Obstacles in the Process of Refugee Integration in Culturally and Politically Homogeneous Swedish and Danish Welfare States

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ABSTRACT

Obstacles in the Process of Refugee Integration in Culturally and Politically Homogeneous Swedish and Danish Welfare States

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This thesis studies the process of refugee integration into Scandinavian welfare states, which are overwhelmed by the recent refugee crisis. Scandinavian countries are known as humanitarian superpowers because they have assisted a large number of refugees in the past, and their generous welfare system has attracted more refugees to resettle there. After gathering and evaluating both quantitative and qualitative data of the chosen cases—Sweden and Denmark—it can be concluded that the in these two welfare states, refugees and also other types of immigrants have not been culturally, socially, and economically integrated well. It also contrasts Sweden with Denmark, indicating that the Danish laws passed to dissuade asylum seekers have blocked the number of asylum seekers since 2015. After examining theories on assimilation, integration, welfare state and citizenship, this thesis concludes that instead of being beneficial for refugees, the welfare system in these two countries is actually one of the biggest obstacles that prevents refugees from being well integrated into the Swedish and Danish society. Other obstacles, such as anti-
immigrant policies and xenophobic public attitudes, also slow down the process of refugee integration in Swedish and Danish welfare states.
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 The Big Question: How to Integrate Refugees in Scandinavian Welfare States?

Migration is not a new phenomenon in modern times, and the movement of refugees, as a special type of migration, has also been seen in the past. Starting from 2011, however, the scale of the refugee movement has become larger and larger, making some of the refugee receiving countries overwhelmed. The on-going armed conflicts in Syria and the instabilities in other parts of the Middle East and North Africa have generated millions of displaced persons in the past few years. Because of the proximity of Europe, refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa often choose European countries as their destinations. Europe, as a continent that has relatively less experience with immigration, has a limited capacity on receiving and integrating refugees. The recent peak of the refugee crisis in 2015 has posed a great challenge for many European Union member states.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), independent countries have no legal obligation to resettle refugees, and accepting refugees is a “demonstration of generosity on the part of governments” (UNHCR). Many of the European states are signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention that “defines the term ‘refugee’ and outlines the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them” (UNHCR). After the recent wave of the refugee crisis hit, European countries have helped resettle significant numbers of refugees. Without adequate experience with assisting refugees, the recent large inflow of refugees is shaking Europe. Among all the refugee-receiving European
Union (EU) countries, Scandinavian welfare states seem to be popular destinations for refugees because of their generous welfare system.

A welfare state is defined as “[a] concept of government in which the state or a well-established network of social institutions plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of citizens” (Britannica). It seems that the welfare system adopted by Scandinavian countries is ideal for refugees since they have the access to social benefits immediately after their asylums are approved through the immigration system. This paper chooses to focus on two of the Scandinavian welfare countries—Sweden and Denmark. Both countries are typical welfare states and they each have accepted a significant number of refugees in the past several decades. Yet, there are also differences between the two countries in terms of their ability to receive refugees and their responses to the recent refugee crisis. Since they are both typical Scandinavian welfare states, the findings and conclusions of this paper can be also applied to other Scandinavian welfare states, such as Norway.

The number of asylum seekers dropped significantly after 2015 in Sweden and Denmark as well as in other European nations, partially because the policies regarding refugees have been changed to deter refugees. In 2016, 6,235 asylum applications were submitted in Denmark but in 2017, the number of people seeking asylum drops to a little over 3,000 (Bendixen). In Sweden, the number of asylum seekers dropped from 162,877 in 2015, to 25,666 in 2017 (Swedish Migration Agency). Even though the number declined significantly, both countries still have more refugees than they can sustain. Denmark and Sweden, two humanitarian superpowers, have been overwhelmed with the large influx of newcomers, shifting from a friendly and welcoming attitude towards outsiders to a staunchly anti-immigration sentiment. Since the newcomers are already present in Denmark and Sweden, the governments face only two choices: repatriate
refugees or integrate them. Compared to repatriation, which is costly and generally thought to be inhumane, establishing a more robust integration system would be a better solution since it is more practical and efficient.

Integration is a multifaceted process that can be measured in several different ways—culturally, socially and economically. As a special type of migrant, a refugee is a forcibly displaced person who does not have enough time to prepare before leaving his or her home countries. Therefore, few of them are able to speak the language of the host country once they get there, creating a huge barrier in their integration process. Without the knowledge of the language and the experience of having lived there, it is unlikely for refugees to know what their host countries are like culturally. Cultural shock is inevitable. Furthermore, in terms of the next generation, refugee children, who have relocated to the host country with or without their families, need to continue their education in a completely new country with different language and culture. Once they enter the local educational system, it is likely that they will be assimilated since they learn what local children learn, creating a cultural gap between them and their immigrant parents. In the case of Sweden and Denmark, where Christianity is the dominant religion, Muslim refugees face another to integration. Even more as religion is still tied closely to politics in both countries.

Economically, the seemingly generous welfare system in Sweden and Denmark, however, is an exclusive system that it is harder for outsiders like refugees to integrate well under the system because they have to fulfill requirements like having a decent job and paying taxes to acquire more social benefits. Coming from another country, it is often hard for refugees to find decent jobs in host countries because they may not have the language sufficiency or recognizable professional certificates recognized by host countries. Even though refugees can
still have access to some social benefits without having decent jobs and paying taxes, in the long run, they will be marginalized by the welfare system. With increasing numbers of newcomers, the lack of social solidarity gradually makes welfare states stray from the welfare principle of providing social benefits for all citizens. In welfare states like these two, even citizenship does not necessarily mean full inclusion.

How do relatively homogeneous Scandinavian welfare states integrate refugees well culturally, socially and economically? After acquiring extensive information of refugee integration on two typical cases—Sweden and Denmark, the paper identifies obstacles that block the integration of refugees in Scandinavian welfare states. After examining what has been done, ultimately, this paper will propose what should also have been done as several possible mitigations to the current crisis.

1.2 Methodology

This paper uses case studies as the main methodology to approach the question because “with the capacity to tailor approaches, case study designs can address a wide range of questions that ask why, what, and how of an issue and assist researchers to explore, explain, describe, evaluate, and theorize about complex issues in context” (Harrison et al.). In this case, the paper asks why the refugee crisis is happening, what is the refugee crisis, and how to solve the crisis. After examining the examples and some political and sociological theories, this paper combines both to make some possible mitigations for the current crisis.

This paper starts with defining the case. The research mainly focuses on matters related to refugees. The topic of refugees, however, is very broad and vague. Then, the paper narrows down the topic by creating boundaries that limit the topic to the study of the most recent refugee
crisis in Europe. After that, this paper starts to develop points of interest, followed by research questions, and ultimately identifies the focus and refines the boundaries of the paper. The points of interests are clear: refugees, the process of integration, and Scandinavian welfare states. The research question is generated according to the points of interests: how to integrate refugees in Scandinavian welfare states. In terms of focus, this paper emphasizes on structural frames like policies, welfare systems and citizenship that either or work for or limit refugee integration. In terms of choosing cases, this paper uses multiple case sampling. It focuses on Sweden and Denmark because not only are these two countries typical Scandinavian welfare states, there are also differences between the policies and the integration processes of the two countries. It is essential to get different information from different yet similar countries in order to generate theories and methods that can be applied to other cases.

The second step is data collecting, including both quantitative and qualitative data. Due to some practical reasons, as the researcher and the writer of this paper, I am not able to travel to Sweden and Denmark, so there is no data in this paper from observations or interviews. Since there is no fieldwork data collection, this paper has to rely on what is available from secondary sources. In order to minimize the inaccuracies, this paper has gathered most of its quantitative and qualitative data from reliable websites such as the United Nations official websites and some government-run websites like the Swedish Migration Agency. Some of the information, such as the incidents that happened in Sweden and Denmark which this paper includes are from well-known and relatively reliable news sources like Cable News Network (CNN), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Washington Post, while others are from local news sources like the Swedish Newspaper The Local. In order to complete the research goals of this paper, I made the assumption that the UN websites, the government-run websites and media
sources are all accurate so that all the data this paper uses are as precise and up to date as possible, even though it is possible that bias exists when these websites and media sources collected their data.

After collecting data, this paper presents and examines theories that relate to refugees, integration, welfare states and citizenship. This is done by doing literature review and researching existing theories. Some of the theories can be applied to both countries while some cannot. With the data collected and the theories examined, this paper analyzes the refugee situation of both countries in depth from perspectives of economics, policies, political climate and religion. By doing so, this paper is able to identify what is currently working for refugees and what is not. Since the purpose of this research is to study integration of refugees in Scandinavian welfare states, some suggestions are made to mitigate what currently is not working.

1.3 What is a Refugee?

A refugee is a special type of migrant. Unlike economic migrants seeking a better life, refugees are forced to leave their home. After World War I, millions of people were forcibly displaced because of the violence of the war. The number of people seeking refuge also dramatically increased after World War II. The international community sought guidelines and legal frameworks to assist refugees to ensure that their human rights were protected. The 1951 Refugee Convention held in Geneva, which was later amended by the 1967 Protocol, consolidated previous international instruments relating to refugees and clearly defined a refugee as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a
particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR). By this definition, refugees are migrants who always cross state borders and are different from internal displaced persons (IDP), who are also seeking refuge but within their home countries. Resettlement is defined as “the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement” (UNHCR). The UNHCR partners with countries including the United States and the Nordic countries, relocating refugees to these partner countries. A refugee who is relocated by the UNHCR to a third country is called quota refugee. Partner countries that participate in the resettlement program take in certain number of refugees from the UNHCR each year. Refugees are slightly different from asylum seekers: asylum seekers are actively seeking international protection and whose claims have not yet been approved by the hosting country. In other words, not every asylum seeker will become a refugee, but all refugees are initially asylum seekers. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are currently 65.6 million forcibly displaced people worldwide. Among those people, 22.5 million are refugees and more than half of them are under the age of 18 (UNHCR).

After refugees settle down in the host country, they tend to stay there permanently rather than temporarily. Permanent settlement for immigrants arriving in European nations was however unexpected. In the past thirty years, however, Europe has surprisingly become a multi-ethnic continent. This demographic change has resulted in various unintended consequences. Before the guest worker program started in the 1970s, European nations were relatively culturally homogeneous and did not expect to receive big waves of migrants arriving in Europe. The legal frameworks that European states developed after World War II fall into two categories: colonial migration regimes and “temporary” guest worker policies. In the mid-50s, most European countries experienced a high level of labor shortages due to demographic decline
caused by WWII and the post-war economic. Europe’s former colonial powers including the Great Britain, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands had their former colonies as their labor resources. Other continental European countries such as Germany and Sweden, sought workers from Southern Europe, North Africa, the Balkans and Turkey. For example, the German government negotiated guest-worker schemes with many other countries. Ideally, those guest workers would come to Germany to work until they were no longer needed and then they would return home. By the early 1970s, as the economic development slowed down, most of the guest workers in Germany as well as in other European nations lost their jobs. Instead of returning home as planned, however, many of the guest workers unexpectedly chose to stay in Europe (Hansen 26). The “temporary” guest-worker program essentially turned into a permanent immigration program. The legal frameworks for the colonial and the guest worker immigration policies were unable to accommodate the current dramatic increase of refugees and asylum seekers entering Europe. When no European states have thought that the immigration to Europe could be permanent, Randall Hansen warns that “temporary immigration will almost assuredly become permeant. This is as true for asylum seekers at is for ‘guest workers’” (31). After 2015, it has been seen that there were less refugees entering Europe, but refugee repatriation has never been a trend.

1.4 The Refugee Crisis in Europe

The number of forcibly displaced individual reached a record of 65.3 million worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or human rights violations in 2015 (UNHCR). Violence and natural disasters in the Middle East and Africa continue to force people to flee their homes and seek refuge in Europe. In 2015 alone, over one million irregular migrants
including refugees from Syria, Africa and South Asia have arrived in Europe, escaping conflicts in their home countries or in search of better economic prospects (UNHCR). With the continuing conflict in the Syria Arab Republic and Iraq, there are still people seeking refuge in Europe after 2015. The EU has granted 333,350 asylums in 2015, an increase of 72% compared with the year before. The largest group of refugees were from Syria, followed by citizens of Eritrea and citizens of Iraq. Among all the EU states, in 2015, Germany has granted the most protection status, followed by Sweden, Italy and France (Eurostat). The dramatic increase in arrival of asylum-seekers brought about a number of practical challenges. Thousands of people are in need of temporary accommodation and legal assistance.

The routes to Europe are extremely dangerous. In September 2015, the image of a three-year-old Alan Kurdi, a Syrian boy whose body washed up on a Turkish beach moved millions of people around the world, raising awareness how dangerous seafaring migrating routes could be. Refugees from Africa often choose to cross the Mediterranean Sea to enter Europe through Italy, Greece, Spain, Malta or Cyprus. Drowning in the Mediterranean, however, happens very often. Thousands of people have lost their lives during their attempt to enter Europe by sea. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in 2014 alone, 3,279 people lost their lives when crossing the Mediterranean to seek refuge in Europe; that number increased to 3,770 in 2015. In 2016, 390,432 people are known to have made it to Europe, and 5,143 were reported to be dead or missing. The number of fatalities decreased in 2017, but still there were 3,116 people lost their lives when crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Since the beginning of 2018, 12,729 people have arrived in Europe through various transit routes across Africa, Asia or the Middle east, and 442 were dead or missing during the first two months of 2018 (IOM). Besides the
Mediterranean route, route by land can also be fatal. On August 28, 2015, 71 refugees and migrants died in a refrigeration truck near the Austrian border with Hungary (Spindler).

Recently, an unprecedented wave of refugees surprised the European Union, leaving the EU countries little time to come up with efficient responses. The Dublin Regulation, created as a European Union (EU) law in 2003, determines which EU member state is responsible for examining an asylum application, which usually is the country where the asylum seeker first enters the EU (European Commission). By far, it is the first and the only EU-wide law relating to the matter of refugee. The Dublin Regulation, created long before the year of 2015, however, has been greatly challenged since the refugee crisis amplified. Countries along the Mediterranean Coast and those on the east front of the Schengen Area are geographically convenient places for refugees to enter as their first entry points. According to the Dublin Regulation, countries like Italy, Spain and Hungary, which sit on the periphery of the Schengen Area, must accommodate many more refugees than other EU countries because they are often the first point of entry. On the other hand, Britain, which was still a member of the EU when the refugee crisis hit, received fewer refugees due to its unique geography that it is separated from the continent of Europe by the English Strait. Popular first entry countries like Italy, Greece and Hungary were extremely overwhelmed by increasing waves of incoming refugees since 2015. They simply did not have sufficient resources to assist so many displaced people.

In July 2015, the EU established the Emergency Relocation Mechanism was established to ensure that the responsibility of assisting refugees was shared more equally among member states. The Relocation System allows “transfer of persons who are in need of international protection from one EU Member State to another EU Member State” (European Commission). The number refugees each EU Member States should take is based on several criteria, such as
the size of the nation’s population, its total GDP, its average number of asylum applications over the previous four years, and the nation’s unemployment rate (European Commission). The three frontier EU countries—Italy, Greece and Hungary—finally got the chance to alleviate their burdens. In November 2015, the first relocations from Greece started, resettling six refugee families from Syria and Iraq to Luxembourg. By September 2017, 29,144 asylum-seekers were relocated throughout the system by September 2017, and the UNHCR called for the EU Relocation Scheme to continue (UNHCR).

The European Union has never fully developed a unified immigration or refugee resettlement and integration system. Each EU member state has its own laws and mechanisms relating to refugees. After refugees are assigned to settle in a host country, they are more politicized than when they were in the international humanitarian system. As Young Hoon Song explains, “international humanitarian agencies seek to be genuinely nonpolitical, to be ‘other oriented’, for the benefit of persons of concern, whereas governments strongly tend to prioritize strategic and partisan goals” (Song 5). Unlike on the international level, where international agencies are solely there to help refugees, host countries often have other interests that precedes helping with refugee resettlement. In the process of refugee resettlement, governments in those receiving countries play essential roles in both the reception and the integration of refugees. Immigration policies, made by the national governments essentially regulate how many newcomers they will accept. After receiving the new settlers, the integration and citizen processes are also regulated by state governments under nationality laws (Joppke 130). As forced migrants, refugees are more vulnerable than other types of immigrants. If their host countries cannot provide sufficient support to assist them properly, there is no other accessible help available except if they are willing to leave for another country for help.
The Schengen Agreement, initially signed in 1985 by only five countries—France, Germany, Belgium, Luxemburg, and Netherlands—validated the long existing concept of free movement among countries in Europe. As more European states signed the agreement, the Schengen Area finally took hold in 1995, with seven member countries participating. So far, 26 member states exist within the Schengen area. Unrestricted movement of people, goods, services and capital occur constantly within the Schengen borders. Since the refugee crisis began, the model of the Schengen Area has been greatly challenged. Once refugees are admitted to one Schengen member state, they have the ability to move to other Schengen countries, making it hard for the governments to keep track on them. Since there are no unified refugee laws or mechanisms within the EU regarding refugees, each member state has its own legislation on refugee reception. Some Schengen Member States, such as Sweden and Denmark, start to check refugees’ identification documents when they enter their countries from other Schengen countries, violating the no-border concept supported by the Schengen Agreement.

1.5 The Importance of Studying the Refugee Integration

It is extremely important to study how to integrate refugees in Europe, especially in Northern Europe because most countries there run a unique welfare system and are culturally homogeneous. The data presented in previous sections clearly shows how the recent refugee crisis has impacted Europe and how Europe responded to the crisis. It has already affected millions of people—both refugees and local European people. Even though, the number of refugees entering Europe has decreased significantly after the crisis peaked in 2015, the cumulated number of refugees in Europe will not decrease since many studies show that migrants, especially refugees tend to stay permanently in the receiving countries: “a mounting
proportion of the new refugees appeared destined to linger on indefinitely, unable either to return to their country of origin or to find a permanent haven” (Zolberg 415). Since refugees and other types of immigrants tend to stay permanently after they settle down, multiculturalism in Europe is inevitable in the future. In order to incorporate multiculturalism well, the very first step is to study how to integrate, instead of assimilate, refugees and other types of migrants. This paper focuses on refugees because they are a special type of migrants who are different and more vulnerable than other types.

Having different cultural backgrounds and experiences, refugees are very different from the local people in the countries they are settling down. Many things that have been existed for a long period are greatly challenged. For example, welfare system has been functioning well for decades and has made Scandinavian countries prosper, but after the refugee crisis hit, the exclusiveness of the system fails to include all the new comers, resulting in economic failure and inequality that will eventually lead to social instability. Unemployment among refugees and other types of immigrants is also a serious problem. It is hard for a refugee to find a decent job in his or her hosting country because there are numerous obstacles like language and skill sets. A refugee may be a doctor in his or her home country, but since he or she do not speak the new language well, or his or her professional credits are not recognized, he or she cannot work as a doctor again. A comprehensive career transitioning program is in need. Besides the job market, the education systems in Europe are also challenged by the refugee crisis. There were over 90,000 unaccompanied minors, along with children who flee with their families, settling down in Europe in 2015 alone. More than half of the unaccompanied minors were from Afghanistan (Eurostat). Coming from another country, speaking a different language, it is difficult for refugee children to adapt to the current education systems in Europe. Even though the current education
systems work well under the culturally homogeneous condition, new policies are needed to accommodate refugee children’s needs to better integrate them than assimilate them.

Additionally, even though there are numerous problems with integrating the large number of new comers, Europe essentially needs immigrants. One of the problems Europe has now is a declining and aging populations. Accepting and integrating more immigrants into the society may be one of the mitigations. It is important to know not only what refugee needs, but also what refugees can offer. Many of the refugees are highly educated and skilled, but their foreign degrees and certificates may not be recognized in their host countries, leading them to do basic non-skill jobs. Plus, it is too optimistic to say that wars and other types of armed conflicts can be eliminated completely from the world, so there is always a possibility that similar types of refugee crisis will happen again sometime somewhere in the future. If the majority of the problems can be analyzed and solved this time, it will set a great precedent for the future so that solving similar problems will be easier.

Among all EU Member States, Sweden and Denmark are particularly interesting because of their generous welfare system—a system that focuses more on the membership rather than citizenship. This paper will focus on the cases in these two model welfare countries, examining their current refugee policies and integration process. The current anti-immigration policies and attitudes in these two countries not only fail to stop new settlers coming in, but also create more problems. Therefore, governments should develop new integration policies not only to make the integration process easier for refugees, but also to lead the public attitudes toward immigrants to a more welcoming direction.

1.6 Theoretical Framework
As has been stated earlier, the “big question” of this paper is how to integrate refugee in Scandinavian welfare states. In order to explore and give an answer to this question eventually, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the term “integration”. The Migration Policy Institute defines integration as “the process of economic mobility and social inclusion for newcomers and their children” (MPI). Uprooted from another society, it is important for refugees and other types of immigrants to find a comfortable position in the host society. Immigrants with distinctive backgrounds, however, cannot be easily integrated into the local population.

There are different types of integration. While some countries adopt multiculturalism as their integration model, other countries focus on assimilation. Multiculturalism is defined as “the view that cultures, races, and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve special acknowledgement of their differences within a dominant political culture” (Eagan). While still keeping the mainstream culture in a society mainstream, and instead of forcing minority groups to abandon their own cultural backgrounds and take on the culture of the host society, the host society recognizes and respects the differences of minority groups. Canada is a good example of multiculturalism, as it is mainly an English speaking country while it recognizes and respect a small group of French descendants living in Quebec by making both English and French its official languages.

Assimilation, with no single definition, is a term that has evolved many theories throughout history. The basic idea of assimilation is to make immigrants and minority groups to abandon their cultures and fully integrate into the “mainstream” culture. It is a term that fell out of use because of it was seen as ethnocentric, but later was revived to illustrate more complex processes of immigrant integration. In a later section, this paper presents assimilation theories of Richard Alba and Victor Nee, Peter Kvisto and Thomas Faist, and earlier theories proposed by
Robert Park and Milton M. Gordons. Later, Min Zhou and Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco also complicate the theories of assimilation further by developing the idea of segmented assimilation, which suggests that immigrants and their children will assimilate into different segments of the host society (Zhou).

Integration is not easy to be measured because, besides a lack of relevant statistics, it is a multifaceted social phenomenon that is difficult to quantify. In general, as has been discussed earlier, integration can be measured in three dimensions: culturally, socially, and economically. According to the Council of Europe (COE), there are indicators that can be used to determine whether integration is successful or not. Positive indicators such as immigrant employment rate and their average salary can show how successfully immigrants are being integrated economically. Likewise, negative indicators, such as violent incidents and dense spatial concentration (i.e. the formation of immigrants’ ethnic enclaves), indicate the failures in cultural and social integration (COE).

Integration into the relatively homogeneous Scandinavian welfare states is even more difficult than in other countries. Similar to what Britannica’s definition, which emphasizes on the governments’ role of taking care of their citizens, a welfare state can be defined as “a social system in which the government assumes responsibility for the well-being of citizens by making sure that people have access to basic resources such as housing, health care, education, and employment” (Crossman). According to the two definitions, the welfare system is a social contract between governments and citizens in which governments play essential roles in providing social benefits to their citizens. These definitions, however, omit the fact that citizens also have to contribute significantly in order to have access to state-sponsored benefits. In those countries, however, citizenship does not guarantee full inclusion. The welfare system has been
working well in Scandinavian countries for so long, but it is only because they have little experience as immigrant-receiving countries and have remained largely homogeneous. In the past several decades, however, Scandinavian welfare states have accepted a significant number of refugees as well as other types of immigrants, significantly challenging their welfare. It is not an easy path for refugees, who are forcibly displaced, to acquire citizenship in welfare states. Even if refugees and other types of immigrants are eventually granted citizenship, without sufficient language or technical skills, they can remain economically excluded by the welfare system, which is a contribution-based system and provides to citizens in proportion to their contributions.

1.7 The Outline of the Chapters

After presenting the “big question” and having chosen case study as the methodology of the paper, the next Chapter Two and Three will present two cases in Northern Europe comparing how Denmark and Sweden, two culturally homogenous Scandinavian countries, have been impacted and responded to the refugee crisis, and what their integration systems look like. They are particularly interesting and unique cases in Europe because both of them are typical Scandinavian welfare states and neither nation has had extensive experience with immigrants besides the experience with guest workers in 1970s. Both of Sweden and Denmark are among the first signatories of the 1951 Refugee Convention, showing their welcoming attitude towards refugees. Although refugees from countries like Somalia and Bosnia in the 1990s found their way to Sweden and Denmark, these two countries had little experience with pluralism. After 2015, however, in response to the dramatic increase of refugees from the Middle East and especially, Syria, public attitudes shifted towards more populist, anti-refugee sentiment, bringing
forth domestic laws aimed at deterring rather than welcome newcomers. Integration without assimilation is not easy in these two culturally homogenous states, and government-sponsored assimilation programs for refugees are not popular among native-born citizens.

In addition, there were violent incidents involving refugees happening in both countries, creating tensions between local people and refugees and making integration even more difficult. Both Denmark and Sweden are known as humanitarian superpowers because of their generous humanitarian aid they have provided to refugees from various countries such as Somalia and Bosnia in the 1990s. After the refugee crisis peaked in 2015, however, “Scandinavian countries, like other countries in Europe, have expressed increasing concern about the scale of the influx of migrants seeking to reach prosperous Northern European countries known for their generous welfare systems and for relatively welcoming attitudes” (Bilefsky). Immigration matters are always politicized. Such a large number of refugees coming into Denmark and Sweden, it is inevitable that policies related to refugees are closely connected to the politics in both countries.

Chapter Four will first introduce theories of migration and specifically, of refugees. It goes in depth on where refugees are from, how they become refugees, and how they usually migrate. After that, it examines theories on assimilation and integration that apply to all types of immigrants including refugees. Then, it goes on to explore the theme of welfare system and citizenship—what role the welfare system and the meaning of citizenship play in Scandinavian welfare states. The generous welfare system is somewhat deceiving to refugees because it does provide social welfare to those who are members of the system who work and pay taxes. In welfare states, citizenship has a different meaning than in other states. In welfare states, citizenship does provide political rights, but it may not necessarily offer the same level of civil rights since it is more of a membership system among presumable like-minded individuals.
Lastly, the trends in Europe suggest more nations are shifting towards multiculturalism while religion and ethnicity of refugees remains politicalized during their entry and integration processes. Populist right-wing political parties are on the rise in Scandinavian welfare states, worsening the political climate for refugees and other types of immigrants.

After comparing and contrasting Sweden and Denmark, the final chapter presents findings on what factors are blocking refugees’ processes of being integrated. After that, the paper recommends several possible mitigations, including establishing efficient job training programs and forming an innovative host family program, to counter economic isolation and xenophobia. Current job training programs in both countries have numerous problems, including matching refugee’s skills with jobs. For example, refugees who were once lawyers in their home country, but their degrees and certificates may not be recognized in the new country. Besides, the lack of sufficient language training makes it harder for refugees to continue their previous careers in host countries. Therefore, refugees may only take those jobs that do not require a lot of skills or language skills. The last thought of establishing a host family program is rather innovative. Effectively communicating with local people not only helps refugees to improve their language skills, but also introduces them the local culture and customs, accelerating their adaptiveness to the new living environment. Meanwhile, intensive communication can also be informative for local people, getting to know more culture about their new neighbors in the community.
Chapter Two: Case Study—Sweden

2.1 History of Immigration in Sweden

Sweden has historically received a large number of asylum seekers. Sweden is also a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its protocol in 1967, accepting both quota refugees and refugees arriving at the border. Sweden is also the first country in Europe to grant permanent residence permits to asylum seekers from Syria. In 2015 alone, Sweden has received 160,000 asylum applicants including more than 35,000 unaccompanied minors, and it was the largest number of applicants per capita in the European Union (almost 2% of the total population) (Hofverberg). Swedish government provides asylum seekers with monetary aids, health care, schooling and housing. As there were increasing numbers of refugees, however, housing became insufficient, resulting in bad situations like refugees spending nights outside without any shelter. Today, Sweden is considered to be a culturally and ethnically homogenous country, in which immigrants are such a portion of the entire population. When the refugee crisis peaked in 2015, however, Sweden’s attitude towards refugees shifted from welcoming to somewhat anti-refugee.

Unlike what is happening today, emigration is used to be the trend in Sweden. There was a great emigration of 1.3 million Swedes leaving Sweden between the mid-1800s and 1930 because of poverty, religious persecution, lack of hope of the future, lack of political freedom and gold rushes. Not until the end of the World War II, Sweden shifted from being an emigration country to an immigration country. During and after the war, refugees from Germany, the Baltics
and other Nordic countries had moved to and settled down in Sweden. According to the theory that refugees tend to stay permanently in the hosting country, many of the refugees, especially those from the Baltics, remained in Sweden.

After the war, there were not enough laborers in Sweden. Instead of having labor migrants from other Nordic countries, Sweden got labor workers mainly from Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey. Because of the change to be an immigration country, the Swedish Immigration Board (renamed to the Swedish Migration Agency later), which would be in charge of immigration and integration, was founded on July 1, 1969. As a result, immigration started to be regulated at the end of the 1960s. The Immigration Board and labor market parties would assess labor market together. During the time that Sweden was short of labor force, the Immigration Board grant residence permits to foreign workers. There were a few categories of immigrants that did not need to go through the labor market assessment: citizens of other Nordic countries, family members of Swedish citizens, and refugees. After five years of living in Sweden, immigrants would have the chance to apply for Swedish citizenship.

Starting from 1980s, the number of asylum seekers began to rise significantly. In 1985, the Swedish Immigration Board started to take the responsibility of the reception of asylum seekers from the labor market authorities, handling the flood of asylum seekers coming from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and Eritrea. More asylum seekers from Somalia, Kosovo, and former Soviet Union block nations arrived in Sweden towards the end of 1980s. As the number of the asylum seekers increased, the waiting periods to get a decision became longer and longer, and increasing numbers of asylum applications were rejected.

Beginning in 1990, the asylum seekers’ country of origin changed from Lebanon, Eritrea, and other countries to Yugoslavia, as the ethnic cleansing and violence broke out in the Balkans.
A little over 100,000 people from former Yugoslavia, mainly Bosnians, settled down in Sweden. The number dropped in the following years, but rose again in 2000. Towards the end of 1990s, Sweden became one of several countries to participate in a joint action with UNHCR to evacuate 3,600 Kosovo Albanians from Macedonia to Sweden. It is important to point out that while Sweden has never expected refugees to stay in Sweden permanently, this joint action intended to provide Kosovo-Albanian refugees with temporary protection, and they would return home after their homeland was safe. In 1997, there were more restrictions on family reunions, resulting in fewer immigrants coming to Sweden because of family reunification.

As increasing numbers of asylum seekers entered Sweden, more problems have occurred. Many asylum seekers entered the country without identification or travel documents, making the process of applying for asylum incredibly difficult. Fewer and fewer cases led to a residence permit because many asylum seekers lacked documentation, and later many of them were even denied entry before they could enter Sweden. Sweden became a member of the Schengen area in 2001, which has an open-border policy between other Schengen countries (Swedish Migration Agency).

In conclusion, before the recent refugee crisis peaked in 2015, Sweden did have some experience with accepting refugees. The trend shows that the more refugees entering in Scandinavia, however, the tighter immigration policies became. Therefore, it is not surprising that Sweden also tightened its borders and passed tougher immigration laws in response to the refugee crisis.

2.2 Sweden’s Responses to the Refugee Crisis
According to a fact sheet published by the Swedish Ministry of Justice in February 2018, the Swedish government has been generously taking tremendous responsibilities to assist asylum seekers and refugees (Regeringskansliet). It is undeniable that Sweden has been doing its part to receive refugees over the past few years. Massive waves of refugees entering into Sweden, however, have overwhelmed the previously humanitarian superpower. Since 2015, the peak of the refugee crisis, Sweden has made a series of changes to its open-door welcoming refugee policies, making it more difficult for asylum seekers to enter and obtain refugee status in Sweden. Government officials of Sweden stated clearly that they would not want new refugees coming in: “in November 2015, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Deputy Prime Minister Åsa Romson announced to assembled reports that Sweden was no longer capable of receiving further asylum seekers” (Fratzke). It was a hard and inhumane decision to make, but in reality it was the lack of capability to assist refugees that forced the government to make such decisions.

In response to the refugee crisis in 2015, the Swedish government adopted temporary border controls such as setting up an ID check on the Öresund Bridge, which connects Copenhagen in Denmark and Malmo in Sweden, as well as other ports in December 2015 in response to the large inflow of refugees. Since then, persons who are not Swedish citizens arriving at the Swedish border have to present valid identification documents issued by their home governments (Regeringskansliet). The measure was essentially violating the Schengen Agreement, which allowed people travel freely within the Schengen Zone. Many asylum seekers do not have their identification documents with them since they did not have enough time to prepare before they left their home countries, making them impossible to enter Sweden. An estimated 20,000 regular commuters cross the Öresund Bridge daily, and they were irritated by
the ID check because it significantly slowed down their travel (BBC News). Even though the ID check ended in May 2017, the temporary border controls were extended at certain ports in Skåne and Västra Götaland, and it is currently effective until May 11, 2018 (Regeringskansliet).

In parallel to the border controls, there were also changes relating to the Swedish asylum and reception systems. Another temporary act relating to Sweden’s asylum policies was introduced on July 20, 2016, putting limitations on family reunification and only granting temporary residence permits to people who were eligible (Fratzke). Under the new act, most asylum seekers would get temporary residency instead of permanent residency. Quota refugees who were relocated by the UNHCR were not affected by this new act. An amendment to this temporary act, which came in effect in July 2017, grants school-age young people residence permits so that they are able to continue their education in Sweden (Regeringskansliet).

All the measures taken by the government to deter refugees may have gradually led to public hostility towards refugees and sometimes to other types of immigrants as well. Tensions between refugees and the local population have grown, resulting in stigmatization and even violent incidents. Also, these new changes greatly limit refugees and asylum seekers’ ability to work, and therefore, it is hard for them to become self-sufficient and their integration process is seriously slowed down.

2.3 Tensions

Like other types of immigrants, refugees are often blamed for the rise in crime rates, even though in Sweden the crime rates in 2015 was roughly the same level as ten years before. As a Swedish official website points out, “people from foreign backgrounds are 2.5 times more likely to be suspected of crimes than people born in Sweden to Swedish-born parents”
In the past few years, as increasing numbers of immigrants and specifically, refugees, arrive in Sweden, several violent incidents caused by immigrants have caught the attention of the public, stimulating anti-immigrant sentiment. The negative incidents gradually alter both the government and the general public’s attitudes, leaving immigrants, especially refugees and asylum seekers, vulnerable.

In 2013, large scale riots flared for a week in the Husby area, a neighborhood west of the Swedish capital, Stockholm, with gangs setting fires to schools and a police station. The riot raised the attention and the national debate about “immigration, unemployment and social inequality” since the incident had happened in an immigrant-concentrated neighborhood (Evans). In August 2015, two people were stabbed to death inside an IKEA in Vasteras. Police arrested two men in connection with the crime. Both of them were asylum seekers from Eritrea, and were living in Arboga (Hellerud). In January 2016, a 22-year-old woman was stabbed to death by a 15-year-old asylum seeker at the asylum center where she worked (Pawle). Like the riot had 2013, another incident happened in February 2017 also in another predominantly immigrant neighborhood, Rinkeby.

It is important to point out that media sources can be biased. Since immigration and matters related to refugees and asylum seekers are highly political, some of the narratives on certain media platforms serve political purposes, exaggerating what has really happened and misleading the public’s attitudes. Comments and statements from authoritative public figures are also influential. The President of the United States, Donald Trump, made a public comment after the riot, blaming migrants for the crimes: “[Sweden] took [immigrants] in large numbers. They’re having problems like they never thought possible” (Watson and Said-Moorhouse). There was clearly a disconnection between the public opinion and what the officials were saying. Most
people in Sweden were not even sure about what Trump was talking about. Even though Trump’s statement left many Swedish residents puzzled about exactly what he meant, news reports from some media platforms on crime incidents caused by immigrants and statements from authorities like this would gradually stimulate hatred towards immigrants and refugees among local Swedish people.

In Sweden, there are so-called “no-go zones” where gangs gather and the crime rates are high. According to a Swedish official website, “in a report published in June 2017, the Swedish Police Authority identified 61 areas around the country that have become increasingly marred by crime, social unrest and insecurity. Of these 61 areas, 23 are considered to be particularly vulnerable” (Regeringskansliet). Most of these “no-go” zones are populated by immigrants from all kinds of backgrounds. Immigrants are unfairly blamed for the relatively higher crime rates in those areas. The cause of the incidents is multifaceted and stems from both media representation and the government failure to properly integrate refugees. Immigrants tend to live together, being isolated from the rest of the society. Because they come from distinctively different cultural backgrounds, sometimes it is extremely difficult for them to enter the Swedish society without marginalization. Living there but not actually being integrated into the society, immigrants are marginalized. In addition, the rising inequality because of the unemployment and the lack of education, along with marginalization as another cause, eventually led to those riots.

The most recent change to the open-door policy on refugees shows obvious anti-immigration sentiment. Instead of blaming on immigrants, the government and local communities should take more responsibilities and more effective integration measures. Blame can only stimulate more hatred towards immigrants and strengthen the problem rather than solve it.
Chapter Three: Case Study—Denmark

3.1 Immigration History of Denmark

Unlike Sweden, which has experienced more emigration than immigration in its history, Denmark also has experienced continuous immigration of groups and individuals from different parts of Europe during the past six centuries. The trend of immigration back then was that most immigrants were invited to come to Denmark to work or to improve the economy in Denmark. In the early 16th century, a group of Dutch farmers moved to Denmark and settled down there. In the 17th Century, under the rule of King Christian IV, who wanted immigrants to improve Danish economics, Jews from several European countries also migrated to Denmark. Between the mid-17th and the mid-19th century, due to the proximity, there was a constant inflow of German immigrants, who have left a longstanding cultural and economic impact, entering Denmark between. From the mid-19th century to World War I, unskilled laborers from Poland, Germany, and Sweden were invited by the Danish government to work in the agricultural sector harvesting potatoes and working in the turnip fields. After a few generations, these groups of immigrants were successfully assimilated into Danish culture, although some of their original characteristics such as religion are still distinguishable today.

Starting from 1952, after signing a passport union that allowed for the free movement of people with Sweden, Finland, and Norway, citizens of these Nordic countries could choose to work in Denmark and they were granted access to social benefits. When Denmark joined the European Community in 1973, which became today’s European Union, citizens from the other
Member States could also settle in Denmark and to enjoy the social benefits just as other Danish citizens. Between the late 1960s and 1973, Denmark, like many other European countries, established a guest worker program. Danish companies, which were experiencing a labor shortage, had to get guest workers mainly from Turkey, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, and Morocco. By the time the guest worker wave stopped in 1973, the estimated number of residents from these four countries was somewhere around 15,000. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, immigration focused on family reunifications for the guest workers who continued to stay in Denmark after the guest worker program had ended (Hedetoft).

Starting from the 20th century, there were also multiple waves of refugees along with the guest worker program and family reunification. After two World Wars, refugees from Eastern Europe, along with Jews and Germans, were brought to Denmark. In the 1970s, Denmark started to help resettle about 1000 refugees annually from Chile and Vietnam. During the second half of the 1980s, most immigrants were from Poland, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Sri Lanka. Instead of entering Denmark through family reunification, immigrants of this period came as refugees (Jensen and Pedersen 94). Towards the end of the Cold War, instabilities in the former Soviet Union states generated a new group of refugees, but only a small group arrived in Denmark (Hedetoft). As the conflicts in ex-Yugoslavia and Somalia escalated, in the 1990s, refugees from the two areas made up a large part of immigration in Denmark.

Denmark has been known as a humanitarian superpower that has a reputation of being friendly and generous to refugees. For example, after the Cold War, refugees from former communist regimes were welcomed by Denmark. As more refugees began to arrive from third-world countries, however, attitudes towards refugees have changed gradually and a shift of policy started to deter more refugees coming in. In 1986, the government made changes to the
Aliens Act, tightening the process to obtain asylum or citizenship. Starting from the early 1990s, almost all temporary residence programs had a repatriation part. After 2001, refugees have been discouraged from applying for asylum, and the number of people who eventually have settled down in Denmark has declined dramatically (Hedetoft).

3.2 Denmark’s Responses to the Refugee Crisis

As a signatory country to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, in the past several decades, Denmark had accepted quota refugees who were relocated by the UNHCR, and individual refugees from the Balkans and former Soviet Union, as well as from Somali and Lebanon. Like what the Swedish government has done, after the recent refugee crisis hit in 2015, the Danish government has adopted passive-aggressive tactics to deter refugees. Since 2015, Denmark stopped accepting the 500 quota refugees annually from the UNHCR (Bendixen). According to Michala Bendixen’s article, Denmark has rejected even more asylum applications for Afghans and Iraqis than Sweden and Germany have in 2015. Changes to refugee policies clearly show a backlash of the original welcoming attitude towards refugees in Denmark (Bendixen).

In 2015, the Danish government proposed changes to asylum laws. While some of the changes could benefit refugees and asylum seekers, many of the changes scared refugees away. The new changes made it harder for refugees to obtain temporary residence permits, and it was even harder for them to be granted citizenships. Deportation was also attached closely to the asylum application process: once an asylum application got rejected, the asylum seeker would face deportation and had to leave the country within seven days. Family reunification for refugees with temporary status was also increased up to three years instead of one year (Bendixen).
Even more, in September 2015, Denmark’s Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing placed advertisements in both Arabic and English in Lebanese newspapers, basically telling Syrians not to come to Denmark. The ads detailed changes to Denmark’s asylum laws that would make it a less desirable place for refugees. It made it clear that the government was reducing social benefits for new refugees by almost 50 percent, and prolonging the asylum-seeker family reunification process from one to three years. It also sent a message that if refugees were planning to stay in Denmark permanently, they would have to learn Danish (Taylor).

In January 2016, Denmark’s Parliament passed a controversial law, which allowed authorities to seize valuables and cash from refugees. Under the new Danish law, police would be allowed to search asylum seekers on arrival in the country and confiscate any non-essential items like gold or jewelry, worth more than 10,000 DKK (about 1,450 USD) that have no sentimental value to their owner. The value of these items was intended to cover the cost of refugees’ accommodation (The New York Times). The new law of seizing refugees’ jewelry and other valuables was clearly designed to deter refugees. The proposal irritated many people, including asylum seekers and humanitarian activists because it violated refugees’ basic human rights.

In addition to refugee policies, laws for the Danes have become tougher, too. For example, Danes can face charges for helping refugees in the country. Under the Aliens Act, Danes who gave rides to refugees could be charged. Lisbeth Zornig, with almost 300 other Danes, was taken to court for giving asylum seekers lifts in Denmark and helping them go to Sweden. She was suspected of human smuggling, while she claimed that she was simply giving a hand to refugee families that needed help. From September 2015 to February 2016, 279 people have been punished with large fines or up to two years’ imprisonment because of helping
refugees and asylum seekers. Volunteers in Denmark were very discouraged to help refugees since they could put themselves in trouble (Dearden).

In December 2017, Marcus Knuth, an immigration spokesman for the governing Liberal Party, claimed that all asylum seekers, including those who had already gotten their status approved, should return to their home countries. The supporting argument for the claim was that Denmark did not have the ability to have such a large number of refugees, so refugees should be repatriated whenever their home countries became safe (Mortimer). The attitude of the governing party was clearly being unfriendly to refugees, resulting in more practical measures to deter refugees and gradually stimulating hatred toward refugees among the general public.

Similar to Sweden, even though Denmark has been a humanitarian superpower that has generously accepted a large number of refugees in the past, the recent large inflow of refugees seriously overwhelmed Denmark, leading to negative changes of refugee policies. The changes of refugee policies are closely tied to the rising right-wing parties in Denmark, as will be explored later in this paper.

3.3 Tensions

Before the recent refugee crisis, Denmark had received immigrants through guest worker programs and family reunifications. In the 1990s, Denmark also had the experience of accepting refugees from the Balkans and former Soviet Union. Denmark, however, has never become a multicultural society. Instead of integration, immigrants in Denmark have been either assimilated or marginalized. Like Sweden, Denmark also has experienced tensions between the newcomers and the local population. Compared to Sweden, Denmark, has taken the tensions to a whole new level. As early as 2005, the Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons crisis occurred in Denmark,
triggering world-wide protests and debates about the role of religion in predominantly Christian European states (Henkel). As Denmark is still predominantly Christian, Muslim communities, which are mostly composed of immigrants, have felt offended and marginalized. Since Denmark has also accepted a significant number of refugees, the government and the local people start to feel that their national identity has been threatened. As a result, there have been several incidents relating to religion and the threat to national identity.

In September 2005, Jyllands-Posten, a Danish local paper, published an issue with cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad (Henkel). The cartoons, which clearly portrayed the Prophet as a terrorist with a bomb, linked Islam to terrorism (The Telegraph). It seriously violated aniconism, the prohibition of showing Muhammad’s images, in the Islamic tradition (Brown). While some people have argued that the cartoons are expressions of free speech, most people regard the cartoons as insults to the Islamic faith. Even though Jyllands-Posten apologized for the cartoon incident, the tension is never fully resolved. Ten years later, thousands of refugees from Muslim-majority countries resettled in Denmark, and the role of religion once again has become a hot topic.

At the beginning of 2016, pork meatballs and other pork dishes were used as weapons to win the invisible culture war in Denmark. It is called the “meatball war (frikadellekrigen)” by the media (The Local). It is undeniable that pork is a big part of the Danish food culture. One of the pork dishes, crispy pork with parsley sauce, was even named Denmark’s national dish in 2014 (Bilefsky). Pork, however, has been banned in the Muslim culture for hundreds of years. Right after the peak of the refugee crisis, in January 2016, a town in Denmark passed a new law that required the city’s public institutions like schools and daycares to serve pork products, forcing Muslim children to accept the so-called “Danish food culture” while their faith was not being
respected. The “meatball war” incident sparked the debate of whether Danish values were “under the attack from multiculturalism” or not (The Local).

Lastly, many believe that areas concentrated by immigrants are more likely to have a higher crime rate. In February 2018, the Danish government decided to execute tougher laws in the “ghetto” areas to try to reduce the crime rate. The twenty-two areas labeled as “ghettos” on the government’s list were mainly populated by non-Western immigrants, had about a 40% unemployment rate, and had more than 2.7% residents with criminal convictions (BBC News). The phenomenon of ghettos can be seen as a result of failed integration because immigrants still live in their own communities instead of being blended into the Danish population. Instead of enforcing tougher laws, efficient and appropriate integration measures would work better to eliminate these “ghetto” areas.

Since the policies in Denmark have changed to be more anti-refugee, tensions between immigrants, specifically refugees, and the local population are still causing problems that destabilize the society. Instead of further marginalizing refugees and other types of immigrants, effective integration measures are urgently needed.
Chapter Four: Theoretical Framework and Analysis

4.1 The Movement of Refugees

There are many theories addressing why migration occurs. There is no universal conclusion about the reasons why people migrate. As Everett S. Lee points out, “the factors that hold and attract or repel people are precisely understood neither by the social scientist nor the persons directly affected” (Lee 50). In *A Theory of Migration*, Lee concludes that there are four types of factors contributing to the act of migration: factors associated with the area of origin, factors associated with the area of destination, intervening obstacles, and personal factors (50). For refugees, the factors associated with the area of origin include natural disasters, human rights abuses, armed conflicts, political instabilities, etc. Push factors are often unpredictable, giving refugees little time to prepare for a hasty departure and making them more vulnerable. Most of the time, they do not have sufficient time to choose where to flee, but go to the closest safe haven they can find.

Refugees usually have limited access to accurate information and tend to move in networks. As Lee points out:

> Personal sensitivities, intelligence, and awareness of conditions elsewhere enter into the evaluation of the situation at origin, and knowledge of the situation at destination depends upon personal contacts or upon sources of information which are not universally available. (51)

Although information on host countries is available online, it may not be entirely accurate and can often be misleading. Since refugees are often politicized in receiving countries, websites
created by the host countries may project misrepresentative images. Due to their limited information and means of transport to a safe country, many refugees turn to human smugglers, and this desperation creates a market for human smugglers. In *Illegality, INC.*, Ruben Andersson points out that as the border control in Europe becomes tighter and tighter, increasing numbers of refugees start to rely on human smugglers. To these refugees from Africa, human smugglers not only serve as their means to cross the Mediterranean Sea, but also as their main source of information (Andersson). When access to accurate information is limited, misconceptions about refugees’ destination countries can be easily formed, causing them to idealize the nation to which they are fleeing.

Refugees may just choose a place to go based on the ease of travel and what they have learned about that nation. For example, refugees who choose to go to Scandinavian countries may have heard that they welcome refugees and that the social welfare system can help them settle down. Refugees, with no time or access to do the research on their destination countries, do not have a clear sense of what to expect. Without having lived there previously, it is often difficult to know what life is like in the destination country. As Lee points out, “knowledge of the area of destination is seldom exact, and indeed some of the advantages and disadvantages of an area can only be perceived by living there” (Lee 50). Destination countries that refugees choose are not as ideal as they are perceived.

In Scandinavian countries, refugees have different national origin and diverse cultural backgrounds. As discussed earlier, Sweden was known more as country of emigration rather than a country of immigration. Only after the Second World War, refugees from Germany and other parts of Europe started to migrate to Sweden. Big waves of refugees did not arrive in Sweden until the 1980s and the 1990s. The political instability in Chile when Augusto Pinochet was the
dictator of the country made thousands of people flee to Sweden, and few of them returned to Chile after Pinochet came down in 1990. In the 1980s, the Iran-Iraq War lasted for eight years, generating thousands of refugees from both sides. Many of them chose Sweden as their destination country. In the 1990s, Wars in former Yugoslavia also sent a large number of refugees from Bosnia and Kosovo-Albania to Sweden. In the 2010s, the trend of refugees’ countries of origin shifted to Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq because of the ongoing armed conflicts in the Middle East (Sweden.se). Having a similar experience with Sweden, current refugees living in Denmark are mainly from Syria, Iraq, Somalia and the Balkans. In both countries, most refugees are from Muslim-majority countries, and the large majority of refugees are Muslims.

4.2 Assimilation

When studying immigrants, and in this paper—specifically refugees—it is inevitable to discuss processes of assimilation and integration, and how these concepts are applied. They are two distinguishable terms, yet they also have some overlap with each other. As two of the most well-used terms in the study of immigration, there are numerous theories addressing their meanings. Instead of only examining assimilation and integration theories that are specifically apply to welfare states like Sweden and Denmark, some of the theories this paper presents below are from studies of immigration from other parts of the world, such as the United States. Many of the aspects of these theories are quite general and universal enough to be applied when analyzing refugees in Scandinavian countries.

In their chapter on “Assimilation” from their book Beyond a Border, Peter Kvisto and Thomas Faist discusses the change in assimilation theory throughout history. There is no single definition of assimilation, and the debate is still going on today. The chapter begins by
examining theories in the past—Robert Park’s and Milton M. Gordon’s theories, which are very important in studying assimilation. In Park’s theory, assimilation cannot be studied unless it is connected with sociological studies. Park also points out that assimilation happens on a very large scale (Kvisto and Faist). Based on Park’s theory, Gordon classified assimilation into seven types: cultural or behavioral, structural, material, identificational, attitude reception, behavioral receptional and civic assimilation. Compared to Park’s theory, Gordon’s theory is more specific (Gordon).

After discussing Park’s and Gordon’s theories, Kvisto and Faist point out two new directions that assimilation theory may go: segmented assimilation and crossing boundaries. Segmented assimilation focuses on the second generation of immigrants that children of immigrants sometimes only partially assimilate to the mainstream culture, whereas crossing boundaries indicates how people’s ethnic identities changed over time. There are three types of acculturation: dissonant, consonant, and selective. Dissonant acculturation means that the second generation has successfully adapted to the new environment but at the same time their parents fail to adjust themselves to the new society. When dissonant acculturation happens, most likely it will lead to downward assimilation because the second generation often suffer from discrimination and lack of support. Unlike dissonant acculturation, consonant acculturation often leads to upward social mobility because in this situation both parents and children adjust themselves to the new society together. However, usually their language values and lifestyles are different from the host country, isolating them from the mainstream society. The final form of acculturation is selective acculturation, which refers to when immigrants and their children adapt a successful balance between the new culture and the original culture (Kvisto and Faist).
Another mainstream theory on assimilation is proposed by Richard Alba and Victor Nee. In their article “Assimilation” from the book *The New Americans*, Alba and Nee first present how the definition of assimilation has evolved over time and how the previous definitions are insufficient or are not suitable for today’s situation. From Robert Park and Ernest Burgess’s point of view, as classical assimilationists, assimilation means cultural adaptation, which suggests that newcomers would eventually assimilate to the new culture (Alba and Nee 125). Park and Burgess’s definition of assimilation represents the understanding of assimilation common in the 1920s. The definition might have worked in context, but it is not comprehensive enough to describe the phenomenon of assimilation today. Alba and Nee also criticize Gordon’s acculturation theory as lacking “some critical dimensions” (127). Gordon has argued that acculturation, which was the process when minority groups adopted culture in the host society, was inevitable and could happen alone without assimilation, and Alba and Nee argue that Gordon’s account fails to include socioeconomic assimilation (126). After criticizing the existing definitions of assimilation, Alba and Nee present their own definition of assimilation: “assimilation, as a form of ethnic change, can be defined as the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences” (130). Compared to previous theories, Alba and Nee’s theory not only includes the cultural aspect but also the social aspect of assimilation.

Similarly, Min Zhou also argues that the classical assimilation theories of Robert Park, W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, and Milton M. Gordon are not sufficient because each of them has omitted some important aspects. Besides the classical assimilationists’ theory, Zhou also presents multiculturalists’ and structuralists’ theories: multiculturalists argue that cultural patterns “may never completely disappear” while structuralists emphasize that the social and economic structures of the host country have great influence on how much immigrants adopt
host-country ways of life (Zhou 201). Zhou, however, has found the outcomes of assimilationists’, multiculturalists’, and structuralists’ theories divergent. Based on previous theories, Zhou formulates a theory of segmented assimilation that complicates them further: individuals will assimilate to some segments of the new society and they will choose to remain segments from their old culture that are compatible with the new environment. Zhou presents three models of segmented assimilation for the case of the United States: “the time-honored upward mobility pattern”, the downward mobility pattern and economic integration into middle-class America (201). Assimilating to which segment depends on two sets of factors: individual-level factors and structural factors. Individual-level factors including “education…, English-language ability, place of birth, age of arrival, and length of residence in the United States” (201). Structural factors including “racial status, family socioeconomic, background, and place of residence” (201).

To complicate Zhou’s theory of segmented assimilation further, Suarez-Orozco finds “significant variations in the opportunity structure of the new land are linked to widely different trajectories, resulting in … ‘segmented assimilation’” (Suarez-Orozco et al. 174). Like Min Zhou, Suarez-Orozco is also a scholar who study assimilation primarily in the United States. After Suarez-Orozco justifies why it is important to study immigrant early adolescence, she goes on to argue that contexts of development like school contexts, family characteristics and individual characteristics have significant influence in immigrant educational outcomes (174-178). Family characteristics including parental education, parental employment, household structure, and family separations (174-176). Individual characteristics including academic English proficiency, academic engagement, psychological distress, gender, and school transitions (176-178). All these variables are crucial in determining which segments of the new society that
the new immigrants assimilate to and which trajectories of adaptation that new immigrants follow.

Without effective measurements, it is impossible to study assimilation. In Mary C. Waters and Tomás R. Jimenez’s article, both of them suggest to focus on the difference and similarities between Americans and immigrants in terms of “socioeconomic standing, residential segregation, language use, and intermarriage” (Waters and Jimenez 106). Employment, income and education determine socioeconomic standing; thus, through socioeconomic status, one can tell if immigrants are assimilated based on their jobs and education. Spatial assimilation can be studied by looking into the residential patterns of immigrants: if new immigrants are no longer living in ethnic enclaves, it is more likely they are accepted by the new society and they have suited themselves to the new environment. Language proficiency is essential to communicate with the larger community in the hosting country. Therefore, most likely the immigrants who speak good English are more adapted to the American society because of the ability to communicate. Intermarriage indicates people from host society and immigrants have already accepted each other so that they can even live together to establish families. Under the new definition and theory of assimilation, measurements like socioeconomic standing, residential patterns, language efficiency and intermarriage can be used to determine immigrants’ assimilation level to the new environment.

4.3 Integration

After examining theories of various kinds of assimilation, it is time to return to the basic purpose of this paper: integration. As it has been mentioned before, integration is different than assimilation, while there is also some overlap between the two terms since the concept of
integration is evolved from the concept of assimilation. Integration is segmented assimilation that happens both ways: immigrants adopt some characteristics of the hosting society while local population also absorbs new things from immigrants so that they can live side by side harmoniously. Min Zhou’s segmented assimilation theory on the United States can be applied to Scandinavian welfare states. On the individual level, factors of one’s education, language ability, place of birth, age of arrival, and length of residence in Scandinavian welfare states all contribute to determine which segments of the immigrants would be assimilated to. Structural factors such as race and socioeconomic background also help determine what immigrants are assimilated to. In the Scandinavian welfare states, currently, refugees do not have access to all the resources offered by the welfare system, leaving them few choices of where to assimilate.

Boundaries between immigrant groups and local people are socially constructed. According to Alba and Nee, there are three modes of how the concept of boundaries can be applied to understand the relationship between immigrants and the host society: boundary crossing, boundary blurring and boundary shifting. Boundary crossing often happens on the individual level when individuals try to change themselves in order to fit into the new society. Boundary blurring indicates that the mainstream culture is rather tolerant than exclusive because it is able to absorb and incorporate minority cultures. Boundary shifting involves in reconstructing a group’s identity (Alba and Nee). According to Alba and Nee’s concept of boundaries, integration can be best described as boundary blurring that eventually leads to boundary shifting: both immigrants and people in the hosting society are tolerant of each other’s culture and other characteristics like religion and customs so that there are no clear boundaries between the two groups, and because of the boundary blurring, the internal boundaries merge to be one single boundary that isolates both immigrants and local people from the outside world.
such as other countries. Boundary shifting, however, can only occur when both immigrants and local people understand each other and tolerate the differences.

Like assimilation, integration can also be categorized into different aspects: religious integration, racial and ethnic integration, social integration and economic integration. In culturally homogeneous welfare states and like Sweden and Denmark, there are obstacles exist in every aspect of integration. As one can conclude from Chapter Two and Three, Sweden and Denmark have adopted tougher refugee policies, leaving refugees marginalized and vulnerable. Violent incidents that occurred in both countries, as well as the existence of the “no-go” zones and “ghettos”, prove that refugees and other types of immigrants are not well-integrated into the welfare society. Coming from different non-European countries, most refugees are not racially and ethnically the same as Scandinavian people. Being homogeneous for a long period of time, Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Denmark aren’t prepared to have people of different races and ethnicities. In addition, the fact of immigrants living together and forming their own communities indicates that they have not been culturally and socially integrated into the society. Lastly, the underlining causes of those violent incidents are economic inequality and high unemployment rate, showing the failure of economic integration of refugees and other types of immigrants. On one hand, as refugees and immigrants, they have had insufficient opportunities to connect with the local population. No kinds of assimilation can occur without enough contact. The lack of contact between the groups prevents further integration from happening. On the other hand, most of the existing integration programs only focus on making immigrants and refugees to learn local matters and completely ignore the other way around.

In conclusion, in order to integrate refugees in Scandinavian welfare states, not only do refugees have to acquire knowledge of host countries, but also local people must be willing to be
“assimilated” to the newcomers by being more knowledgeable and open-minded. Integration is a lengthy process that may take several generations. Even though the ideal image of integration in Scandinavian welfare states may not be seen in the near future, it is important that both sides keep working towards the same direction. As has been discussed before, refugees and other types of immigrants in Scandinavian countries are from different countries with distinctive backgrounds, so it is inappropriate to group all of them together as one cultural group. The diversity of refugees and immigrants makes it harder for local people to learn their culture, but the problem can be solved as time goes. The very first step is to create more opportunities for both sides to connect and learn, eliminating the phenomenon of isolation.

4.4 The Exclusive Social Welfare System

The refugee crisis has created a huge burden for the social welfare system in Scandinavian countries in which the social welfare state model has been adopted for a long time. It had been working really well there before the refugee crisis: “It represents a particular type of welfare state characterized by universal access, generous benefits, a high degree of public involvement and comparatively high levels of redistribution” (Brochmann and Hagelund 13). The welfare system has its own rule: “Everybody is expected to contribute his or her share, but the community assumes the obligation of providing for those of its dependents who cannot do so” (Klausen 255). When increasing numbers of immigrants, especially refugees, come to settle down in the welfare states like Denmark and Sweden, the welfare model has been greatly challenged: high taxes are paid by the citizens and a large portion of these tax money goes to refugee resettlement instead of benefiting citizens. The usage of the tax problem, along with the
anti-immigration sentiment stimulated by several violent incidents, eventually creates tensions between local residents and newly settled refugees.

The social welfare system in Scandinavian countries is widely known to be generous and highly developed. It is difficult, however, to include new settlers in the sophisticated welfare system. In order to benefit from the system, one must fulfill a wide range of criteria: from “residence, employment, or means tests to norms for various types of desirable behavior” (248). Hooijer and Picot have listed several reasons that why refugees may be more vulnerable under the welfare system:

For several reasons, humanitarian and family migrants may face a higher risk of poverty: their motivation for entering the host country is not employment (though they may still be eager to find work); refugees in particular may be traumatized by experiences in their country of origin; their skills are less likely to be adapted to labor market needs; and they may face higher institutional hurdles to socioeconomic integration (e.g., work permissions and benefit regulations). (Hooijer and Picot 4-5)

According to Hooijer and Picot, the biggest obstacle for refugees to enter the welfare system is employment, which is the most important of the eligibility rules. It is more difficult for refugees to find decent jobs in a highly regulated labor market. Even if the labor market is not highly regulated, refugees are vulnerable: “a weakly regulated labor market may be more accessible to immigrants, but may offer mostly low-paid jobs” (5). Being a refugee does not mean one is unskilled or uneducated. Coming from another country, however, one’s certificates may not be recognized in the country where he or she settles down so that he or she can only get unskilled low-pay jobs.

Along with all other challenges of integration, the labor market in Sweden and Denmark is also a big issue. For example, in Sweden, “there’s a big gap in the labor force participation rate between the native-born (82 percent) and the foreign-born (57 percent)” (Lowry). Sweden’s
economic structure is not equipped to accept such large amount of foreign labor forces, especially people who may not have the skills that are needed: “Sweden is an advanced economy with relatively few low-skills jobs to begin with. On top of this, high minimum wages and stringent labor protections make it harder for marginal workers to find employment, while social assistance discourages the unemployed from getting work” (Lowry). Without decent jobs, refugees hardly have access to the benefits in the social welfare system due to the “eligibility rules” (Hooijer and Picot 6). There are certain prerequisites for people in the system to gain benefits: “Benefit access for immigrants is eased if eligibility is universal or means-tested as opposed to insurance-based because the latter requires the accumulation of insurance contributions over sufficiently long spells of regular employment” (6). The system is designed based on the premise: contribute first, gain benefit after. As new comers, even though some refugees are in the labor market, they have significant less time to acquire those contribution records. If the new comers are not eligible to have the access to the benefits, the welfare system actually marginalizes them instead of helping them.

In Sweden, the welfare system has been adopted by the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SDP), which was founded in 1889. The welfare system was created to utilize the taxes paid by workers and employers to provide workers with health insurance, old-age pensions, protection from unemployment, and other social benefits (Costly). The system has evolved, and eventually became the modern welfare system that Sweden has today. By principle, the system provides Swedish citizens with social benefits, such as health care, education, and retirement pensions. At the same time, the Swedish Model of the welfare system has one of the heaviest tax rates in the world. As Costly points out, “an average Swedish working family pays about half its earned income in national and local taxes” (Costly). In addition, there is also a 25 percent sales tax built
into consumer goods. The Swedish people even have developed a word for the tax burden—skattetrat (tax tiredness) (Costly). With the large influx of refugees in recent years, when the Swedish welfare system accepts more newcomers, more taxes paid by Swedish citizens are used to accommodate refugees, making the system unsustainable.

Likewise, in Denmark, even though the welfare system should guarantee equality among all citizens, an economic gap between rich and poor exists. The Danish Model of the welfare system is also a contribution-based system. While it provides social benefits, such as health care and education, it requires reciprocal contributions from the citizens. Refugees, along with other types of immigrants, have spent significantly less time in Denmark than native-born citizens, so even if they are able to find a job right after they come to the country, they have contributed less than native-born citizens have. Therefore, the social benefits they are able to acquire are limited. As Alexandra Lu and Lisa Sig Olesen point out, Denmark offers a “‘Start-Help’ program, under which people who have not been living in Denmark for the past ten years (read: immigrants) will receive lower social benefits” (Lu and Olesen). According to Lu and Olesen, people who qualify for the “Start-Help” program receive 3,000 DKK (about 500 USD) less than others. Program like “Start-Help” are designed to deter refugees and other types of immigrants by systemically excluding them from getting sufficient benefits from the welfare system.

4.5 Does Citizenship Equal Inclusion in Welfare States?

Citizenship is a social and legal contract between the state and the individual. It entitles the individual to membership within the nation and is the premier sign of inclusion. Citizens have obligations to the state, such as paying taxes, following laws, and voting in exchange for access to public goods, such as security, rule of law, education, and social services. When
refugees are resettled by host countries, acquiring citizenship is considered to be the desired outcome. Gaining citizenship allows refugees to be included in society and legally entitled to all the rights the native-born people enjoy. As Aida Just and Christopher J. Anderson explain:

The acquisition of citizenship is a mark of self-selection into an identity—an expression of kinship with the host country rather than, or in addition to, the sending country—as well as a quest for access to a legal status that provides formal protections and material benefits (political rights, wider employment opportunities, welfare benefits, visa-free travel, protection against deportation, etc.). (Just and Anderson 190)

According to Just and Anderson, when refugees acquire citizenship in a host country, they are granted the rights to formal protection and material benefits, just like other native-born citizens. However, this paper begs the question: Does citizenship really mean full inclusion for refugees who are resettled in Scandinavian countries?

To begin with, the pathway to citizenship in Scandinavian countries is not easy an quick or easy process. After a flood of refugees entered the country from 2013 to 2015, Denmark gained a reputation for being exceptionally unhospitable toward asylum seekers and refugees. Refugees who are resettled by the state receive citizenship after eight years of continuous residence in the country, and pass a language test as well, as history and civics tests. In addition to these requirements, refugees must not have a criminal record, and they also have to swear allegiance to Denmark (Hofverberg). While these criteria are not so different from other Western nations, the barriers are more stringent in gaining lawful residency. As Edward Delman explains:

One recent poll showed that 37 percent of [Danish] voters opposed offering more residence permits to migrants—an increase of 17 percentage points since September. Another poll indicated that 70 percent of voters felt the refugee crisis constituted the most important issue on the political agenda. (Delman)

Sweden is used to be considered generous in granting residence permits. From 2012 to December 2015, asylum seekers arriving from Syria were automatically given permanent
residence. From November 24, 2015, however, permanent residence permits were only granted to asylum seekers qualifying as quota refugees, the refugees sent by the UNHCR.

In fact, in social welfare states, citizenship does not guarantee inclusive membership for refugees. Cultural, economic and social differences still exist even when refugees receive citizenship. As refugees, they were born into and have lived in different political economic, and social environments. When they are forcibly dislocated from their homeland and relocate to host countries, they experience both physical and psychological uprooting, which often require considerable efforts in adjusting to new environments. In addition, they also have to learn “how to cope with consequences of being an outsider and being different in one’s adopted homeland” (Just and Anderson 189-190). Even though refugees may have overcome all the obstacles to become legal citizens in Scandinavian countries, their “belonging [still] requires the consent of the community” (Klausen 250). In welfare state, instead of citizenship, only the membership of the welfare system guarantees inclusion and social benefits.

The Scandinavian welfare system was designed to serve a population that is culturally and politically homogenous population. As Ulf Dedtoft, a Migration Policy Institute researcher, points out, “the [welfare] system is rooted in ideas of social egalitarianism, but also in the assumption that citizens earn their entitlements by contributing (through taxation) over a lifetime of active work to the maintenance and growth of the national wealth” (Hedtoft). This type of welfare state has been greatly challenged after a significant number of refugees and other types of migrants entered the system. Ulf Hedetoft also points out that although refugees in Denmark may legally obtain citizenship, they are essentially considered to be outsiders, “welfare scroungers”, and a financial burden on the state (Hedetoft).
As has been mentioned earlier, the majority of refugees of the recent refugee crisis in Scandinavian countries are from the Middle East and North Africa. Their countries of origin make them have distinctive experiences in terms of religion, politics and economics. In addition, racially, most refugees are not white Caucasians as Scandinavians are. The distinctive nationalities and ethnicities of refugees make it difficult for them to be included in the welfare system, even if they are granted citizenship. Hedetoft goes on to explain: “Immigrants from the non-Western world, Muslims in particular, have become singled out as objects of disparagement, whereas Danes are far more open and welcoming toward immigrants from the EU and other Western countries” (Hedetoft). The concept of welfare states essentially magnifies the importance of being a member of the social system.

It is also fascinating to see Aida Just and Christopher J. Anderson’s study of immigrants’ attitude towards new immigrants: “just like natives, foreigners, particularly when [immigrants] enjoy citizenship status in their host country, access immigration largely in light of socio-tropic economic considerations about their host society” (Just and Anderson 199). The anti-immigrant attitude from former immigrants is stimulated by the policies in host countries. Former immigrants in the welfare system do not want more immigrants to join the system because they believe the new settlers will compete with them in the job market and further, threaten the national economy. Refugees obtaining citizenship does not make former immigrants feel less threatened. Instead, “such negative effects of economic threat are only amplified by the acquisition of citizenship” (190). Therefore, in Scandinavian welfare states, instead of promising inclusion, the acquisition of citizenship actually generates negative effects.

Government policies have shifted increasingly toward an anti-immigration stance, paralleling a rise in xenophobia with both populations. Though some refugees have acquired
citizenship, the newest wave of immigrants in Denmark and Sweden are distinguished because of their ethnic, religious, and cultural differences. Their visibility and perceive differences have resulted in ethnophobia that eventually has turned to xenophobia. As Vladimir Mukomel explains, “Ethnonphobia these days is directed primarily against representatives of the ‘visible minorities’, who are visibly different in appearance from the ethnic majority” (Mukomel 38). Local people also have security concerns with the influx of refugees regardless whether they have obtained citizenship, even though there were crimes before refugees coming in. The rising xenophobia among the public leads to the rise of right-wing parties. For example, “the Sweden Democrats, a far-right anti-immigrant party, won almost 13 percent of the vote in a 2014 general election, and recent polls show it gaining in strength” (Bilefsky). In this case, citizenship does not mean anything besides a legal status. The new comers with citizenships are still hardly accepted by local people.

4.6 Refugees, Religion and Politics

The arrival of asylum seekers and refugees is often politicized in host countries, with no exceptions in the cases of Sweden and Denmark. While political decisions—such as legislative changes to refugee policies—affect refugees and asylum seekers significantly, it is necessary to understand the political climate in Sweden and Denmark in order to analyze the current situation. Especially when the policies are changed to deter refugees, analyzing the governing parties’ tactics and strategies helps generate better suggestions. In addition, religion, which also plays an important role when discussing matters related to refugees, is also highly politicized in Sweden and Denmark, as well as other European states.
The Sweden Democrats (SD or Sverigedemokraterna), a far-right nationalist political party, was found in 1988 in Sweden (Widfeldt). The party has gained popularity and power starting from 2010, promoting its anti-immigration right-wing ideologies. The Sweden Democrats insist that Swedish people do not want people from the outside and Sweden have no responsibility to assist and help resettle refugees. The Sweden Democrats also has a youth wing, called Young Swedes SDU, which was previously called Sweden Democratic Youth. On the homepage of the Young Swedes’ website, their “social conservative and nationalistic” ideologies related to immigration and refugees are clearly stated: “limit asylum and refugee immigration; renegotiate Sweden’s membership for the European Union; tougher punishments for criminals” (Ungsvenskarna). In 2017 election, the right-wing Sweden Democrats lost majority support from the general public, and the Social Democrats was rising to power (Roden).

Similar to what has happened in Sweden, the anti-refugee sentiment has been led by the rising right-wing parties in Denmark. Refugees and asylum seekers in Denmark are also politicized. The center-right Liberal Party formed a minority government in June 2015, posing tougher laws on refugees to avoid more of them coming in. The further right political party, the Danish People’s Party (DPP), established in 1995, even called for more measures such as exiting the Schengen Area to deter asylum seekers (Taylor). The rising right-wing parties in both countries have influenced greatly on the changes of refugee policies. At the same time, they spread anti-immigration sentiment widely to the general public, posing further challenges on the refugee integration process.

In terms of religion, nowadays, Europe is actually not as secular as it seems. Religion is still filling in almost every part of people’s life. In The Re-Politicization of Religion in Europe: The Next Ten Years, Jytte Klausen predicted that from 2005, religion would be increasingly more
important in European politics in the next ten years. Despite that Europe is never completely secularized, Europeans today are increasingly Christianized: many of them belong to churches and they still practice all kinds of Christian rituals like Christian weddings and funerals. Ten years after 2005, refugee crisis peaked in 2015. Large number of the refugees that Scandinavian countries are taking in are Muslims who are very religious: “the problem with Muslims, it is widely argued, is that they are too religious and do not distinguish properly between private faith and public values” (Klausen 555). Therefore, religious pluralism has gradually emerged throughout the past decade. How to cope with this newly emerged religious pluralism would significantly affect how well new immigrants are integrated.

Jonathan Laurence’s “How to Integrate Europe’s Muslims” presents barriers that Muslim immigrants have experienced during the process of integration. Muslims in Europe have greatly experienced institutional exclusion since the large-scale Muslim immigration in the mid-1970s. The article points out that European countries, as host countries of Middle Eastern immigrants, should not suppress Islamic practices and traditions because, instead of preventing Islamic fundamentalism, doing so made Muslim immigrants feel marginalized and would ultimately stimulate radicalism. The European version of integration was basically equivalent to assimilation: Muslim immigrants should not express their religion and at the same time, they should adopt the way that Europeans live. Obviously, completely assimilating to European culture hasn’t worked well for Muslim immigrants. In the next 20 years, it is predicted that the Muslim population will grow to 30 million, and it is extremely important for such a large population to live properly in Europe (Laurence).

Like other European states, Scandinavian countries are also very Christianized: “Denmark and Sweden are often described as the epitome of European secularism, but 85
percent of the population in the two countries belong to the national Protestant churches” (Klausen 555). The clash of different religious values foreshadows further problems: “Conflict over the role of religion in western Europe does not pit Christians against Muslims, but secularists against those who want public policy to endorse faith” (556). Since Scandinavian countries are still very Christianized in Scandinavian countries, when accepting a large number of non-Christian refugees, they find it hard to incorporate the religious values of the new comers into the current system.
Chapter Five: Conclusions and Possible Innovative Solutions

5.1 Findings and Conclusions

As the recent refugee crisis in Europe continues to place significant pressure on Scandinavian welfare states, this paper details factors that contribute to systemic blockages of refugee integration in two Scandinavian welfare states—Sweden and Denmark. This paper asks a lead question about how well these two homogeneous Scandinavian welfare states integrate incoming refugees culturally, socially, and economically. It ends by offering possible solutions to provide more access for refugees to important jobs and social services. It is important to note that refugees are extremely difficult to distinguish from other types of migrants. While those fleeing war and persecution are classified as “forced migrants” or “refugees”, individuals seeking to escape severe poverty or environmental disaster are categorized as “voluntary migrants”. However, refugees and voluntary migrants often move along similar travel routes and apply for asylum together. Therefore, the data and other types of information gathered for this paper may at times address both refugees and other types of immigrants.

The refugee crisis has greatly overwhelmed the Swedish and Danish welfare states, which have been flooded with incoming asylum seekers. When people think about the refugee crisis in Europe countries such as Germany and France are usually the first nations that come to mind while Scandinavian countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, are ignored. As the paper argues, the refugee crisis has already caused numerous problems in the Swedish and Danish
welfare states. The scale of the problem in those countries, particularly in Sweden, is no less significant than it is in Germany and France.

The refugee crisis has hit Sweden and Denmark in a similar way, yet there are differences between the situations in these two countries. While both Sweden and Denmark have been overwhelmed by the recent refugee crisis, Sweden has accepted some of the most refugees in Europe while Denmark has accepted some of the fewest. Following the Danish Cartoon Crisis of 2005 and extreme anti-immigration laws such as the law to seize jewelry from refugees, as have been discussed in an earlier chapter, Denmark receives fewer asylum seekers. Compared to other European countries, Denmark also receives fewer asylum seekers per capita than other European countries. Only 1.3 refugees have been granted asylum per 1 million inhabitants in 2016, while Sweden has the number of 6.7 (Bendixen). Nonetheless, both of the Swedish and Danish welfare states have become more restrictive to incoming refugees because they tend to be more egalitarian and homogeneous, and their welfare system is not capable of including a large number of newcomers. These states require a certain level of contribution before citizens receive benefits.

The negative response to the refugee crisis from the state governments has created tensions in harmonious welfare countries. Violent incidents, such as the riots occurring in 2017 near Stockholm, caused by refugee isolation and marginalization, also indicate the failure of integration in Scandinavian welfare states. There are precedents of accepting refugees and other types of immigrants in these countries in the past several decades, but Sweden and Denmark have not embraced the idea of multiculturalism, because ethno-religious diversity is seen to erode the egalitarian and homogeneous nature of the Swedish and Danish welfare state models.
The generous welfare system in Scandinavian countries is exclusive, preventing refugees from being integrating well. The nature of a welfare system is that the government of a country takes care of its citizens by proving them with social benefits such as education and health care, while citizens are expected to contribute to equally to the state. This model, however, is most successful when citizens within a country are culturally and politically homogeneous and contribute equally to the system before receiving benefits. Refugees and other types of immigrants, as newcomers to these welfare states, do not share the same educational or cultural experiences as the native-born, and find it difficult to gain significant employment within a short period of time after entering the host country. Their lack of education and employment worsen their potential to live as an equal citizen in a welfare state. When they cannot contribute to the welfare system, they can only acquire the most basic social benefits, creating a gap between them and the native-born population in the long run.

In conclusion, it is the exclusiveness of the welfare system, along with other obstacles such as anti-immigration policies, xenophobic public attitudes, and high unemployment rates among refugees, that prevent them from successfully integrating into Sweden and Denmark’s welfare states. According to the findings, one of the biggest obstacles that prevent refugees from integrating is their difficulty in finding decent jobs in the host country. Welfare states depend on economic contributions to the system before benefits are distributed, therefore, refugees would be more successful if offered more help with job placement. In the following sections, this paper proposes several possible mitigations to solve some of these problems. Having a job is the first step towards inclusion, so effective technical and skills trainings along with job placement programs are needed. Finally, refugees tend to live together because many of them share similar cultural backgrounds. Spatial segregation often prevents refugees from having further contact.
with the local population. An innovative host family program may help both refugees and native-born citizens know more about each other, reaching the goal more cultural and social integration.

5.2 Innovative Solution: Establishing a Vocational Training and Job Placement Agency

As a response to mitigate the current refugee crisis, this paper creates a non-profit and nongovernment model of a career service agency designed to help refugees find jobs so that they can be included in welfare states. As has been discussed before, it is essential for refugees and other types of immigrants to have decent jobs so that they are able to contribute to the welfare system and eventually acquire social benefits from the system. Since this paper focuses extensively on Sweden and Denmark, it chooses to build the agency in Sweden first because there are more refugees and other types of immigrants there than in Denmark. This section provides some detailed thoughts on establishing a vocational training and job placement agency serving for refugees.

According to the Swedish Migration Agency, asylum seekers are able to work in Sweden with AT-UND, a certificate that is only granted to asylum seekers to allow them to work in Sweden without working permits. The Asylum Seeker card indicates whether the asylum seeker has AT-UND or not (Hofverberg). Even though refugees are able to work with AT-UND, “hidden discrimination, housing problems and a Swedish reliance on informal networks help explain the gap [of unemployment rate between native-born workers and foreign-born workers]. But many refugees simply lack the skills for Sweden’s job market” (The Economist Newspaper). There are many obstacles that prevent refugees from seeking careers in Sweden, but the biggest one is the lack of skills. Low-skilled refugees desperately need to be trained so that they can find jobs. Also, coming from other countries, some refugees do have professional skills but their
degrees and other qualifications are not accepted in Sweden, blocking their way to professional jobs in their field. There is also the need to provide information and resources to these new comers so they can make better use of the skills they have already developed.

In order to meet the needs mentioned above, the innovative career service agency will be established to help refugees with their careers in Sweden. It will welcome all refugees in Sweden who are fifteen to seventy-five years or age, regardless of origin, gender, or religion. By providing services like language training, skill development, job searches, and career consultation, this human rights-oriented agency will assist refugees with their career development so they can support themselves and integrate into the Swedish society. The migration crisis peaked in 2015 and after that, problems regarding refugees still remain to be unsolved. Ideally, the preparation work of creating such an agency includes hiring trainers and staffs, renting space, connecting with partners and fundraising. Even though the number of refugees coming to Sweden started to moderately decrease, as the armed conflicts in the Middle East is still going on. As a result, refugees continue to arrive in Sweden for at least the next five years.

There are many NGOs that work with refugees in Sweden, but they all focus on different services. The Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups (FARR), founded in 1988, is a national network that provides assistance to individuals and groups who are seeking asylum in Sweden. The main mission of the network is to promote asylum rights and educate asylum seekers about the procedure to get asylum. It also has lawyers and former asylum seekers to provide legal support to asylum seekers (FARR). Refugees Welcome Sweden, established in 2015 and a part of Refugees Welcome International, aims to provide housing solutions to newly arrived refugees. It is a digital platform to pair refugees with local residents to be flat mates.
International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) also has projects of helping refugees in Sweden. IFRC mainly focus on refugees physical and mental health, providing medical care and support. Unlike other NGOs that provide assistance to refugees, the career service agency proposed by this paper specifically focuses on the career paths of refugees.

The primary beneficiaries are refugees who came to live in Sweden. In order to start a new life in Sweden, refugees need job opportunities in order to support themselves financially. By joining the agency, participants are able to acquire the skills that they need in order to secure a job. The agency partners with companies in different fields so that certain numbers of job positions are reserved for the participants of the agency. The job searching resources also provide useful information about local jobs to help them connect with employers. Language classes offered by the agency offers promote participants’ ability to find jobs and further helps them to better integrate into the Swedish society. Secondary beneficiaries are companies that are hiring trained refugees. Even though for most companies, hiring new workers is usually not difficult, having trained workers with relevant technical skills that are exactly needed is more convenient. In addition, the Swedish society will benefit as a whole. Since Sweden is a welfare state, citizens pay high taxes and get numerous benefits in return. When the country takes in many refugees who are not able to work, it is a huge burden on the welfare system. Greater social impact will be made by assisting refugees with their jobs, refugees can better support themselves and integrate into Swedish society, and the burden on the social welfare system can be lessened.

Establishing connections with companies that are willing to hire refugees is a key step. Before launching the agency, staffs should visit human resources of targeted companies to advertise what the agency does and what benefits there are. At the same time, staffs will visit
refugee communities to spread the words of what the career service agency does. After launching
the agency, it also offers Swedish and English classes of different levels. Participants who are
willing to take language classes are required to take placement test first. Language classes will be
held in evenings and on weekends, allowing participants to work during weekdays. Skill training
lessons are intensive training sessions and will be held during weekdays. The content of skill
training lessons will depend on what partner companies need and what job openings are
available. The agency will hire personnel from partner companies to teach the participants with
specifically needed skills. Often, these skills needed in specific industries can be applied
elsewhere, too. Skill training takes three to six months on average. After skill training, partner
companies will interview participants and decide whether they are qualified for the jobs or not. If
the participants are still not qualified for the job, their training period will be extended. The
career consultation sessions mainly help refugees who have skills but still cannot find jobs.
Consultants can advise participants on what they need to do in order to transfer their skills to the
new environment.

In Sweden, “the Swedish non-profit organizations may be described as entities
established for the purpose of a social nature, not allowed to distribute the profit resulted as
action to its economic activities to its founder, members or contributors” (Bridge West). The
proposed career service agency, as a non-profit agency, aims to serve refugees without gaining
profits. The classes and services are free to all qualified participants. Therefore, all funding,
including the launching cost, should come from fundraising. Money comes from both
foundations and individual donors. Fundraising events can be held once a month to get more
people to support the career service agency. The launching cost includes hiring skill trainers,
consultants and staffs, renting space for office and classes, and advertising. In order to save money, language classes are taught by volunteers.

Negative indicators such as violent incidents in Sweden and Denmark show that refugees and immigrants in both countries are not being well-integrated since the underlining causes of the incidents are thought to be unemployment and marginalization. This model of a career service agency for refugees can be used as a practical way to mitigate problems associated with refugee integration, at least from an economic perspective. Having a job is a key step toward self-sufficiency, and also allows refugees to be included in the welfare system.

5.3 Innovative Solution: Host Family Programs for Refugees

In addition to the existing housing programs, innovative host family programs serving for refugees can be employed to speed up the integration process. Host family programs are employed commonly in cultural exchange programs, such as study abroad and work abroad programs. According to the general perception, a host family is a family that invites one or more non-family members, usually from another country, to live with the family for a fair amount of cost. In Sweden, host families can be found in several cultural exchange programs such as the Swedish Program. Similarly, in Denmark, there are several agencies that provide the service of matching host families: Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS), Au Pair in Denmark, Humanity in Action, etc. As far as the research for this paper goes, it seems that there is no agency that provide host family matching service for refugees.

While many unaccompanied minors arrive in Sweden and Denmark, the majority of refugees come in family units. If this is true, then, why do refugee families also need host family programs? Refugees, as newcomers with little to no experience of living in the host countries of
Sweden and Denmark, usually know little to nothing about the local culture. Often, they also do not speak the language well. Cultural barrier slows down their integration process significantly. It is hard for refugees not only to find decent jobs, but also to make friends. Besides what the government and NGOs provide, refugees need to find other means to connect with local communities. Living with local families can be an efficient way to experience local culture so that refugees can adapt to the new living environment more quickly. On the other hand, by connecting with refugees, local families in welfare states are able to acquire the knowledge of a foreign culture, speeding up the cultural integration process for refugees while avoiding assimilation.

The innovative host family programs that this paper proposes, however, are not traditional host family programs. The mission of the proposed host family programs is to improve the quality of the integration process in welfare states by creating more opportunities for newly settled refugees and the local people to connect with each other. The theory of change is rather simple: the more people know about each other, the less stigmatization there is so that they can eventually achieve cultural integration. It seems that there should not be limitations on who run the programs—both the governments or NGOs can establish such programs. Financially, the governments of the welfare states can subsidize host families while the money can also come from local fundraising events.

Instead of an entire refugee family living with a local family, it is more practical to have only one or two members from the refugee family to live with a local family. Conversely, it would also be beneficial to have a member of a local family to live with a refugee family for a short period of time. It would maximize the benefit of host family programs if the younger generation within each family is willing to participate, serving as the cultural bridge between
their families and the local families. By doing so, the ones who are participating get the chance to acquire firsthand knowledge of local culture and customs and at the same time, practice the language. In this way, most refugee families would have at least one member who knows some local language and the basics of living in the host country. Local families, in return, have the chance to know more about who is settling down in their country. The length of traditional host family programs usually depends on how long the cultural exchange programs are. In the case of refugees, who are settling down in the host countries, usually they do not plan to leave. Since different people have different levels of ability to adapt to a new environment, programs of different lengths should be designed—one week, two weeks, or one month.

Host family programs are reportedly difficult to operate at first because home is such an intimate space that people normally do not want to share with others. In welfare states that currently have large number of refugees, such as Sweden and Denmark, the governments should play a key role in encouraging the local community and refugee families to participate in host family programs. Since this is an innovative suggestion, further thoughts and details are needed before this host family program proposal is modified to the needs of Sweden and Denmark.

As this paper argues, the challenges faced by Sweden and Denmark make it clear that solutions are mandatory. Even though anti-immigrant policies have deterred more refugees and asylum seekers from entering Sweden and Denmark, refugees who are already in these two welfare states need more help integrate, preventing further problems from happening. Innovative solutions, such as a career service agency and a host family program as proposed by this paper, may help resolve parts of the bigger problem of refugee integration.
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