



EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENT DIRECT SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF AFGHAN AND SYRIAN REFUGEES IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study is to determine which factors have led to the differences in the direct socio-economic integration of Afghan and Syrian refugees in the Netherlands. By using a most similar case design, the human and social capital of Afghan and Syrian refugees are analysed. In addition, the time spent in refugee reception centres, the number of relocations from refugee reception centres, and health issues have been identified as possible additional factors explaining the better integration of Afghan refugees in the labour market compared to Syrian refugees. Data originated from the SCP, CBS, and Significant have been employed. The results show that only the social capital theory in combination with the number of relocations from refugee reception centre have been able to explain the difference in the direct socio-economic integration. However, more research needs to be done about the role of the number of relocations refugees experience during their stay in refugee reception centres and its effect on the direct socio-economic integration.

1. Introduction

Recently, several German companies announced that there had been a shortage of 1,6 million low skilled workers. Since the economy of Germany has been growing significantly over the last years, these workers became necessary to fill important structural needs. The German companies are welcoming asylum seekers to fill the employment gap available in the different sectors. Significant efforts from the German government and some employers have resulted in a lower unemployment rate among refugees (Dam, 2018). However, in comparison with Germany many countries are still lacking behind in employing refugees in the labour market. Indeed, in the Netherlands, state institutions have been trying to integrate refugees in the labour market, but with less success. One and a half year after receiving the residence permit, around 90% of the refugees still remain dependent on social welfare in the Netherlands (CBS, 2018). In addition, only 4% of the asylum holders had found employment after one and a half year (2018). The percentage of asylum holders with employment increased to 11% after two and a half year, but this remained a low number (Markus, 2018; CBS, 2018). Most notable, however, has been the difference between the origin of country of refugees. For instance, amongst Afghan refugees, 22% of the refugees found a job within 18 months. However, among the Eritrean refugees, only 0,9% had found employment after one and a half year. These figures mirror similar findings in the 1990s where Afghan refugees tended to find employment significantly more often than Iraqi and Iranian refugees (Sprangers et al., 2004). A frequently given reason for these dynamics has been that Afghan refugees are higher educated than other refugees (NOS, 2018). Nevertheless, if education is the main determinant of employment in the host community, the percentage of employed Syrian refugees should be equivalent to or higher than the Afghan percentage since Syrian refugees tend to be higher-educated than Afghan refugees in the Netherlands (SER, 2016). Nonetheless, Syrian refugees have been the second lowest group when it comes to finding employment within 18 months, with a percentage of only 3% (CBS, 2018). Former education, thus, does not seem to be the

main reason that leads to a faster economic integration. This research paper will then attempt to explain the differences in the economic integration of refugees in the Netherlands by addressing the following research question:

What explains the differences in the direct socio-economic integration between Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands?

There exists a negative attitude in western societies towards refugees. The dominant view here is that refugees do not or rarely contribute to the national economy and that they are enormously reliant on social welfare products (Schoonen, 2018). However, several studies have found that migrants have in fact had a positive influence on the national economy, mainly in the long run (D'Albis et al., 2018; Bove & Elia, 2017; Ager & Brückner, 2013). Therefore, it can be in the benefit of the refugees and the receiving states to foster the socio-economic integration of refugees. To stimulate the socio-economic integration of refugees, it is, however, important to understand the different dynamics of socio-economic integration. In the existing literature, there is not much research done about the different integration results among refugees when the different nationalities are considered. By finding an explanation of why Afghan refugees tend to integrate more effectively economically than all other refugee groups, more knowledge is gained about the different integration processes amongst different nationality groups. This study might, thus, contribute to a better understanding of the integration processes amongst different nationality groups, which might ultimately help in future policies regarding integration.

This paper will test different factors that are said to influence the direct socio-economic integration of refugees in the Netherlands, namely the education of refugees acquired in the Netherlands, health problems, the residency in refugee reception centres, and contacts with Dutch natives (*bonding social capital*). These factors are expected to influence the social and human capital of refugees, which in turn affect the economic integration of refugees.

First, a brief literature review will be given where the current gaps in the literature relating to the integration of migrants will be identified. Second, the theoretical framework will outline the two theories that will be used in this paper to account for the differences in the direct socio-economic integration of refugees, namely the social capital theory and the human capital theory. Third, in the research design section the case-selection strategy, the methods used in this research, and the operationalisation of the variables will be justified. Fourthly, the results of the data analysis are to be found in the fifth section. Finally, the paper will end with the conclusion and discussion.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Variants of Integration

The integration of migrants is a widely discussed and debated subject. When analysing the literature on integration in Western European countries, it becomes clear that one can make a distinction between many variants of integration. The first distinction that can be made is between the concepts of assimilation, integration and multiculturalism.

Assimilation

The main distinction separating these concepts from each other is the dominant idea of how integration will succeed (Gest, 2012). Hence, some authors argue that only the migrants need to accommodate to the host community's culture in order for integration to be successful. This theory argues that over time migrants will assimilate to the culture of the host country. This assimilation theory had been the most dominant one among scholars when studying the adaptation of migrants in the 1960s and 1970s in the Western world (Gordon, 1964; Warner & Srole, 1945; Alba & Nee, 2003; Inglehart & Norris, 2012; Engbersen, 2003).

Integration

Since the 1980s many scholars have avoided using the assimilation theory as an explanation since it presupposes total adaptation of migrants to the host's culture and because it assumes a linear and one-way process. Mainly because of those reasons, this theory has been criticized extensively (Gest, 2012). Instead of the normatively-oriented classical assimilation theory, most scholars studying integration processes have adopted a non-normative understanding of integration and agree now that integration involves more parties than solely the migrants, including the host society (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016; Alba & Nee, 2003).

Therefore, the concept of 'assimilation' has been replaced by the concept of 'integration'.

Here, it is mainly argued that in the long run, migrants as well as the host community will assimilate and, hence, that integration goes both way (Castles et al., 2002; Gest, 2012; Kirkwood et al., 2015; Meer, 2012). Indeed, the integration policies imposed by many

western states find its roots in the 1980s, when the integration of immigrants had been central in the policy agenda's (Joppke & Morawska, 2003).

Multiculturalism

A related concept to integration is multiculturalism. Multiculturalism presupposes that different ethnicities are able to exist side by side without the need to sacrifice their own identities. Hence, none of the ethnic groups assimilate to the other. Multiculturalism has replaced the dominant idea that immigrants have to adopt to the host society (Kymlicka, 1995; Koopmans, 2010). In multiculturalist states the liberal values are central to the multiculturalist policies. It is argued that a liberal state has to provide all minorities group-specific rights, since these rights are inherent to liberal-constitutional law (Joppke, 2017; Koopmans, 2010). It is, however, argued that immigrants have to integrate to some extent to the norms and culture of the receiving state, especially economic migrants who have travelled voluntarily to the receiving state (Kymlicka, 1995). Nevertheless, Koopmans found that generous welfare states with multicultural policies, such as the Netherlands, negatively influences the socio-economic integration of migrants (2010). As a consequence, integration policies imposed by these countries have only a modest effect on the integration of immigrants (Ersanilli & Koopmans, 2011). Instead, states with more restrictive or assimilationist integration policies are found to have better integration results (Koopmans, 2010).

In addition, the recent immigration of mainly Muslim migrants and the recent increase in terroristic attacks have led to increased tensions in the western society toward Muslim migrants (Joppke, 2017). More attention has recently been paid to Muslim immigrants in the policy making processes which had caused multiculturalism to be under attack (Joppke, 2017). Nonetheless, Joppke argues, even though multiculturalism has been under attack recently, there simply does not exist an alternative in the liberal-constitutional framework of European countries (2017). Multiculturalism, thus, seems to remain the dominant framework

under which liberal Western European states cope with Muslim immigrants, including refugees.

2.2. Dimensions of Integration

The second distinction that is frequently made, is over the dimensions of integration. For example, Garcés-Mascariñas and Penninx differentiate between the legal-political dimension, the socio-economical dimension, and the cultural-religious dimension (2016). In addition, Heckmann and Schnapper name structural, cultural, social and identificational integration as different sorts of integration (2003). Instead of four dimensions, Lucassen et al. distinguish two sorts of dimensions: the structural and identification integration (2006). Furthermore, the scholar Godfried Engbersen differentiates between the functional, moral and expressive integration (2003). Finally, in the Dutch literature the most frequent dimensions used are the structural or socio-economic integration and the socio-cultural integration (Bakker et al., 2014; Vermeulen & Penninx, 1994). When the definitions of all the different dimensions are analysed, one finds many similarities. For example, functional and moral integration share many similarities with socio-economic integration, while the expressive dimension tends to be similar to the socio-cultural dimension (Engbersen, 2003). Here, the concepts of socio-economic or structural integration are mainly related to the full participation of migrants in social institutions while the socio-cultural integration focuses particularly on the social contacts migrants maintain with the society, and the cultural adaptations to that society (Engbersen, 2003; Vermeulen & Penninx, 1994). Since this study aims to explain the differences in employment rate, and since employment rate is often considered one of the main indicators of the socio-economic integration of migrants (Gest, 2012; Gordon, 1964), the socio-economic dimension will be focused on.

2.3. Gaps & Contributions

Comparisons of different migrant groups based on their country of origin have often been done. Lucassen et al., for example, make comparisons between migrants in the past and the

more recent waves of migrants and find that, for example, the Turkish migrants do not differ significantly from Polish migrants in the past when analysing integration in Germany (2006). In fact, Polish migrants were regarded by the Germans as ‘alien’ just as much as the Turkish migrants from the 1970s onward. Similar to this work, most of the scholarly studies that focus on the socio-economic integration of migrants focus on non-refugee migrants, such as economic or family migrants (Bauer et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2016; Lucassen et al., 2006; Hagendoorn et al., 2017; Ersanilli & Koopmans, 2011). Therefore, research on the socio-economic integration of refugees is still scarce.

Another important work that compares groups of migrants and their integration processes has been written by Vermeulen and Penninx (2000). They attempt to explain why certain migrant groups tend to integrate more easily in the socio-economic sphere than others. Vermeulen and Penninx study here the Turkish, Moroccan, Southern European, Moluccan, Surinamese, and Antillean migrants. Even though this study shares many similarities with the aim of this research paper, it differs in two significant aspects. Firstly, of all the groups they analyse, none of them belong to a ‘refugee’ group. This is important since refugees migrate for other reasons than economic and family migrants, and therefore, refugees find themselves often in a less secure position and in an economic deprived environment. Secondly, since this study dates back to 2000, it is relatively outdated and many significant changes in the Dutch context have occurred. For example, the Dutch integration policies have changed significantly, especially after new policies were implemented in 2013 (namely: *Wet Inburgering 2013*). The most significant policy change through *Wet Inburgering 2013* was that instead of the state and municipalities, migrants themselves were now being held responsible for their integration. Here, migrants have to find and enrol themselves to language schools without the assistance of municipalities or other social institutions. Lastly, the composition of the current refugee

population is different from the one in the 2000s, especially when taking into account recent migration from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Eritrea.

This research project therefore attempts to contribute to the current literature by analysing how the national identity of a refugee seems to determine its chance of access to the labour market. The literature on the integration of migrants has focused too much on non-refugee migrants. The position of refugees in this respect has, therefore, been overlooked. In addition, since integration policies are aiming at encouraging refugees to find a job, it is even more crucial to understand the reasons of why Afghans refugees, for example, tend to integrate better in the socio-economic sphere than Syrians. Identifying the factors that lead to faster integration among some refugees and impede faster integration among others, might therefore be useful to understand when designing future policies regarding the integration of refugees. This is not solely the case in the Netherlands, but for all states struggling with effective integration policies towards refugees worldwide.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this theoretical section, the core concept of ‘socio-economic integration’, which is the outcome of interest, will be defined. In addition, the theories of human and social capital will be employed as possible explanations to answer the research question. Several hypotheses are then derived.

3.1. Concept: (Direct) Socio-Economic Integration

Since this research focuses on a sub-part of integration, socio-economic integration, it is crucial to rigorously define this concept. Engbersen defines socio-economic integration as the participation of migrants in social institutions (2003). This, however, remains very broad. The participation of migrants in social institutions does not include solely the labour market, but also education centres. A valuable distinction was offered by Milton Gordon (1964). He divided socio-economic integration into two categories: direct socio-economic integration, and indirect socio-economic integration. *Direct socio-economic integration* relates to the participation of migrants in the structures and institutions of the receiving state that directly influences one’s economic position, for example the labour market. Meanwhile *indirect socio-economic integration* refers to the participation of migrants in the structures and institutions of the host society that influences indirectly the economic position of a migrant, for example in the education system (De Vroome et al., 2011). Even though this distinction is relatively old, it is still regarded as a useful division and is still being used in scholarly works today (De Vroome et al., 2011). This research will attempt to explain the direct socio-economic integration of refugees, since this is strongly related to the labour market.

3.2. Theories & Hypotheses

The theories that are often used to explain the socio-economic integration of migrants are the human capital, economic capital, and the social capital theories (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Alba & Nee, 2003). These three theories agree on the fact that the main factors influencing the socio-economic integration are “host country specific education, work

experience, language proficiency, and contacts with natives” (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010, p. 376). Here, human capital includes the educational, vocational, and linguistic skills of migrants; economic capital relates to the socio-economic status of migrants and their economic resources; and social capital refers to the social and organisational networks that migrants have (Alba & Nee, 2003; Inglehart & Norris, 2012). Since the theories have mainly been applied to explain integration in other countries than the Netherlands, it is difficult to know the extent to which these theories can be used to explain the direct socio-economic integration of migrants in the Netherlands. When analysing integration in the Netherlands, however, mainly the social and human capital theories are tested or applied (see for example: De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Dagevos et al., 2018; Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011). For this main reason, this paper will adopt the human and social capital theories in explaining the socio-economic integration of refugees. As additional factors, this research project will also analyse “health problems, integration courses, and the time spent in refugee reception centres” as also important in explaining the degree of socio-economic integration of refugees in the Netherlands (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010, p. 376). These factors are found by De Vroome & Van Tubergen as also important in explaining the socio-economic integration of refugees in the Netherlands (2010). Another aspect that has not been analysed thoroughly in the existing literature, but also still might affect the socio-economic integration of refugees is the number of relocations from refugee reception centre (Dagevos et al., 2018). This, thus, will be regarded the final additional factor in explaining the direct socio-economic integration.

This paper aims to test the factors identified by De Vroome & Van Tubergen, which relate largely to the social and human capital theory. In addition to these factors, this research project aims to make a new theoretical contribution to the current debate on integration by incorporating an additional factor that has not been analysed yet in the literature: the amount of relocations a refugee experiences during his time in refugee reception centres. It will be

tested if those factors are capable to explain the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

3.2.1. Human Capital

Human capital is generally referred to as the skills a person has in the fields of education, employment, and language (Inglehart & Norris, 2012). Refugees, however, are in a disadvantages position in comparison with the host society. When the human capital of immigrants is considered by employers, refugees are often viewed as lacking relevant work experience and as having poor language and social skills (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010; Soontiens & Tonder, 2014).

A distinction can be found between the human capital migrants acquired prior to their migration and after their migration (Soontiens & Tonder, 2014; De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010). Human capital acquired in the country of origin tends to be valued less than the human capital a migrant has obtained in the host country, since their human capital is not 'fully transferable' (Soontiens & Tonder, 2014). A well-known example is the educational qualification that is not (fully) recognised by the host community. As a consequence, many high-skilled migrants end up in a profession below their socio-occupational situation in their country of origin. This study will focus on the post-migration human capital for the two reasons that the human capital migrants acquired in the host country is valued more than their pre-migration human capital and that the pre-migration educational levels of Syrians and Afghan refugees do not differ significantly. In fact, Syrian refugees tend to be slightly higher-educated than Afghan refugees in the Netherlands (SER, 2016).

The language skills play a crucial role in the assessment of human capital which tend to correlate with more participation in the labour market (Soontiens & Tonder, 2014; Essen, 2006). In addition to language skills, the acquired education that is not related to language tend to influence the human capital of refugees (Alba & Nee, 2003). Therefore, by assessing

the human capital of refugees, their education (language skills and non-language related education) acquired in the Netherlands will be analysed.

Since the current integration policies are focusing mainly on language training and to incorporate the additional factor ‘integration courses’ as identified by De Vroome and Van Tubergen, the language acquisition of refugees will be assessed through the completion of the integration courses (2010). This leads to the specification of the first hypothesis:

H1: Education acquired in the Netherlands accounts for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

3.2.2. Social Capital

Social capital is often explained as the social network ties that migrants have with the natives (Alba & Nee, 2003; Norris & Inglehart, 2012). It is often argued that the weak direct socio-economic integration of refugees is often the result of a shortage of resourceful social ties. Indeed, social contacts increase the access of refugees to the labour market. There are two ways that refugees can obtain social capital. The first one is through members of the same community, also termed by Robert Putnam as *bonding social capital* (2000). The second form of social capital is labelled by Putnam as *bridging social capital* and includes the social connections refugees have with other communities (in this case the Dutch population) (2000). It is exactly the second sort of social capital that might help refugees to integrate in the economic sphere (Kanas & Van Tubergen, 2009). Since the Dutch population has more knowledge about the structure of the labour market, they might be valuable for the refugees in finding employment (Kanas & Van Tubergen, 2009). As a result, *bridging social capital* tends to be more valuable than *bonding social capital*. This leads to the second hypothesis:

H2: Contacts with the Dutch native population accounts for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

3.2.3. Time spent in Refugee Reception Centres & Number of Relocations

The time spent in refugee reception centres is also said to play a role in the economic integration of refugees. This dimension affects the social capital as well as the human capital. A refugee who resides in a refugee reception centre is in less contact with the Dutch natives. Here, its bonding social capital will be significantly higher than its bridging social capital mainly because of the fact that contacts with the outside world are less frequent. Furthermore, refugees who have not received a residence permit yet might encounter difficulties in enrolling for education. Besides the time a refugee has spent in a refugee reception centre, the number of relocations from a refugee reception might also influence the direct socio-economic integration of refugees. Refugees who relocate often from refugee reception centre tend to experience less stability and more unrest and uncertainty compared to those who do not change from refugee reception centre often (Dagevos et al., 2018). Feelings of unrest and uncertainty in turn might restrain refugees from finding friends and employment.

This leads to the identification of hypotheses 3a&b:

H3a: Time spent in refugee reception centres account for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

H3b: The number of relocations from refugee reception centres account for the difference in the socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

3.2.4. Health Problems

The last additional factor that might explain the differences in the direct socio-economic participation of refugees are health problems.

In general, refugees tend to have more health issues than local communities (Dagevos et al., 2018). Traumatic experiences of refugees before or during the emigration are often identified as the most important factors of their disadvantaged health conditions. In addition, events during their stay in the host country might also negatively influence the health of refugees.

For instance, the absence of refugees from their family members might contribute to mental health problems. Health problems can be considered part of the human capital, since health might be considered an individual quality that enhances job opportunities (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010). On the other side, however, health problems might influence negatively the social capital of refugees when it limits their ability to establish social networks. This leads to the fourth hypothesis:

H4: Health problems account for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

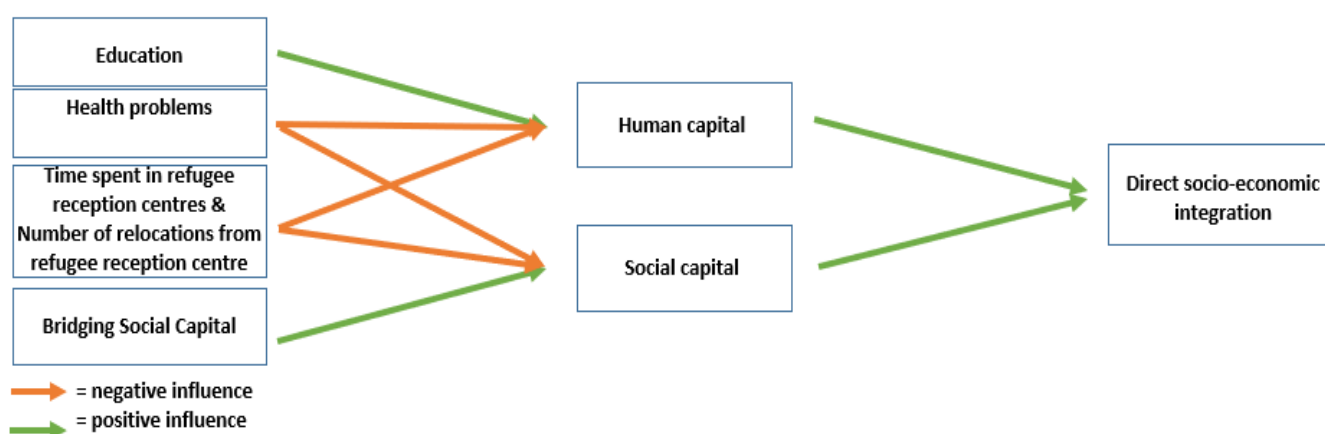


Figure 1: Relationship of the variables that lead to the direct socio-economic integration

This project expects health problems, education, contacts with Dutch natives, time spent in refugee reception centre, and relocations from refugee reception centres to have significant effects on the human and social capital of migrants in the Netherlands. Human and social capital in turn strongly affect the degree of direct socio-economic integration of migrants. The relationships between the different variables is illustrated in figure 1. In the following section the methodology, the case selection, and the operationalisation will be explained and justified.

4. Research Design

The different hypotheses are thus as follows:

H1: Education acquired in the Netherlands accounts for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

H2: Contacts with the Dutch native population accounts for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

H3a: Time spent in refugee reception centres account for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

H3b: The number of relocations of the refugee from refugee reception centre account for the difference in the socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

H4: Health problems account for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

Several studies conducted with the aim to analyse the position of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands will be used to answer the research question. First, the case selection is justified. Then, the methods of data collection strategy and research methodology are explained. Lastly, the methods of data analysis are described.

4.1. Case Selection

The refugee population in the Netherlands is very diverse, including many different nationalities. Thus, the main question is why this study focuses solely on Syrian and Afghan refugees. Syrian and Afghan refugees are chosen as the populations of inquiry since they share many similarities but, regardless of this, have experienced very different processes of socio-economic integration. The majority within both groups is Muslim; both groups have fled the country because of a civil war; their pre-migration education is relatively similar; and

finally, both groups are obliged to finish the integration courses imposed by the Dutch government. Hence, this paper attempts to explain what exactly accounts for the difference in their direct socio-economic integration by using a most similar case design.

4.2. Methods of Data Collection & Methodology

In the different hypotheses, one dependent variable and multiple independent variables can be identified. The dependent variable is the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees. Meanwhile the independent variables to test the varying hypothesised explanations are education, contacts with natives, time spent in refugee reception centres, the number of relocations from refugee reception centre, and health problems.

The different variables will be analysed through four studies and their data that focused on the position of refugees in the Netherlands, these are: *'Syriërs in Nederland: Een studie over de eerste jaren van hun leven in Nederland'* and *'Vluchtelingengroepen in Nederland: Over de integratie van Afghaanse, Iraakse, Iraanse en Somalische migranten'* by the SCP, *'Inburgering: systeemwereld versus leefwereld Evaluatie Wet Inburgering 2013'* by Significant, and *'Uit de Startblokken: Cohortstudie naar Recente Asielmigratie'* by CBS (Dagevos et al., 2018; Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011; Blom et al., 2018; CBS, 2018).

The two researches conducted by the *Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau* (SCP) will be the main focus in this thesis. The SCP is a government agency that follows, explains, and explores the social and cultural well-being of Dutch inhabitants (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, n.d.). They evaluate government policies and conduct exploration on different fields in behalf of future policies (Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, n.d.). It is, thus, an independent government agency conducting research on different aspects of the Dutch society.

The SCP has conducted different researches related to the situation of refugees in the Netherlands. The most recent report examines the situation of Syrian refugees, including in the labour market, their health, the social contacts, their education, and their period in the

refugee reception centres (Dagevos et al., 2018). The data collected for this research has been conducted between 2014 and 2017 and is, thus, very recent.

Fortunately, a similar study has been conducted by the SCP with regard to different refugee groups, including Afghan refugees. Here too, the dimensions of education, labour market, health, social contacts, and living conditions of Afghan refugees have been examined (Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011). However, a significant disadvantage of this research is that the data was collected in 2009. There is thus five years of difference between the data collected regarding Syrian refugees and Afghan refugees. Nonetheless, the data of Afghan refugees will be used in this paper for several reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, there simply does not exist more recent data on Afghan refugees which looks at most of the variables of interest in this study. Secondly, the methods used in the studies of 2009 regarding Afghans, and 2014-2017 regarding Syrians, share many similarities. There might be some newer data on the social contacts of Afghan refugees, but if the method and questions asked during the data collection is different than in the study among Syrian refugees, it becomes hard to compare these surveys. Thirdly, the composition of Afghan refugees in 2009 does not differ much from the one in 2014. In 2009 as well as in 2014-2017, most migrants from Afghanistan have been refugees or family migrants (Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011). Lastly, the most important objection against using data from 2009 is the fact that integration policies have changed significantly since 2009 with the implementation of the new *Wet Inburgering 2013* policy. The integration policies relate mainly to the integration courses of refugees, including language courses and education in general. Therefore, none of the two studies mentioned above will be used when examining the education and language acquisition / level of refugees. Here, other data sources will be used emanating from the organisation *Significant*. *Significant* evaluated the *Wet Inburgering 2013* following a request of the Dutch ministry of

Social Affairs and Employment, including the pass rates for the integration courses per country of origin. Hence, it offers more recent and comparable data.

By using the two studies from the SCP, from the same organisation and with similar methodologies and questions, the internal validity increases significantly. Those two studies obtained their data through surveys. These surveys had large-N respond rates of 3209 among Syrians, and 1006 responders among the Afghan population (Dagevos et al., 2018; Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011). The reliability of the surveys is strong because of the high respond rate and the similar questions that have been asked to Syrian and Afghan responders. However, the reliability might also be restricted by the fact that the data collected among Syrians is more recent than the one among the Afghans. There, thus, remains a risk that the Afghan population in 2017 is not totally similar than the one in 2009, which might negatively influence the outcome of this research. On the other hand, however, a quantitative large-N study allows for more general statements. And the aim of this study is to find general patterns explaining differences in the socio-economic integration based on the country of origin. In addition, although using surveys does not allow for in-depth interviews of refugees, it does allow for generalisations to other refugee groups since a large number of refugees has been questioned.

The same is true for the data offered by the CBS and Significant. They are both professional, independent organisations whose methods and data are freely accessible online. Therefore, to make this research more reliable and generalisable to other non-questioned refugees, the large-N data sets offered by the SCP, the CBS, and *Significant* are being employed.

4.2.1. Operationalisation

The operationalisation of the different variables is elaborated upon in this sub-section. Each variable will be discussed independently.

Variable 1: Direct socio-economic participation

The first dependent variable that needs to be operationalised is the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees. The most obvious indicator for this variable is the participation of the refugees in the labour market. Thus, this will be measured through analysing the employment of refugees. A distinction can be made between full-time and part-time participation in the labour market. Similar to the study of the CBS, direct socio-economic participation includes all refugees who have a paid job or are entrepreneurs regardless of the number of hours the person works in a month (CBS, 2018). Thus, in this paper every refugee who has a paid job, irrespective of the number of hours is considered as being direct socio-economically integrated.

Variable 2: Education

When analysing the post-migration education of migrants, several aspects are considered. Firstly, the refugees' progress in integration courses will be analysed. Here a distinction will be made between those who have completed their integration courses, those who have not completed their integration courses, and those who are studying Dutch at a higher level than required in the integration courses (higher than level A2). The report from *Significant* will be the main data source to analyse this aspect (Blom et al., 2018). This organisation offers information about the pass rates of the integration courses of Afghan and Syrian refugees.

Secondly, whether refugees have completed any other courses than the language courses in the Netherlands will be analysed. Here, the achieved level of education will be reviewed since this might give an overview over the average level of education of Afghan and Syrian refugees. The data offered by the SCP in 2009 and 2017 about the achieved level of education is employed here (Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011; Dagevos et al., 2018). Besides the achieved level of education, the enrolment of refugees in secondary vocational higher education or higher will be assessed through data offered by the CBS (2018).

Variable 3: Contacts with natives

The independent variable ‘contacts with natives’ can be measured in two ways. The first indicator determines whether the refugees have any Dutch friends, meanwhile the second one controls for the participation of refugees in organisational structures (De Vroome & Van Tubergen, 2010). The main sources examining these factors are here also the data from the SCP in 2009 and 2017 (Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011; Dagevos et al., 2018). These sources take into account the amount of time refugees spent with Dutch contacts and if the contacts with the Dutch natives are more or less frequent than the contacts with the community of the refugee. Unfortunately, however, the study of Syrian refugees does not analyse the participation of Syrians in organisational structures. Even though this aspect is analysed among Afghan refugees in 2009, it will not be possible to incorporate the participation of refugees in these organisations in this thesis since there is no comparable data for Syrian refugees. Hence, only the contacts refugees have had with the Dutch community (in comparison with their own community) are considered.

Variable 4: Time spent in Refugee Reception Centres & Number of Relocations

By analysing the time spent in refugee reception centres, two factors are crucial. Firstly, the amount of time a refugee resides in a refugee reception centre is expected to influence participation in the labour market. Secondly, the number of different refugee reception centres a refugee has resided in tend also to negatively influence direct socio-economic integration. Here too, data will be originating from the studies of the SCP from 2009 and 2017 (Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011; Dagevos et al., 2018).

Variable 5: Health problems

The last variable ‘health problems’ is intended to be analysed through the indicators similar to those used by the study of De Vroome & Van Tubergen (2010). Health problems are here indicated through two measures: depression and general health. In both the reports of the SCP

of 2009 and 2017 responders are asked about their general health and more specifically about aspects of their mental and physical health. Unfortunately, however, the methods that were used to ask the responders about their mental and physical health in 2009 and 2017 differed significantly. Hence, it becomes difficult to compare both results. Another option that could be analysed and has been analysed by the CBS is the use of care facilities (2018). Indeed, a person with more health issues will make more use of the care facilities and this might therefore be a good indicator. The data offered by the CBS relating to the use of care facilities will thus be used in addition to the general health assessment by refugees from the SCP.

4.3. Methods of Data Analysis

In analysing the data, this paper will, thus, compare the data given by the SCP in 2009 and 2017, Significant, and the CBS. No distinction will be made between age-groups or gender, since both categories are similar among Afghan and Syrian refugees. Education is used as the main indicator of human capital, meanwhile bridging social capital is employed as the most important indicator explaining the social capital of refugees. In addition to these, the time spent in refugee centres, the number of relocations from refugee reception centre, and the health of refugees will be used as additional factors affecting as well the social as the human capital of refugees.

5. Results

In this empirical section, the independent variables of Syrian and Afghan refugees will be examined. The dependent variable, the direct socio-economic integration, is confirmed to be higher among Afghan refugees than among Syrian refugees (see figure 2). This is not only true for the last several years, but since the 1990s Afghan refugees tended to integrate better in the economic sphere than other nationalities (Sprangers et al., 2004). Also remarking is that the longer the Afghans possess a residence permit, the larger the differences in the direct socio-economic integration become between Afghans and other nationalities. By testing the independent variables, this paper aims to be able to point to the factors that have led to the stronger direct socio-economic integration of Afghan refugees.

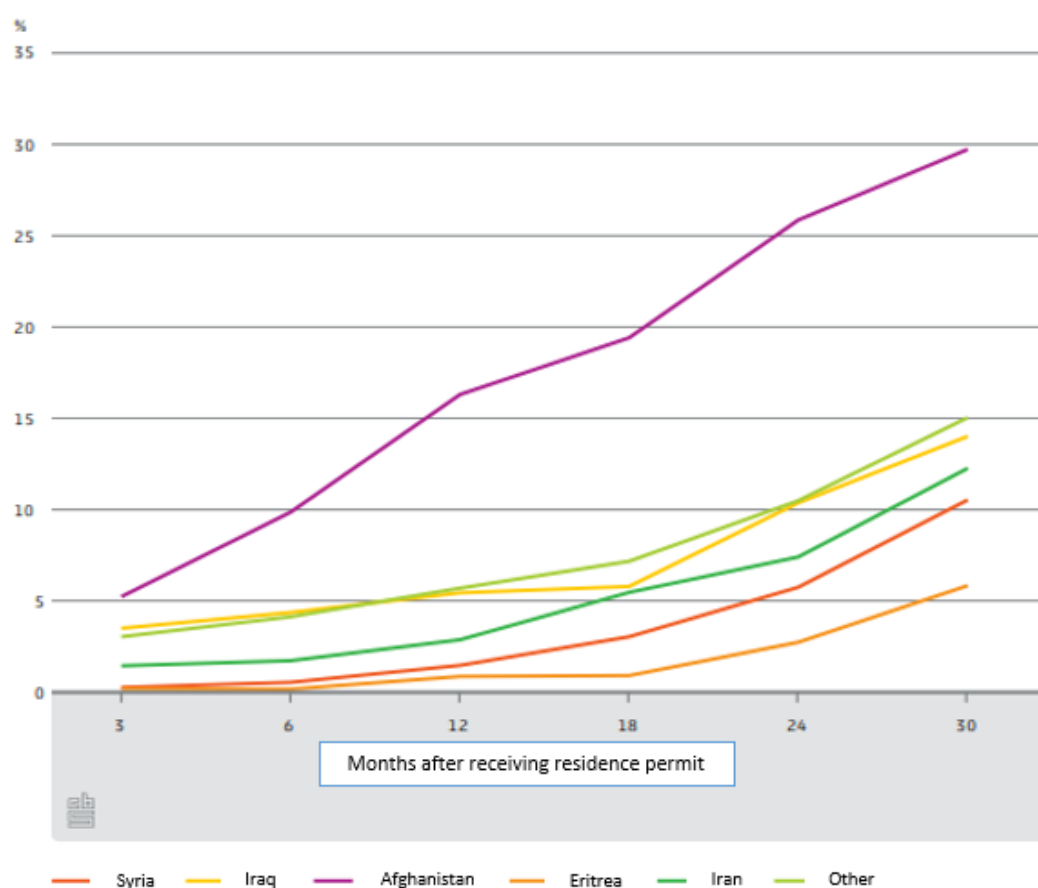


Figure 2: Total employed between 18 to 65-year olds who received a residence permit in 2014 in percentage (Source: CBS, 2018)

5.1. Education

H1: *Education acquired in the Netherlands accounts for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.*

The first hypothesis is tested by analysing the education of Afghan and Syrian refugees acquired in the Netherlands. Two aspects are considered here: the performance of the refugees in the integration courses and non-language related education.

Completion of Integration Courses

First, it is crucial to analyse the completion rates of the integration courses after the implementation of the new policy of 2013: *Wet Inburgering 2013*. In general, of all refugees who were obliged to finish the integration courses in 2013, 60 percent were able to succeed within the limit of three years (Blom et al., 2018). Of those 60 percent, 9 percent finished the language courses with level B1 or higher (instead of the required level of A2). There are, however, some differences with regard to the Syrian and Afghan refugees. Whereas of the Afghan refugees 46% received the diploma within three years, this percentage among the Syrian population has been 59%. Hence, Syrian refugees tend to succeed more or faster than Afghan refugees. The same pattern is found when analysing the percentage of refugees who succeeded the integration courses at a higher level than necessary (higher than level A2). Of the Syrian refugees 12% finished the integration courses with level B1 or higher, while this percentage among Afghan refugees is solely 5% (see table 1).

Table 1: Success rates of those for whom it became obligatory to finish the integration courses in 2013, in percentage (Source: Blom et al., 2018)

	Finished the integration courses within three years	Finished the integration courses with level B1 or higher
Afghan refugees	46	5
Syrian refugees	59	12

Education (Not related to language)

Besides language courses, education acquired in the Netherlands is expected to contribute to the direct socio-economic integration of refugees. Previous scientific studies showed that only few refugees in the Netherlands manage to receive a Dutch diploma, even though this is of huge importance for their integration (Dagevos et al., 2018). The language skills as well as education not related to the language of refugees play a significant role in the socio-economic integration of refugees. There tends to be a relationship between the level of the Dutch language and the ability to follow education not related to language. It is argued in the report of *Significant* that the current level in the integration courses of A2 is not sufficient for a refugee to follow education not related to language (Blom et al., 2018). For instance, if a refugee aims to enrol for university or to follow secondary vocational education, level B1 or higher is required. Here, the integration courses will not be helpful for those who wish to continue education after completing the language courses.

Of the refugees who received a residence permit in 2014, 1,8 percent followed secondary vocational education in 2015, meanwhile this percentage rose to 7,6 percent in 2016. However, the nationality of the refugee seems to have no significant influence on the enrolment to secondary vocational education (or higher) (CBS, 2018). Hence, the enrolment in non-language related education of Syrians and Afghans tend to be similar among those who received a residence permit in 2014.

There remains, however, a difference between those who follow or followed education, but have not finished yet and those who have indeed finished the particular study. Here, the achieved level of education could be a helpful indicator. It helps examine the level of education that refugees have in fact completed. The achieved level of education of Syrian and Afghan refugees can be found in table 2. In this table, there are no significant differences

between the education level of Syrian and Afghan refugees. Indeed, Dagevos et al. argued that the educational level of Syrian refugees is most similar to that of Afghan and Iraqi refugees (2018).

Table 2: Achieved level of education 15-64 years in percentage (Source: Dagevos et al., 2018 & Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011)

	Syrian	Afghan
<i>HBO / WO</i> (higher education)	21	26
<i>MBO / havo / vwo</i> (vocational or upper secondary education)	32	24
<i>Vbo / mavo</i> (lower secondary education)	15	16
Max. primary education	32	34

In summary, the acquired human capital related to education does not seem to explain the difference in degree of direct socio-economic integration of Afghan and Syrian refugees. Syrians tend to finish the integration courses more often than Afghans. In addition, non-language related education and the achieved level of education among Syrian and Afghan do not show significant outcomes. The first hypothesis is, thus, refuted.

5.2. Bridging Social Capital

H2: Contacts with the Dutch native population accounts for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

The second factor that needs to be discussed is the bridging social capital of Syrian and Afghan refugees with the Dutch population. Language barriers, cultural differences, concerns about family members, and dominant perceptions about ‘the other’ might complicate inter-community interaction (Dagevos et al., 2018). Despite these factors, the majority of the Syrian and Afghan refugees indicate to have regular contacts with Dutch friends.

The two reports of the SCP have both analysed the contacts that Syrian and Afghan refugees have with Dutch people during their free time. The majority of both Syrian and Afghan refugees indicate that they have contact with Dutch people at least once a week. For the Syrian population this percentage is 61, similarly this percentage for the Afghan population is 61. Hence, no large differences can be found between the two populations. Moreover, the contacts that refugees sustain with Dutch contacts on a monthly or yearly basis do not differ largely (see table 3).

Table 3: Contacts Syrian & Afghan status holders with Dutch people in free time in percentage (Source: Dagevos et al., 2018 & Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011)

	Afghan	Syrian
At least once a week	61	61
Monthly	17	19
(Less than) few times a year	22	20

Despite the fact that most refugees are in contact with the Dutch community, there might still be a difference between those who have little bonding and bridging social capital, and those with a high level of bonding social capital and a low level of bridging social capital, or vice versa. It is crucial to make a distinction between those two categories in order to make valid arguments about the validity of bridging social capital. Indeed, if a refugee has many contacts with members from his own community and less contacts with other communities, it is

expected that this negatively affects the socio-economic integration of this refugee. However, if a refugee has no contact with the Dutch community, nor with his own community, it is difficult to make valid arguments about the role of bridging social capital in stimulating the direct socio-economic integration. Thus, to argue that bridging social capital has a greater value than bonding social capital in the direct socio-economic integration of refugees, it is crucial to also analyse the bonding social capital of Syrian and Afghan status-holders.

Table 4: Level of social contacts, in four types in percentage (Source: Dagevos et al., 2018 & Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011)

	Regular contact with Dutch natives, much contact with own community	Regular contact with Dutch natives, little contact with own community	Little contact with Dutch natives, regular contact with own community	Little contact with Dutch natives, little contact with own community
Afghans	35	26	14	25
Syrians	41	20	18	21

Here, one finds that of the 61 percent of the Afghan refugees, 35 percent have strong bonding as well strong bridging capital, meanwhile 26 percent do have strong bridging social capital but weak bonding social capital. Among the Syrian refugees, those with strong bonding and bridging capital account for 41 percent, meanwhile 20 percent have strong bridging, but weak bonding social capital (see table 4). Here, it can be argued that Afghans who focus more on the Dutch community are more in number than among the Syrians. Even though this percentage is not much higher than among the Syrians, it might contribute to the explanation of why Afghans status holders tend to integrate economically more effectively than Syrian status holders. Indeed, this claim is also supported in the two reports where refugees are asked

whether they spend more time with Dutch members or with their own community during their free time.

Table 5: Level of social contacts during free time in percentage (Source: Dagevos et al., 2018 & Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011)

	More contact with members of own community, little contact with Dutch native community	Similar contact with members of own community and the native Dutch community	More contact with the Dutch native community
Afghan	32	29	39
Syrian	42	40	18

Interestingly, the results show that Afghan refugees tend to have stronger bridging social capital during their free time in comparison with Syrian refugees who tend to focus more on their ties with their own community during their free time. Thus, even though most Syrians claim to have similar contacts among the Dutch and Syrian community, the frequency in which they have contact with the Dutch or Syrian community during their free time differ significantly. During their free time, most Syrians seem to spend most of their time with members of the Syrian community. ‘Only’ 18 percent indicate that they spend more of their free time with Dutch members instead of Syrian members. This percentage is significantly higher among Afghan refugees (39 percent). The contacts Afghan refugees sustain during their free time with the Dutch community might explain their better integration in the labour market compared to other refugees. The second hypothesis seems confirmed, but only when the bridging social capital is placed in comparison with the bonding social capital of refugees.

5.3. Time spent in refugee reception centres & Number of Relocations

H3a: *Time spent in refugee reception centres account for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.*

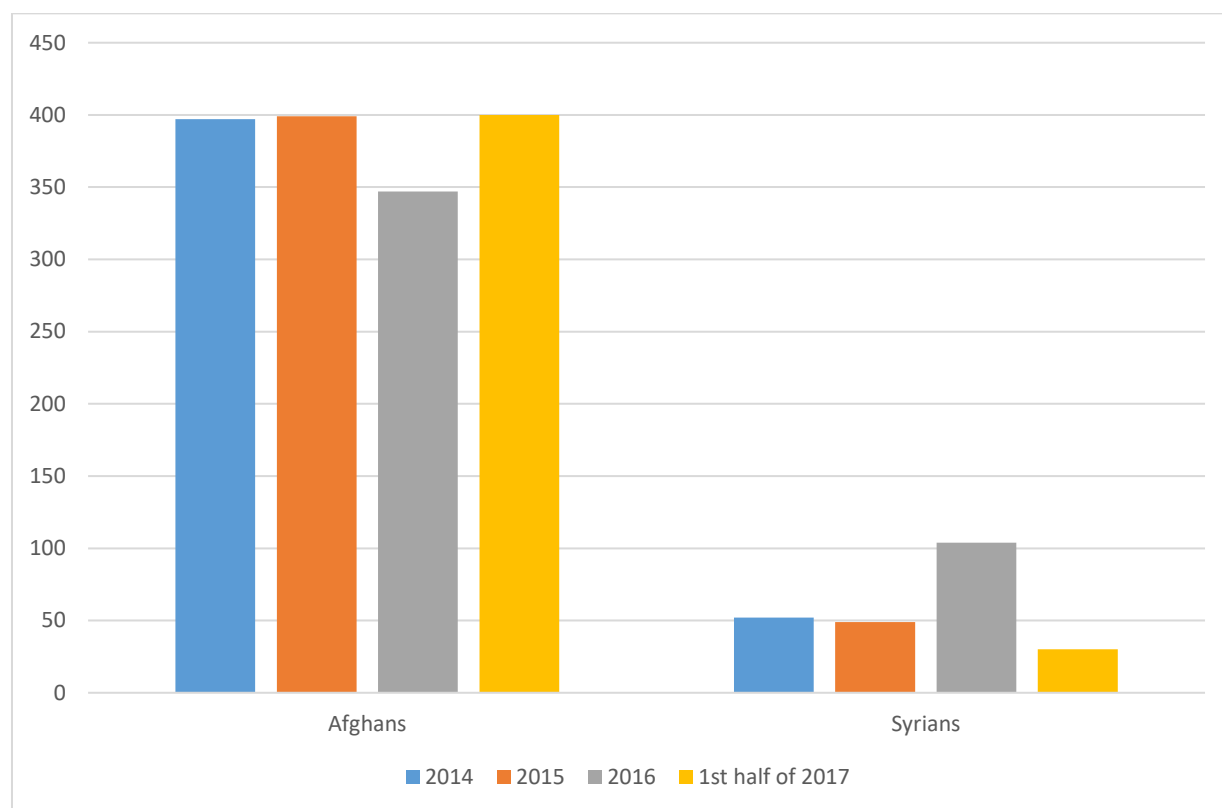
H3b: *The number of relocations of the refugee from refugee reception centre account for the difference in the socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.*

The third factor that might explain the difference direct socio-economic integration between Afghan and Syrian refugees is the time that the refugees spent in refugee reception centres before they were assigned an individual living space. It is expected that those who spend a longer time in a refugee reception centres will be less integrated in the labour market. In addition to this factor, the number of different refugee reception centres a refugee resided in might also indirectly influence the direct socio-economic integration.

By analysing the average time that Syrian and Afghan refugees have spent in refugee reception centres, it seems that Syrians tend to spend a shorter amount of time than Afghans in refugee reception centres. Most Syrians declare to have stayed 10 to 12 months or less in refugee reception centres (Dagevos et al., 2018). Around 20 percent stayed longer than one year in refugee reception centres. Syrians spent an average of nine months in refugee reception centres (Dagevos et al., 2018). This data was collected in 2017. The most recent data on the length of stay in refugee reception centres for Afghan refugee stems from 2009. This data shows that the average duration in refugee reception centres for Afghan refugees is one year and seven months (Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011). Hence, Afghan refugees spend on average ten months longer in refugee reception centres than Syrian refugees. This is significantly higher than among the Syrian population. Nevertheless, as stressed by Dagevos et al., this difference can be explained by the different asylum procedures and by the fact that the time in which an asylum case is assessed decreases significantly (2018). However, the

amount of days that Syrians have to wait for a residence permit is significantly lower than the amount of days among Afghan refugees when the same year is considered (see figure 3). It is thus, possible that the time Afghan refugees spend in refugee reception centres currently remains higher than among Syrian refugees. The main reason for this is that Afghan refugees receive their residence permit relatively often after repeated applications for asylum or after an appeal, causing a longer waiting time for Afghan refugees.

Figure 3: Waiting time (in days) until receiving the residence permit, per year (Source: CBS, 2018)



The fourth aspect that needs further analysis is the amount of refugee reception centre locations that a refugee has been to. Interestingly, on average the Afghans tend to move only once from one refugee reception centres to another and, thus, spent all the time in two particular refugee reception centres before being assigned a private residency (Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011). This data was interesting in 2009 as Afghans tended to move significantly lesser than other refugee groups, such as Iraqis, Iranians, and Somalians who on average change their refugee reception centre location 2,3 to 2,7 times (Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011).

Nevertheless, the low amount of times a refugee has moved is also interesting when compared to Syrian refugees, who on average changed four times from refugee reception centre (Dagevos et al., 2018). The large inflow of refugees in 2014 and 2015 resulted in huge pressures for refugee reception centres in providing shelter for all refugees. This might have contributed to the fact that many recent asylum seekers had to change their location frequently.

Nonetheless, since Afghans tend to move less frequently from one refugee reception centre to another since 2009, it might contribute to the explanation why they succeed more frequent than other refugees in finding employment. In addition, Afghans tend to spend ten months on average longer in refugee reception centres than Syrian refugees. This seems to indicate that Afghans are less integrated in the labour market than Syrians, even though the reverse is true. Thus, meanwhile hypothesis 3A is refuted, hypothesis 3B still stands.

5.4. Health

H4: Health problems account for the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees in the Netherlands.

The final factor that influences the social and human capital of refugees is the health problem issue. Here, two aspects will be considered: general health assessment and the use of care facilities. These issues will be discussed separately. An important indicator for health is age. Older people have in general more health issues than younger people (Dagevos et al., 2018). Refugees older than 65 years are, nonetheless, underrepresented in the Netherlands. For instance, only 5% of the Syrian refugees are 55 years or older. It should, therefore, be kept in mind that the majority of the responders will be below the age of 55.

General Health Assessment

The general assessment of one's health includes the physical health as well as the mental health. An average of 72 percent of the Syrian population described their health as 'good' or

‘very good’ (Dagevos et al., 2018). In comparison, 67,9 percent of the Afghans similarly assessed their health as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ (Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011). Among the Syrian refugees as well as among the Afghan refugee, the assessed health condition varies greatly among the different age categories. As mentioned earlier, health deteriorates at an older age. The different age categories of Afghan and Syrian refugees are compared in table 6.

Table 6: Percentage of those who assess their general health as ‘very good’ or ‘good’ (Source: Dagevos et al., 2018 & Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011)

	Syrians	Afghans
15-24 years	87	91
25-44 years	71	65
≥45 years	44	32

It seems that general health assessment is not a relevant factor to explain the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of Syrian and Afghan refugees. Despite the slightly better health assessment of Afghan refugees in the age category 15-24 years, the health assessments among the population between 25 years and older show that in general Syrians tend to assess their health more positively than Afghans. If health explains the direct socio-economic integration, Afghans should have a better health assessment than the Syrians. Since this is not the case, general health assessment does not seem to be a factor in explaining the different integration of the refugees in the labour market.

Use of Care Facilities

The second issue that needs to be examined is the use of care facilities. Indeed, a person with more health issues will make more use of the care facilities and this might therefore be a reliable indicator. The variation in the use of care facilities by Afghan and Syrian refugees is depicted in figure 4.

Figure 4: Use of care facilities in 2015 of those who received a residence permit in 2014 in percentage (Source: CBS, 2018)

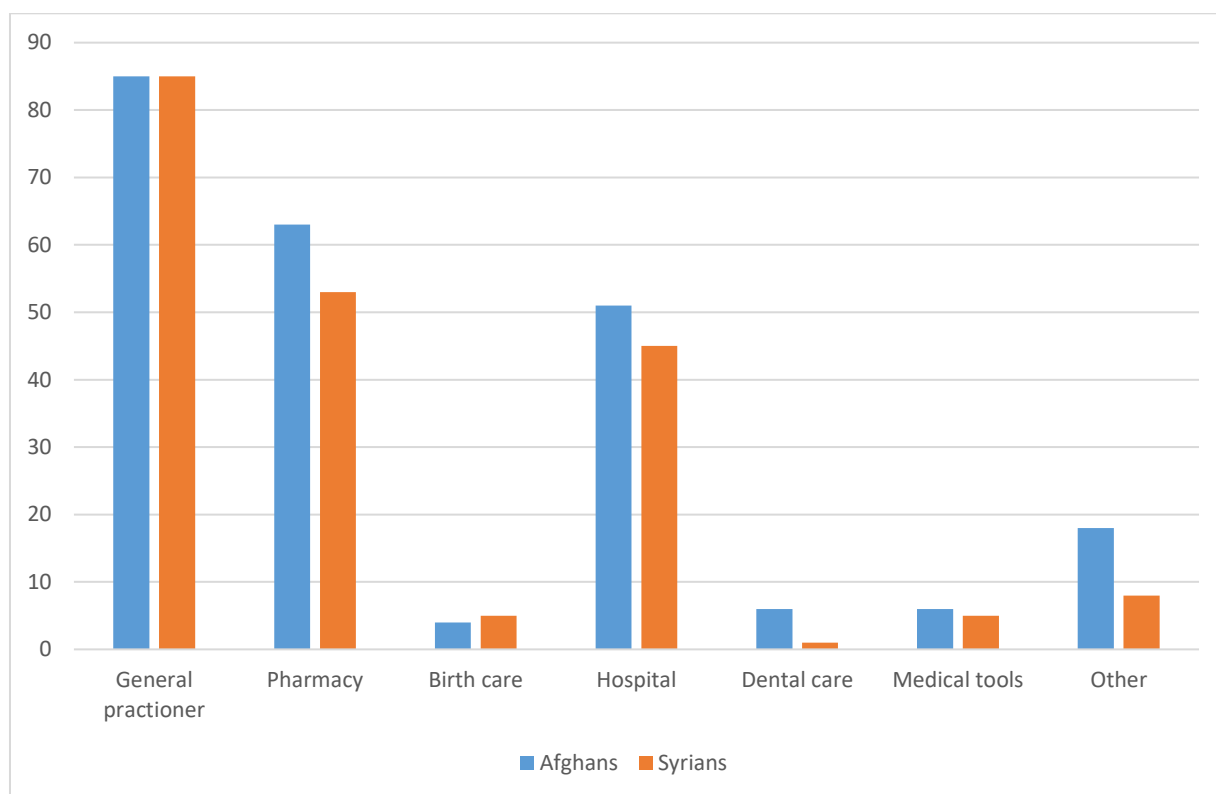


Figure 4 shows that Afghan refugees, with the exception of birth care, make more use of care facilities than Syrian refugees. The use of care facilities is, however, influenced by multiple factors. Language barriers, for example, prevent refugees from visiting care facilities (CBS, 2018). It might be possible that Afghan refugees make more use of care facilities since they could easier fall back on the older Afghan community in the Netherlands. This community might provide the refugees with relevant information about care facilities, or the community might assist to translate for the refugees.

In general, however, the general health assessment data for Syrian and Afghan refugees seem to indicate that Afghans suffer from more health issues than Syrians. Hence, the fourth hypothesis health problems is not confirmed to explain the difference in the direct socio-economic integration of these two groups.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are two aspects that might have led to better direct socio-economic integration of Afghan refugees in comparison with other refugees in the Netherlands. The factors education, time spent in refugee reception centres, and health have not been able to explain the different direct socio-economic integration between Afghan and Syrian refugees. In contrast, the number of relocations a refugee experiences and bridging social capital seem to explain the better direct socio-economic integration of Afghan refugees, compared to Syrian refugees. An important remark here is that bridging social capital between the two groups seems similar at first glance. Only when it was compared with bonding social capital, and when related to their free time, Afghans turned out to have much stronger bridging social capital during their free time with the Dutch population than Syrian refugees. The fact that Afghans spend more of their free time with the Dutch population, might explain partly for why Afghans find employment more often than Syrians. Moreover, Afghans change refugee reception centre locations only once, which is the lowest rotation rate among all other refugee groups (including Syrians) who change locations about four times on average. Thus, besides bridging social capital, the relocations from refugee reception centre might also contribute to the answer of the research question.

Since bridging social capital and the number of relocations from refugee reception centre influences largely the social capital of refugees, it can be argued that the social capital theory might explain the better direct socio-economic integration of Afghan refugees in relation to Syrian refugees. The human capital theory, however, has not been helpful in answering the research question of this research project. In fact, Syrians showed better outcomes when the integration courses and health were examined. Also, Syrians tend to spend a shorter amount of time in refugee reception centres than Afghan refugees.

Nevertheless, this research project has showed that social capital, bridging social capital in particular, has much value when promoting the integration of refugees in the labour market. Future integration policies aiming at the integration of refugees in the labour market should, therefore, take this aspect more in consideration. Establishing and encouraging more contacts between refugee groups and the population might indeed foster the socio-economic integration of refugees. In addition, more research needs to be done about the role the number of relocations from refugee reception centres have on the economic integration of refugees. This aspect has not been studied often yet, even though this might be a crucial aspect. This is especially true since the number of relocations increases significantly when the inflow of refugees is high.

Unfortunately, however, this research project had to encounter some limitations in the data analysis. Firstly, it was not possible to use the similar indicators for the independent variables as used by De Vroome & Van Tubergen. This might have altered the results. Secondly, not all the data used was coming from the same year. In fact, much data relating to Afghan community dated from 2009, meanwhile the data of the Syrian refugees originated from the years 2014 to mid-2017. This might have influenced the validity of the results. Lastly, it is also important to compare the results of Afghan refugees with other refugees, such as Iranian refugees who also share many similarities with the Afghan population. Due to lack of time, however, other comparisons could not be made in this paper, but is advised strongly.

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