling of belonging. What is particularly interesting, is that the two respondents that have stayed the longest time in Sweden, Tara and Bahar, mention the teachers' ability to spread feelings of exclusion, while the others usually raised the positive effects teachers have had on their feelings of belonging. Bahar and Tara said that they felt that teachers treated Swedes better than them, and favored Swedish students, and gave many concrete examples. One such example in Bahar's own words is portrayed in the quote below:

I saw this in one teacher, but he doesn't work here anymore, but he, sort of, disfavored us, we who were, and we were the majority in the class that were foreigners, he disfavored us with those who were Swedish, and that one could see very clearly. Because it was not only me who realized it, it was also the others that realized it and understood that that teacher was a bit like that. And in [name of school], it was almost all teachers that were like that. Because it was a majority that were Swedish, so one was very excluded by the class, and by the teachers too.

Bahar's answer shows that she felt very excluded due to some teachers' behavior and that it affected her feelings of belonging. Bahar felt that almost all teachers in her former class had prejudices towards foreigners and it made her feel so excluded that she eventually changed school. This is discussed more in the analysis part of the thesis.

In the next two categories of respondents, who have been in Sweden for seven years or less, none mention that teachers made them feel excluded, on the contrary, they mention that teachers contribute in a positive manner to their feeling of belonging by helping them with language learning, being kind, answering questions, helping them and equally distributing the word in class. When the respondents who stayed in Sweden less than seven years mention teachers' negative characteristics, it is more the problem with the individual teachers' ability to keep order in class, or that some teachers that are not used to teach Swedish as a second language talk too fast.

The last aspect that they raise is about Muslim holidays in school. Most respondents said that it is not a problem to apply or call in sick during those days and that one had to understand that and respect the rules of another country. However, some answers showed that feelings of exclusion could occur. In this section, there is no difference in the answers depending on length of stay and they rather paint a quite similar picture of their experiences with belonging and religious festivities. In what follows, some examples of this are given.

Narratives that showed signs of feelings of exclusion are well represented in the examples of Noora, Bahar, and Tara. First, Noora's answer shows that the ease of having off during Eid differs from school to school. She said that it is hard for her to get off in her current school, which led her mentor to eventually report Noora as having unannounced absence during Eid. However, she said that in her former school it was easy, and she just had to apply in paper form. Now she instead has to lie to her school. She mentions as well that her family has taken on the tradition to have a Christmas tree at home and says that it would be nice if the Muslim community could get one day out of their holidays as a day off. Bahar does not feel excluded

due to the current system and thinks it would be strange if Sweden would have more bank holidays during Eid, but she admits that there could be some positive outcomes if that was the case, leading Muslims to feel more as parts of the society. Tara prefers calling in sick because the application process is long and requires all teachers signing an application form she has to pick up from the principal. She thinks that this process also shows that she is not like the others. While she thinks that Sweden cannot have more bank holidays, she also thinks that recognition by writing Eid in the calendar would be nice. At the same time, she highlights that a lot of people are atheists nowadays, and it feels unjust that they have the right to celebrate during Christmas anyway.

These examples show that the question of which place religion takes in school is very individual. For some, it has the power of creating feelings of exclusion, but for others, it does not matter so much. This is further explained in the analysis through the lens of Alba's theory on boundaries.

In this section, I presented that the respondents feel included in the Swedish society through the 'inclusionary nature' of the Swedish educational system, but it also shows that lack of recognition within the same system, or by the contents of the curriculum, can spread negative feelings. I continued to show that there is a difference between respondents who spent many years in Sweden and new migrants in relation to the feeling of exclusion in regard to the teachers' treatment. It proved to be more widespread among the ones who stayed in Sweden longer. In regard to the incorporation of Muslim holidays in the Swedish school, length of stay does not have an impact on the answers, but the presence of religion in schools can affect feelings of belonging. In the next section, the next theme, social life and belonging, is presented.

5.5 Social life and belonging

The social life is another aspect that was brought up while speaking about the respondents' feelings of belonging to their schools and to Sweden. Most respondents mentioned that having friends affected their feeling of belonging, and some mentioned how having Swedish friends or not having Swedish friends had effects on their sense of belonging. Another factor that affected their feelings of belonging was whether or not they were part of the majority of the class and/or school. Since these two factors often were interlinked while we spoke, they are also interlinked in this section.

Several respondents say that schools that have both Swedes and students with other origins are preferable. This is, for instance, visible in Bahar's answer about why the atmosphere is better in her current school than her last one, in which she felt lonely and excluded:

I probably think, so I know it will probably be, sort of, prejudice if I say this. But I think just because there is a bit more foreigners in my class. I can imagine that these foreigners that, uhm, understand more foreigners and have a more open mind meanwhile one that is Swedish just wants to be in their bubble, and not want to, uhm, so, they are a bit shy maybe to exit that bubble that they are in, which I also can relate to sometimes [...].

The position of me as a Swedish master's student asking these questions might have affected her answer since she eventually defended Swedish people. However, the quote still shows that Bahar preferred classes where both Swedes and students with other origins study. Tara, who has been in Sweden since she was three years old gives a similar response. When she is asked what a school needs to have in order for her to feel belonging she said: "A more mixture maybe of students, sort of like, from all, so, from all countries in the world, because in my class it is sort of only Swedes." This shows that both Bahar and Tara are not interested in just spending time with other people who identify as Swedish, Iraqi or Kurdish. Their accounts rather point towards a wish to spend time with people from various backgrounds.

Structural aspects were also brought up. Even though Yousef stayed in Sweden for almost a decade and is a member of my first group of respondents, he explains that there is a structure in society that is hard to resist and that he spends time mostly with other migrants. In his own words: "one belongs so, that one is a wog, and so, the system is like that, you know." He thinks that it might have turned out differently if he did not grow up in Malmö, which he says is famous for its many foreigners. His account highlights that it is not a mere question of wanting to become part of the mainstream society and cross the boundary, because when a boundary is bright, it is also harder to cross. A deeper connection between social life and Alba's theoretical concept is provided in the analysis section.

In addition to the cosmopolitan form of social life that the respondents referred to, I also found evidence in the data of diasporic identities. What is important to note, though, is that while many thought it was important to keep contact with relatives and friends in the home country, none said that they were involved with any organizations related to their origins in Sweden. Two representative examples of the signs of diasporic identities were brought up by Hashem and Amr. Hashem said, for instance, that he thinks it is easier, and a much faster process to get to know other Syrians because he knows about that person's background from before, he added that there would be misunderstandings with someone from, for instance, Afghanistan. Amr's account shows signs of ambivalence. While Amr thinks he feels the most

belonging when he is with the Swedish defense educators and adheres that “the most important is that, that one has, like, Swedish friends because otherwise one will never enter the society,” he also explains that he feels less belonging when he spends time with Swedes:

I know Swedes, I have been at the homes of Swedish friends; also, I still don't think that I have the same relation to them as I have to my Arabic friends. I feel closer when I speak to my Arabic friends, I understand them, and they understand me, meanwhile when I am with my Swedish friends [...] I am expected to know something that I don't know. I mean, you who grew up with Swedish parents, you know how it is to be a Swede, you know what is expected, when you are at someone's home, then you know exactly what you should do, when you should go, when it is time to go, but she won't tell you to leave, but this, I mean this, such unwritten rules. It is hard to learn them, and if one doesn't know them, then you end up in, maybe, weird situations.

These experiences are connected to Abdelhady's theoretical concept of diasporic identities in the analysis. Adam's and Noora's explanations of what affects their belonging show that they think in an alternative way. When Adam talks about social belonging, he explains that he prefers being with friends who behave well and that he thinks that Arabs particularly create problems. “[...] there is a lot of people that just want problems, most Arabs are like that if I should be completely honest.” As I wrote in the theory chapter, recognition by others is important, and a person's identity is often influenced by the recognition, non-recognition or misrecognition from others, which can make groups or individuals adopt the negative view others have of them (Taylor 1994, 25-26, Fangen, Johansson, and Hammarén 2012, 7). In this case, it seems like Adam adopted the negative view others have of Arabs. These aspects are further analyzed in chapter six. Noora described how her Swedish friends had a positive effect on her belonging. When I asked her if her Swedish friends play any role in her feelings of belonging to Sweden she answered:

Yes, because they make me feel that there is not a difference between me and them. And, yes, it makes me feel better and that I belong to Swedish society also. We plan also for the future together, and, they count me as a, a Swede, or a person that is not different from them.

While Noora acknowledges having Swedish friends in the quote above, she also said that she does not think that she would have felt that she belonged more in another school (there are no Swedes in her class) and that she appreciated the fact that not all were Swedes the first day of school.

Moving on to the respondents in group three, many of them said that they wish to get to know more Swedes but think that the process is difficult. Some reflect on the ease of getting to know other people from their own culture and then describe Swedish people as hard to get to know and cold. Hanan thinks that friends affect her feeling of belonging, but she felt more at home while being with other Arabs. Hanan studies in a school with a majority of non-Swedes, but she felt more at home in her first school, where the majority were Arabs. She could talk to anyone in Arabic and get understood, in her new school she needs to speak Swedish if she wants to talk to someone else.

In this sub-section I discussed how having friends and how being in the majority or the minority affects feelings of belonging. Most respondents witnessed that a mixture of students with various origins was the preferable situation. What is clear is that the difference in the responses cannot be explained by length of stay. The variations in the answers also show that the preferred social group cannot be explained by national background. The question is far more complex. This also adds to literature that suggests that researchers move beyond focusing on national belonging as the only form of belonging, to enable more complex analysis of the cosmopolitan and diasporic identities migrants sometimes embrace. This is discussed further in the analysis. Relating to that, I discuss the last theme I found in my research in the next section, namely, the feeling of not fitting in here nor there, and at the same time feeling belonging to more than one society.

5.6 Feelings of “inbetween-ness”

When speaking with the respondents about their lives in Sweden, it became clear that it is not possible to say that a respondent either feel more belonging to Sweden or to his/her home country. The situations and contexts in the home or host country can create feelings of, for instance, inclusion, exclusion, alienation and/or acceptance, as well as feelings of “inbetween-ness”. They often described their experiences as not fitting in here nor there, or at the same time fitting in in both societies, but in different ways. In regard to this fifth and last theme that I found, length of stay in Sweden plays a vital role in the answers of the respondents.

In the group of respondents who stayed in Sweden the longest, Bahar, Tara, and Yousef express feelings of not fitting in when they visit their home countries. But out of all twelve

respondents, also Mifleh and Adam, who have spent six and five years in Sweden respectively, share emotions of not completely fitting in in their home countries anymore. The other respondents have all spent four years or less in Sweden and arrived in Sweden in their early or late adolescent, and do not mention these feelings of not fitting in in their home country. How do then the respondents frame these emotions? Bahar said that going to her country of origin almost feels like being on vacation and that she would probably have preferred to be in Sweden since she is used to that. When I asked Tara if she feels that she belongs to Sweden she answered:

Yes, indeed. Exactly in those moments, when one is in one's home country and then, when one doesn't recognize things, or they speak in a certain way, or they behave in a certain, and one is not used to it, it is exactly then one feels that, okay I am Swedish. Because some things that they do, we in Sweden would never do.

Tara goes on to explain that she feels more Swedish in Kurdistan than in Sweden, and even if she is a Muslim, she does not share the same culture with the people in Kurdistan, because she grew up in Sweden and became part of the society. She adds that even if Swedes do not see her as Swedes, she feels that she is Swede. She thus describes a boundary between being Swedish or not, which is further discussed in the analysis. Mifleh thinks that he would not have made it back in his home country because he got used to how it is in Sweden. He has not travelled back because he thought it would be boring to go back to see his relatives, and had travelled to Spain instead, and added that he could not go out and party and drink in Palestine. He also said that he feels both Palestinian and Swedish but would not want to be called Swedish in Palestine.

When it comes to how the respondents introduce themselves to strangers, the four respondents that stayed the longest time in Sweden do identify themselves, not only in line with their origins but also as Swedes. None of the other respondents mentioned their Swedish identity when they were asked how they identified themselves. However, all four make a distinction between nationality and origin. This is perhaps best represented in Tara's account. Tara would introduce herself as Kurdish in Sweden, but she feels Swedish too. In Kurdistan, she would not introduce herself as Swedish, but the others would see her as Swedish, she explains: "So, it becomes strange, one doesn't fit in anywhere." Bahar's way of presenting herself to new people also is best categorized as a form of diasporic identity:

So, I would have said that my ethnicity and background is Kurdish. Nationality Swedish, yes, but I wouldn't have said that I am Swedish-Swedish, by ethnicity, because one can see that I am not Swedish. But, yes, nationality-wise, so yes, because I grew up here, I know the language, and I reside here.

Her quote shows signs of ambivalence, and in both Tara's and Bahar's quotes it is clear that they do not position themselves outside the boundary, rather, they position themselves between the boundaries of home and host country. Abdelhady's theoretical framework is useful to explain these emotions and is further developed in section six.

Religious symbols can also add to the feeling of "inbetween-ness." When I asked Noora how she could feel more at home in the Swedish society, she said that people sometimes look at her because of her headscarf. She works in a restaurant that serves alcohol, and she feels that people look at her in a weird way, but for her it is not a big thing that the restaurant serves alcohol even though she is a Muslim, because she wants to be a part of the society also and work no matter if it is a job that fits her or not. But she actually feels that that job fits her, she said.

The theme has shown that time matters for the feeling of belonging among the respondents. The longer the respondent had stayed in Sweden, the more feelings of "inbetween-ness" they had, and in some situations felt more aligned with the Swedish mindset, and had incorporated some of the Swedish cultural traditions or preferred the Swedish system, while keeping traditions at the same time. None of the respondents that stayed in Sweden four years or less expressed feelings of not fitting in in their home countries, while those who stayed in Sweden five years or longer did bring that up. Before the analysis, in the next sub-section I conclude the findings and themes my research has landed in, so it is clear what is analyzed in section six.

5.7 Concluding remarks

In this section, I first introduced the respondents before I presented the five themes: role of the Swedish language, legal status and length of stay, the role of the school, social life, and belonging, and feelings of "inbetween-ness." I showed while discussing the first theme that all respondents view language as important for their feelings of belonging. Two topics were discussed relating to this theme: language as tool for exclusion and inclusion and language introduction programs. One important aspect that became visible through the comparison of the answers depending on length of stay is that the students in group three hope that language will

lead to increased inclusion, something that the respondents who stayed in Sweden the longest just partly feel were the case. Instead, they give examples of how language can work in exclusionary ways, and language introduction programs can contribute to these emotions.

Relating to the next theme, legal status, were topics such as being part of society, security, and insecurity, and finally, feelings of freedom discussed. Citizenship leads respondents to feel that they were part of society and the passport provided feelings of freedom. However, for the migrants that stayed the shortest time in Sweden, feelings of insecurity were brought up, due to the insecure nature of their legal status, both for themselves, as well as for others in their surroundings.

The third theme, the role of the school, showed that the school plays a role in regard to the respondents' feeling of belonging to Swedish society in three different ways. First, respondents felt included in Swedish society through school, but at the same time, feelings of exclusion could occur in relation to how the educational system evaluates knowledge that is typically non-western. Teachers mostly have a positive impact on feelings on inclusion, but they can also spread feelings of exclusion, as was the case among the respondents that stayed in Sweden the longest. Finally, Muslim holidays play a role, and some respondents felt excluded because they have to apply to be free during their holidays.

Social life is the fourth theme I found. Respondents agreed that having friends is important for their feelings of belonging, but the context differs. Some felt more at home with Swedes, while others felt more at ease with people who share the same origin as themselves, or even a third origin. Explaining social belonging in strictly national or ethnic lines can, therefore, not explain the respondents' feelings. Rather, they show that their social lives are connected to cosmopolitan or diasporic identities. Another factor that affected their feelings of belonging was whether or not they were part of the majority of the class and/or school, where a cosmopolitan setting was preferred. What also was clear is that the difference in the responses cannot be explained by length of stay; rather, it is individual and contextual.

Finally, I discussed the theme of feeling "inbetween," which showed that time matters for the feelings of belonging among the respondents. The longer the respondent stayed in Sweden, the more feelings of "inbetween-ness" they had, as well as feelings of not fitting in in their home countries, something that was not mentioned by those who stayed in Sweden four years or less. These findings will be viewed in light of theoretical concepts and previous research in the next part.

6. Analysis

In this section, the five different themes: Swedish language, legal status and length of stay, role of the school, social life, and belonging and feeling of “inbetween-ness,” that I described in the findings-section, are discussed in the light of theory and previous research.

6.1 The schools’ reproduction of ethnic inequality

My findings showed that school plays a significant role in the respondents’ feelings of belonging to their schools in particular and to Sweden in general. The respondents mentioned that the Swedish school system made them feel belonging due to its ‘inclusionary nature’ whilst also providing a place to meet people. They also discussed the importance of having friends. According to the second factor of place-belongingness in Antonsich’s theoretical framework, personal and social ties to a place is important for feelings of belonging. This is in line with my research since offering education to the migrants make them feel belonging. School then becomes that personal connection a respondent has to a place. They also explain that they spend many hours in school and that it, of course, has an effect on their feelings of belonging due to that. The respondents’ friends that they met in Sweden, no matter if they are Swedes or migrants, provide that social connection that creates a feeling of belonging for the respondents. Previous research that has shown that schools are important for creating feelings of belonging (Ham, Yang, and Cha 2017, 41-42, Block et al. 2014, 1338, Nilsson Folke 2017, 13, Bunar 2001, 19, 279), is thus supported by the findings in my thesis.

The findings also showed that the structure of the Swedish educational system can create feelings of exclusion. Yousef, who has spent approximately a decade in Sweden, said that he has seen that the migrants get separated already when they arrive and study in separate language introduction classes, which he said leads migrants to spend time with migrants, and Swedish people with Swedish people. Research has shown that even though language introduction programs aim to work in an inclusionary way, they sometimes has the opposite effect, leading students to feel excluded (Nilsson Folke 2016). My thesis is in line with this research. Eleven out of twelve respondents said they preferred schools where it was expected that everyone spoke Swedish to each other. Several of the respondents said that they still enjoy spending time with people who share the same origin as them, but preferably within the mainstream system, and not separately in a language introduction school, I discuss this further in section 6.2. My research is thus also in line with research that shows that migrant students want to study in “real” schools and not in separated schools (Bunar and Bouakaz 2015). Looking at language introduction schools through the lens of Antonsich theoretical framework

indicates that separating migrant students to special classes, away from students in mainstream classes, is not beneficial in granting the new claimers belonging. On the contrary, language introduction schools deny the migrant students' feelings of belonging, in the form of personal acceptance, inclusion and recognition.

Another negative aspect of the Swedish educational system is how it continuously overlooks providing recognition to typically non-western knowledge. This was brought up by the respondents in relation to the merit credit system and the non-recognition of knowledge in Arabic, the evaluation of academic achievement in the Middle East and the Euro-centric curriculum. Merit credits that students receive in the upper-secondary school play an important role for their chances of entering university. Noora brought up this aspect for her feelings of inclusion when she said that she thinks it is good that Arabic now can give her merit credits, which shows that Swedish schools give her recognition to some extent in this regard. On the Swedish university admission's website it is written that a person's mother tongue cannot give merit credits (UHR 2019), and it is not clear how Noora now can receive it.

It is nevertheless remarkable that Arabic or any other native language students might have for that matter, do not give merit credits. French, German, and Spanish are generally more positively evaluated in the form of merit credits than, for instance, Arabic, since knowledge in a person's mother tongue is exempted from merit credits (UHR 2019). Non-recognition of knowledge in Arabic was even internalized by Yousef, who himself did not think that knowledge in Arabic was something valuable. To receive knowledge in a language from parents is then clearly less appraised than other forms of cultural capital that students receive from their parents, like knowledge in French or math. Students benefit from the knowledge their parents have in, for instance, math, which can affect their grades positively, and that is something that is considered acceptable. Arabic, or other native languages, however, is not appreciated the same way by the Swedish educational system. Bourdieu and Passeron showed that schools, instead of promoting equality, reproduced social hierarchies (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) and that typically, certain knowledge is more valued. Tara's example about her semester in Kurdistan that was not recognized, and the Euro-centric curriculum are other examples of that.

Second, teachers' treatment plays an important role. The examples, especially by the respondents that stayed a long time in Sweden, showed that whilst being in classes with a majority of Swedish students, they sometimes felt discouraged or treated in an unjust manner, by their teachers. Migrants that stayed in Sweden a shorter time thought they instead contributed to their feelings of belonging.

How is it possible to explain that my findings showed that the respondents that had stayed in Sweden the least time did not share Bahar and Tara's feelings towards teachers' ability to spread feelings of exclusion? I argue that since Bahar and Tara have been in classes with a majority of Swedes for a longer time, they have seen that they have failed to feel included, accepted, recognized and supported more frequently than the respondents that have been studying in classes and schools that have a majority of migrants. It is not only up to each and every one to decide whether or not that person belongs, but it also includes a social process. There are two opposite sides in this social process, one side that wants to belong and therefore claims belonging, as well as the side of the people who already belong, and therefore has the power to grant belonging to the new claimers. To feel belonging to a place is therefore connected to feeling that one belongs to a group of people. In the case of Bahar and Tara, they take actions to claim inclusion, but do not feel that they always succeed since the opposite side, their teachers and classmates, does not grant belonging, by not recognizing their skills or their abilities as equal to their peers with Swedish origins. Bahar and Tara have spent more time in fields in which bright boundaries exist, and have, therefore, felt the hardness of attempting to cross the boundary, while the newer migrants do not share the same negative emotions such as disloyalty to their own group or anxiety to be accepted by the mainstream.

After this discussion about the 'inclusionary nature,' and the time spent in Swedish schools, the impact of teachers, and being in the majority or minority of the school and/or class, the issue of how the schools deal with Muslim holidays remain. My research revealed that there are no differences in the answers depending on length of stay, but it also showed that celebrating one's holidays is important for the recognition aspect. The Swedish approach of integration rather than assimilation (in which the migrant is supposed to be able to keep their culture (Södergran 2000)), is impeded by the fact that schools sometimes makes it complicated for the students to have days off during their holidays, which have a negative effect on some of the respondents' feelings of belonging. Several respondents witness that the complicated process has led them to rather call in sick, than asking the principal for a paper, and then ask each teacher for permission to celebrate their holidays, as Tara had to do. Tara further explained that the paper application demonstrates that she indeed is not like all others. Noora even explained that she once got reported for having unreported absence for not attending class during Eid.

Alba explains that such institutionalization processes, in which social actors live out the differences associated with power and better social statuses in a recurring way, enforce the bright boundary and make it hard for it to be blurred. The religious domain, and to be Muslim in Europe, is indeed connected to a bright boundary that is hard to cross (Alba 2005). And from

the aspect of recognition, Swedish schools do not offer recognition to the respondents in regard to their religious traditions. The fact that many of the schools I visited when I conducted the interviews, shined bright of Christmas decorations, also contributed to the institutionalization of the ethnic boundary.

To conclude this sub-section, after viewing the system with language introduction schools, the unjust treatment by teachers, the process for applying to be off during Eid and the fact that non-western knowledge is not equally appreciated as western knowledge, in the light of Bourdieu's and Passeron's reproduction theory, with newer contributions of reproduction of race, I argue that the schools, in the form of its educational system, Euro-centric curriculum, and its teachers, play a vital role in reproducing ethnic inequalities as well as bright boundaries, which can affect migrant students feelings of inclusion, recognition, as well as feelings of support by adults in the school environment, negatively.

6.2 Multiple forms of belonging

The findings showed examples of how hard it was to get to know Swedes, especially among the newly arrived migrants. Ammar, who only spent a year in Sweden, said for instance that "If there are no Swedes in the school, it is not possible to see someone in the street and say do you want to become my friend?" And while it is tempting to argue that Swedish people and the structure that exists in Swedish society does not grant belonging – by not offering the migrant students personal acceptance, respect, inclusion and support by others, mostly by adults in the school environment – my findings also show that my respondents oftentimes did not get badly affected by the fact that they did not have Swedish friends *per se* (many respondents also described that they have Swedish friends and that they like spending time with them). The most important for my respondents' feelings of belonging was to have friends, no matter the origin of those friends. Especially the more recently arrived migrants said that they feel that it is easier to get to know someone who shares their own background, and Hanan said that she felt more at home in a class with only Arabs. The role that social life play for the respondents' feelings of belonging is far more complex as well as individual and contextual and cannot be explained by a binary form of belonging, it is not the question of whether or not an individual feel belonging, but *how* they describe their experiences.

This is also supported by several of the respondents' explanations that they feel more comfortable, accepted and supported in classes where there is a mixture of migrant students and students with Swedish origin. Under those circumstances, the social process of claiming and granting belonging becomes a much easier process. In that context, the ethnic boundary is also

blurred. It is easier for the respondents to be members of both sides of the boundary simultaneously. Or sometimes relating more to the one side than the other. In a context with a majority of Swedish students, the boundary instead becomes bright, and the boundary-crossing becomes more connected to anxiety of being accepted by the majority group.

These findings are best explained by Abdelhady's framework that highlights the multiple forms and layers of belonging. Abdelhady showed that diaspora is a concept that can be used to understand the multiple types and layers of belongings migrants feel. Individuals do not have to either feel belonging with the host country or only feel belonging to the home country, on the contrary, it is possible to feel inclusion and exclusion simultaneously, as well as feelings of "inbetween," to neither belong here nor there (Abdelhady 2011).

In the case of my respondents, it is evident that they feel these multiple types and layers of belonging that Abdelhady suggests. Noora provided an example of how complex the sense of belonging can be. Even though she wears the headscarf, she works in a restaurant that serves alcohol and explained to me that even though others might think that it is not appropriate, she thinks that that work suits her. Her feelings can neither be explained by assimilation theory or multiculturalism, rather, her narrative points towards a diasporic identity, created in the host country, and yet not representative of it, nor in line with her former identity she performed in her home country.

I, therefore, argue, in line with Abdelhady's findings, that there is a need to move beyond simple forms of belonging, and that it is not possible to explain belonging as a binary. In section 6.4, I continue to discuss another related issue, the fact that respondents that stayed the longest in Sweden narrated more feelings of "inbetween-ness."

6.3 Legal aspects

Alba argues that citizenship is one of the domains that contribute to the institutionalization of ethnic boundaries. His theory is supported by my findings. I showed in section 5.3 that length of stay and legal status had an impact on the respondents' feelings of being a part of society. Almost all respondents that have Swedish citizenship brought up the feeling of being part of the Swedish society, without me asking that question. Even though it is relatively easy to naturalize in Sweden, and there is no need to do language or history tests, citizenship nevertheless creates a boundary between those who have it and those who do not. I argue that my respondents describe the boundary as blurred, however, since they provide accounts that resemble being members of both sides of the boundary simultaneously, no matter if they already had the citizenship or still waited to receive it.

Another aspect that was brought up within this theme by the respondents was the freedom that the Swedish passport provided them with a sense of movability. I connect this to previous research about recognition. Research has shown that identity is continuously performed, and that one individual's identity is dependent on the recognition by others. In the case of the Swedish passport, both the Swedish state as well as other individuals around my respondents grant belonging and recognition. This is further revealed due to the passport, which not only is a symbol of identity but also enables migrants that are used to have to apply for visas wherever they go, to move as the others in the Swedish society. The Swedish passport enables migrants that acquired the Swedish citizenship to travel with their classmates on school trips, and by that, the respondents receive recognition from both the state, as well as their own classmates, which affects feelings of inclusion, recognition and acceptance positively.

But it is not only the citizenship or the passport that acts as a domain for the institutionalization of the ethnic boundary, in regards of feelings of insecurity and security of the legal status, my research showed that the longer the respondent stayed, the less worried he/she was about the legal status of their residency. This finding is also supported by theory. A vital dimension, for many, to be able to feel place-belongingness is to feel security in regard to one's legal status in a country. There is a negative correlation between an insecure legal status and the feeling of place-belongingness (Antonsich 2010, 646-649).

6.4 Length of stay

As I pointed to in the literature review, length of stay is an area of research that has not been much studied in relation to feelings of belonging. What my findings showed is that time matters for the feeling of belonging among the respondents. The longer the respondent had stayed in Sweden, the more feelings of "inbetween-ness" they had, and in some situations felt more aligned with the Swedish mindset or the Swedish system or culture. It is important to note though, that the respondents who stayed in Sweden the longest, do not narrate their identities as a binary, in which they either felt that they assimilated or that they kept their cultural background in its original form, rather, they narrate their identities along diasporic lines. None of the respondents that stayed in Sweden four years or less expressed feelings of not fitting in in their home countries, while those who stayed in Sweden five years or longer brought that up.

The findings showed that length of stay not only mattered for feelings of belonging resulting in blurred boundaries and feelings of "inbetween-ness," but also as a variable affecting feelings of belonging within the aspects of the Swedish language, educational system, and the individuals' legal status. The educational system and legal status were analyzed in section 6.1

and section 6.3 respectively. In what follows, I analyze how the Swedish language affected feelings of belonging for my respondents and how length of stay affected those feelings.

Students that stayed in Sweden for more than four years gave examples of how the Swedish language sometimes could create feelings of not belonging, while students that recently arrived in Sweden only saw language as positive and something that will lead them to feel belonging. Language is not only connected to politics of belonging, but also to place-belongingness, which is discussed in section three of the thesis. In Sweden, Swedish is the spoken language, which means that the respondents who are seeking integration/inclusion/incorporation into Swedish society, think that they will attain it by learning the language. Those studying Swedish hope that their language skills will help blur the boundaries between them and Swedes. This is true in some cases, Yousef and Bahar, who both are in group one of the respondents, explain that they feel that they belong to Sweden through their Swedish language skills, which is connected to what Antonsich calls place-belonging and politics of belonging.

The respondents spoke of language as a tool for feeling inclusion as well as exclusion. In Tara's quote in the findings section, she explained that she sometimes got a compliment for knowing a Swedish word, which made her feel sad, because she lived in Sweden for 15 years, which is almost her whole life, and she got offended when Swedes did not think she would know the word. Language has the power of creating feelings of "us" and "them," and by that generating a sense of community (Antonsich 2010, 646-649). When her Swedish classmates gave her a compliment for her Swedish knowledge, even though they probably have good intentions, they also brightened the boundary between her as a foreigner and them as the "belongers".

On a similar note, language is another boundary experienced by Amr who, despite four years in Sweden, has a hard time understanding slang and reading social signs. When Amr does not understand when his Swedish friends send signals that he should go home, it brightens the boundary between Swedish and immigrant to him. This can be explained by Antonsich analytical framework. He argues that not only words can impact belonging but also understanding codes, signs, and gestures (Antonsich 2010, 648).

Alba argues that language is one of the domains in which the ethnic boundary gets institutionalized daily. From the findings, it is possible to see that the respondents, by learning Swedish, attempted to cross the boundary. The language boundary is blurred, though, since all respondents have some or extensive knowledge in both Arabic, Kurdish and Swedish, and sometimes many more languages. In this domain, it is, therefore, possible to be a member of both sides simultaneously, and many respondents witness that they can speak Swedish, Arabic

or Kurdish in their schools, in their homes or in public places in Malmö. Lack of recognition from the mainstream group, or personal feelings of language insecurity, however, has the power to push migrants over the blurred boundary, back to the minority group.

In this section, I analyzed the five different themes I found in light of theory and previous research. The conclusion that I draw from the research is presented in the next section.

7. Conclusion

My aim was to analyze the students' own narratives with belonging to Sweden in general and to their respective Swedish schools in particular. I also aimed to include the variable of length of stay, since it affects experiences with belonging but has not been researched as much. While doing so it became clear that, even though scholars highlight the importance of belonging, and even though schools have a good potential of creating feelings of inclusion, recognition and acceptance, the outcome, when listening to the migrant students own narratives, was that they in many situations rather experience feelings of exclusion and not belonging. These findings were typical for those migrants that could be classified as 1.5 generation migrants, newer migrants had still not experienced boundary-crossing to the same extent, and instead showed other forms of belonging.

By the use of Bourdieu and Passeron's reproduction theory, of which I added aspects of race, and Marco Antonsich's framework of belonging, that focus more on agency by suggesting that there are two opposite sides that claims and grants belonging, Richard Alba's work on bright and blurred boundaries and Dalia Abdelhady's concept of diasporic identities and multiple belongings, I showed how the respondents narrated their belonging. Their experiences with being separated into language introduction schools, their unjust treatment by teachers, their processes for applying to be off during Eid and the fact that non-western knowledge is not equally appreciated as western knowledge, made me argue that the schools, in the form of its educational system, Euro-centric curriculum, and its teachers, play a vital role in reproducing ethnic inequalities as well as a bright boundary.

I further argued, in line with Abdelhady's findings, that there is a need to move beyond simple forms of belonging, and that it is not possible to explain belonging as a binary, with reference to the social lives of the respondents. It is not as easy as stating that they either feel belonging with Swedes, or with people from their own origins. Many more factors are at interplay. More research is needed to investigate these diasporic identities and multiple belongings further. I also demonstrated how the Swedish citizenship and the passport act as a domain for the institutionalization of an ethnic boundary as well as how legal status is related to belonging and how it can create feelings of insecurity, especially among the migrants that only stayed in Sweden for a few years. Finally, I discussed how length of stay also plays a role in language which has the power to affect feelings of belonging. Alba argues that language is one of the domains in which the ethnic boundary gets institutionalized daily, which is supported by the narratives from many of my respondents. From the findings, it is possible to see that the respondents, by learning Swedish, attempts to cross the boundary, and while most respondents

think language creates belonging, it also shows that lack of recognition from the mainstream group has the power to push migrants over the blurred boundary, back to the minority group.

In relation to feelings of belonging to a school, the most used definition is “the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others – especially teachers and other adults in the school social environment” (Goodenow and Grady 1993, 60-61, see for instance Slaten et al. 2016, DeNicolo et al. 2017). My research has shown that first-generation students in Sweden have obstacles to feel belonging, but also that length of stay matters. And contrary to what is wished for, belonging does not automatically appear with time. In some cases, time actually increases feelings of non-belonging, which indicates that we as society, neighbors, peers, teachers, politicians and researchers, are doing something wrong.

There is thus a need to study this further. Migration is here to stay for a variety of reasons. People wish to move in a globalized world and search for opportunities in other areas. Conflicts are still happening, and in this increasingly hostile world, it could even increase and create many more refugees. On top of that, we have a climate crisis that will create even more refugees. This means that schools all over the world will deal with more migrant students. And since schools have the power to effect belonging positively, which in turn has a lot of positive outcomes for the society at large, we need to research this more. Quantitative studies have done their share in showing the relationship between for instance belonging and educational achievement, academic motivation, and health-related issues. Qualitative studies must continue to push harder and dig deeper to truly understand the social reproduction, ethnic boundaries, diasporic identities and multiple belongings that are at interplay when migrant students claim belonging.

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Appendix 1: Table of respondents

Group 1: Group 1 consists of respondents who stayed in Sweden more than seven years

Name	Age and origin	Gender	Years in Sweden	Legal status in Sweden
1) Bahar	18, Kurdish from Iraq	Female	16	Citizen as long as she remembers
2) Tara	18, Kurdish from Iraq	Female	15	Citizen as long as she remembers
3) Yousef	21, Iraqi	Male	9-10	Citizen for 3 years

Group 2: Group 2 consists of respondents who stayed in Sweden between three to seven years

Name	Age and origin	Gender	Years in Sweden	Legal status in Sweden
4) Mifleh	19, Palestinian	Male	6	Citizen for 3 years
5) Amr	18, Palestinian from Syria	Male	Almost 4	Citizen for 1,5 years
6) Hamza	19, Syrian	Male	4	Permanent residency
7) Noora	19, Syrian	Female	Almost 4	Citizen (not mentioned how long)
8) Adam	18, Iraqi	Male	5	Citizen (not mentioned how long)

Group 3: Group 3 consists of respondents who stayed in Sweden less than three years

Name	Age and origin	Gender	Years in Sweden	Legal status in Sweden
9) May	18, Syrian	Female	2	Temporary residency
10) Hashem	19, Syrian	Male	Almost 2	Permanent residency
11) Ammar	18, Syrian	Male	1	Permanent residency
12) Hanan	18, Syrian	Female	Almost 2	Permanent residency