

Trump-Effekten: Sweden's Integration of Iranian Migrants as a Model for the USA

Sarah Sakha

Princeton University

Abstract

The far-right Sweden Democrats are gaining traction ahead of the September 2018 elections in Sweden, as an increase in hate crimes has paralleled an increase in xenophobic rhetoric and politics. Sweden has accepted refugees and immigrants for several decades – a trajectory similar to what the United States is experiencing. Given an increasingly recognized “Trump effect” internationally, from New Zealand to the United Kingdom, other societies’ lessons learned are particularly salient today. This paper uses Iranian migrants, the second largest non-European migrant community in Sweden, as a case study of immigration and integration practices for the USA. As both liberal, multicultural countries with histories of immigration and similar political climates, this paper contends that Sweden provides a model of bilateral integration, so that xenophobia does not trump a humanitarian commitment.

The paper offers a self-designed set of markers of integration by which to evaluate migrants’ degree of integration, including employment and education. Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews, coupled with quantitative data, media, and academic literature, were used to inform an evaluation of integration and current practices. Structural racism is manifest in Sweden’s economic integration through employment and housing. This research presents an opportunity for the USA, among other liberal nations, to learn from other societies facing similar challenges but utilizing different approaches.

Keywords: immigration, Sweden, Iran, Trump, integration, xenophobia

Introduction

Sweden lies at a critical political juncture. As a country with a long humanitarian history, it is now facing the rising wave of the populist right. Over the last few months, far-right political groups have gained traction in Sweden. The anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats have grown in popular support ahead of elections in September 2018, and fears continue to grow around violent extremism and immigration in the aftermath of a terrorist attack in Stockholm in April 2017 by a rejected Uzbek asylum seeker. So much so, in fact, that one conservative political party is pushing to renegotiate the Geneva Convention, so that Sweden is no longer obligated to fulfil any refugee quotas, as currently a signatory of the UN Refugee Convention.

Sweden boasts a long history of welcoming immigrants and refugees, extending back to the 1960s. Sweden has been named the world's best country to be an immigrant, and has accepted the highest number of asylum-seekers per capita among European countries (U.S. News & World Report 2017). However, as Rouzbeh Parsi, a leading EU scholar and Iranian immigrant to Sweden, pointed out, Sweden is not ideologically a country of immigrants like the USA (Interviewee A 2017). Academic Hassan Hosseini-Kaladjahi, an Iranian refugee, echoed that sentiment, pointing to the USA's history of different groups living with each other, while Sweden has no such history or experience; it is a much more homogeneous society. Unlike most other Western countries, Sweden came about its heterogeneity only in the late 1970s (Interviewee B 2017; Hosseini-Kaladjahi 1997: 77). Despite these differences, Sweden offers a successful model of bilateral integration, based on approaches to education, labor, housing, and cultural integration for refugees and migrants, and has appealed to migrants for decades.¹

As Swedish historian Carl Marklund contested, Sweden is seen as a 'positive model for liberal Americans and progressives abroad' (Karlidag and Branchereau 2017). These historical differences do not preclude the potential for one country to learn from the practices of another. Further, this paper's methods help highlight and amplify immigrants' voices in ways that American public policy previously has neglected, through interviews that contextualize quantitative data and literature. Above all, Sweden's political climate, particularly in urban areas, is uncannily analogous to that of Trump's America, rendering Sweden a compelling point of comparison. This article first explores challenges Sweden has faced in dealing with accepting and integrating immigrants and presents a history of Iranian migration to Sweden. Second, the methodology of this investigation is examined. Third, a background on Swedish migration policies is provided. Next, I delve into some factors that affect integration and markers by which the migrant population's degree of integration can be measured. Ultimately, I draw from lessons learned to offer policy recommendations for the United States.

Challenges

Sweden now faces global challenges and threats, many of the same ones the USA faces. For instance, there is the pervasive concern and faulty narrative of immigrants taking jobs from native citizens. Even more notably, many Swedes believe there to be a growing association between crime and immigration. The terror attack in central Stockholm in April 2017 intensified fears, the perpetrator an immigrant whose request for asylum had been rejected by the Swedish Migration Agency the year prior (Anderson 2017). A Pew Research Center study from 2016 shows that 46 per cent of Swedes believe that 'refugees in our country are more to blame for crime than other groups' (Wike, Stokes and Simmons 2016). This association, in turn, stems from a surge in crime in Sweden (Interpeace 2015). However, there only exists a tenuous connection between crime and immigration, bolstered by proliferation of an alleged migrant crime crisis in Sweden. In fact, the majority of people suspected of committing crimes in Sweden had two Swedish-born parents and were born in Sweden; none the less,

people from foreign backgrounds are 2.5 times more likely to be accused than people born in Sweden (Government Offices of Sweden 2018).

Often the precursor to violent crime, migrant-instigated sexual violence has also been widely reported. Fear and hostility towards immigrants increased with the rise of ‘Sweden’s rape problem’ – as popularly termed by right-wing American media (Charen 2017). From January to October 2017, there were 2875 reports of threats against staff of the Swedish migration board, including sexual assault, rape, harassment, and threats to set fire to their offices (Noack 2017). Though some refugees have committed sexual assault in Sweden, including the Facebook Live assault of a Swedish woman by two Afghans and a non-native Swedish citizen, the right-wing’s vilification of immigrants does not paint an accurate picture (Noack 2017).

Naturally, these reports of crime have engendered xenophobia, contributing to support for the neo-Nazi Sweden Democrats – a shift all too familiar for the USA. This party had only 3 per cent support in 2010; ratings shot up to almost 20 per cent in November 2015, after the surge in people granted asylum status. It stood at 18.4 per cent in June, then 14.8 per cent in November 2017 (Charen 2017). Concurrently, the sharp increase in Islamophobic, xenophobic, and racist crimes has mirrored the increase in xenophobic rhetoric and politics, much like the USA. According to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, there has been more than a 20 per cent increase in crimes with an identified xenophobic or racist motive from 2011 to 2015. More specifically, there has been at least a 40 per cent increase in ‘agitation against a population group’ – minority or immigrant community – from 2011 to 2015, with a 30 per cent increase from 2014 to 2015 (refer to AI and AII). These numbers are likely underestimates, since not all hate crimes are reported to the police or identified by the police as having a racist motivation.

The Iranian community in Sweden

Iranians constitute the second largest non-Western community in Sweden after Iraqis, as one per cent of the overall population, now numbering at more than 74,000 individuals (Williams 2017; Charen 2017; refer to AIII and AIV). In fact, Iranians feel more discriminated against than other immigrant groups in Sweden (Emami 2012: 126). Stockholm is home to the largest population of Iranian expatriates. Moreover, Iranians comprise one of the most successful – and most highly educated – immigrant groups (Interviewee D 2017). This, in turn, makes integration uniquely complicated for the Iranian population, since a higher level of education can make social adjustment and finding employment naturally more difficult, since foreign credentials are often disqualified and immigrants are often overqualified for the jobs offered to them (Interviewee C 2017). And as a young Iranian-American who is fluent in Farsi, I have the unique ability to gain the trust of Iranian migrants and refugees. Thus, to gain perspective on Swedish policies as a whole, I will focus on the Iranian-Swedish community as a lens.

Methodology

I conducted 29 semi-structured interviews with Iranian immigrants and refugees in Sweden, from diverse academic backgrounds, ideologies, careers, and motivations for migration. These interviews provide a more current window into life in Sweden for migrants than what existing literature can provide. Interviews were not recorded to encourage subjects to speak freely about their experiences, which often included personally identifiable, sensitive, traumatic information. These voices have historically been excluded from decision-making and help build upon existing literature. Research that deals comprehensively and solely with one immigrant population, specifically in Sweden, is sparse, particularly which focuses on specific aspects of integration and daily life. *The Iranian Community in Sweden*, compiled and edited by mainly Iranian academics, is ‘a first step to countering this shortcoming’ (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 17). I hope this paper is a second, further and updated step in filling this gap, since most of the research dealing with the Iranian community in Sweden comes from the 1990s or early 2000s. Further, much of the literature is from an exclusively male perspective, excluding female voices and experiences. To supplement my ethnographic research, I collected data from studies done by Iranian and Swedish academics, often directly under the auspices of the Swedish government, as well as government documents and demographic statistics.

Measuring integration has traditionally been a question of methodology, but this paper goes beyond past reductive approaches. Admittedly there is no consensus; there is no definitive way to measure the success or degree of integration. Scholar Hassan Hosseini-Kaladjahi provides three broad categories for integration: economic, cultural, and social, but researcher Ali Hajighasemi in *The Iranian Community in Sweden* points out how economic and social integration focus disproportionately on tangible factors, such as employment, income, and housing. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), on the other hand, offers eight larger policy areas based off a study of 38 countries. Drawing from these examples and my own ethnographic research, I constructed my own parameters for measuring integration for a more nuanced look; these include education, employment, marital status, nationality of significant other, language spoken with children, nationality of colleagues, participation in ‘*förening*’ (voluntary Swedish associations), political activity, and voting behavior. For the sake of this paper, I will focus on two – education and employment – which my research offers as the most telling and comprehensive markers.

Swedish migration law & policy

Sweden boasted an incredibly ‘generous’ immigration and refugee policy prior to 1989, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and increasing demand on Sweden by refugees and asylum seekers (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 10; Hajighasemi 2012: 65; Interviewee E 2017). As a welfare state, Sweden provides extensive social assistance. Any person living in Sweden – regardless of national origin, age, or employment status – is eligible for assistance, as per the Swedish Social Welfare Act, under which recent immigrants and refugees are also entitled to

certain benefits within ‘introduction assistance’ (Hammarstadt 2009: 86). Even so, these benefits remain contingent upon contracts on integration with the local municipalities, which are funded in turn by the central government (Gustafsson 2011: 4-5). The Social Welfare Act ensures the right to emergency support from municipalities, as per the amended Law on the Reception of Asylum Seekers (FARR 2016: 10). Individuals with refugee protection are granted a three-year temporary permit, with the right of family reunification, commonly known as chain migration in the USA. For immigrants, too, the Swedish government has provided generous financial support, even long after they have initially settled in the country (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 40). One example is the accessibility of state loans for re-education. Up until 2017, Iranian immigrants came to Sweden to study for free in the universities; higher education for both EU and non-EU students was fully subsidized (Interviewees B and F, 2017). However, today it is only fully subsidized for EU students.

The process to attaining Swedish citizenship is not complicated, at least compared to the USA. First, the applicant is granted permanent residency, before attaining citizenship. It generally takes five years – the minimum period of residence required – and does not require mastery of the Swedish language (Migrationsverket 2016). This period of residence must be continuous, a caveat that often results in a prolonged process of attaining citizenship for some immigrants, as it did for one Iranian researcher, who points to an almost ten-year process before he was granted citizenship (Interviewee F 2017). The resident must also intend to remain in Sweden (FARR 2016: 65). Information is remarkably accessible online via the Swedish Migration Agency, available in six languages including English, Arabic, and most notably, Persian (Migrationsverket 2014). Granted, experiences with the process are variable and unpredictable. One former Iranian political refugee stayed at a refugee camp with her family for four months, until then being resettled in a small town by the respective municipality (Interviewee E 2017). But another former political refugee, an Iranian Kurd, stayed in a refugee camp in Sweden for almost two-and-a-half years, after having stayed in a camp in Russia for six months (Interviewee G 2017).

Dual citizenship is recognized by Sweden, even with Iran, in contrast to both the USA and Iran, the former which does not look favorably upon citizenship with Iran, as a listed state sponsor of terrorism, the latter which does not recognize dual citizenship in any capacity. The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Stockholm, none the less, works closely with Sweden – and Iranians living in Sweden on personal and legal affairs (Mohajer 2017). Accommodating dual citizenship allows for a greater inclination toward integration due to an ability to retain one’s own heritage; not recognizing dual identity only serves to alienate and shut people out.

The burden of integration has been largely left to individual municipalities (Interviewee B and H 2017). Still, the Swedish Migration Board expressed a willingness to break the law in order to compel municipalities that had previously refused to provide housing to asylum seekers to do their share. Asylum seekers have found housing through housing providers across Sweden, by way of the Swedish Public Procurement Act (Radio Sweden 2014). Often churches work with 20 different municipalities in resettling refugees (Interviewee H 2017).

Sample markers of integration

In this section, I evaluate the different factors that affect the integration of Iranian migrants, as well as the degree to which they have been successfully – or unsuccessfully – integrated. I focus on two markers in particular, education and employment, as across the literature and my research I have found these to be among the most comprehensive and telling signs and measures of professional and social integration.

Education

All individuals in Sweden have the right to education (FARR 2016: 49-50, 71). Both Swedes and Iranians highly value education. Iranians are among the most highly educated immigrants, which has implications for integration. In 2008, 26 per cent of Iranian-born men had completed post-secondary education, higher than that of the rate for Swedish-born men and MENA-born men (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 24-25). A higher degree of education can make integration harder at first, as many have to adapt to new lives and often new beginnings, either without documentation of their awards and diplomas from Iran or simply degrees and repertoire that are discounted in Swedish society. Many first-generation Iranian immigrants have had to go through a ‘process of re-education’ to adjust to the Swedish labor market (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 11). Some employers discredit the quality of immigrants’ education, or do not accept foreign credentials at all (Behtoui 2006: 3; Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 28). One Iranian refugee was at the top of her class in university in Tehran, having won an award for her thesis in theater; however, in Stockholm, that did not amount to much, and she struggled to assert legitimacy and gain credibility within the artistic community (Interviewee I 2017). Some fields, like engineering or medicine, have international renown and legitimacy, allowing migrants to adapt to a new labor market with minimal retraining. Other fields, like languages or literature, can have a more ‘local character’ and preclude migrants from adapting as easily to the needs of the new labor market (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 28). Another political refugee had to retake exams in Stockholm, since he was unable to bring – or retrieve – documentation of his diplomas from Iran. Deterred by this setback, he resigned himself to managing his taxi business (Interviewee J 2017).

Of course, education can be a tool to mobility. Generally, the more qualified one is, the more educated, the greater opportunity for mobility exists – a notion affirmed by the Swedish government (Williams 2017; Government Offices of Sweden 2018). After all, for years, Iranian immigrants came to Sweden to study for free in the universities; higher education was fully subsidized by the Swedish government. Education can have a tangible impact on integration into society. As one former refugee reflected, he himself feels fully integrated and accepted in Swedish society. He has had a highly successful career in law and academia, with support from his colleagues, and as a result of the education he has received in Sweden, a large part of which was completed by way of a PhD (Interviewee B 2017). Another Iranian immigrant, who came to Iran explicitly to continue his education, echoed that sentiment, speaking to how his education in Sweden has allowed him to integrate and interact freely

particularly with his colleagues (Interviewee F 2017). Thus, education is inextricably linked to employment, which I discuss next.

Labor market

Overall, Sweden boasts low unemployment rates. However, such is not the case for newly arrived asylum claimants, refugees, and immigrants due to a variety of obstacles, including inadequate or nonexistent language skills, difficulty in validating diplomas and credentials, and a dearth of unskilled job opportunities (FARR 2016: 70). According to a survey conducted in 2015 on the Swedish labor market, specifically in regard to foreign-born persons with higher education degrees, only about one per cent of Swedish-born persons were unemployed, compared to around 10 per cent of foreign-born persons (Statistics Sweden 2016: 37). Iranian-born persons in Sweden illustrate this disparity; despite their high level of education, they experience an unemployment rate far below that of native Swedes (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 25). Among those who are employed, 68.5 per cent of Iranians are overqualified (twice that of Swedes), and 22.2 per cent are concentrated in unattractive positions, such as cleaning and washing dishes (almost twice that of Swedes) (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 31).

Additionally, they report very low income levels, again far below that for Swedes, though higher than that of most other MENA immigrants (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 25-26). Research points to a positive correlation between the income of immigrants and the number of years spent in the new host society (Drive and Lundh 2008: 332). Beyond this independent variable – time spent in the host society – there exist many barriers to entering the labor market; migrants do not enter the host country's labor market as easily as the host population does (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 25). Entrance, and the generally differential benefits migrants receive, is contingent upon attitudes of the host country toward the arrival of migrants and the occupational backgrounds of the newcomer population, which serve as their reference points. As such, labor market integration of immigrants and refugees has become a major issue for both the migrant population and host society. The past socioeconomic status of Iranians in their country of origin shapes their adaptation to and integration into the host society (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 18). Many Iranian refugees and migrants experience firsthand a sharp learning curve while adjusting to a new, lower standard of living. One political refugee had to take on a role as a caretaker for the sick and elderly, working in squalid conditions to make ends meet and support her son's education in Sweden, after beginning an eminent theatre career in Iran but having to start all over (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 25; Interviewee I 2017).

The Swedish labor market also exhibits structural discrimination by barring minorities from high positions, with the most pronounced ethnic segregation in academia (Interviewee K 2017). One language professor, a former Iranian political refugee, spoke candidly about the 'subtle racism' she has seen in academia; there are no department heads of Iranian descent in Sweden (Interviewee L 2017). One Iranian immigrant, who came not as a political refugee but rather as a migrant seeking to continue his higher education, noted this 'indirect'

structural racism, even with his qualifications through extensive university studies. Still, he personally reconciled with how his national origin could impede his advancement or promotion (Interviewee E 2017). For many others, though, structural racism is much more tangible. Research from the Stockholm University Linnaeus Center for Integration Studies (SULCI) points to how immigrants who changed their last names from their native, 'foreign' names to 'Swedish conform names,' or more 'Swedish-sounding' or 'neutral' names, showed more favorable employment prospects and higher earnings (Arai and Skogman Thoursie 2006: 1-39). Changing one's surname can decrease the potential of encountering 'disadvantageous treatment' in initial contact with the employer or customer, and can increase the probability of landing a job interview and thus attaining the opportunity to actually present their credentials to an employer. In fact, researchers yielded an earnings disparity of around 26 per cent after changing to a Swedish conform surname, most notably after abandoning the original name 'Mohammed,' of different spellings, in favor of Anglo-Saxon names (Arai and Skogman Thoursie 2006: 3-4). The Swedish Name Law allows for individuals to change their name at a fee; the Swedish Patent and Registration Office (PRV), which oversees name changes, offers a catalog of 'Swedish-sounding' surnames available for applicants, but notably 'prevents foreign-sounding new names.' Thus, applicants are confined to names that are 'easily adaptable within the Swedish linguistic context' (Arai and Skogman Thoursie 2006: 10-11).

This sense of 'subtle racism' within Sweden's assimilating practices, specifically in regard to employment, is further manifested in Iranian immigrants' experiences seeking job counseling at the Swedish Job Centres. Counselors have advised Iranian immigrants to not seek particular professions, as they discouraged one female lawyer from pursuing law because 'who would hire a foreign lawyer: a woman, a female foreign lawyer that doesn't speak perfect Swedish?' Similarly, 'who would hire a foreign doctor?' (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 32-33). Counselors reaffirmed many of these prejudices.

Cognitive biases, as manifested in prejudicial employment practices, often stem from larger cultural judgments and misconceptions in regard to immigrants with greater 'cultural distance from the culture of "the West"' (Behtoui 2006: 9). These particular immigrant communities are often perceived to come from 'culture[s] of poverty,' bringing 'dysfunctional cultural values that impede social mobility' (Behtoui 2006: 9). Further, Iranians, among other non-native, non-Western populations, are not afforded the same opportunities as native Swedes for being promoted, attaining tenure, and moving into more permanent jobs and positions as professors (Interviewee G 2017). One Iranian refugee, now an associate professor at the University of Gävle, has remained in her associate position for years. She recounted how she felt discrimination as a university student in Sweden, and now as a professor. She would not be selected for positions for which she applied at Uppsala University (1995-2009) and she was conscious of her identity as the only foreigner in her workplace (Interviewee B 2017). Quantitative research supports the prevalence of discrimination against Iranians in this regard, using income as an illustrative indicator of discrimination; however, it is impossible to definitively conclude a positive correlation between discrimination and cultural distance of Iranians as an ethnic minority from the Swedish population (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 66-67).

The disparity in opportunity is due in large part to native Swedes having their own networks, which engender greater trust and support, giving them a foot in the labor market. As such, this form of social capital often carries more weight than any educational achievements or credentials may, at least for immigrants. A person from a 'disadvantaged racial/ethnic group may mobilize her/his social network by reaching out to relatives, friends, or acquaintances in her/his personal or professional networks' (Behtoui 2006: 19). However, when immigrants use these group ties to informally seek employment, they more often than not obtain lower wages than they otherwise would through more formal networks, and a lower starting salary can have long-term impacts for employment prospects (Neergaard and Behtoui 2010: 763-64). Immigrants do not generally have the luxury of access to such formal networks in the host society, making it much more difficult not only to be promoted, but also to secure employment and access valuable resources in the first place, such as connections and introductions to employers (Interviewee G 2017). These resources are instrumental in the accumulation of social capital, which in turn increases job prospects (Behtoui 2006: 23, 28).

Social capital is synonymous with power, and the individual's gender and ethnicity can affect the accessibility of capital (Neergaard and Behtoui 2010: 762). Access to these networks – and thus resources – ultimately can dictate whether an immigrant will be able to secure a job. Thus, education and employment remain contingent upon social capital. Even if an individual has the educational credentials that qualify them for a 'high-status job,' but lack the appropriate contacts via said networks, they 'cannot obtain a full return from one's education' (Behtoui 2006: 24). According to a 2015 survey, only half of foreign-born persons obtained jobs that matched their educational qualifications, while eight out of ten Swedish-born persons secured employment that matched their qualifications (Statistics Sweden 2016). This disparity points to how higher education is not always sufficient for employment, at least for immigrants. Naturally, immigrants might participate in their own networks by virtue of their shared background, culture, or national origin to seek out employment, but these 'segregated social networks of disadvantaged minority groups reflect unequal treatment of individuals due to their "race" or "ethnicity" in relationships among individuals in everyday life' (Behtoui 2006: 2). Immigrants are shut out of the networks needed to gain entry into labor market.

Supporters of segmented labor market theory would argue that immigrants, regardless, do not typically find jobs in the top tiers (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 23). As a result of the racialization of the labor market, ethnic labor is degraded and devalued. Then, sometimes an 'ethnic enclave labor market' forms outside the mainstream economy (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 23). In other words, ethnic labor is often disproportionately concentrated in one area, often valued less than native labor would be. I offer Kista, Stockholm as one such example to illustrate this phenomenon. Kista is known to have a remarkably large concentration of Iranian immigrants, but also a disproportionately large number of Middle-Easterners, Arabs, South Asians, and women wearing hijab and niqab, as compared to the number of native Swedes. Kista Galleria, the largest mall in Stockholm, also features a disproportionate number of ethnic food places in one centralized location, the majority of which offer halal

food. Compared to places around the rest of the city, the food is also incredibly cheap, in a city known for its high-priced standard of living.

One way Iranian migrants have circumvented these barriers is through self-employment (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 34). One political refugee now owns his own taxi business, allowing for more flexible hours and thus greater political participation; many of his friends, former political refugees as well, have followed suit (Interviewee J 2017). Another Iranian, who came to Sweden initially for his studies, now owns three Iranian restaurants, including the locally known Shahrzad and Tehran Grill (Interviewee M 2017). Some own Persian groceries, such as Kista Grocer, among other small businesses. Others have their own law firms and media stations (Interviewee H 2017). There exist a wide variety of local Iranian businesses in Sweden. Thus, some did not find hopeful prospects in the labor market; others did not find the prospects they sought or expected, and so they turned to self-employment (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 34-35).

When they do not find or are unable to secure the prospects they want in the Swedish labor market, many Iranians have left Sweden for a third country after completing their education – or sometimes re-education – in the country. Iranian immigrants who moved to Sweden to continue their studies plan to seek professorships and fellowships in other countries, such as the U.K. (Interviewees A, C, and F 2017). Migrant workers not only have greater difficulty entering the labor market, but they are not always met with the same welcoming attitude or material benefits as members of the host population, compelling some to seek prospects elsewhere (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 25).

Additionally, the lack of a universal minimum wage can further hurt immigrants. The minimum wage is set by and within each sector or industry, through collective bargaining initiated by the respective trade unions, to which nearly all Swedish citizens belong. However, Swedish unions do not tend to prioritize immigrants and their needs (Mulinari and Neergaard 2005: 61). There are often pronounced divisions between immigrant and native workers, fostered by a language barrier and even a sense of ‘exclusionary nationhood,’ or simply a sense of superiority as a result of national origin (Mulinari and Neergaard 2005: 65). While these wages are generally high – higher than many other countries, not having a universal minimum wage has hampered labor market integration of refugees, due to the heterogeneous effects on refugees seeking employment in different sectors and the role discrimination can often play (Skedinger and Lundborg 2014: 1-24). After all, employers help make the hiring and wage setting decisions, and their attitudes towards immigrants and refugees can incur integration problems. Per Lundborg and Per Skedinger (2014: 1-29), through the Swedish Institute for Social Research, studied Swedish labor market integration of refugees and how the Swedish labor market has often impeded not only the employment, but also the integration of many refugees. The minimum wage is also a binding restriction, particularly for refugees in low-skilled jobs Lundborg and Skedinger’s research (2014: 10) points to a positive correlation between refugees employed in low-skilled positions and refugees employed at minimum wage. All in all, employment is considered a privilege, not a right, and work is limited to the unskilled sector, since migrants generally lack language

requirements and certified skills. Around 30 per cent of foreign-born persons surveyed had jobs that did not require higher education, while only six per cent of Swedish-born persons had such unskilled jobs (Statistics Sweden 2016: 37). However, beginning January 1, 2017, the Swedish Migration Agency no longer distributed work opportunities to claimants, cutting back on state-level assistance (FARR 2016: 48). Still, there have been efforts by the Swedish government to create more low-wage jobs to meet rising demands (Library of Congress). Securing housing would entail similar difficulties, if it were not for any government assistance.

Policy recommendations

These recommendations open a larger debate of assimilation versus adaptation, as strategies and mechanisms for integration. How we approach immigration and integration politically today – specifically in the United States – can be perceived as not only assimilatory and nationalistic, but oppressive at times, though arguably many American citizens and policymakers may see the status quo as attempts to promote and facilitate social mobility and cultural assimilation. With that, I will frame policy recommendations around the postulation that integration must be considered a reciprocal process – between both the native population and the newly-arrived immigrant population. Additionally, migrants are human capital, individuals who contribute economically, socially, culturally, and politically. As Michael Williams (2017) points out in a personal interview, there exists a “basic reception policy,” characterized by a widespread awareness of what it means to be an asylum seeker or refugee. Such is not the case in the United States; most American adults do not know why refugees had to leave their home countries, or can tell the difference between immigrants, stateless persons, and refugees (Goldberg 2011). As such, I offer some policy recommendations on how to strengthen and improve integration policies in the United States:

1. The Swedish government has sanctioned and sponsored investigations into their own immigration and integration policies. Masoud Kamali and Mehrdad Darvishpour are two such scholars tasked by the government with looking into different facets of the process and non-Western migrant communities now living in Sweden. Hassan Hosseini-Kaladjahi was sponsored by the Swedish Multicultural Centre to conduct research around migration and integration. Admittedly, it will take a few years to monitor and evaluate the effects of this research. The U.S. government should more comprehensively research what needs are met by the public and private sector, to work toward filling gaps and meeting needs.
 - a. The U.S. government should partner with bigger organizations to tap into their mobilization power and networks (Emami 95). State governments can provide grants to voluntary organizations that work closely with immigrants, as Sweden does, which would facilitate greater engagement of immigrants with these associations (Emami 105, 110).

2. The host population's reception to integration is inevitably affected by how they perceive the newcomer population's country of origin, specifically at the time of immigration (Hosseini-Kaladjahi, Kelly 29). This was the case during the Islamic Revolution and hostage crisis, again post-9/11, and continues today with contemporary sources of political tension such as the Trump administration's "Muslim ban," growing Islamophobia, recent terrorist attacks, and political relations between the U.S. and Iran in light of the nuclear deal and U.S. hostages. These negative perceptions can, in turn, lead to the exploitation of an ethnic, national, or racial category to construct a singular identity – a prescribed collective identity (Behtoui 13). Admittedly, this problem is not unique to Iranians. To present as fair an opportunity to integrate for new immigrants, the U.S. State Department should engage more in cultural diplomacy, specifically through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, to combat misinformation and encourage peaceful cultural understanding and exchange. If we accept the premise that there are societies with "cultural distance" from the United States, Iran being one of them, as many scholars have pointed out, then responsibility falls on the U.S. to help bridge that gap due to its position and power in the world today, particularly for Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, which are governed more around vilifying politics and rhetoric and less around the real narratives of the Iranian people.
3. The United States should encourage naturalization, while supporting individuals keeping their dual citizenship, including Iranian citizenship, as Sweden does. In this way, immigrants can participate more fully in the American polity and civic society, while holding onto their cultures and being able to visit their families. Further, this pathway safeguards both the individual and group and community rights of immigrants. Both the United States and Sweden – as advanced liberal democracies have exhibited a particular "indifference...to the ethnic group's cultural identities and/or group loyalties" and thus have manifested an "ethnocentric nationalism," by only heeding individual rights (Hajighasemi 68).
 - a. Another mechanism for cultural integration is reexamining language and education policies by providing language classes, not just for immigrants to learn English (e.g., ESL), but also for the children of immigrants to learn their mother tongue, even if a language apart from English, following Sweden's enrichment model (Lindberg 2007). Research suggests that learning one's mother tongue is often a prerequisite for learning the language of instruction – English, in this case (Bingöl 2013). This can help increase the comfort level of newly arrived immigrants, both parents and their children, as they adjust to a foreign society, making them feel more at home and thus more amenable to learn how to integrate into American society. Potentially, Americans might be inclined towards learning their mother tongues as well, in an effort to encourage bilateral integration. After all, multilingualism is not characteristically the norm in the United States, and more specifically, immigrant multilingualism is natural and should – and can be – accommodated in society and education. We see such educational

accommodation in Dearborn, Michigan, where I co-led a service trip to and learned, for example, Gardner Elementary School hires Arabic-speaking staff to accommodate the needs of the refugee children attending their school. Additionally, they offer an after-school English as a Second Language (ESL) program for refugee parents, designed for those who may not have known any English upon immigrating to the United States.

4. Crime and criminal justice should not be coopted or exploited to create fear and antagonism towards migrants and refugees. This is, in effect, fearmongering, and in the current context of the #MeToo movement, the potential for what occurred in Sweden in regard to the influx of sexual assault incidents to occur in the U.S. is high. In turn, this could further perpetuate the current narrative around terrorism and Islam. Responsibility lies with not only the government and political leaders in recognizing the prevalence of sexual violence and the need for legislation, but also with the media. Numbers themselves do not stoke xenophobia or Islamophobia; the perpetuation of particular narratives does.
5. The United States should instate education and skills assessments and trainings, similar to those recently introduced by Sweden, into the labor market, to facilitate integration overall. This would help quell fears that immigrants are often poor fits for the U.S. labor market and economy.
6. Asylum seekers should be guaranteed public legal counsel in immigration court. The U.S. Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), with the Department of Justice, does not guarantee legal counsel for individuals seeking asylum in court, even if they cannot obtain their own legal counsel (American Immigration Council).
7. The United States should strive towards joining (or creating) a common asylum system and procedure, as the EU has done since 1999 (Ammirati). On one level, this entails courts and lawmakers operating on the same page in regard to immigration policies and their enforcement; on another, this entails learning from and operating in conjunction with other countries, such as Canada and even EU members.
8. The U.S. government should establish a sponsorship program more widely, to allow more time to find more permanent accommodations and facilitate integration for refugees.
9. The U.S. government should provide special accommodations to people with “special reception needs,” to meet the specific needs of certain groups of asylum seekers and refugees, including single mothers and unaccompanied minors, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and traumatized persons. Currently, only requests from persons with disabilities for accommodation will be processed (USCIS).

10. The U.S. government should grant the right to family reunification and change the language of “chain migration” to family reunification to reflect its reality. Language directly impacts policymaking, as we can see in differences between modern political discourse around immigration – and legal precedent – in the United States versus Sweden.

Conclusion

While rates of immigration to Sweden are projected to slow down, there will continue to be steady flows of people out of the Middle East into Sweden and other similar countries, especially as higher education becomes more commonly pursued and family reunification continues (Statistics Sweden 2017). In the bigger picture, too, migration will continue to be a potent force, both an undeniable agent and product of globalization. We see the flow of people, or ethnoscaples, and the flow of ideologies, or ideoscapes (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 9). We see the globalization of cultures, as processes of acculturation transcend borders, as Swedes celebrate Iranian cultural holidays and as Iranians get involved in Swedish politics, or as Americans acclaim Iranian films and Iranians get involved in American politics.

That is what makes this research critical; a liberal, multicultural country of immigrants, such as the U.S., will continue to struggle with the challenges of integrating migrants, including legal and undocumented immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Evaluating the success of Sweden’s integration of the Iranian community – a population markedly different from the native society in terms of culture, faith, ethnicity, and background – can inform how we approach not only the Iranian-American community, but largely our Arab and Middle-Eastern communities. These are some of the most heavily stigmatized communities worldwide, in the current political climate in the Trump era.

Thus, what makes this integration research particularly relevant is the danger of social isolation of immigrants, as opposed to integration. Integration, as a constructive, bilateral means of inclusion, can prevent radicalization, or even aid in de-radicalization. Scholar Tashina Alavi (2014) points out how successful, positive integration can lead to better well-being, shared unity and inclusivity, less crime, and even economic benefits; after all, the government would be spending less on immigration and integration policies. On the other hand, she points to a number of consequences from failed integration attempts: increased segregation, the social and economic marginalization of communities, and even violence (Alavi 2014: 3). Admittedly, ‘successful’ integration is not necessarily ‘positive’ integration; in order for integration to be successful and positive, it must be a reciprocal process, with efforts on behalf of both parties, the host population and the immigrant population, to integrate.

That sort of reciprocity runs across both areas of integration outlined in this paper: education and the labor market. To evaluate Swedish policy more specifically, in terms of education and employment, the Swedish government can do more to make fairer and equalize the

playing field for immigrants and native Swedes alike. Higher education will likely attract fewer smart, motivated Iranians since it is no longer completely subsidized, and more steps can be taken to give credence to educational qualifications from the country of origin, an issue that is even more salient for refugees and asylum seekers who fled without documentation. However, the labor market is the poorest marker of integration for Iranian-Swedes; a number of challenges exist to not only accessing greater opportunities, promotions, and incomes in the market, but also simply entering the market in the first place. In the same vein, an important distinction must be made between non-discrimination policies and those that explicitly safeguard and promote anti-discrimination; a lack of such policies can make it incredibly dangerous for immigrants simply because of a surname, considering the modern political climate.

Who exactly should benefit from special protections under the law, and who bears this responsibility? This question pervades a larger public debate, both political and ideological, that likely sees no resolution in the foreseeable future, in Sweden or in the U.S. However, it is imperative that we reexamine the intent and efficacy of U.S. immigration and integration policies to offer protections to vulnerable persons while promoting the inclusion, social mobility, and self-sufficiency of immigrants, because another global refugee crisis – this time, as a result of climate change – might be on the horizon.

But it is difficult to measure the efficacy of immigration policy in the U.S. when there is no one way – or rather, no ideal way – to measure integration. The Swedish government offers statistics on participation in the Swedish labor market to point out successful integration, at a rate of 68 per cent. They highlight how the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) both indicate that Sweden comes out ahead in terms of integration policy (Government Offices of Sweden 2018). But, as aforementioned, the numbers do not tell the full story. Further, this paper has broadened the question to one that affects all of Europe; these patterns within Sweden mirror similar trends across other European countries, such as France, Germany, the U.K., and worldwide. The March 2019 terrorist attack at the Christchurch mosque in New Zealand, in which a white nationalist murdered 50-plus Muslims and fostered ideology similar to that of the Trump administration, sparked widespread discussion about his motivations and the origins of his ideology. Even such a strong liberal tradition as that of New Zealand is ostensibly not immune to anti-immigrant sentiments, and shows just how far the “Trump effect” can infiltrate. Current events starkly point to the urgency of such research to more effectively address immigration, in ways that does not inflict a human cost, by political leaders in power.

Where do we go from here? We have to answer a few fundamental questions around what integration means in the United States for both immigrants and the host society, what the future of U.S.-Iran relations looks like and thus the future of Iranian Americans, and what the role of a group like the National Iranian American Council (NIAC) should be in ensuring the interests of this community are represented. These answers require further research, specifically from and about other countries that face the exact same challenges and share

similar interests but might offer different approaches. Ultimately, the United States can learn from Sweden's approaches to integrate its immigrant communities more successfully and positively.

Appendices

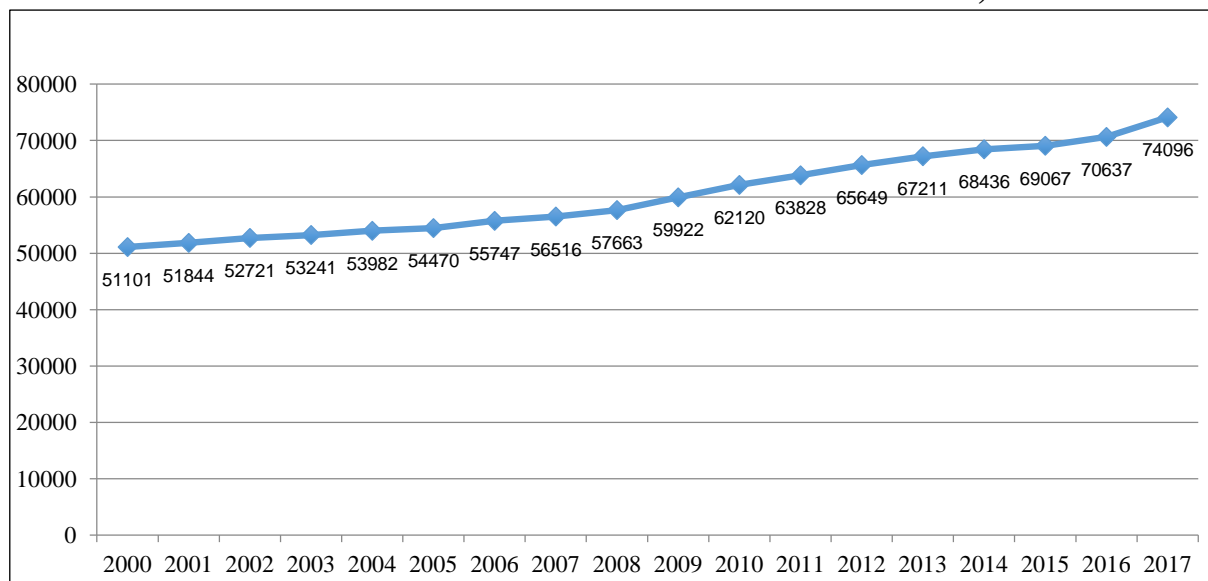
AI: Number of reported crimes with an identified xenophobic and/or racist motive 2011-2015

Type of offense	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change 2014-2015	Change 2011-2015
Unlawful threat/non-sexual molestation	1,650	1,646	1702	1,847	1,972	7%	20%
Criminal damage/graffiti	296	374	327	390	703	80%	138%
Agitation against a population group	396	419	410	430	552	28%	39%
Total number	3,936	3,979	3,999	4,314	4,765	10%	21%

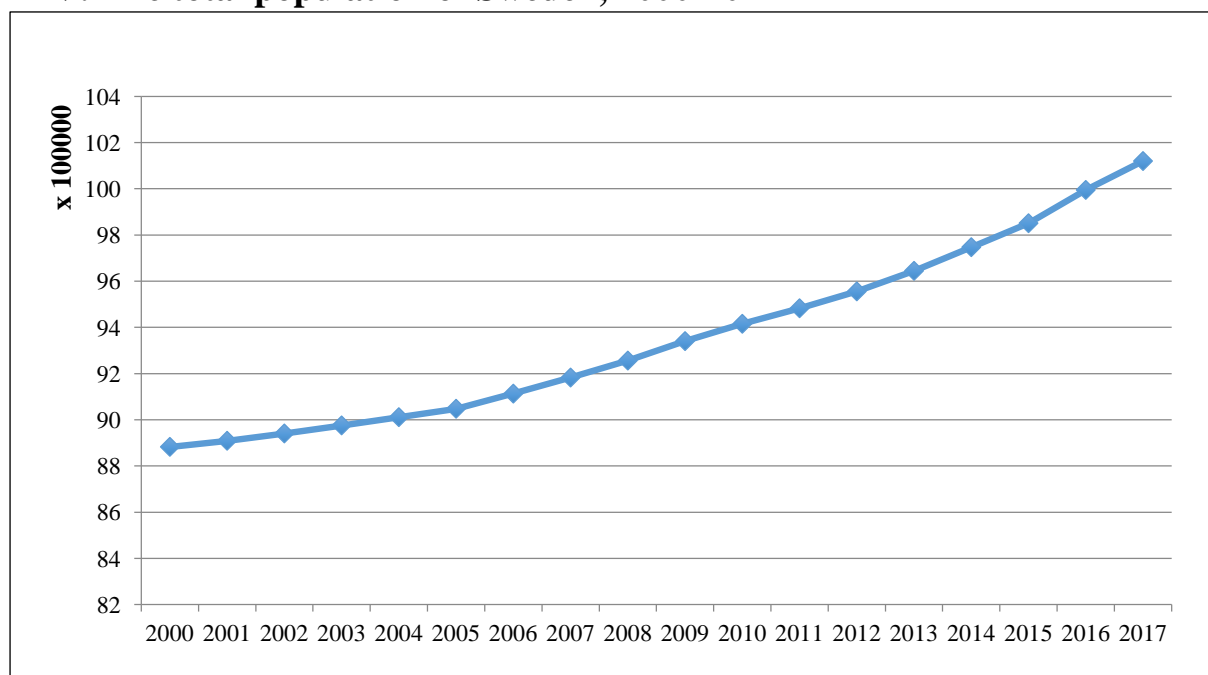
AII: Number of reported crimes with an identified Islamophobic motive 2009-2015

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Change 2009 to 2015
Reports	194	272	278	306	327	492	558	187%

AIII: Persons who were born in Iran and now live in Sweden, 2000-2017



AIV: The total population of Sweden, 2000-2017



Notes

This research is due in large part to the support of my advisor Max Weiss, Zia Mian, Ambassadors Rick Barton and Ryan Crocker, Fereshteh Ahmadi, Ambika Viswanathan, Zaynab Zaman, Mohamed El-Dirany, Sassan Hajirezaie, Layla Varkey, Emily Kunkel, Jaclyn Hovsmith, Yousef Elzalabany, loving staff of the 'Daily Princetonian,' my parents, and above all, the individuals who volunteered here their time and stories of resilience, sacrifice, and courage.

Bibliography

Alavi, T. 2014 ‘Iranian Migration to Sweden: Identity-Processes and Integration Strategies Among Iranian Immigrant Men and Women.’ Lund University: 1–31.

American Immigration Council. “Asylum in the United States.” 22 August 2016.

Ammirati, A. “What Is the Dublin Regulation.” *Open Migration*, December 8, 2015. <http://openmigration.org/en/analyses/what-is-the-dublin-regulation/>.

Anderson, C. 2017 *The New York Times* ‘Sweden Mourns Stockholm Attack Victims; Suspect Is Formally Identified’, 10 April 2017.

Arai, M. and Skogman Thoursie, P. 2006 ‘Giving Up Foreign Names: An Empirical Examination of Surname Change and Earnings’, *Stockholm University Linnaeus Center for Integration Studies*: 1–39.

Behtoui, A. 2008 ‘Informal Recruitment Methods and Disadvantages of Immigrants in the Swedish Labour Market’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34(3): 411–30.

——— 2006 ‘Unequal Opportunities: The Impact of Social Capital and Recruitment Methods on Immigrants and Their Children in the Swedish Labour Market’, *Linköping University Institute for Research on Migration, Ethnicity and Society*: 1–52.

Bevelander, P. 2014 ‘Catching Up: The Labor Market Integration of New Immigrants in Sweden’, *Migration Policy Institute*: 1–22.

Bingöl, A. Selcen. “Mother Tongue Instruction Policies towards Turkish Migrant Children in Europe,” *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 70, no. 125 (2013): 1016–23.

Charen, M. 2017 *National Review* ‘What’s Up with Rape in Sweden?’, February 2017.

Crouch, D. 2014 *The New York Times* ‘Rift Emerges Before Vote in Sweden as Immigration Tests a Tradition of Openness’, 12 September 2014.

FARR 2016 ‘Country Report: Sweden’, Asylum Information Database (AIDA).

Goldberg, M. “Americans Don’t Know Much About Refugees” (UN Dispatch, May 18, 2011); extrapolating from 2011 polling data from the UNHCR, only four in ten adults.

Government Offices of Sweden 2018 ‘Facts about Migration, Integration and Crime in Sweden’, 18 January 2018.

Gustafsson, B. 2011 ‘Disparities in Social Assistance Receipt between Immigrants and Natives in Sweden’, *Institute for the Study of Labor*, 6129: 1–37.

Hammarstedt, M. 2009 ‘Assimilation and Participation in Social Assistance among Immigrants’, *International Journal of Social Welfare* 18(1): 85–94.

Hosseini-Kaladjahi, H. 2012 ‘Introduction’, *The Iranian Community in Sweden*: 9–22.

Hosseini-Kaladjahi, H. and Kelly, M. 2012 ‘Iranians and the Swedish Labour Market’, *The Iranian Community in Sweden*: 23–44.

Interpeace ‘Tackling Social Exclusion and Rising Tensions in Sweden’s Suburbs’, June 2015.

Interviewee A. 20 June 2017.

Interviewee B. 22 June 2017.

Interviewee C. 26 June 2017.

Interviewee D. 26 June 2017.

Interviewee E. 16 October 2017.

Interviewee F. 27 June 2017.

Interviewee G. 26 June 2017.

Interviewee H. 21 June 2017.

Interviewee I. 28 June 2017.

Interviewee J. 26 June 2017.

Interviewee K. 27 June 2017.

Interviewee L. 24 June 2017.

Interviewee M. 20 June 2017.

Interviewee N. 28 June 2017.

Karlidag, I. and Branchereau, G. 2017 *Business Insider*, ‘The Trump Effect? Sweden Reflects on Its Integration Policy’, 22 February 2017.

Library of Congress ‘Refugee Law and Policy: Sweden.’

Lindberg, I. “Multilingual Education: A Swedish Perspective,” in *Education in “Multicultural” Societies – Turkish and Swedish Perspectives*. Swedish Research Institute, 2007: 76-82.

Migrationsverket (Swedish Migration Agency) ‘Becoming a Swedish Citizen’, 22 August 2016.

Mohajer, S. Phone, 28 June 2017.

Mulinari, D. and Neergaard, A. 2005 “‘Black Skull’ Consciousness: The New Swedish Working Class’, *Race & Class Institute of Race Relations* 46(3): 55–72.

National Council for Crime Prevention 2-15 ‘Crime Statistics’, Sweden.

Neergaard, A. and Behtoui, A. 2010 ‘Social Capital and Wage Disadvantages among Immigrant Workers’, *Work, Employment and Society* 24 (4): 761–79.

Noack, R. 2017 *The Washington Post* ‘Sweden Proposes Tough Sexual Assault Law’, 20 December 2017.

Parsi, R. Meeting, 20 June 2017.

Radio Sweden 2014 ‘Migration Board Ready to Break Law to Force Councils to Accept Refugees’, 17 October 2014.

Robling, P.O. ‘Rising Immigration and the Evolution of Income Inequality: The Swedish Experience 1991-2009’, *Swedish Institute for Social Research*: 1-36.

Skedinger, P. and Lundborg, P. 2014 ‘Employer Attitudes Towards Refugee Immigrants’, *Swedish Institute for Social Research*, May 2014: 1–29.

——— 2014 ‘Minimum Wages and the Integration of Refugee Immigrants’, *Swedish Institute for Social Research*, April 2014: 1–24.

Statistics Sweden 2014 ‘Swedish and foreign background among students and doctoral students in higher education’: 92–93.

Statistics Sweden 2016 ‘The labour market for foreign born persons with higher education’, March 2016.

——— 2017 ‘Immigration and Emigration 1960–2016 and Forecast 2017–2060’, 12 April 2017.

Tomlinson, C. 2017 *Breitbart* ‘Migrants Threaten Swedish Migration Board Employees With Rape, Violence’, 8 October 2017.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. “Chapter 11 – Disability Accommodation Requests Policy Manual,” March 2018.

U.S. News & World Report 2017 ‘Sweden Is the Best Country to Be an Immigrant, Followed by No. 2 Canada and No. 3 Switzerland’, 10 July 2017.

Wike, R. Stokes, B. and Simmons, K. 2016 ‘Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs’, *Pew Research Center* 11 July 2016.

Williams, M. Skype, 21 June 2017.
