# Liminality in narratives of integration: Articulation of digital ethnicity in social media use by migrants to Sweden

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**Abstract:** Given challenging conditions in different parts of the world, it is no wonder that people undertake journeys to regions where they may feel secure, seek refuge, be able to acquire a livelihood, as well as carry on a type of living. Migration is therefore an inevitability of the contemporary world. At the same time when migrants arrive in a country that they have hitherto never been to, there is an expectation that they will integrate into the host country's way of life, buy into shared beliefs and prevalent value systems. Therefore deconstruction of their digital narratives of migrant journeys may lead to conceptualisation of unique dimensions of an emergent online ethnicity and consequent integration. Despite a growing interest in social media use, relatively little is known about why or how migrants leverage influence on practices that would enable them to integrate into host societies. Preliminary evidence on social media use among migrants to European countries like Germany do not attest to any unalloyed blessing in aiding integration. In contrast there are pointers that indicate social media based interaction of migrants is indeed encouraging the opposite effects of isolation, and consequent ghetto-isation. Drawing upon concepts of digital anthropology, we argue that migrants' use of social media creates a liminality that is synonymous to ambiguity and disorientation that may diminish through a composite adaptation of acculturation and ethnic identity. Evidence for the study was collected through in-depth interviews of migrants in several Swedish cities including Stockholm, Jönköping, Malmö, and Gothenburg. (248 words)

## 1. Introduction

Migration today is a global phenomenon that affects countries in various ways. Movement of people to relocate in new destinations is something that has continued ever since human beings had the capacity to travel across oceans. Migrants look to better their lives, develop new knowledge, skills, and abilities in work when they move to host countries. The latter benefit by acquiring a new and often enthusiastic work force of professionally qualified people. So there is mutual benefit that accrues to both the migrant as well as the receiving host nation. But recent history tends to demonstrate that this narrative of mutual benefit is challenged by adverse perceptions on both sides, the migrants as well as the host populations. Instances of migrants being able to fluently speak the host nation's language or may have re-skilled themselves with additional qualifications from local higher education insitutions that may make them eligible for absorption into industries of the host nation are common. At the same time, such migrants may struggle to get integrated into the host nation as they may not succeed in getting jobs that utilise their skillsets or that their family members may not be accepted as part of the local society. Host country nationals could also feel insecure due to countervailing perceptions of jobs being taken up by migrants while host populations remain unemployed. School places being taken up by children of migrants whereas children of host popluations don't succeed in being accepted in those same schools. Or that migrants do not make enough effort to emulate local values and buy into local ways of life. In reality the situation may be that only a minority of migrants actually succeed in getting jobs or school places, yet it is perceptions that form a significant barrier to this coming together of two peoples. Integration into host countries is therefore a complex challenge that needs to be examined using a variety of approaches.

As we become digitally active we tend to spend a substantial proportion of our time online, interacting with our network of friends and family. Social connections for many of us tends to require interactions through a variety of media – both in physical face to face as well as online communications. As a matter of fact increasingly people spend more time in online interactions than through physical face to face communications. Many migrants who have never been to the host country before they migrated, find it hard to make time in the physical world to meet people and make friends. So they tend to develop a world of friends in the online world usually through social media platforms. It is clear that frequent interactions in the online world might translate expectations and aspirations of the offline world into the online context and vice versa. Over time peoples day to day engagements, the type of material that they post, the type of groups that they attach themselves to, the type of ownership of material that they circulate reveals their online identities.

As we become digitally as active as we are in our physical offline world, it is increasingly feasible to develop a profile of our online conversations that could corroborate the challenges that migrants face when integrating into a host country. The principal question that this paper tries to address is: What role does ICTs play in the integration of international migrants into Swedish society?

The advent of ICTs into our lives can be identified by a couple of primary characteristics. Until about late 1990s the research community seems to have been exploring impact of ICTs on our lives, our working environments, how we coped with alterations of information flows as well as the technology itself (Richmond and Skitmore, 2006). However, around the early 2000s, as ICTs have increasingly played roles in widespread activities in our lives, a tendency of taking ICTs for granted have become commonplace. So much so that ICTs today are being used to restructure organisations (Grimshaw et al., 2002), modify the way people communicate between each other. Gone are the days when everyone was worried about the impact that ICTs are going to have on our lives. Today ICTs are an imperative in many sectors.

The integrative influence of ICTs has been recognised in extant literature (Boudreau and Robey, 2005) as a key dimension of both the time when coping strategies to implementation of ICTs were being investigated, to the time when ICTs are being used to directly modify organisational communication. Integration of organisations, groups, and audiences has been an abiding characteristic of ICTs ever since its advent. In 2004, the advent of Facebook as a social media platform brought about a sea change in the way we communicate, the promise of freedom that social technologies could offer became a reality. We no longer needed to make phone calls, compose emails, buy newspapers, travel to meet up with friends – Facebook provided a platform that freed us from all these chores through its capacity to make conversations instantaneous as well as reciprocal in real time. This integration of audiences through technologies of freedom brought about a significant change in the way we communicate or even in the way we expect people to respond to our views.

With the passage of time social media has gradually assumed an importance as a preferred medium of communication for a range of audiences and conversation makers including government agencies, NGOs, migrants, and the like. The instantaneous nature of social media communication along with the constant sense of being connected is a key driver for experiencing

engagement that is not the same in asynchronous media like email. Governments in countries in Europe like Sweden have supported the arrival and gradual inclusion of migrants into society with the expectation that they will integrate and become part of Swedish society. For a variety of compulsions, migrants also today are prolific users of platforms like Facebook. Swedish government agencies believe that social media could be a mechanism through which greater engagement with migrants as well as their participation in online conversations would translate into offline cohesion. It is this issue of reproduction of online engagement leading to familiarity into the offline milieu is what is the central driver of this thesis.

## 2. Ethnicity:

Traditional conceptualisations of ethnicity in extant literature stem from a connection to a region, language, cultural practices. However, such conceptualisations are increasingly found wanting as migrants learn host country languages, and need to adopt new ways of communicating, participating in social interactions using norms which are different from those of their homelands. As they acquire new status, get employed in the host country, it becomes harder to carry on with communicating in the same way as the past. For instance, once people communicate through Facebook, it is rare for them to then ask for a phone number to communicate through a voice platform. So, there is this inherent incompatibility in how people communicate. In addition, trust seems to get impacted upon when generation of material for sharing, conversations, or the lack of it are an integral part of social media interactions.

Digital ethnicity would need to be explored through the three dimensions (Mitra and Evansluong, 2019) of engagement, belongingness, and approval seeking among relational interdependencies. The need for interdependence is worth exploring as it is coloured by the compulsion of integrating into the host country at a juncture when the disappearance of uniqueness (especially in an online context) is palpable. In pre social media contexts, uniqueness among individuals drew from within a need for communications which required the use of unique skills or expertise. With social media there seems to have been a drive to make everything look alike, so individuals shorn of their unique identities are of course able to communicate which wasn't feasible before. However, the need for communication is plummeting. This feature is being reported by other social media researchers as well. Alex Krotoski talks about a 'digital gentrification' in her radio show the *Digital Human* (2019).

Digital ethnicity characterised by episodic interactions, temporal engagement and conversation based, significance of visual exchanges, community defined by circles of friends and family where sharing of content becomes organic, identity coloured by type of posts shared, created, forwarded. Specific enthusiasm for negative posts. Traditional offline ethnicity is characterised by a constancy of presence, distinct cultural identifications, ways of life, language, dress codes, food, festivals, challenges, aspirations, triumphs, frustrations, acceptance among peers, existence of a journey path in life. Need for greater tangible evidence. Negative assertions would need an evidence base to get support and validated. Positive views tend to be more popular.

Application of systemic distinctions is a key facet of the conceptualisation of ethnicity (Eriksen, 2010). The articulation of 'Us' and 'Them' is also a key feature of such systemic distinctions. According to Eriksen (2010) ethnicity is constituted through social contact. Although ethnicity is not entirely developed by individual agents, yet it can provide a dual element of meaning along

with specific avenues for pursuing culturally defined interests. This duality may be an important dimension to explore within obtaining ethnicity of migrants.

## 3. Acculturation

Although acculturation may be taken to be a smooth process of migrants acquiring local tastes and preferences as well as buying into obtaining value systems yet in reality this may be a process that could smudge out individual identities of migrants. Processes of negotiating new identities and ethnicity may also bring about conflict among migrants due to inequality of access to economic, political and social resources. The adoption of the white, Swedish speaking majority's values and ways of life – which in turn may be dependent on the economic success of the migrants or groups. According to Eriksen (2010), Park assumed that acculturation would replace ethnic entrenchment.

Another differing interpretation of acculturation that has gained support in the domain of Anthropological research is in the work of Bateson (Bateson, 1972), in which contrary to the integrative expectations, there could be an accentuation of group differences through contact situations (Eriksen, ibid). Prolonged interaction solidifies cultural distinctiveness and schismogenesis.

## 3a. The melting pot metaphor

The context of immigrant integration into America, popularised the notion of a melting pot. Migrants from different countries would arrive on American soil and then gradually embrace the American way of life so much so that at some point in the future their identities could not be distinguished from those who were born and raised on American soil. Eriksen (2010) contends that it has become commonplace to criticise the notion of melting pot for having been empirically wrong as it predicted the demise of ethnicity. A key criticism alluded to by Eriksen (2010) as well is the fact that the melting pot metaphor never seems to have materialised for the large majority of migrants in whose case diverse ethnic groups never merged into one and differences between them got accentuated after generations of mutual adaptation.

As an individual moves between social contexts in a flux, the relative importance of his or her ethnic membership changes. Thus, an individual may have many 'selves' according to the groups to which he belongs and the extent to which these groups are isolated from the others. This is a valid argument when we examine ethnic membership in the context of social media use.

## 4. Methodology:
### 4a. Research approach and methods

To gain insightful understanding of how the use of social media influences migrant's integration process into the host countries, we adopted an inductive case study approach (Eisenhardt, 1989) to develop key themes for theory building purposes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### 4b. Data collection procedures and sources

Our data collection was guided by purposeful sampling (Pratt, 2009) following the criteria: (a) born outside Sweden to parents having foreign background, (b) residing in Sweden, (c) active in social media, (c) being able to speak English or Swedish. Our data collection followed three steps: (1) recruiting respondents (2) conducting interviews and (3) data validation.

**4b.1 *Recruiting respondents***
Following snowball sampling logic to approach hard to reach population, we recruited respondents in areas having high population of migrants such as Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö (Perez et al., 2013; Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). We selected respondents from different ethnic origins, for example, from EU and non-EU countries. The length of time that the migrants reside in Sweden varies in our sample: newly arrived (1 to 5 years), between 5 and 10 years and over 10 years. Next, we chose respondents from various occupational background in different sectors. Our sample includes respondents moving to Sweden as economic migrants, family reunion or refugees. The combination of different occupational and ethnic backgrounds, length of residence in Sweden and locations allowed us to investigate the acculturation process in a more holistic way.

Through social and professional network groups on LinkedIN and Facebook, for instance, Expat Groups in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, Indians in Sweden, North Americans in Sweden and with the help of gate keepers in these communities; we succeeded in recruiting 25 respondents from different backgrounds. Following Edirisingha et al. (2017), to establish trust, we contacted each and every respondent to share the topic guide with them. We obtained written consent of interviewees prior to conducting the interviews. If a respondent declined assent to be recorded, we made written notes during the interview. The following table outlines the broad characteristics of our sample.

Table 1.

| Migrant | Country of origin | Gender | Occupation | Years in Sweden | Age group |
|---------|-------------------|--------|------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Vicky | Australia | Female | IT consultant | 13 | 40-45 |
| Soumya | Bangladesh | Male | Unemployed | 2 | 35-40 |
| Bao | Vietnam | Male | Maths teacher | 11 | 40-45 |
| Quynh | Vietnam | Female | Job seeker | 3 | 25-30 |
| Iva | Romania | Female | Employed by Swedish public authority | 11 | 35-40 |
| Quy | Vietnam | Female | Job seeker | 6 | 25-30 |
| Sara | Syria | Female | Employed by NGO | 3 | 30-35 |
| Adedayo | Nigeria | Male | Substitute camera man and TV editor | 4 | 35-40 |
| Liz | United States of America | Female | Strategy manager at Ericsson | 1 | 25-30 |
| Mahdi | Somalia | Male | Teaching assistant | 7 | 20-25 |
| Ali | Palestine | Male | Job mentor | 4 | 25-30 |
| Huang | China | Female | Designer | 7 | 25-30 |
| Carlos | Colombia | Male | Marketeer | 5 | 25-30 |
| Jacinda | Nigeria | Female | Job seeker | 4 | 40-45 |
| Farhan | Iraq | Male | Job seeker | 5 | 25-30 |
| Julie | Swiss | Female | Job seeker | 2 | 25-30 |
| Zameer | Syria | Male | Data scientist | 6 | 30-35 |
| Indrani | India | Female | Job seeker | 2 | 25-30 |
| Jinny | Vietnam | Male | Digital project manager | 8 | 25-30 |
| Pradeep | India | Male | Investment banker | 1 | 40-45 |
| Baomin | Canada | Female | Maths teacher | 8 | 30-35 |
| Morag | Romania | Female | Social worker | 9 | 35-40 |

**4b.2 *Conducting interviews***

To capture the process of migrant's integration into the host country and how migrants use social media and unpack different aspects in such a process, we used open-ended questions (e.g. Stake, 1995; Mitra & Evansluong, 2019), which allow migrants to tell their story. This approach enables us to obtain rich information in specific contexts (Patton, 1990). We have made several attempts to schedule and re-schedule the interviews with the migrants due to the sensitivity of the topic on integration and migration as well as their day-to-day busy life in the new host country. A number of these migrants are asylum-seekers who were waiting for the extension of their resident permits which decided their future to stay or leave the host country. Some others were job seekers who have been trying hard to enter the labour market. Others were struggling between life and work to provide us with their limited spare time for the interviews. One of the challenges of interviews was the unpredictable nature of venues through which we needed to interact with the migrants. For, instance one of the migrant decided to be interviewed while he was travelling on a bus. Consequently, he was so guarded about what he was saying fearing being overheard, that he cautiously avoided all issues that might have been even remotely critical of the Swedish government.

In total, 25 interviews were conducted over the period of 30 months between 2017 and 2019. Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. Our interviews focus on the following categories: (1) Engagement including questions like what sort of material usually interests the subjects as material for exchange, frequency of postings, sharing or creating new opinion on specific issues of interest, (2)Belongingness including questions like the membership of the community that the subject would identify with, does this identification change in the online context, can digital ethnicity provide an understanding of why subjects need to assume different identities. (3) Approval seeking among relational dependencies including questions like are there specific languages used for certain relationships, how would it be ascertained that conversations would lead to integration.

**4b.3 *Data validation***

We reached a saturation point between the twentieth and twenty second interviews where no further insights were being uncovered (e.g. Francis et al., 2010). We contacted respondents and confirmed with them the conclusions that we've drawn from the data that we have gathered.

**4b.4 *Secondary data***

To examine the abovementioned research question, we gathered policy documents published by Swedish government agencies as well as materials from news and media regarding the topic of migrants and integration. This combination allowed us to triangulate the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to maintain a high level of data richness and minimise the risk of missing important information (Maxwell, 2004).

**4c. Design of analytical approach**

We employed a content analysis strategy (Miles & Huberman, 1994) by performing multiple analyses by going back and forth between theory and the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Our analysis consisted of the following steps:

*Step 1:* Following the use of open coding, all of us read the transcripts of the interviews to analyse the texts with the goal of identifying codes. Each of us copied these texts of evidence into a separate document. We have then compared and discussed these texts together. From the

evidence, we develop a large number of primary codes which are very close to the respondents' wordings in the transcripts (Van Maanen, 1979).

*Step 2:* Guided by axial coding, we have interpreted the codes across all the respondents by moving back and forth between documents containing the texts selected from the transcripts and the literature (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). We have used the existing literature to interpret our first order codes.

*Step 3:* We evaluated all the second order themes by using the relevant literature on social media and acculturation. From the collection of themes and we organized these themes into a more abstract level (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The outcome of this process is the three aggregate dimensions, namely, (a) migrants' access and participation in social media, (b) migrants' generation of content and (c) migrants' digital identity.

## 5. Data analysis:
### 5a. Approval seeking among relational dependencies:

Vicky who is employed as an IT consultant found that her engagement through Facebook came about due to her interactions and connections with the 'Expats in Sweden', group. According to Vicky the difference between an expat and an immigrant is, '*Immigrant is anyone that comes on from somewhere else whereas an expat is at working age, earning a decent income.*' Vicky feels more integrated than the average expatriate as she speaks Swedish fluently and has been part of a network even before meeting her husband. Vicky finds Sweden to be a little behind regarding migration in comparison to Australia where there is a lot more diversity.

Liz from the USA feels similarly here when she says, 'Swedes are generally very nice and friendly, but it can take a long time to build a deep and meaningful bond. Most of our friends are expats. Swedes are by nature reserved people. So, unlike the US where you'll strike up a conversation with anyone in a coffee shop, that doesn't happen here.'

One of the key challenges for Iva from a different ethnic background is the lack of a network. 'It is really hard to build up or be part of an existing network', admits Iva. For Iva the Swedish culture had various similarities with Romanian culture but learning Swedish is hard, especially so as there isn't anything comparable like a similar language. So, it has taken time to get to grips with both the language and pronunciation for Iva.

Bao who has lived in Sweden for eleven years says, 'most of my close friends are Vietnamese, I have acquaintances who are Swedish.' Bao goes onto say, that his working life is quite enjoyable whereas the other life doesn't happen as people tend to be quite cold outside work.

Quy mentions that in theory it does appear that using Facebook one can get closer to the Swedish population yet in practice this may not be all that easy. Quy feels that online conversations do influence off line activities. Quy is part of an online community of professional women called LeanIn. For the LeanIn group the sense of community is strong. This may be because the size of the group is very small. In contrast the same cannot be said of the dance group that has an online existence as well. There are more than a hundred members and relationships are a little 'bitchy' there. After all we are all trying to show that we are better than the others.

Sara's sense of community is primarily underscored by the offline world. Sara feels that there are numerous opportunities to learn the language, participate in the local culture in face to face

meetings. But this does not happen on social media platforms. Sara contends that emotionally people are more directly connected through the offline space than when they are online. Reflecting on her own social media use, Sara feels that social media use has not helped her to acculturate into Swedish society. Sara reckons that integration is a two-way process. Both the Swedish and the migrant needs to make efforts. If the Swedes don't accept the migrant it would be impossible for the migrant to integrate.

Adedayo feels that there are several categories among migrants. 'Some are more equal' than others. Integration projects, according to Adedayo, are pretty much one sided. These projects are initiated but they never look at what the migrant is doing. In a disappointed vein, Adadayo point out that 'we just exist here but we are not here – acculturation is very difficult for us.'

Baomin from Canada found that skin colour, racial origins, extraction, are all key dimensions that could impact on integration into Swedish society. Baomin is of Chinese origin but was born and brought up in Canada. Every time, Baomin and her husband would go to a party or and event people would ask her husband who is of Canadian descent whether Baomin spoke any English? And whether Baomin was of Thai heritage.

**5b Engagement:**
Vicky writes a blog on special needs of people with an ancillary objective of encouraging bloggers to come on board and start contributing. Vicky's blogs are mainly in English, about 80:20 would be the proportion ratios between English and Swedish. 'Generally, Swedes are all planned and reserved and don't talk for the sake of talking. I find Swedes are different online. They seem to be more opinionated online than in real life', says Vicky. Iva seems to agree with Vicky, when she says that Swedish people are more open on social media than they are when you meet them on the street. Given this lucidity, Iva feels that it is therefore easier to make contact through social media than in real life.

Soumya uses YouTube videos to learn Swedish. Soumya uses a fake Facebook account to follow Swedish people. 'I find Swedish people are conservative when it comes to publishing their opinions on Facebook' says Soumya. It is interesting to note here that this observation is in direct contrast to Vicky's point about how 'opinionated' she feels Swedes are when they are on Facebook.

Soumya writes poems in Bengali and shares them with Indian and Bangladeshi Facebook participants. Soumya's interaction with mainly Indian and Bangladeshi Facebook participants again illustrates the actual chances of acculturation within Swedish host society. 'I'm treated like a stranger here in Sweden as they don't want to communicate with me', says Soumya.

Bao who reads newspapers and friends' updates on Facebook doesn't read any Swedish news, only Vietnamese ones. His interactions on Facebook are only with Vietnamese people. He says, he has some Swedish friends on Facebook, but he never really interacts with them. He has joined several Vietnamese groups but not any Swedish ones. Somewhat similar to Bao, Mahdi from Somalia uses Facebook to become up to speed with Somali news, or Swedish news as he doesn't have the time to sit and watch news programmes on tv.

Quynh mostly uses Facebook for interacting with people and Instagram for sharing photos with a smaller group. '*Instagram is a little bit more private, so I can share photos of my son – circulate a kind of a picture diary to a small group of people*', says Quynh. Quynh also has a Twitter account but that to locate suitable work. Quynh adds that Facebook has really helped her a lot in getting to know people. Initially she found that in face to face conversations it was awkward as she had to repeat

the same introduction every time she met someone for the first time. Quynh observes, '*I had noticed that Swedes really hate changing into English mid conversation.*'

'*Before my son was born I used to post material on politics, identity, culture and arts. Then after my son was born my postings were on life support issues like education and psychology. But recently it seems to me that there is no audience, so I don't post*', admits Quynh. Quy follows similar practice to Quynh as she does not like to generate content and prefers to use it primarily for entertainment purposes.

Commenting on the role that language plays in acculturation, Quynh says, '*writing in Vietnamese is counter-productive as even Vietnamese people in Sweden will not react to it. Writing in English embeds the foreign element of my post in contrast to writing in Swedish which would work best.*' In a similar vein Quy says, 'when I want to share an opinion, then I prefer to write it using English as that way I'm able to reach both Vietnamese as well as Swedish friends.

Iva from Romania work as a project leader uses social media to send messages justifying the importance of developing and conducting projects that are aimed at social integration into Swedish society. Iva writes a blog regarding what needs to be done to enable integration of migrants into Swedish society. While Iva conjectures that this blog has been well received yet there are people who have disagreed with my blog arguments being themselves principally opposed to the idea of entry of migrants into Sweden.

When Sara was based in Syria she was involved in the political crises there. She used to have her own YouTube channel. Sara used to be super-active, regularly publishing material that was sent to her. But all the material used to be posted using some other name. 'We used VPN as otherwise I could get killed,' observes Sara. In Sweden Sara also shares material on Facebook with her community. The motivation to do this stems from the menace fake news that the Syrian community frequently receives.

## 5c. Belongingness:
'*Difference between online and offline behaviour is starker in the case of Swedes than Australians. I tend to be more direct in Swedish. Achieving trust of people through social media interactions is difficult*' says Vicky.

Soumya from Bangladesh is one of our participants in this study whose real-life experiences articulated the challenges that online and offline identity could pose to successfully integrate into a host community. As someone who has been an active blogger, Soumya has been black listed by religious zealot groups in Bangladesh. So Soumya fears for his life. Every time Soumya sends a friend request on Facebook he is usually unsuccessful, as he is unable to reveal his identity. So, while Soumya is unable to meet enough Swedish people in the offline world yet at the same time in the online context, Soumya is hemmed into a prison like enclosure which is gradually taking him further away from integrating into Swedish society.

Bao says, '*although I've lived in Sweden for eleven years, I don't interact with Swedish people.*' Bao further adds, '*My connections to Vietnam are stronger than ones here in Sweden.*'

According to Quynh, '*it is not that important for me to share my opinion on social media as people who reveal their identities online are all pro-immigration. So, I don't post material on immigration per se.*' However, Quynh does post about issues like having more women in the work force and why it is important to respect gender equality. Quy uses social media to tell other users about who she is. Upon reflection Quy feels that she has a natural inclination to share funny material with her friends through social media, yet with the passage of time, she finds that she is turning into a Swede as she increasingly considers consequences of sharing.

Sara from Syria feels that it is important to integrate but she doesn't want to share Swedish artefacts just to show that Sara has become part of the country, after all Sara wants to be identified through her own Syrian personality and identity. Mahdi from Somalia feels people from African countries have greater problems to integrate into Swedish society in comparison to migrants from other places.

Zameer from Syria articulated integration through three different perspectives, viz. that of the Swedish government, the migrant, and that of society. From a government perspective, *a migrant is reckoned to be integrated when he is employed as the state would be receiving taxes paid by the migrant.* This is quite challenging in the state of things for migrants in Sweden as the integration plan doesn't tends to impose liminality in that it tends to accentuate inequality by allocating jobs randomly. So a migrant who is a qualified medical practitioner might be asked to work as a cleaner. For Zameer who is a qualified data scientist being offered a job of a cleaner did signify that he was integrated using the government's lens yet in reality, Zameer was far from feeling as if he was being treated equally.

From a migrant perspective integration would happen, '*when I have the same opportunities as my peers – in terms of qualifications, job opportunities, salaries, education, access to social services like facilities in the institutions of the government – all those will show that I'm integrated if I'm having similar access like my peers within society*'. Pradeep whose daughter had to be hospitalised at short notice, echoed a similar view about not having certain symbolic documents right after arrival in Sweden which increased their sense of vulnerability and insecurity.

Another interesting observation of Zameer is the societal take on migrants. '*I won't be Swedish until I give up eating falafel*', is what Zameer felt societal integration was all about. I'll be integrated into Swedish society '*when I'm able to imitate local Swedish choices, their social habits – adopting these as mine and not exercise my own habits in their presence.*' This view point was also supported by Morag who spoke about celebrating mid-summer holidays articulated this dimension of voluntarily imitating and participating in Swedish festivals during the year.

## 6. Discussion:

Several participants in the study dwelling on the challenges of integration and acculturation have posited that there may have been misconceptions and prejudices on both sides. Nekby's (2012) point about the fact that although cultural integration is a process of adaptation for both majority hosts and the minority migrant groups, asymmetrical size differential between the groups would imply that the overwhelming expectation of adaptation would be on the side of the migrants. When the Swedes are so fluent in English, it might have been easier to speak English with migrants and not Swedish. According to our participants there is this overwhelming experience of the system not being adaptive. It is likely that this lack of adaptiveness has been partly due to attitudes and actions of the majority Swedes (cf. Nekby, 2012). There are so many highly skilled refugees who cannot fit into the Swedish system. That is clearly a sign of difficulty and the processes of acculturation leading to sub-optimal results in the present scheme of things.

The experiences of the Australian Vicky and American Liz does have synergies with the findings of Barker (2014) who conducted grounded theory analysis based on in-depth interviews of Americans in Sweden and Swedes in the US. It is clear from the data analysis for our study that host culture interaction and home culture contact influence the process of acculturation in diverse ways. Liz's fondness to opt for impromptu social arrangements for meeting up with friends like in her home country, the US, in favour of the more planned and structured Swedish style shows that home culture core values are rarely abandoned in favour of host-culture ones

and the latter are not simply added. Indeed, cultural familiarity is a key dimension for Liz as she finds herself going back to US expats in Sweden for most group social activities. Vicky's observation about the lack of diversity in Sweden in comparison to that of Australia and her frequent social media based exchanges that have enabled to continue to have abiding links with family and friends in her home country Australia attest to the transnationalism as pointed out by Hendry (2016).

Almost all the migrant participants in our study seem to have been directly influenced by the security of their occupations or the lack of it. Regarding migrants from Syria, Vietnam, Nigeria, and Somalia efforts to acculturate were directly mediated by their economic situation in life. We found that when migrants found work that was permanent and were secure, then the propensity to acculturate began to diminish. In contrast, when they were looking for work they'd be keen to learn Swedish or participate in various social media platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn. This finding of ours seems to corroborate Samnani et al.'s (2013) research findings. In multiple instances where migrants were well established in their job world's, our study showed a distinct reluctance among migrants to give up home cultural identities.

The definition of who is a migrant by Vicky above as well as Bao's attitude of having no interest in Swedish culture corroborates Samnani et al.'s (2013) research where cultural identity and acculturation strategy gets moderated by economic rewards. In the case of Bao there is negative correlation between economic self-sufficiency and acculturation. Bao's desire to acculturate has disappeared as he feels very satisfied with his job as a teacher and his position in life where he uses social media to sell Swedish goods to Vietnamese clients of his wife's business. Bao does not have any curiosity about his neighbours on even Sweden as he lives within this cocooned reality in Sweden that is defined entirely by all things Vietnamese. In contrast Vicky who is fluent in Swedish thinks that the Swedish host population is beholden to her skills as an IT consultant.

The need to learn Swedish to become part of the host country varied among participants of our study. Some of the newly arrived migrants like Soumya from Bangladesh, Quy from Vietnam, Sara from Syria were daunted by their challenges in learning Swedish which they considered as tantamount to barriers to entering the job market. At the same time Vicky from Australia Bao from Vietnam, Iva from Romania and Quy from Vietnam who have been in Sweden for longer than five years have given up trying to get fluent in Swedish and thus acculturate into the host community. This behaviour conforms to Laroche et al.'s (1998) findings of a negative correlation between acculturation and ethnic identification. Mahdi from Somalia who speaks multiple languages is a slightly different case as his work is to facilitate student acculturation across several language communities.

Adedayo's observation about different classes of migrants and the Swedish system's partiality in treating different migrants differently, attests to the acculturation challenges highlighted by Berry (2005, 2013). In this context the admission of Adedayo that the Swedish community was initiating various integration projects but were never actually considering the work being done by the migrant professionals like himself shows the conflictual nature of such inter-cultural communication as posited by Berry (2001). Adedayo's frustration that 'we just exist, though we are not here', reinforces abiding conflict and the need for negotiation to reach outcomes that are adaptive to both the Swedish and migrant communities.

## 7. Conclusion:
Analysis of the considerable amount of data that was collected, for this study did reveal patterns that have hitherto been taken for granted. The integration plan of the state, that it would apply equally successfully for all migrants is a myth that needed to be examined critically. Here it was

found that professionally qualified migrants found it hard to be integrated into Swedish society as they were allocated jobs that were not related to their background expertise. Social media use among migrants tended to interlink migrants to each other, but with regard to breaking barriers into Swedish society it wasn't something that was noticeable among the accounts in this study. Distinctiveness and Schismogenesis was a key feature as people assume different identities to converse with different audiences. In a sense, the need for conversations on social media also seems to be plummeting with the widespread propagation of fake news. The capacity of social media to generate opinion seems to be getting curtailed as contributors due to various real and imagined threats decide to not be responsible for what is being circulated.

## 8. References

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