

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CURRENT EXPERIENCES OF SYRIAN
REFUGEES LIVING IN TURKEY AND POLITICAL RADICALIZATION

by

MADELEEN KAREN CASTRO

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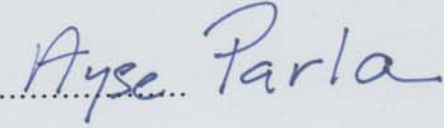
APPROVED BY:

Asst. Prof. Ateş Altınordu



.....

(Thesis Supervisor)

Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Parla


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Asst. Prof. Seda Altuğ


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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CURRENT EXPERIENCES OF SYRIAN REFUGEES LIVING IN TURKEY AND POLITICAL RADICALIZATION

M.A. Thesis, September 2016

Thesis Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Ateş Altınordu

Keywords: refugee, radicalization, assimilation, integration, belonging, grievances,
identity

In my thesis, I discuss the mass migration of Syrian refugees to Turkey as a result of the civil war in Syria at the start of 2011. The Syrian civil war has become the largest global conflict in the contemporary international arena and accounts as Turkey's largest influx of refugees in its modern history. The complexity of factors involved in the experiences of Syrian refugees including assimilation, integration, belonging, traumas, grievances, and identities in their host country would be indicative of political radicalization as suggested by mainstream literature in the field. However, the results of the semi-structured, open-ended interviews I conducted on Syrian refugees living in Turkey contradict the contemporary theories on radicalization involved in the development of radical ideologies and violent radical actions. The ways Syrian refugees perceive their experience with the Turkish government and society is pivotal to the overall findings of this research as is the role of the media's portrayal of Syrians in Turkey. Thus, the overall goal of this research is to provide new insights and contribute to the ongoing study of radicalization by asking whether or not the current experiences of Syrian refugees living in Turkey will lead to their political radicalization.

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE’DE YAŞAYAN SURIYELİ MÜLTECİLERİN MEVCUT DENEYİMLERİ İLE SİYASİ RADİKALLEŞME ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Eylül 2016

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Mülteci, Radikalleşme, Asimilasyon, Entegrasyon, Aidiyet, Şikayet,
Kimlik

Tezimde, 2011 yılında Suriye’de başlayan ve uluslararası alanda günümüzün en büyük küresel anlaşmazlığı kabul edilen Suriye iç savaşı sonucunda Suriyeli mültecilerin, modern tarihteki en büyük göç akınına alan Türkiye’ye toplu halde zorunlu göçlerini ele aldım. Suriyeli mültecilerin zorunlu göç ettikleri ülkedeki deneyimlerini şekillendiren asimilasyon, entegrasyon, aidiyet, travmalar, şikayet, ve kimlik gibi faktörlerin karmaşıklığının, siyasi radikalleşme için bir gösterge olabileceği bu alanda yapılan temel çalışmalarda ortaya atılmaktadır. Ancak, Türkiye’de yaşayan Suriyeli mültecilerle yapmış olduğum yarı-resmi, ucu açık mülakatların sonucunun, radikal ideolojiler ve şiddet içeren radikal eylemler ile ilgili mevcut teoriler ile çeliştiği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Suriyeli mültecilerin Türkiye hükümeti ve halkıyla olan deneyimlerinin yanı sıra, medyanın Suriyeli mültecileri lanse ediş biçimleri de bu araştırmanın kilit bulgularındandır. Böylece, bu araştırmanın genel amacı, radikalleşme ile ilgili devam eden çalışmalara katkıda bulunup yeni bir anlayış sağlayabilmek ile birlikte Türkiye’de yaşayan Suriyeli mültecilerin mevcut deneyimlerinin siyasi radikalleşmeye çevirip çevirmeyeceği sorusuna cevap aramaktır.

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I dedicate this thesis to my mom who embodies an unyielding vision to the value of education. The struggles she experienced as a Chilean migrant rebuilding her life in the United States as a single mother of two whilst working full time and completing her second Masters degree set a standard for my academic career and for the commitment to this thesis that I am forever grateful for.

I also wanted to thank all my advisors for their efforts in my work, especially Professor Ateş Altinordu for his support, guidance, and patience throughout all the processes of not only this thesis, but throughout my academic journey at Sabanci University.

Lastly, I wanted to thank each Syrian refugee who relived their stories to enlighten us on the very real challenges that humans continue to endure across different conflicts of the world.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

For years, the international community has been trying to answer the question as to why individuals engage in radicalization and transcend into violent radicalization. My research puts these theories on radicalization to the test by juxtaposing them to interviewed Syrian refugees and their experiences living in Turkey. Radicalization, theorists claim, can occur in any society and common themes exist to identify radicalized individuals. Some of these themes include a perceived lack of opportunities in their society and exclusion from which hatred can grow quickly as radical ideology plays on the notion of grievances, transforming grievances into action (Peter Neumann 2015). Whether or not radicalization in Turkey is taking place, it is an important contemporary issue because if Syrian refugees are becoming radicalized due to the conditions in their host country, Turkey will be a primary exporter of newly radicalized individuals to the international arena (Alabbasi 2015).

Currently, nearly 3 million Syrian refugees out of the 5 million displaced by the war in Syria are situated in Turkey (UNHCR 2016). As the largest country with an ongoing influx of Syrians and a growing population boom of over 150,000 Syrian babies (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016d*), Turkey is involved in a new dimension of internal hostilities in the region. The Syrian civil war's protracted conflict in the region is responsible for the ongoing waves of refugees into Turkey, proving challenging in terms of assimilation and integration as resentments of local Turkish citizens are sprouting into violent riots across the country (Kutahyali 2014; Motlagh 2015). The effects resulting from the unprecedented numbers of Syrian migrants exponentially pouring

into the country have given rise to anti-immigration and anti-Arab sentiments among the Turkish public (Özden 2013).

The Syrian conflict is havocked by radicalized groups that include Syrians living in Syria, and muhajereen (foreign fighters) from Iraq, Jordan, North Africa, the Caucasus, and other European Muslims who support Syria's historically radical Salafi ideologies (Al-Rawi et al 2015). Salafism, Al-Rawi et al (2015) explains, are in support of "exporting jihad to countries in which Muslims were repressed, including their own countries" (p. 45). However, the Syrian refugee population in Turkey does not typically account as the aforementioned group, having not engaged in radical activity in their host country. Instead, the profiles of Syrian refugees in Turkey are not of a homogenous group of people; they encompass a vast array of demographics, exposed to events that have forever altered their perceptions on life and played a significant role in molding their identity. From the means of transportation into Turkey to the living conditions in their host country, the processes that Syrian refugees undergo and how they reflect on their stories are integral to the overall understanding of this thesis.

The ways in which Syrian refugees perceive and reflect on their experiences and adapt to their traumas and grievances is central to this research as it asks the question whether obstacles in their process of integration into Turkish society could lead to radicalization. Therefore, this research advances the thesis that the refugee crisis in Turkey entails a unique set of elements that could allow for political radicalization to sprout and develop quicker within the minds of Syrian refugees than it would in different cases. In addition, common attitudes of those who have been radicalized in other contexts are compared to the findings of the interviews I conducted to assess the correlation with contemporary radicalization theories.

Turkey's current geographical, social, political, and economic landscape contains some of the basic ingredients for radicalization to develop. To fully analyze these elements, I will briefly outline the framework that this thesis will follow. In the following subchapters, I will discuss the research methodology used to interview Syrian refugees living in Turkey and how this particular design is effective for the case of Turkey. I will also provide a quick overview of my thesis. In Chapter 2, I introduce the theoretical perspectives of radicalization by highlighting on the shift from classical theories to contemporary ones through new research within the international arena. In

Chapter 3, I provide a brief synopsis of radical activities that have and are taking place in Syria and Turkey, emphasizing on the significant role they play in the experiences of Syrian refugees. Additionally, I incorporate the sorts of traumatic events that Syrian refugees have undergone both in Syria and in Turkey that have led to grievances.

In Chapter 4, I elaborate on the role of the media, both at the domestic and international level, across news and social media platforms and convey how Syrians perceive their sense of assimilation, integration, and belonging and the relationship between these attitudes and the development of radical ideologies. The chapter is divided into three subchapters that focus on Syrian refugee's legal status, employment, and educational opportunities. In Chapter 5, in light of the aforementioned results, I discuss the process of identity formation taking place in Turkey. Finally, I conclude with an overall review of the concluding analyses in Chapter 6.

1.2 Research Methodology

Aside from theoretical findings, this thesis took on a comprehensive qualitative methodology using a semi-structured and open-ended interview format on Syrian refugees. Throughout my interviews I used tape-recording and, where necessary, Leyla Neyzi's (2010) techniques on oral history transcription which compensates for what Weiss (1995) describes as the loss of "vividness of speech" when "conversational spacers are dropped in note taking (and) respondents' false starts and stray thoughts and parenthetical remarks" disappear (p.54). The series of open-ended questions (*see appendices*) served as a guide to later assess the conversations and determine if a relationship exists between Syrian's experience in Turkey and the formation of radical ideologies.

Primarily because radicalization is a phenomenon that goes through a process, the interview questions were constructed diachronically, which consists of reports that "begin at the beginning and proceed from there (and) tell the stories in which things happen as time goes on" (Weiss 1995, p.42). This technique was used to understand the

experiences of Syrian refugees in chronological order from the phases reflecting their stories of assimilation, integration, belonging, traumas, grievances and identity that occurred before, during, and after the Syrian conflict.

Given the ever-changing dynamic of the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey, conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews with refugees proved crucial to attain the most current developments on sentiments related to experiences. Considering the difficulty to attain a group of Syrian refugees willing to speak in English about their plight out of Syria, their current experiences in Turkey, and government restrictions on academic research on Syrian refugees, my thesis began with snowball sampling (Weiss 1995). The snowball sampling technique took effect from the first individual I interviewed who then served as a referral to the next interviewee and so forth. Therefore, my sample began as Weiss (1995) explains, as a convenience sample or “pretty much whomever we can get...in attempting to learn about a group difficult to penetrate (since) it can be a breakthrough to find any member of the group willing to serve as an informant and respondent” (p. 24-25).

The way in which individuals internalize and make sense of their assimilation process in their new lives in Turkey as refugees is vital to understanding how radicalization may find its way into the mind and can create significantly transitional processes within Syrian refugees in Turkey. That is why a qualitative study with Syrian refugees in Turkey for this thesis served best because, as Weiss explains, “in a qualitative study anyone who has anything to teach us is a desirable interviewee” (p.29).

1.3 Interviewees

The individuals with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews are not only at different levels of transitioning their life into Turkey but also range across various demographics; however, none of the interviewees are residing, have resided, in refugee camps. It was important to conduct interviews with Syrians living in the cities of Turkey since only 10 percent of the total amount of Syrian refugees in Turkey reside in camps (Kirişci and Ferris 2015). Overall, I conducted a total of 15 interviews with Syrian

refugees living in the cities of Istanbul and Gaziantep. Rather than conducting interviews in cities such as Samsun or Sivas which hosts no more than 5,000 Syrian refugees (WHO 2016), I have chosen Gaziantep and Istanbul because they are indicators to the dense diffusion of Syrian refugees in Turkey. In May 2016, World Health Organization (WHO) reported that Gaziantep and Istanbul alone host approximately 400,000 to 800,000 Syrian refugees (WHO 2016).

Each interview's duration ranged between one hour to two hours depending on the flow of the conversation and the respondents were interviewed more than once, some three times if needed. As Weiss (1995) suggests "it is almost always desirable, if time and costs permit, to interview respondents more than once" because the first interview is dedicated mostly to "establishing the research partnership" (p.57). A third interview is also suggested with the same respondent if the interviewee is in need of completing other undiscussed areas of research (Weiss 1995, p.57). From these interviews, a total of five took place in Istanbul and ten in Gaziantep within an eight-month period between November 2015 to July 2016.

My interviewees included both females and males, originally from the Syrian cities of Deir Ezzor, Damascus, and Aleppo. The age peripherals ranged from early 20s to early 30s and included diverse financial situations as well as marital statuses. The individuals I interviewed are, along with other Syrian refugees living in Turkey, a group that does not typically engage in radical politics. Each individual's story was recorded through audio and their identities remain anonymous. The educational background and academic levels among the interviewees range from Bachelors degrees to Masters and includes individuals from the fields of English literature, architecture, electrical engineering, international development, dental technician, and others. An important note to make is that the majority of the individuals interviewed carried politically active lives in Syria throughout the revolution and continue to express these views in Turkey, although not engaging in protests.

1.4 Strengths and Weaknesses

The research methodology used for this thesis did present various merits and constraints which ought to be discussed. Firstly, the advantages of a qualitative study that uses an open-ended interviewing technique include “permitting the respondent to talk about what the respondent wants to talk about, as long as it is anywhere near the topic of the study, (which) will always produce better data than plodding adherence to the guide” (Weiss 2015, p. 49). Another strength in the methodology I chose for my thesis was the use of tape-recording as discussed above. The advantages of tape recording are that the interviewer can dedicate their full attention to the interviewee without having to “worry about getting down all the respondent’s words... (or to) miss a good part of what follows” (Weiss 1995, p. 54).

In terms of weaknesses, perhaps the most debilitating limitation in the scope of my interviews was language. The fact that I do not speak Arabic bounded me to conduct all my interviews in English since I did not use translators. The language barrier certainly prevented me from reaching an audience of a lower educational strata who did not or were not able to develop an additional language such as English. The drawback of language led me to experience yet another important limitation that I would experience throughout the course of the interviews I conducted. This limitation was that of being bounded by one respondent’s referral which ultimately led me to a similar network of respondents.

There are several disadvantages that Weiss (1995) warns when using a convenience sample based on snowballing. For instance, in my thesis Syrian refugees share the same narrative of those who have escaped war from Syria and have taken refuge in Turkey. Secondly, when conducting interviews, Syrian refugees may also “be able to judge the extent to which others in their situations behave similarly or differently and have the same or different experiences” (p. 26). This is primarily because of the isolation and the production of Syrian refugee communities across Turkey that circulate information between their communities and create a common narrative across the refugees. Likewise, Syrian refugees’ experiences may include the “same behavior from any other group with the same dynamics and the same constraints” (p.27) and because of snowballing, the Syrians I interviewed may be representative of “those who have few social contacts and will therefore underrepresent every belief and experience that is associated with having few social contacts” (p.27).

Finally, although using a tape-recorder does come with its benefits as discussed above, it also presents key issues with how the interviewees talk about their stories. Weiss (1995) claims that tape-recorders “remind people that there will be a record of what they say” and “they can feel constrained by its presence” (p. 53). Another disadvantage of using a tape-recorder, was that five of the total interviews were conducted through telephone or Skype conversations, which presents some noteworthy disadvantages. Firstly, a bad connection on the telephone or Skype cuts off contact, resulting in an awkward back and forth attempt to reconnect. As a result of the bad connection, it is easier for interviewees to either delay the interview for another time or, as Weiss (1995) reveals, avoid continuing the interview altogether. Secondly, the absence of a face-to-face conversation between the interviewer and interviewee leads to a disconnected relationship that “generally produces a shorter interview” (Weiss 1995, p. 59).

1.5 Overview

All in all, the main argument of my thesis looks at the relationship between the current experiences of Syrian refugees in Turkey and political radicalization. Contemporary literature on radicalization would suggest that Syrian refugees, as mass migrants into Turkey exposed to a complex landscape of experiences including grievances to a politicized environment, social isolation and exclusion, discrimination, perceived relative deprivation, identity crises, and traumas, would be vulnerable to and ultimately become radicalized by these experiences. However, the findings from the interviews I conducted on Syrian refugees shows that even though these individuals are exhibiting all the aforementioned sentiments, they have not become radicalized, thus contradicting the mainstream literature on radicalization.

If the current literature claims that individuals in these circumstances do radicalize yet Syrian refugees have not, then there is a gap in the research that needs to be discussed within the case of Turkey. Therefore, I will discuss how Syrians are experiencing their transition into Turkey and what sorts of factors have led the large population in Turkey to exhibit these sentiments but not turn to radicalization. Thus, the

overarching goal of this thesis is to provide new insights that expose the relationship between the current experiences of Syrian refugees living in Turkey and their political radicalization as incongruent.



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is Radicalization?

The radicalization process, complex in its development from ideas to action, involves a web of factors extending to vast outcomes, stretching its reach from the individual level to small groups, communities and organized systems at internal to external scopes. Radicalization takes shape in different forms across the globe, neither the individuals, their backgrounds, motives, country of birth nor residence can be transcribed into a single framework. Although definitions of radicalization range across a multitude of fields, understanding the different interpretations of radicalization is integral to determining whether or not these processes are taking shape in Turkish communities hosting Syrian refugees.

The processes of radicalization are, as Magnus Ranstorp (2010) suggests, a “multifaceted combination of push-pull factors involving a combination of socio-psychological factors, political grievance, religious motivation and discourse, identity politics and triggering mechanisms” (p. 6). Similarly, Mastors and Siers (2014) add that since multiple phases of radicalization exist, an extensive examination of the processes are recommended since “indoctrination occurs over a period of time” (p. 378). Wilner et al (2011) also view radicalization as a gradual process, one that does not develop overnight nor in a few days, instead, it is mental process from which the “deconstruction and reconstruction of meaning perspectives” occur (Wilner et al 2011).

Mark Sedgwick (2010) interprets radicalization as a confusing and complex term because it is typically “used in three different contexts: the security context, the

integration context, and the foreign-policy context” (p. 479). Within the security context, radicalization is defined as “a direct or indirect threat to the security of the state or of individual citizens of the state” (p. 485) and “draws the line between ‘moderate’ and ‘radical’ in the light of concerns with direct or indirect threats to the security of the state or of individual citizens of the state” (p. 490). Radicalization within the integration definition is understood as a “social phenomenon with ideological and political consequences” (p. 486) and “draws the line in the light of concerns about citizenship, including cultural issues” (p. 490). The foreign-policy definition of radicalization defines the term both within the security context and that of the government as a “threat to their continued control of state power” (p. 487) and “considers the agendas of other governments when drawing its line, resulting in the classification as ‘radical’ of stances that would not otherwise be of concern for either the (domestic) security agenda or the integration agenda” (p. 491).

Veldhuis and Staun (2009) also distinguish a split in defining radicalization and identify the term in two different ways: violent radicalization and a broader sense of radicalization. As for violent radicalization, “emphasis is put on the active pursuit or acceptance of the use of violence to attain the stated goal”, whereas the broader sense of radicalization emphasizes “the active pursuit or acceptance of far-reaching changes in society, which may or may not constitute a danger to democracy and may or may not involve the threat of or use of violence to attain the stated goals” (Veldhuis and Staun 2009, p.4)

Clark McClauley and Sophia Moskalenko (2008) define political radicalization as a “dimension of increasing extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in support of intergroup conflict and violence” (p. 415) and as a “change in beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify intergroup violence and demand sacrifice in defense of the ingroup” (p.416). McClauley and Moskalenko (2008) also emphasize the role of social groups for radicalization, in particular, radicalized individuals would engage in such violent actions with the following group think: “we are a special or chosen group (superiority) who have been unfairly treated and betrayed (injustice), no one else cares about us or will help us (distrust), and the situation is dire—our group and our cause are in danger of extinction (vulnerability)” (p.416). Therefore, social networks and the development of group identification plays an

important role in the radicalization of individuals.

Fathali M. Moghaddam (2005) suggests to view the process of radicalization as a staircase, whereby individuals start to develop radical ideologies from the ground floor and engage in violent radical actions at the last floor of the building. In this respect, the ground floor is fundamental for the development of radical ideologies within individuals because it is “where what matters most are perceptions of fairness and just treatment” (p. 162). McGregor et al (2015) define radicalization as a “shift from mainstream to anti-normative or comparatively extreme ideological convictions that animate eagerness to challenge the status quo” and it “is neither necessarily aggressive nor religious” (p. 7) McGregor et al (2015) pay particular attention to the role of personality and threat as factors influencing individuals to engage in radical behavior:

- The personality factor:
 - Aggression (disagreeableness, hostility, anger, narcissism, or low self-control);
 - High BIS personality traits that incline people toward the experience of anxiety;
 - Identity-weak personality traits that undermine capacity to assert personal value priorities, take initiative, or maintain self-regulatory control
- The threat factor:
 - External control threats that undermine faith in the social system (that identity-weak people are especially inclined to rely on);
 - Life circumstances that underscore hopelessness (p. 7).

Sedgwick (2015) makes an important contribution when he distinguishes between the definitions of radicalism and activism. Activism, Sedgwick (2015) argues, is defined as “readiness to engage *in legal and non-violent* political action” while radicalism is defined as “readiness to engage in *illegal and violent* political action” (p. 483). Therefore, radicalization follows an agenda that delineates a breach of legality and the use of violence.

While individuals engaged in political radicalization seem to share similar features to those involved in political activism, such as the deep desire to make a notable change in their society, “collective identification” with a group which leads to “collective action” (Sturmer and Simon 2004), the two concepts are vastly different in

practice. McCauley and Moskalenko (2010) distinguish the two concepts best by defining activism as “the movement of individuals and groups to legal and nonviolent political action” while radicalism is defined as “illegal and violent political action” (p. 82).

Unlike radicalization, activism does not involve an identity crisis, instead Bardi et al (2014) explain that activists’ “basic values are typically quite stable across time (Schwartz, 2006), changing little even in the face of many life transitions”. This is primarily because political activism has a temporal tendency and is “often situational and episodic, depending on the salience of particular political issues” (Vecchione et al 2015, p. 87)

The role of education is also an important factor in motivating individuals to partake in political activism as it “provides citizens with the cognitive resources to participate effectively in politics” (Verba et al 1995). In radicalization, individuals tend to disintegrate, ultimately moving away from society and becoming more involved in radical ideologies. In sharp contrast to radicalism, political activism focuses on the movement of individuals towards social community movements, by “becoming more integrated into the community, increas(ing) their social and political ties, get(ting) more experienced in the political domain, and thus acquir(ing) more resources and opportunities for political activism” (Vecchione et al 2015, p. 87).

Finally, although the amount of literature available on radicalization is quite substantial, Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen’s (2010) definitions serves as guide. Therefore, a radical in this thesis is understood as a “person harboring deep-felt desire for fundamental sociopolitical changes,” and radicalization is defined as “growing readiness to pursue and support far-reaching changes in society that conflict with or pose a direct threat to the existing order” (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 798). In its most extreme stage, violent radicalization is to be understood as the “process in which radical ideas are accompanied by the development of a willingness to directly support or engage in violent acts” (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 798).

2.2 Classical and Contemporary Theories on Radicalization

It wasn't until the late 20th century that the study of radicalization began to focus on personality and social psychological empirical research (McGregor et al 2015). The findings suggested that a direct correlation existed between the decision to engage in radical actions and “threats to a psychological resource (esteem, security, integrity, immortality, belongingness, meaning, or control)” (McGregor et al 2015).

Building upon Sigmund Freud's classical theories on psychoanalysis, Lewin (1933) conveys theories of motivation and goal regulation that explained how “conflicts and uncertainties produce anxious tension that persists as long as goals remain impeded”. He argued that if individuals do not have a means to “relieve the tension arising from their (often social) conflicts then they escape from the field of tension by resorting to fantasy, submission, or belligerence” (Lewin 1933).

Bhui et al (2014) take on a classical approach to radicalization theory by focusing on “the role of mental health issues and social isolation (as they) play a part in making certain individuals more vulnerable to extremist propaganda” (p. 2). De Bie et al (2014) as social movement theorists argue that grievances, efficacy, identity issues and emotions such as fear and anger motivate people to participate in protest groups.

Social Movement Theory scholars like Quintan Wiktorowicz and network theorists such as Marc Sageman make sense of violent radicalization in relation to the influence of “small communicative communities” on identity, perceptions, and preferences (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 801). Dalgaard-Nielsen, focusing on the micro level, posits that radical ideas are spread by people you know directly, found within small groups of people who are able to create tight-knit bonds, peer pressure, and indoctrinate a radicalized perception.

Despite the multitude of research conducted on the study of radicalization, “even profiles, root causes, individual characteristics, personal qualities, and environmental precursors are neither sufficient nor necessary for radicalization to occur” (Wilner and Dubouloz 2011, p. 420); instead, it serves as a means to advance knowledge on the phenomenon of radicalization. Thus, interviews with the Syrian community are vital to furthering the understanding of how radicalization takes shape in Turkey as “each case study of radicalization contributes to the overall understanding of the processes at work” (Ranstorp 2010, p. 7).

Within the literature on radicalization, social marginalization and social exclusion are central themes to be considered in the social integration discourse and are juxtaposed by Hornqvist and Flyghed to the exclusion perspective. This perspective points to how “conflicts and problems arise when the individual becomes disengaged from society and its fundamental values as a result of unemployment or residential segregation”. Therefore, the impacts of unemployment and social exclusion can produce a “fertile soil for the emergence of (radical) values and behaviours that are very different from those of the rest of society” (Hornqvist and Flyghed 2012, p. 323).

Wilner and Dubouloz (2011) indicate that radicalization occurs when an individual internalizes a particular set of ideas within their personal belief system (p. 420). Radicalization is thus a process that transforms an individual's meaning-perspective when three underlying factors take place: triggers, change, and outcome (Wilner and Dubouloz 2011). The trigger phase occurs when an individual undergoes a disorienting event that hinders them from “functioning in habitual ways or in ways they desire” and ultimately “propels individuals to question how they are going to live with their new realities” resulting in a change in their previously-held belief systems and the construction of new meaning perspective (Wilner and Dubouloz 2011). Finally, violent radicalization takes full form at the outcome stage when an individual “accepts and participates in their new lifestyle...(and) gain(s) new perspectives on life and adhere(s) to novel rules of conduct and lifestyle routines” (p.427-431).

Additionally, Wilner and Dubouloz introduce transformative radicalization to explain how alienation and the rejection of foreign policies “shape an individual's personal context of living” and “trigger(s) a transformative learning process” which eventually leads to terrorism (Wilner and Dubouloz 2011, p. 423). Elena Mastors and Rhea Siers' case study of Omar al-Hammami's participation in radical behavior proves how crucial the trigger phase serves as an indicator to the development of radicalization. The fact that al-Hammami “rejected the society of his youth” (Mastors and Siers 2014, p. 384) confirms how rejection and the ultimate alienation from society is at the forefront to the development of radical behavior.

Similarly, Ranstorp emphasizes Tore Bjorgo's four factors in explaining the processes that individuals undergo to radicalize. The four triggers of radicalization are related to structural, facilitating, motivational, and triggering causes. Structural causes

include factors involving “demographic imbalances, globalization, rapid modernization, transitional societies, increased individualism with rootlessness and atomization, relative deprivation, class structure” (Ranstorp 2010, p.4). External factors in society, Albert Bandura suggests, are essential to the radicalization of individuals, most especially for those who “live in violent regions and who witness terrorism regularly may seek to imitate terrorists or learn from a culture that glorifies terrorists” (Kleinmann 2012, p. 280).

Although the focus of contemporary discussions on radicalization tends to be on the role of religion, individuals engaged in radical activities are “generally ignorant about Islam” (Ranstorp 2010, p.7). Interestingly, Scott Matthew Kleinmann’s study on 83 Sunni Muslims who radicalized in the U.S. put great emphasis on the role of the radicalization of individuals through “group-level socialization” rather than grievances related to religion. He determined that individuals are drawn to the message of radicalization “by movements or radical friends and family members” and not by “perceived injustices against Islam, (which) generally play a minor role in radicalization” (Kleinmann 2012). The widespread interest in the Muslim versus non-Muslim narrative (Wiktorowicz 2004) is not of value to this thesis; instead, the role of how Syrians and Turks perceive the good Muslim versus bad Muslim (Wiktorowicz 2004) narrative is of interest.

Finally, Wiktorowicz (2004) claims that individuals can radicalize if they experience a “cognitive openness” or “willingness to be receptive to the (extremist) message” due to a “moral shock” resulting in the outbreak of an identity crisis. Whether or not individuals are experiencing an identity crisis along these themes as it resonates within Turkey’s context of Syrian refugees will be further discussed throughout this thesis.

2.3 Debunking Classical Theories on Radicalization

The topic of radicalization has been at the forefront of contemporary international politics, triggering massive interest to conduct research and explain why individuals engage in radical action. Marc Sageman (2014) explains that research on political violence escalated in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a result of airplane hijackings. Researchers raced to find the answers to the conundrum of radicalization, affirming that personality factors and mental illness were responsible for violent actions (Sageman 2014). However, empirical research later rejected these claims when there was no direct correlation to the findings. It was not until the attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001 that researchers began to exponentially revisit the topic of political radicalization. The extensive funding granted to researchers by governments to identify new intel on the topic of radicalization ultimately led to “lay assumptions and understandings of the 9/11 ‘terrorists’” (Sageman 2014, p. 566) that blamed Islam and the Quran as the roots of hatred.

Classical theorists pointed towards psychological factors to explain why individuals radicalize, blaming mental illnesses for the participation in acts of violence (Silke 2008). For the most part, contemporary research has now moved away from tying radicalization to innate psychological imbalances and instead began providing new insights into the study of radicalization. Silke, elaborating on this shift, stated that individuals who radicalize are “essentially normal individuals” (2008, p. 53), then again “normal people can do abnormal things” (Silke 2008, p. 67) such as engaging in non-violent radical behavior and actions in the form of social movements.

As is the case of Moghaddam’s (2005) theory discussed above, his stipulation for the formation of radicalization is problematic in the Turkish-Syrian case because it assumes that if an individual has the characteristics as prescribed on the ground floor, then it is inevitable that their final destination is the fifth floor, i.e. radicalization. Although Syrians, in theory, contain the prerequisites for radicalization as they share sentiments related to social and economic grievances, the interviews I conducted finds that they have not radicalized. Thus, contradicting the common narrative outlining the formation of radicalization.

Hiebert and Dawson (2015) explore the common themes of radicalization research, drawing attention to the literature pertaining to mental illness, demographic profiles, and personality traits. The researchers, basing their references from empirical

studies conducted on terrorists by Lyons and Harbinson, Rasch, Sageman, Bakker, and Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman, argue that mental illness and terrorism are not correlated and instead may even hinder participation in radical activity. However, Hiebert and Dawson (2015) also claim that certain demographic profiles are associated with radicalization, especially an educated male in a middle to upper class background. These vague demographics are also problematic because they attribute radicalization to a group of individuals as long as they are indicative of deep-seated resentments.

Another misconception is the association of the term radicalization with that of terrorism. Magnus Hornqvist and Janne Flyghed clarify this fusion by placing terrorism at the end of radicalization as an end result. By doing so, the development of radical “opinions, views and ideas” (Hornqvist and Flyghed 2012, p. 321) result in acts of violence performed by individuals, i.e. terrorist actions. Someone who is considered a “radical” should not necessarily be connoted in negative terms, as it can refer to a diverse range of people who are working hard for legitimate causes in their communities.” Therefore, it is “important not to equate radicalism with terrorism” (Jaffer 2013). Instead, this thesis stresses that the processes through which individuals become radicalized are complex and cannot be defined within a linear progress (Ranstorp 2010, p. 2).

Heather Selma Gregg (2014) emphasizes that “not all social movements are violent; in fact, many successful movements have been purposefully non-violent, such as Gandhi’s Quit India movement, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s U.S. Civil Rights Movement, Bishop Desmond Tutu’s non-violent resolution of apartheid, and the Dalai Lama’s non-violent protest against Chinese occupation” (p. 6).

Quite interestingly, Veldhuis and Staun (2009) while analyzing both violent and nonviolent radicalization, ultimately criticized the common definition of radicalization used by theorists as “a chronological overview of the phases through which people progress in a process of radicalization” (p. 61). The phases, Veldhuis and Staun (2009) criticize:

“Suffer from a selection bias due to the fact that they focus only on successful cases of radicalisation. The phases they describe are presumed to be related only to violent radicalisation, but can also be associated with other, counter- suggestive outcomes like non-violent radicalisation or no radicalisation at all... as a result of this selection bias with regard to only cases of violent radicalisation, phase models run the risk of wrongfully

categorising groups of people who share certain characteristics or forms of behaviour as potentially dangerous radicals. The phases are identified by vaguely defined features which can be interpreted in different ways and do not necessarily have to be a cue for radicalisation, let alone for upcoming violence” (p.61-62).

As Wilner and Duboulouz also explain, “not all radicalization is necessarily negative, nor does radicalization necessarily lead to violence. There are ‘different forms of radicalization’” and different ways to go about them. Instead, Wilner and Duboloz state that radicalized individuals “are not a security problem, until (actions) take on intolerant, segregate attitudes or promotes the use of violence” (Wilner and Dubouloz 2011, p. 420). Therefore, an individual’s engagement in radical ideology is not indicative to the participation in violent action at a later stage.

Mastors and Siers even claim that theories on radicalization do not exist; instead, there are “large and fragmented bod(ies) of literature relevant to the study of radicalization (Mastors and Siers 2014, p. 378). Therefore, it is important to understand radicalization as a non-sequential pattern, by which internal and external factors are in constant motion. The role of these internal and external factors are to be discussed with further detail within the scope of Chapter 4, 5, 6, and 7. In all, these theories will be juxtaposed to the responses of interviewed Syrian refugees living in Turkey to determine if radical attitudes are present and are likely to lead to radical attitudes.

CHAPTER 3: RADICAL ACTIVITY & TRAUMAS AND GRIEVANCES

3.1 Radical Activity

Syria and Turkey have been through a series of noteworthy radical activities and dynamics that make for the Syrian refugee case in Turkey a delicate web to dissect in terms of the processes of radicalization. Therefore, a brief description of the radical activities taking place in Syria and Turkey is essential to fully understanding whether or not there is a relationship between radical attitudes and Syrian refugees living in Turkey.

3.1 (a) Syria

Syria, prior to the revolution, was a diverse country ethnically and religiously mixed with Muslim and Christian communities (Khatib 2015). In the 1930s, the establishment of political parties in Syria “advocating progressive political or social changes” brought about the Syrian Nationalist Party (PPS), the Syrian Communist Party, the League for National Action, and the Arab Resurrection Party (Ba’ath) (Maoz and Yaniv 2013). The parties’ collective message called for “national independence, social (or socialist) and economic reform, and secularization of public life” (Maoz and Yaniv 2013). The Ba’ath party, in particular, gained power through the “socio-economic unrest among peasants and workers, as well as the political grievances and aspirations of the middle class”. Ultimately, the Ba’ath party took power on March 1963 in a coup d’état (Khatib 2015) which led the country into “radical, extensive

reforms...(and) are undoubtedly leading Syria towards a social-political revolution” (Maoz and Yaniv 2013).

The power of the Assad regime ruling from 1971 with President Hafez al-Assad to the current President Bashar al-Assad in Syria maintained its command through the elimination of Islamic groups and influence of the Alawite families which “had at least one member who work(ed) for the military, police, or security forces” (Khatib 2015, p. 347). Security forces began to take advantage of the state emergency imposed under the Assad regime from 1963, which allowed them to “arrest, detain, track down, and commit all sorts of human rights violations without questioning” (Khatib 2015, p. 347).

The Syrian revolution was sparked primarily by anti-government sentiments. The Assad regime’s arrest and torture of teenagers who graffitied their school walls with revolutionary slogans (Rodgers et al 2016) triggered cognitive openings that quickly transcended from radical attitudes to radical behavior and ultimately, radical actions. President Bashar al-Assad’s policy of force re-awakened anti-government sentiments that played on past grievances from the Assad regime.

The mass protests that took place in 2011 demanding the resignation of Assad resulted in the regime committing brutal war crimes and the use of chemical weapons, leading to armed retaliation by opposition groups in Syria (Rodgers et al 2016). The rise in armed rebels across different cities in Syria was supported by radical groups seeking to exponentially grow members by playing on the narrative of grievances related to the “West’s inaction” (Rodgers et al 2016) whereby participation in such armed groups serves as, Ranstorp proposes, redemption to fill the void of lost loved ones and transforming suffering into honor.

We left (Syria) because me and my husband; there, Jabhat al-Nusra controlled the city (Deir Ezzor) and moved the Free Army. At first we worked as civil activists and they weren’t interrupting us. But after awhile, my husband (was) required for investigation from Jabhat al-Nusra. So when we heard that, we have a cousin with Jabhat al-Nusra, he told us they require you to an investigation, so we just escaped there’s no way to deal with them. So, me and him, said we must escape from Syria because it’s too much. At that time two of my friends, were working with me in the same organization I worked, they wanted to come (to Turkey), we were on a project on elections, I wrote to them but after a while they were disappeared. I don’t know why. I talked (wrote) to them in the internet, they weren’t answering. After a while we heard that when they are in the road to

Deir Ezzor they were kidnapped in al Raqqa by ISIS, so we tried our best just to know what happened to them but we didn't know. After a while in the news and T.V. they said they murdered them. Because they (ISIS) said it's a blasphemy to work with an American organization, so they murdered them. So killing is starting, it's too much, And Jabhat al-Nusra, Daesh, there's no difference. (4)

To this day, Syria continues to be ravaged by different conflicts and controlled by notorious radical groups like al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Jabhat al-Nusra, who have taken advantage of the revolution to extend their radical activities throughout the country's people and territory. Although these radical groups proclaim their ideologies to be vastly different from one another, they share the common goal of discrediting and delegitimizing the other as the bad Muslim in order to continue to influence and maintain the support of their members. At the other end of the spectrum, the Assad regime and the Free Syrian Army share a fight against al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Jabhat al-Nusra who deem them as “un-Islamic” and “enemies of Allah” given Assad's relationship with Western leaders and the Free Syrian Army's fondness for democracy (Al-Rawi and Jensen 2015, p. 48).

3.1 (b) Turkey

Its geographical position in the world continues to be a critical zone for allied partnership between both Western and Arab countries as they maintain military presence in stations like Adana's southeast Incirlik. However, as a member of NATO, Turkey has received international criticism at the “ease with which ISIS fighters appeared to be able to enter and leave territory held by the group” (Malik et al 2016). Therefore, Turkey's violent political landscape has marked it as a “contemporary geographical hub for terrorist acts” (Castro 2016) and has been proclaimed as the “jihadi highway” (Candar 2016) for channeling radical groups in and out of its territory.

Recent surveys have shown that over 2,500 individuals have traveled from Turkey to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS. 800 of these individuals even took their families with them and over 5,000 radicalized Turks have crossed into Syria (Gürcan 2015).

Gürcan also claims that "the real problem is not the ones who go to Syria and Iraq to fight, but those who are radicalized and stay here (Turkey)" and "they [number] in the thousands" (Gürcan 2015).

The characteristics of Turkey, without considering the radical activity already taking place across the nation, has made it a target for attacks by groups like ISIS. Since "Turkey has a strong Islamist core, a majority Sunni population, and a tangibly strong Islamic identity and history" along with a democratically elected republic, these elements make for a "fertile ground for ISIS' ambitions" (TBFF 2016) Even Turkey's shift away in the early 20th century from a state dominated by religion, created a conflict between "conservative populism and republican nationalism" (Altinordu 2010, p. 518). These national and historic events play an important role on how Syrian refugees begin to compare life in Turkey to that in Syria in terms of religiosity. Although in Turkey, refugees are not exposed to the common narrative of *Kafir* which means the struggle between Muslims against non-Muslims, the discourse of the good conservative Muslim versus the bad modern Muslim does exist.

The radical activity that has dominated Turkey's political scheme includes versatile incidents of radicalization by ISIS, and even the Turkish and Syrian refugee community. Al Jazeera reported that "Turkey is facing several security threats. As part of a US-led coalition, it is fighting ISIL in neighbouring Syria and Iraq as well as Kurdish fighters in its own southeast, where a two-and-a-half-year ceasefire collapsed last July, triggering the worst violence since the 1990s" (*Al Jazeera* 2016). The incidents that have unfolded in Turkish territory will be discussed by the groups committing them.

As for cases involving ISIS, concerns continue to grow regarding Turkey's Islamic radicalization at some universities including Istanbul University in 2014 when students were attacked for protesting ISIS (Ridgwell 2014). Another concern is the sale of "pro-jihadist literature on sale openly on the streets of Istanbul" (Ridgwell 2014). In Gaziantep, an ISIS supporter injured five Turkish police officers by detonating explosives in his flat as they attempted to infiltrate his operations (*Hürriyet Daily News* 2015a). In another tragic incident in Gaziantep, a Syrian pro-opposition journalist was killed by ISIS sympathizers (*The Guardian* 2016).

Salafi networks in the notorious Hacibayram district uncovered a Turkish

defected ISIS fighter who claims that “the Dawlah (ISIS) considers Turkey to be *taghut*, a false idol because it isn’t governed by divine rules (and) a country of blasphemy” (Eroğlu 2015). The reasons as to why Turkish youth has resorted to radical ideologies is rooted in politics, primarily that with AKP who have “polluted political Islam” (Gürcan 2015).

It is no doubt that with these ideologies there have been a series of attacks by ISIS sympathizers in Turkey. On January 2016, a suicide attacker killed 10 foreign tourists and injured over 15 (*Al Arabiya 2016*) at the historic square in Istanbul at the Sultanahmet Mosque (*Middle East Eye 2016*). Shortly afterwards, in January 2016, “Turkish police detained some 33 suspected members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) during operations in Istanbul and southern Adana province” (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016b*).

The suicide attacks which ravaged through Istanbul Ataturk Airport on June 2016 (Tastekin 2016) reverberated not only in Turkey but across the globe, reminding the ever real security threats present in the country and the irrelevance of a state’s religious piety. When considering the threat of ISIS, security officials in Ankara claim that Turkey “doesn’t have a strategic vision for combating ISIS” (Gürcan 2015).

The radical activity discussed above, although not directly affecting Syrians living in Turkey, play an instrumental role in how the refugees come to terms with their experiences and the attitudes built thereafter. Nevertheless, direct incidents have occurred between the Turkish and Syrian communities across Turkey which have sparked tensions between both sides. As was the case on July 2014, violent riots erupted in Gaziantep when Turkish locals protested against refugees in competition for blue-collar work and resentment for their use of national benefits like healthcare and education. (Kutahyalı 2014) In the city of Kahramanmaraş, roughly 1,000 locals marched, demanding that Syrian refugees be sent back to their country (Today’s Zaman 2014), blaming them for dragging along hardships with them to Turkey as the country undergoes a mass influx of refugees. During the holy month of Ramadan, free meals are distributed across the country at sunset to celebrate a day of fasting, yet two Turkish men in Bingöl were video recorded slapping Syrian refugee children as they were served their meals (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016i*).

Cumulatively, the highly politicized landscape, ongoing radical activities in Turkey, and hostilities between Turkish and Syrian communities make the assimilation process for the refugees more difficult and have developed resentments between both sides that will be discussed in further detail below. The ever-changing platform in the case of Turkey could make Syrian refugees susceptible to radical messages and ideologies to that play on the theme of the Syrian grievance in Turkey. The responses from the interviews I conducted will be analyzed alongside the themes of assimilation, integration, and belonging in relation to the media, legal status, employment, and educational opportunities.

3.2 TRAUMAS AND GRIEVANCES

The aftermath of traumatic events results in “psychological consequences (that affect individuals both in ways that are highly personal and in ways that are impersonal, transpersonal, collective and social” (Papadopoulous 2006). Among the interviewees in my research, every individual has encountered a traumatic experience in Syria that has resulted in grievances. Below, an individual reflects on his decision to finally leave Syria at the end of 2015 and comparing life in Syria to Turkey:

I was scared. I was hungry actually. Um, I rested. I saw life here (Turkey) is going on. We forgot what it was before. A normal day where nobody dies, nobody you know, dies. Even death is not that big a deal now for Syrians, people die everyday, literally every day. Bomb shelling, mortars, everyday in the street, everyday hospitals, everywhere... I... I'm sorry. (3)

Sharika Thiranagama (2013) illustrates how individuals perceive displacement as “being trapped in a world not of their own choosing but that which they and their bodily and social instincts were undeniably the product of.” As a victim of war, individuals perceive these events as qualities that are both “happening to them, as an external force” from which they have little control and are “making them” which are

enforced by their “communities and families” (Thiranagama 2013). The traumas experienced from a lack of integration are expressed below by a Syrian respondent:

I don't speak the language, I don't want to learn Turkish, my license doesn't work for being an architect. Physical hurt isn't an issue; I don't belong here (Turkey). (3)

The stories that Syrians shared with me on their journey out of Syria and arriving to Turkey were never quite the same, but they all exhibited events involving traumatic experiences which ultimately led them to reflect on these events with grievance. Escaping the war in Syria into Turkey is divided between those who enter Turkey legally through means of air, land, or sea; then there are those who have entered illegally through land. Before even getting to the border of Turkey, Syrians described the traumas they endured on their journey, most of them described themselves as internal refugees or internally displaced peoples (IDPs) in Syria. The majority of my interviewees came face to face with life-threatening confrontations with radical groups in Syria like ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra, or for cases involving individuals wanted by their government, the worse group to face was the army of the Assad regime as will be illustrated in several examples below.

5.1 Plight out of Syria

They (Syrians) were wanted by the regime, and if the regime found them they would kill them. And a lot of them would say that getting killed is the easiest option (rather) than getting arrested, the amount of torture and humiliation is unbearable. (1)

The sorts of warfare that civilians endured made them familiar with artillery, many militarizing themselves for protection and for a sense of “duty” (1) to oppositional groups. The traumas experienced in Syria alone are integral to understanding the attempt to transition from war at home to a civilian lifestyle in Turkey. Below is an excerpt that describes a crossfire in Deir Ezzor:

I remember some of the Free Syrian Army fighters, uhh, even when you hear, uhhhh, what do you call that, a battle or something, like, you hear the regime, you know the regime side from the bullets that they are firing. It will be like "...toot toot toot toot toot", and you know the Free Syrian Army side because they would be like "tat (silence) tat", they wouldn't-- they would only fire a bullet if they know they would hit one, they didn't even have bullets at that time. (1)

The normalization of fear and death are heavy traumas carried in the Syrian migration. As depicted below, a married couple arrive to the Turkish border and explain their experience:

By bus, open-border, we had passports so it was easy but you know the crowd was so much on the border it's just only hard. And our way to Turkey it was a lot of conflict (armed), we passed 4 or 5 conflicts by fire on the road to Turkey. I remember it was ISIS and the Free Army were fighting at some point, I don't know it was just luck when we passed. (4)

5.2 Plight into Turkey

No, I'm not planning to go there (Kilis) because it's boring and a little dangerous, it's so close to the border. There was this period of time, there were mortal shells dropped on Kilis, so we had to put our work on hold. The one's who were bombing were ISIS. Actually, I think we Syrians, handle it way better than the Turks, since we already know the situation, we already know how to handle mortal shells and what to do when something is falling from the sky. So, it didn't make much difference, we already know how to deal with it. We are kinda emotionally, I can't say dead, but numb. (2)

The Syrian I interviewed retells the dangerous situation which occurred in Kilis during a 2-week period on April 2016 when mortal shells were shot from Syria into Turkish territory by ISIS militia. Although the Turkish military interfered, protests unfolded within the same month in response to the mortar shells dropped in Kilis by ISIS. The protest also blamed Syrian refugees for rising conflict in the region, but Turkish media did not cover these accusations. A video recording was circulated and shared by the interviewee's Syrian friends as described below:

There were some protests by Turkish citizens against Syrians, since the bombs are coming from Syria, so that was also a shock. They were protesting Syrians who are living in Kilis. They're blaming the wrong people. It's not justice, but we (Syrians) forgot justice for a long time. (2)

The above excerpt highlights Syrian refugees' awareness of the injustices taking place against them by the Turkish public but they are not compelled to protest them. Such grievances are yet another important theme for Syrians living in Turkey and they resonate across other concerns as described below:

Two months ago (January), people here stand (stood) in the street, they want homes, they want food, because they want new laws in Turkey but I don't think something real happened. (4)

Across Turkey, Syrians share grievances that are congruent with juxtaposing their experiences alongside negative terms. The radicalization literature would suggest that individuals can become attracted and ultimately support radical ideologies based on shared grievances among the Syrian refugee community. It is through the use of these broad narratives depicting grievances, such as that of a lack of educational opportunities, that the Syrian refugee community in Turkey could begin to share common attitudes regarding local issues and by which radical groups like Britain's al-Muhajiroun (Wikotowicz 2011, p. 18) were able to easily recruit members. In this case, the success of recruitment was initiated through awareness programs that al-Muhajiroun used to appeal to its target community by illustrating the narrative of the "plight of Muslims rather than its particular solutions" (Wikotowicz 2011, p. 18).

With the policies of the EU and Turkey halting the flow of Syrians into the EU, the lack of opportunities in employment and education, and the lack of assimilation of Syrians in Turkey have to choose between a life of misery or death:

It's really bad because most of them you can see them riding the boats to escape from Turkey to, to any other country where they can see at least see a future, some stability for one or two years, at least. People come here if they have money and they will continue to Europe or any other country they can find, if they don't have money, they will work until they get some money, and go to, to some other country. And as, the longer it takes, the more people will lose hope and they will start going outside. So, if, you've seen the summer, the big refugee crisis, next summer will be more horrible if nothing is done. (1)

Crossing the border into Turkey as IDPs to refugees entailed its own traumas and grievances that Syrians share in Turkey. When recounting her experience crossing the border into Turkey, Fatima al-Ahmed recalls the Turkish refugee smugglers as “mean, violent, and only think(ing) about money. They push us like beasts, hitting the women who don’t walk fast enough, even when they are carrying babies. It’s terrible, it’s the law of the jungle” (Moutot 2016). Aside from the emotional distress of crossing a border, Syrians endure an economical blow during this phase, many using their last savings to pay the estimated price of \$1,000 to be smuggled into Turkey (Moutot 2016).

The incidents that have occurred in Turkey between refugees and the Turkish community both personally and collectively adds to how individuals conceptualize their experiences as a whole. Series of cases involving violent confrontations between Turks and Syrian refugees as mentioned in previous sections have developed negative sentiments. These traumatic experiences endured by Syrians continue in Turkey today, creating grievances for incidents that should not be occurring.

In Antakya, Syrian teenagers aged between 16 and 18 attempted to steal bread from a shop but were immediately apprehended by the two Turkish shopkeepers who resorted to violently attacking and removing the two individuals (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016f*). In Izmir, a Syrian refugee toddler was violently slammed to the ground by a street vendor (*Hürriyet Daily News, 2016e*). In the Turkish city of Urfa, two Syrians were beheaded by ISIS sympathizers for their support of a Raqqa-based human rights group (Dearden 2015).

In Konya, a knife fight between one Turkish man and four Syrians broke out over a confrontation on animal cruelty and escalated quickly resulting in the death of the Turkish man and one of the Syrians (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016j*). To protest the incident, family members and friends of the deceased Turkish man stationed themselves in front of the hospital to attack the other injured Syrians. As a result, police officers were called in to intervene at the scene and had to use tear gas to break down the confrontation. Despite these efforts, the relatives of the deceased Turkish man remained outside the compounds of the hospital until the following morning to continue their protest against the Syrian refugees.

The Syrians interviewed reflected on their experiences in Turkey within a shared meaning that took on their personal experiences and those shared by other refugees. Both at the individual level and from secondary sources, refugees in Turkey are sharing the perception that they are cumulatively undergoing unprecedented grievances that require reevaluation at the governmental level.

The living conditions in Turkey alone have become a sort of trauma to many Syrians especially those whom consider themselves more conservative and reflect on the cultural shocks they've experienced. An excerpt from an interview discussing these conditions is quoted below:

It's really bad for them, those people are working at really underpaid jobs, difficult situation. A family of ten people living in a single house with three of them working and the rest of them are just living on the very few money that the other three are bringing, so they're mostly living in bad situations, not really that good life. (1)

Zambrana (2016) draws attention to the issue of gender in Turkey as it has created traumatic experiences for Syrian women. She states that “gender is an important factor to consider when understanding how Syrians experience their life in Turkey. Women, in particular, are exposed to different traumas than men, mostly in the likes of harassment or discrimination in public spaces. In addition, to curtail financial burdens and to assist family, marriages between Syrian women and Turkish men have exponentially grown in Turkey”.

As an option to curtail the “temporary protection beneficiary” status and gain citizenship in Turkey, many Syrian refugee women began marrying Turkish men. In the Turkish law, Article 16 outlines “aliens who have been married to a Turkish citizen for at least three years and whose marriage still continues can apply for the acquisition of Turkish citizenship” (Çağaptay 2014). As of the start of the Syrian conflict, Syrian women’s marriages to Turkish men has exponential growth with 573 marriages in 2011, 841 marriages in 2012, and 753 marriages in 2013” (Çağaptay 2014).

Aside from the marriage issue, Syrian women are subjected to sexual harassment in a relatively less conservative country than their hometown of Syria. Their inability to communicate in the same language and lack of knowledge of cultural norms

between men and women make them vulnerable to harassment. These experiences are reiterated below:

When I was going to the hospital to check on the baby, on Haider, when I was pregnant, the nurses were really really rude. They treat us very bad. It's a hospital, I want to say hello, it's humanitarian, it's humanity, but where is it? There is a Syrian woman, I think she was having her labor, she just cannot go up, she can't stand up, they were scream at her, blaspheme her, I don't know they treat us really really bad in Urfa, when they talk to me, they talk in an aggressive way, I don't understand their language, but I know they were swearing on us. (4)

I never go from home, I'm always home, but my husband goes to his work and I just go on the internet, taking care of my baby. Just this, is the only thing I can do. Because when I go to the streets, in Urfa the men (Turkish) to us, I feel like, sometimes they were chasing us. My sister in-law and I were shopping and two Turkish men were moving, follow us, we were afraid that time, we don't know the country, we don't know how we should treat with them, and its embarrassing to talk to them in this way, we just go to home as quick as possible. They were bothering us so much. They start to want to talk to us, you know it's like, flirting, but it's too hard to know what they really want. Sometimes when I saw them talk to us, they don't speak to any Turkish women. I know it's not their regular habits and in Syria, it's not regular to talk to strangers, especially men strangers. (4)

The above excerpt belongs to a woman I interviewed as she reveals the cultural shock as a refugee. The increasing hostility between the Turkish and Syrian refugee society has led Syrian refugees to experience traumas that developed resentments and grievances against the Turkish society. Although Syrians are exposed to serious conflicts with the Turkish society, it is not enough to say that these sentiments alone can result in radicalization. Instead, there are other crucial factors playing into the case of Syrian refugees living in Turkey that reject the claims made by radicalization theories on radicalization. These will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: ASSIMILATION, INTEGRATION, AND BELONGING

4.1 The Role of the Media

The admission of refugees by host countries has always been a controversial topic discussed by the hosting public. Mostly, it is a contested subject involving heated debate between those arguing for global human responsibility and those for the protection of national values. The Syrian refugee crisis is currently at the forefront of this political debate in not only Turkey, but internationally. Drawing international attention, in November, G20 leaders from around the world met in Antalya to discuss the refugee crisis (*Al Jazeera 2015*). It also played a critical role in dividing communities between opinions and affecting voter turnouts within the United States' presidential elections as in Donald Trump's campaign (Watson 2016) and Britain's Brexit (Siegfried 2016).

4.1 (a) Domestic and International Media

At the top of the agenda in media coverage has been the heavy criticisms across the international arena on the relationship between Turkey and the European Union (EU) in relation to the Syrian refugee crisis. The role of the refugee crisis in facilitating Turkey's accession into the EU is primarily focused on curtailing the flow of refugees into Turkey and taking back undocumented Syrians who enter EU territory (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016h*). In response to the backlash from the international community, the EU stated "we must work with Turkey to ensure refugees are properly sheltered, we must do so on its own merits and not mix it with accession" (*Hürriyet Daily News*

2016h). In an interview with a Syrian refugee, the individual interprets the EU-Turkey Syrian refugee deal:

I'm tired of watching the news. I've been watching for five years and all I can see in the news is that everyone is playing a dangerous game that the only victim is the Syrian people. So it's blood-sucking. So they, the Turkish government, is pushing the EU, the EU doesn't want refugees. They (EU) fear for themselves for bombing. So they just, so the Turkish government just takes the money without wanting them, it's a win-win situation. (2)

Another major issue concerning the international media is that of refugees in relation to Islamophobia. Media framing plays a critical role in forming anti-Islamic sentiments and has led to discriminatory perceptions in the minds of targeted audiences across the globe (Sian et al 2012). As Syrians experience the effects of otherization in media, feelings of stigmatization develop, promoting resentment and the narrative of “us against them”. The extent from which perceived injustices reverberate in junction to the media’s and internet’s role at the international level is a growing theme in contemporary radicalization studies (Ranstorp 2010).

Although the non-Muslim Western host country versus the Muslim refugee Islamophobia narrative has been an all too familiar theme, how this phenomenon plays within the Muslim westernized host country versus the Muslim refugee is new to the international agenda and has not received as much attention. Among this discourse is that of Ayhan Kaya and Ayse Tecmen (2011) who argue that Islamophobia is not limited to the European context, it is also active within Turkish perceptions.

Therefore, the role of the media in forming attitudes among Syrian refugees ushers in an important perspective as it contributes to how the Turkish and the international communities view the crisis. Citing economic expenditures, communal interactions, and differences in religious conservatism, Sharma (2015) states that an 86 percent of Turks oppose the free flow of Syrian refugees into Turkey.

Violent radical behavior has seen a spike in coverage by Turkish media especially of its own citizens like the story of Süleyman Bengi’s recruitment as a foreign fighter in Syria. Tagging along his twin brothers, Bengi’s recruitment into ISIS perplexed the Turkish community as his family, educational background, and respectable economic standing did not seem to align with classical themes on

radicalization (Kizilkoyun 2015). Partly, Turkish media has blamed Islamist bookstores (Kizilkoyun 2015) as well as the flow of Syrian refugees into the region for the rise in tensions.

As a result, Turkish society is molding their perceptions of refugees through media coverage, as little dialogue is available between the Syrian refugee and Turkish communities. At the other end, the lack of integration of Syrians into the Turkish community has redirected Syrians towards establishing and maintaining social networks through online platforms. The issues that arise with the use of online resources as a tool for social interaction is the easiness by which radical attitudes can make their way into the minds of Syrian refugees.

4.1 (b) The Internet and Social Media

The individuals I interviewed pointed towards their reliance on social media as a hub for socialization with other Syrians and other individuals since interaction with the Turkish community is limited. For free time, Syrian refugees are roaming the internet to counter the absence of social interaction in Turkey, allowing them to escape the social stigma that comes with the title of “refugee”. Below is a short excerpt explaining the reliance of online social networks:

I think now, I'm just in the internet, all my life is coming to be in a virtual reality, my friends are just in the internet. (4)

As an alternative to their reality and to engage with other Syrians in Turkey that share common experiences in their host country, Syrians are connecting to other Syrians communities online. In this stage, radicalization theorists like Ranstorp (2010) would argue that social isolation and dedication to online communities “are an important gateway into extremist circles” (p. 15). Bermingham et al. (2009) also add to the theme of online radicalization, claiming that these gateways are integral for the development of radical ideologies because “internet users with no apparent prior links to jihadism may have the potential to be drawn into radical circles via their interactions on a popular

global site” (p. 232).

For radical groups seeking vulnerable members of often isolated communities, online networks become a “valuable instrument for strengthening their most important activities” (Soriano 2012, p. 274). Once individuals determine that there are other cases similar to their stories, it produces feelings of comfort and trust. Wiktorowicz argues that preceding the phase of establishing interest in radical actions, radical ideologies grow within an individual when trust is attained through credibility and thus facilitates frame alignment (Wiktorowicz 2004, p. 20).

The Turkish case of Süleyman Bengi as discussed above also places importance on the influence of online communities in the process of radical ideologies. In fact, it was through the use of social media platforms that Bengi maintained close contact with his twin brothers, Diler and Dilşat, who attended different high schools in Diyarbakır. Thus, through this medium it is “likely that Süleyman radicalized his brothers through their social media correspondence and persuaded them to go to Syria” to join ISIS (Gürcan 2015).

In another platform, the Turkish public has also taken to social media to express their feelings on the Syrian refugee crisis in their country. In the most recent case, Turks hit Twitter to fire back at President Erdoğan’s proposal to make Syrian refugees Turkish citizens (Tharoor 2016) by hashtagging #UlkemdeSuriyeliIstemiyorum which translates to “I don’t want Syrians in my country” (Girit 2016).

Although the media has commended Turkey for its role in admitting the largest number of Syrian refugees and for its collaboration with international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) in “assisting the hundreds of thousands of refugees eking out an existence in urban centers” (Kirişci and Ferris 2015), refugees do not agree with the latter. Instead, they not only are experiencing a lack of integration and assistance both by the Turkish government and INGOs in assimilating into its cities but are exposed to discrimination and social isolation by the Turkish public.

The outlet to cyberspace that Syrians are opting for to engage in social interaction as a result of the societal exclusion they’re experiencing in Turkey is a critical finding that deserves further research outside the scope of this thesis. Most importantly, despite the narrative proposed by theorists such as Ranstorp (2010), Bermingham et al. (2009), and Soriano (2012) that mark vulnerable and isolated

communities like Syrian refugees in Turkey prone to become radicalized through interaction on online networks, Syrian refugees are not indicative of radicalization. Instead, Syrian refugees contradict the notion prescribed to them by the literature as “victims to the radical message” (Sieckelinck et al 2015) because they take initiative to engage with NGO communities in Turkey that are composed of Turkish and foreign individuals.

The following section moves away from the virtual dimension of online interactions and instead focuses on the role of radicalization by the ways in which Syrian refugees perceive their assimilation, integration, and sense of belonging in Turkey.

4.2 Social Implications

The unprecedented increase of Syrian refugees entering Turkey has brought about negative sentiments in the Turkish public who express concern regarding the “high numbers in cities, the increasing length of their stay in Turkey, their perceived contribution to rising housing costs and increased unemployment, and their economic competition with Turkish citizens” (İçduygu 2015, p.1). Ahmet İçduygu (2015) claims that the Turkish government underestimated the Syrian crisis’ length and “ignored the possibility of long-term or permanent stay and instead focused on providing aid and assistance to refugees in camps” (p.7). In 2013, nearly all refugees were situated in refugee camps; however, a year later, at the end of 2014, four out of five Syrian refugees in Turkey lived outside of refugee camps (İçduygu 2015).

A Syrian refugee interviewed for this thesis, aware of the Turkish public’s and government’s change in reception with the population increase, expressed this shift by stating:

In the beginning, Turkish people were so compassionate with Syrians, they provided a lot. We were okay in the beginning, we really had really positive reception from the Turkish people but as, as numbers increased and the situation became first, crime rate increased and also the people became more desperate and they-- they uh, some Turkish people starting taking advantage of them (Syrian refugees). (1)

Below are excerpts highlighting just some of the feelings Syrians expressed within the social, employment, and linguistic context that express isolation from the Turkish public:

I don't really know much of the Turkish point of view, as I said, Syrians are mostly living in their own societies and I haven't been in contact with Turkish people. (1)

Some people have been here for months and still the same. Just as if they arrived, not having a job, not knowing anything, staying closed to themselves. (2)

I don't speak the language, I don't want to learn Turkish, my license doesn't work for being an architect. Physical hurt isn't an issue; I don't belong here (Turkey). We will never be part of the society, we are what we are, we can't change, it's not possible. This keeps popping into my head: "East, West, home is the best". Nothing replaces home. I don't think I can melt (into society) anywhere. (3)

It's like, not just sadness, it's more than sadness, I could say it's like a weakness, it's not my home, not my people, no family, no friends here. I don't know the language, they don't speak English, it's too hard. (4)

The isolation that Syrian refugees express would under contemporary radicalization theories constitute as the preliminary indicators for the formation of radicalization. As Jaffer (2013) argues, a "member of a minority who has low-self esteem and feels excluded may use terrorism to affirm his or her ethnic or religious identity." Robert E. Park and Wernest W. Burgess defined assimilation as a "process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons or groups, and by sharing their experience and history are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (Quoted in Hirsch 1943, p. 35).

In the United States, a research on refugees found that at the first stages of entering the host country, individuals begin to "exhibit symptoms of mental health

problems” as they attempt to assimilate. De Bie et al (2014) depict the frustrating circumstances that asylum seekers must undergo when adjusting to new social spaces:

“Asylum seekers share relatively small and sober living spaces with several people. Privacy in ACs (Apartment Complexes) is limited and social conflicts occur on a regular basis. Asylum seekers are supposed to organise their own leisure activities, but have difficulties integrating into society due to their lack of contacts and language skill” (p. 285)

Nevertheless, Turkey provides Syrians refugees with an environment that is not only cultural and architectural reminiscent to home, but it provides personal security. An interviewee explains his experience in Turkey as a Sunni Muslim versus that of a Sunni Muslim in Western societies:

I don't feel like a stranger here (Turkey). Most importantly, we (Syrian refugees) are not treated as terrorists here. With Charlie Hebdo, the whole continent (Europe) got scared, we didn't here. I don't have to be scared here for that. (3)

Comparatively, “refugees who are working and self-sufficient have fewer adjustment problems than those who remain at home or accept public assistance for extended periods” (Finnan1981, p. 292). Below is an excerpt of a Syrian refugee I interviewed, addressing his reflection on attaining a new job and the sorts of effects it entailed:

Since I started working, everything became easier, because I became more involved in the society. Even having more money affected that. I have a residence permit, which qualifies me to apply for a job. My organization is currently submitted my work permit papers and I'm still waiting for it. (2)

The current literature claims that a lack of personal social and economic development in a community are important triggers and serve as driving forces for the use of violent extremism. However, Syrian refugee’s responses express otherwise. In the following subsections, the role of assimilation, integration, and belonging are delineated to describe how Syrians make sense of their status in Turkey, employment opportunities, as well educational opportunities and how their experiences break the contemporary arguments for their radicalization.

4.2 (a) Status of Syrians

On July 29 2009, continued internal hostilities in Syria resulted in the first migration of Syrian refugees into Turkey (General Directorate of Migration 2015). On July 2011, Turkey roughly 15,000 Syrian refugees arrived in southeastern Turkey's Antakya (İçduygu 2015). As the first wave of refugees arriving to Turkey outside the geographical scope of Europe, Syrians were not granted legal asylum as decreed by the 1952 Refugee Convention (Çağaptay 2014). Although a refugee is defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as "people fleeing conflict or persecution" and "they are defined and protected in international law, and must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom are at risk" (UNHCR 2016), Syrians in Turkey were only admitted under a "temporary refugee status" on November 2011 (Çağaptay 2014). In 2011, with the assistance of UNHCR, Turkey granted Syrians with a "guest" status. Two years later, on April 2013, Ankara established the Turkish Law on Foreigners and International Protection to steer the growing refugee flow which was then implemented on April 2014 (Çağaptay 2014).

Within the framework of Article 91 of Law No 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, Syrian's Temporary Protection serves "foreigners who have been forced to leave their country, cannot return to the country that they have left, and have arrived at or crossed the borders of Turkey in a mass influx situation seeking immediate and temporary protection" (General Directorate of Migration 2015). The plight of Syrian refugees into Turkey is considered by the UNHCR as a *mass influx* because it constitutes as "significant numbers of arrivals over a short period of time of person from the same country or geographical region, and for whom, due to their numbers, individual refugee status determination is procedurally impractical" (UNHCR FAQ 2015).

The benefits entitled to Syrians under the Temporary Protection plan begin once registration is completed and includes identification cards which "facilitate access to medical assistance and other assistance provided through the sub-governorates" (UNHCR FAQ 2015, p. 3). The title prescribed to Syrians by the Law on Foreigners

and International Protection as “temporary protection beneficiaries in 2014,” (Ineliger 2014, p. 28) enables Syrians living outside camps to receive some government-based aid such as free medical services at health centers or hospitals (UNHCR FAQ 2015, p.3). The policy for Syrians in Turkey led by Erdoğan’s government is guaranteed through an open-door policy, non-refoulement, and a formal registration (Özden 2013, p.5).

In the excerpt below, an interviewee explains the identification that Syrians are given and the benefits it includes. Although Syrians are given these identification cards to register them and distribute benefits, the government’s lack of clarity and guidance in even translating them highlights fault lines at the beginning stages of the transition in Turkey:

They (Syrians) have this ID card, that the government gives them, the Syrians call it ‘kimlik’. I think it means ID in Turkish, but because Syrians doesn’t know what it means they call it ‘kimlik’, I think the official name is the ‘Identification Card of the Syrian Guests,’ something like that. So this card, because a lot of people don’t have ID cards, so this card lets them go to hospitals, put children in schools, discounts on medicines but that’s it. (1)

As the legal status in Turkey for Syrians remains in limbo, the asylum seekers struggle to accept the title granted by Ankara. Below are excerpts that reflect the concerns of a “temporary protection beneficiary status”:

I think there is no specific policy actually. Practically, they benefit from medicine, of course. In terms of their rights, what they can do, what they can’t, it’s constantly changing. Of course, it’s always changing for the worse. If they (Syrians) were registered as refugees, they (Turkish government) would have to give them more rights, more money. They want to control them of course; they want to keep them in check. And of course, there is the opposition in Turkey, which is trying to push back the Syrians, so they have also voice, so they can affect the decision. Of course, the Turkish government doesn’t want to lose its people. So they don’t want to give the Syrians more rights because that would upset a good percentage of the Turkish citizens. (2)

We are considered “refugees” that words mean something, we are not visitors here, we came forcefully, we are trying to adapt to the new situation. (2)

Former Foreign Minister of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu, extended his support of this open door policy to Syrians by stating those “who are not happy at home” can go to Turkey (Özden 2013, p. 1). However, the limitations that come along with the implementation of a “temporary protection regime” (Özden 2013, p. 5) for Syrians have been delineated by the current Turkish Deputy Prime Minister, Numan Kurtulmuş, as he referred to the integration processes of Syrians into the Turkish community by stating “let me say this very openly; deeming the Syrian refugees [as the] local population is out of question,” and “as for the issue of [defining refugees as] ‘local citizen,’ that is entirely speculation” (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016g*).

A common theme I observed across the Syrians I interviewed was that the individuals were up-to-speed and well-informed of the shifting political policies that Turkey applies to them. This is in part due to the constant changes of the legal benefits to Syrians and their involvement in civil activism in Syria. Below is an analysis of the open-door policy by one of the interviewees:

The government here is just, I think they are doing, what they are doing is keeping Turkey as a stopping point, they don't want Syrians to stay here, so they are welcoming Syrians, at least before, but since January 2015 they close the borders and its really becoming crazy to go in and out. So, you can, a Syrian can come to Turkey and they can stay here, but they can't do anything. They're really at a stopping point because if there are at least, if a Syrian stays here for awhile, if I want to go outside of Turkey, if I don't have a residence permit, it will be really complicated. If I don't have valid passport, its almost impossible. And who can do that if they don't have money and they are wanted by the regime? They can't have passports and they can't have residence permits. (1)

Although Western audiences and entities like the United Nations and the European Union have welcomed Turkey's refugee work permits as “seeds of success,” (Grisgraber and Hollingworth 2016) it is important to note that as Syrian refugees allocate more benefits than currently provided as “temporary protection beneficiary” status in Turkey, their courage to have a voice within the workforce also increases. It is clear that Syrians are aware of their limitations given their status; however, objections to the treatments and policies affecting their livelihood in the form of protests is rooted across European and American civilizations within the narrative of the working class struggle and does not necessarily result in radicalization.

Despite the fact that Turkey's open-door policy has been commended at the international level, loopholes have created a filtering system for Syrians entering the host country, contradicting the image of Turkish hospitality. For most of the Syrians who have gone through physically and emotionally exhausting journeys to reach the border of Turkey, the next stage they need to undergo entails satisfying a requirement that not every refugee meets: a valid passport (Özden 2013). As for the individuals who do not hold a valid passport and are seeking refuge in Turkey, entering the host country takes the form of illegal passages that are often life risking. Therefore, the temporary protection policy, which entails non-refoulement, turns a blind eye to refugees that reach the border of Turkey without a valid passport. Since November 2015, Syrian refugees and NGOs like Human Rights Watch report that the border to enter Turkey has been closed (Bora 2015) although Turkey continues to be commended for its open-border policy. A Syrian refugee I interviewed explained that although Turkey claims to have an open-door policy, the international border between Turkey and Syria, Bab al-Hawa, has remained closed for months:

There's no legal way to get into Turkey by land, uh, the door that is called Bab al-Hawa only gets, uh, the emergency cases to get through it's door. No regular Syrians can go there and get into Turkey legally. I tried. I asked. I ask every month actually, if there's any change, there's no change so far. There's also--I'm following their Facebook page for updates--I keep asking the same questions, the answer is always no. (3)

Among the individuals interviewed, a vivid illustration of the grueling experiences that contradict the image purported of an open-door policy. The excerpt involves several attempts at crossing both legally and illegally into Turkey for the purpose of attending a workshop that added value to rebuilding efforts in Syria:

We travelled illegally the first time. It was quite humiliating. The first time it took us three days from Al Qamishli, you know Al Qamishli is on the border with Turkey but it's closed because you know Turks don't like Kurds and that Al Qamishli is full of Kurds, so it's kinda closed there. So we tried Tell Abyad, it's north of Al Raqqah, we tried to go there and it was my late friend, Osama, and his pregnant wife, Marwa. It was really hard going with a pregnant woman. We went to Tell Abyad we tried there illegally, and it didn't work out. We found a smuggler and he wanted to take \$100 each to get us across, so we said what the hell, let's go for it. When we tried, the Turkish troops on the border caught us, and while we were running, she fell. So, I can't tell you how that felt seeing a pregnant woman fall, it was like 6-7 months (of pregnancy). So you know after all it worked out (they reached

the border), but they didn't let us in, so you know, we came back to Al Raqqah. Tried legally, it didn't work out. So we went illegally, I was running across the border carrying a bag this big for about 200-300 meters running across the border. At that time, we just didn't think about the workshop, being in that stressful environment, you need to loose some steam, coming here (Turkey) and seeing civilization again. So it was refreshing and worth it. We got across finally but covered in mud, we had to cross a stream which was about three meters wide and the height was I think, one meter, I think. We had to cross it with all these bags, we jumped but first we got some water, so after we crossed the border, we stayed 6 hours until we got to the hotel, and all those 6 hours we were soaked. (2)

Other cases have appeared by which “Turkey has started implementing visa restrictions for Syrians entering the country by air or by sea as part of its efforts to stem the flow of migrants into Europe” (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016a*). However, it should be noted that visa restrictions won't apply to Syrian refugees who cross the Syrian-Turkish border by land to flee the conflict in Syria. Nevertheless, this means that Syrians must go through dangerous routes by land, often dealing with radical groups like ISIS or Jabhat al-Nusra, to reach Turkey. The overall goal of the new visa restriction is to curtail “Syrians from flying into Turkey from other countries and illegally trying to reach Greece and other European nations” (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016a*).

Amnesty International is among the NGOs who have been critical of Turkey's treatment of Syrian refugees. The NGO claimed that “Turkish authorities have been rounding up ‘potentially hundreds of people’ onto buses in western Turkey and moving them to isolated detention centers in the east, where they are often subjected to abuse” and thus making it a breach on the non-refoulement policy which prohibits the force return of refugees as indicated in international law (*Hürriyet Daily News 2015b*). With international attention on human rights abuses, Turkey has become vigilant of NGOs like Human Rights Watch that are interested in conducting investigations on the Kurdish conflict in southeast Turkey but have been blocked access to the area (*Hürriyet Daily News, 2016k*).

The most unsettling feeling for Syrians residing in Turkey is the unpredictability of tomorrow, as policies towards their livelihood are constantly changing in terms of laws, international agreements, status, educational and work opportunities, and human rights. How policy makers determine to enact or reject decisions on Syrians living in

Turkey directly determines the living standards of millions of Syrian refugees who are currently at the hands of the Turkish government and EU members.

Irrespective to the fact that Erdoğan's government has admitted nearly 3 million Syrian refugees into the country in line with the 1951 Convention of the Status of Refugees, the asylum policy does not recognize Syrians as "refugees"; instead, they are referred to as "temporary protection beneficiaries" because the crisis they experienced in their home country is not within Europe's geographical framework (Özden 2013, p. 5) The role of human dignity is not integral within the Turkish domestic policy on Syrian refugees as Article 22 on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that "Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality" (Universal Declaration of Human Rights 2016). Instead, Syrians are not being integrated into Turkish society and are left with a sense of alienation from the working class in Turkey as described by one of the interviewees and will be further discussed in the following subchapter:

So, mostly, I think now, Syrian people, uh, are not being integrated into Turkish community, they are still isolated, they are living on their own groups, their own societies, inside Turkey, and the Turkish people are not really feeling good about the Syrians being here in Turkey with this large number, especially at least on the south part of Turkey. The first thing I say (to Syrians), if you can find a job, you can come, if you can't find a job, it will be really difficult for you. And if you have some money don't waste it in Turkey, ride the boat, spend what you have and then you will start looking for money to ride the boat. Because they will not achieve anything in Turkey unless someone has a scholarship to study or working with an organization and that means really qualifications, because the competition is really high because so many Syrians are here and trying to work. It's very difficult, to, to do. (1)

4.2 (b) Employment

Magnus Hornqvist and Janne Flyghed emphasize the importance of employment as a domino effect towards the positive assimilation of individuals by stating that "being

integrated is first and foremost equated with having a job” (Hornqvist and Flyghed 2012, p. 328). Nevertheless, with work competition being a major issue within the Turkish community alone, the mass influx of Syrians into the work force has added fire to the fuel on the workforce debate. As Syrians are desperate for a means of income to survive in Turkey, any work opportunity whether through illegal, underpaid, overworked, or in dangerous circumstances has become mutually beneficial to both Syrians and employers. However, considering these conditions, local Turkish workers argue that they are being pushed at the bottom of the work chain (Özden 2013).

Çağaptay (2014) explains the conflict in Turkey’s job market with the rise of Syrian refugee workers entering the illegal sector:

“The Turkish job market is strained especially by illegal Syrian immigrants who are unregistered as refugees. Such arrivals typically use their existing savings to rent small apartments, and they seek informal work opportunities in textile factories, clothing stores, restaurants, and construction and agriculture sites. If these Syrians are caught by the police, they are sent to refugee camps. As illegal workers, they earn below the minimum wage, reportedly around \$250– 300 monthly, which is just enough to cover their living expenses. Some salvage a bit extra to send back to their families in Syria.”

Only 3 percent of the total population of Syrian refugees in Turkey are qualified for employment in the labor market when considering their educational backgrounds (*Hürriyet Daily News 2016c*). In turn, this had led to the rise of underage Syrians working illegally in Turkey (Johannisson 2016) to help support their families with the economic burden of refugee life while even having to make uniforms for ISIS, al Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sham, and Free Syrian Army fighters (Hunter and Rizk 2016). On the 30th of January in 2013 a factory fire killed eight people in Gaziantep, two of which were Syrians. Although Turkish media did confirm that two of the deceased men were undocumented refugees, they did not confirm their Syrian nationality (*Hürriyet Daily News 2013*).

“I don’t want to live here (Turkey). They don’t allow us to work in the local (market)” (4)

A Syrian reflected on his recent employment as both “happy and sad” because being hired entailed a sense of guilt when he compared his luck to other refugees. The

passage below illustrates how rent prices to salary income in Gaziantep is a struggle for most Syrian refugees:

As a single man, \$1,000 is more than enough to live, as a single man of course. I can take a 1+1 with 900 TL which also makes like \$300. But as for other refugees, I am considered like the 1% which has a good life now, the other 99% so expensive for them. Seriously, the average worker is getting like 1,000 TL, 1,500 maximum, so it's (rent) quite high for them, what if he has a wife and three children? That 1+1 is not enough for them. Most of them (Syrians) work illegally, only few, let's say, I don't want to make it so low, so 5% of the Syrian people work legally. (2)

Many Syrians are not only juggling the finances of sustaining a life in Turkey, but they are also desperate to make an income to help their family in Syria as described by an interviewee: *"I also care for my family and I want to bring them here and now I can. With this income, I can" (1).*

Nevertheless, the common theme across Syrian refugees is that even those who are lucky enough to enter the workforce, will eventually do so illegally. An interviewee describes the situation that other Syrian refugees may face if they are considering to take refuge in Turkey:

People come here if they have money and they will continue to Europe or any other country they can find, if they don't have money, they will work until they get some money, and go to, to some other country. And as, the longer it takes, the more people will lose hope and they will start going outside. So, if, you've seen the summer, the big refugee crisis, next summer will be more horrible if nothing is done. And as I said, most of them are working just to get enough money for the smuggler to put them in a boat. that's I think that's more than 85% of the Syrians' ambition here. Just to get enough money to ride that boat, and either drown, or make it. if you are living in a country where you don't have money, you don't have future, you don't have anything, you have children that are starving. There isn't much you can do. (1)

Even with the new issuing of work permits for Syrians, it remains a slow and selective process from which very few have gotten access to work permits and those denied any sort of legal work, let alone in their field, are left to "begging on the streets, performing illegal, underpaid, and at times dangerous jobs" (Grisgraber and Hollingsworth 2016). Thus, refugees in Turkey are left incapable of sustaining a

standard of life that is in line with international standards. An interview with a refugee illustrated this struggle:

Staying here (Turkey) will get them nowhere. A Syrian that would stay here, if they want to stay officially, they will have to get a work permission and they will have to pay a lot of money and find their own companies. I know a lot of some people who did that, they make companies and start working in it and they have Turkish people and have Syrian people. That takes money, that takes knowledge, that takes a lot of effort. And some people are just lucky and are working with Turkish people, working in factories, they are working. Some engineers I know, I know a guy who works in accounting, he's an accountant for a very good company here in Istanbul. Some people are lucky, but the percentage is really small and it takes a lot of effort and qualifications to get somewhere. (1)

Employment and education are intrinsic to countering the development of radical ideologies in migrant populations. The meager legal opportunities in the employment sector available to Syrian refugees debilitates their opportunities for self-development in Turkey although “employment is one of the most important pillars of integration (because) in the workplace, refugees can improve their language, tap into the culture while becoming financially independent.” (Meaker, 2016)

4.2 (c) Educational Opportunities

Although Turkey’s Temporary Protection law claims that “all children in Turkey, including foreigners, have the right to receive primary and secondary school education free of charge (as insured by) the Ministry of National Education’s circular on foreigners’ access to education (No 2014/21) issued in September 2014 (and have) access to educational services delivered through schools and temporary education centres overseen by the provincial education directorate in each province” (UNHCR FAQ 2015), Syrian refugee children face a detrimental language barrier (Nielsen and Grey 2013) that prevents them from excelling amongst their peers. To alleviate the challenges of language, Syrian schools have opened across the city of Gaziantep for refugee children in primary and secondary grades (Nielsen and Grey 2013).

Nielsen and Grey (2013) indicate additional problems Syrian refugees face in Turkey, including the restriction of using a *hijab* or headscarf at school and the lack of gender-homogenous classrooms. Syrian youth may apply to attend Turkish universities, provided that they satisfy language and academic requirements. The Council of Ministers announced that tuition fees for Syrian students would be waived for the 2014/2015 academic year for State universities. However, language once again becomes a core disadvantage for young Syrian adults wishing to attend academic programs at universities, but have neither, working knowledge in Turkish nor English. In addition to the educational disadvantages that Syrians experience as refugees, the Turkish community has accused them of “stealing educational opportunities from Turkish students” at the university level (Özden 2013, p. 8).

Syrian parents expressed skepticism in the educational programs available to Syrian children in Turkey and instead are in favor of Syrian-led schools in cities like Gaziantep even if they are not in par to their standards. An interviewee expresses these concerns in the excerpt below:

I don't think that the education is high, or I don't think if my husband still in his work at that time and we could easily put our children in the school or something. Every day they make new laws for Syrians. I think a lot of people put their children here in Syrian schools, but this Syrians schools is not just like a real school, it's like a smaller school. It's like a daycare center, it learn them something, but not as a real school in Syria. There's free and there's private (schools), it's not worthy as a Syrian school. (4)

The European Commission for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection states that “more than half of the refugees in Turkey are children” and according to UNICEF “74% of refugee children without an educational system “are at risk of becoming a lost generation” (ECHO 2016). Educational leaders in Turkey like Enver Yücel emphasize the need to assimilate marginalized people like Syrian refugees into the educational system, explaining that a person’s lack of education becomes “easy recruits for extremists” (Amos 2015). Yücel is among the few entrepreneurs in Turkey to invest in long-term initiatives for Syrian refugees by targeting the educational opportunities through his proposal that would allocate \$10 million for the construction of universities for Syrians. He also claims that “Syrians are now permanent residents and have changed Turkey’s social fabric” (Amos 2015). However, Syrians interviewed for this thesis

believe otherwise, they see Turkey as “transitional” (1), a stopping point on the road from war-torn Syria towards a better life westward in Europe.

On the other hand, Turkey’s Ministry of National Education announced that at the beginning of the school year in 2016, students in elementary school will be able to choose Arabic as an elective course (Çetingüleç 2015). Although the introduction of a new language within the education sector seems as a positive move towards the integration of Syrians into the Turkish community as well as the employment of Syrian refugees as instructors, the Turkish public has reacted negatively. Çetingüleç (2015) explains that the main criticisms of Arabic as a second language derive from the Turkish public’s backlash at “AKP’s fanatic desire to indoctrinate Arabic into the Turkish system because of it’s ‘holy’ ties to Islam, the dissolution of Atatürk’s ‘alphabet revolution’ in Latin, to ‘assassinate secularism’, attaining future votes for its party from Syrians who become citizens” (Çetingüleç 2016), and the competition for teaching jobs.

4.3 Key Findings

To conclude this chapter, analyzing the assimilation of Syrian refugees into Turkey required a considerable amount of research to understand the complexity behind the formation of attitudes as a result of social treatment. Overall, the conditions that Syrian refugees are experiencing in Turkey indicate sentiments related to resentment, isolation, discrimination, exclusion, and deprivation. The traumas experienced by Syrians in their home country as a result of the revolution and in Turkey as transitional refugees reveal feelings of resentments, hopelessness, and disappointment towards a country they assumed was traditionally and culturally similar to Syria. Although Syrian respondents expected an easy transition into Turkey because of religion, customs, traditions, food, family dynamics, geographical proximity, and architecture, an easy transition has been further from feasible. These last excerpts express the feelings of disappointment:

I may say that in here we may saw mosques, we may saw Muslims, I think it's tiny (of importance), it's a different culture, a whole different culture from us. But here in Turkey, people are unfriendly, you know, I think I lived here two years, I just know my neighbor outdoor, just this (Turkish) person. And it's really miserable for Syrians and there's no law protecting Syrians or give them home for free, or something easier for live. (4)

In Urfa I found they were really rude to Syrians, they blackmail us in words, in the treatment, like in the bus sometimes they talk to us in a loud voice, this is rude for us, I mean. And I didn't really, I weren't comfortable at Urfa, at all. That Urfa, there are lots of Syrians there and Turkish people it's like half of them speak Arabic in difficulty but they speak Arabic. In my opinion, they should be more close to us, because they have some Arabic and some traditions they have, we've got. So, but I didn't know why they're treatment was this way. But a lot of Syrians, I may say, Syrians do bad things that make us all in this situation, they look at us that we are like this. (4)

It definitely looks like Syria. This part of Turkey (Gaziantep) but it's actually not. The streets, the building's. When I walk down the streets here I feel kind of nostalgic, when you wake up it's not the same. (2)

When respondents were asked if they would partake in any protesting movements in response to the treatment of Syrians in Turkey, they expressed feelings of fear. Traumas rooted in their past political activism in Syria, the intimidation to the current limitations on having a voice in Turkey, and the trepidation of possible deportation are all significant factors impeding major protests organized by Syrian refugees. Wiktorowicz highlighted that “where there are high risks and costs involved,” (Wiktorowicz 2004, p. 20), individuals are hesitant to partake in radical movements and instead will partake in “low-risk, low-cost activism” (Wiktorowicz 2004, p.21) which is taking form through social media networks.

Hornqvist and Flyghed (2012) emphasize the need to focus on “perceived injustices” regardless whether or not they are factual (p. 329). If Syrians correlate their experiences in Turkey with “social exclusion, unemployment, a lack of integration, and a breakdown of common values” (p. 327), the literature on radicalization would suggest that they are on the pathway of radicalization. However, Syrian refugees attribute the aforementioned experiences and grievances to the Turkish public; while on the other spectrum, they express gratitude and commendation to the Turkish government for hosting them. This divide in the Syrians refugee experience is particularly important

because it serves as a balancing force whereby the injustices by the Turkish public are harmonized by the role of the Turkish government.



CHAPTER 6: IDENTITY

If I wanted to define myself as a refugee, I would have gone to Germany. I don't want that. I want to be the same person, Syrian or not. I want to be a person who has rights, who can work, sleep, eat, have a social life, just like anyone else. It is quite hard being a Syrian. But if you work hard enough, I believe I can achieve it. (2)

Hornqvist and Flyghed claim that individuals who become recruited to radical organizations “are not drawn from the lower strata of society, nor are they primarily motivated by a sense of injustice, instead, it is a question of identity” (Hornqvist and Flyghed 2012, p. 325). As Wiktorowicz (2004) puts it “identity crisis is critical for recruitment”. In an excerpt of a Syrian refugee I interviewed, the individual expressed his sense of loss in identity:

A year or two ago I was quite depressed 'cause I'm a type of a man who likes to think five steps ahead, and if I can't I just get confused, so when the war started I can't even think two minutes ahead. So, it was quite depressing. (2)

Wiktorowicz explains how pivotal the process of identity construction is as “the vehicle of recruitment and joining” into radical groups with “networks of shared meaning” (Wiktorowicz 2004, p. 11). The concept of shared meanings can be quite simple, from the narratives depicting the plight of Syrian refugees or living in a country less conservative than their own. As Magnus Ranstorp suggests, the “deterritorialization of Islam and a sense of ‘global grievance’” among other narratives, serve as “‘tipping points’ into violence” (Ranstorp 2009, p. 3).

Wendy Pearlman’s research across Turkey and Lebanon identified four different fears that Syrians exhibited during their country’s revolution: silencing, surmounted, semi-normalized, and nebulous fear (Pearlman 2016) Pearlman defines silencing fear as the “submission to their (autocratic leaders’) coercive authority” (p. 24) and a “rational

strategy for survival” (p. 25) when punishment over political transgression is feasible. Therefore, I argue that Syrians in Turkey are, like in Syria, exposed to a new level of silencing fear, whereby relocation to a refugee camp, deportation, imprisonment, or even loss of employment are possible forms of punishment that hinder refugee’s likelihood to protest their current circumstances and perceived relative deprivation.

Commonalities among refugees as they come to understand their new identity and revisit the traumas and grievances associated to life in Turkey is particularly significant in understanding the initial stages of radicalization. Wiktorowicz attributes importance to the preliminary stages of interest in participating in radicalized ideologies and movements by arguing that “cognitive opening and religious seeking do not guarantee even initial participation” and instead, what is crucial at the initial level is whether the “movement message...resonates with individual perceptions and understandings of the world” (Wiktorowicz 2004, p. 18).

A common theme among radicalized individuals is the experience of a “severe identity crisis prior to their initial stages of participation” (Wiktorowicz 2004, p. 14). When we look at the case of Syrians prior to their life in Turkey, there is no doubt that the war in Syria alone has reconstructed their identity and this process has continued to as long as they remained in zones of conflict. Even with the benefits that Syrians receive as temporary protection beneficiaries in Turkey, the lack of educational and work opportunities coupled with the social stigma of being labeled as a “refugee” does not fade. The ways in which Syrians perceive their experience in Turkey and as the literature shows that feelings of ostracization and discrimination can lead to radical ideologies. In an interview conducted by Wiktorowicz with an al-Muhajiroun member, the radicalized individual asserted that “despite the fact that you have just as many qualifications as the next man and gone to the same universities, there is still a feeling that you are disadvantaged or people are still discriminating against you. And those kinds of obstacles have pushed people to reevaluate their ideology, their culture” (2004).

The individuals interviewed identified themselves as politically-driven civil activists as a result of the revolution and the tragedies of war that continued thereafter. Now a Syrian’s identity is stamped on as a refugee in Turkey, even though before this stage, they were civil activists during Syria’s revolution, and even before then

university students thinking about career paths. Among the 11 factors that Mastors and Siers identify as triggering factors for radicalization, Syrian refugees satisfy over half, including frustration, economic misery, humiliation, need for belonging, personal crisis, moral outrage, quest for personal significance, and perceived injustice (Mastors and Siers 2014, p. 378).

Having undergone at least three major identity crises, Syrian refugees would be deemed vulnerable for the recruitment into radical ideologies that can provide “logical solutions to pressing concerns” (Wiktorowicz 2004, p. 9). The concerns that Syrians experience in Turkey are related to what Wiktorowicz refers to as the “severity of the cognitive opening” or how intensely Syrian refugees are reflecting and reassessing their lives in Turkey in relation to their belief system and identity (Wiktorowicz 2004, p. 10). The instability in terms of income, employment, and education make individuals susceptible to radical ideologies within any of these pillars.

Exposed to the interpretations of life from their families and those surrounding them, the potential for recruitment in Turkey among the Syrian refugee youth is a very real risk as more than half of the refugees living in Turkey’s camps are under 18 years of age (Daily Sabah 2016b). The role of “group comparison” plays an important role on how Syrians perceive their social identity in Turkey in terms of “in-groups and out-groups” (Mastors and Siers, 2014. p. 379).

As social identity theory presents, Syrian refugees are represented as the in-group, whereas, Turkish society is the out-group; thus, the “suffering of the in-group (is) at the hands of the out-group.” The interpretation of this otherization by Syrian refugees in Turkey is vital as it serves to remove responsibility and guilt associated to believing in and performing radical acts against the culprit or the out-group who is labeled as “the enemy” and “less than human” (Mastors and Siers 2014, p. 379). With the violent incidents between Syrian refugees and Turks mentioned in the above chapters, the enemy in Syrian’s eyes is not necessarily the government of Turkey, but the community of Turkish people.

Finally, as “transformative radicalization suggests similar cognitive shifts occur in radicalizing individuals, whereby previously held conceptions, beliefs, and identities—along with their associated behaviors—are reconstructed and replaced (Wilner and Douboulouz 2011, p. 419). These cognitive shifts were exhibited by the

interviews conducted with Syrian refugees as they explored the sorts of experiences in Turkey and how their previously held belief systems is incongruent with their current ones.



CHAPTER 7: CONCLUDING ANALYSIS

With radicalization sprouting across the globe, the international community wants more answers as to how radical ideas emerge and how these ideas transform into violent radical actions. The next contemporary threat to the international community could have been the Syrian refugee crisis in Turkey as it possesses the elements that would current literature indicates for the formation of violent radical action. However, the Syrian refugee case in Turkey has not.

To recapitulate, the stories of Syrian refugees in Turkey were captured through the use of a semi-structured interview format which allowed Syrians to share their experience in an open-ended format guided by a set of questions. Throughout this research I connected Syrian's attitudes related to living in Turkey with the role of social media, Turkey's political turmoil, the Turkish government and society, legal statuses and educational and employment opportunities, among others. The overall aim of this research was to contribute innovative work to the ongoing discourse on radicalization within the international arena by analyzing the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey.

According to the findings in the interviews, Syrians' discontent with the Assad regime ultimately led to their participation in political activism during the revolution in Syria. In Turkey, they seek to continue their goal of fulfilling their "duty" in political activism in Turkey for Syria. The grievances Syrians experienced in their home country led them, by definition, to engage in radical behavior because it was a direct "threat to their (Assad regime's) continued control of state power" (Sedgwick 2010, p. 487).

Although Syrian refugees continue to exhibit feelings rooted in fear from their experiences in Syria, they are now exposed to new dimensions of fear in Turkey's shifting political landscape. Syrians, though exposed to social and economic grievances

in Turkey, are not compelled to engage in political activism, primarily because they feel their status as temporary protection beneficiaries does not guarantee them the freedom to demand more rights. Additionally, even though the Syrians I interviewed continue to lead politically active lives in Turkey, they dedicate their desire for activism to working for Syrian-based NGOs as either contractors, volunteers, or translators in peace-building initiatives for Syria. Actively interacting with Turkish and foreign individuals in the same NGOs exposes Syrian refugees to a community that shares similar interests in activism. Thus, the availability for Syrian refugees in Turkey to participate in legal activism within these NGOs perhaps plays an important role in hindering them from engaging in radical practices.

Another important finding in the interviews conducted for this thesis is that Syrian refugees expressed an important division in interpreting their experiences in Turkey. At one end, being admitted into Turkey is congruent with feelings of gratitude for admittance, while at the other end, uncertainty for their future. Özden provides this account when one of his interviewee expressed this frustration by stating, “we are in between two fires in Turkey. As displaced people we are in a vulnerable situation so we cannot voice our complaints to the Turkish authorities. Because we do not have refugee status they can decide to deport us at any time” (Özden 2013, p. 7). These claims by Syrians living inside Turkey contradict the policies inherent to Syrians admitted into the country.

Yet another notable finding was made while conducting interviews to understand how Syrian refugees distinguish and interpret their experiences in Turkey. When referring to their experiences, the responses drastically split between two significant dimensions: the government of Turkey led by Tayyip Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) and that of Turkey’s civil society. It’s crucial to distinguish specifically AKP’s role in the Syrian perception as a body of protection and admission to the refugees. The divide found during the interviewing sessions deserves more research to understand the role of AKP and Syrian refugees because if Syrian refugees attain the right to vote in Turkey they can drastically affect voter turnout. The political perceptions of the refugees swayed in support of AKP, expressing positive attitudes associated with gratitude, respect, benevolence, and praise. At the other end of the

spectrum, the refugee's feelings towards Turkey's civil society were expressed as those in relation to antagonism (3), disconnection (4), rejection (1), and resentment (2).

In conclusion, Syrian refugees in Turkey are faced with serious cases of discrimination and are experiencing severe social isolation from the Turkish society which has led to the development of resentments. The findings from the interviews I conducted for this thesis contradict the theories on radicalization because Syrian refugees would like to become a part of Turkey's society as one interviewee stated "*I think most Syrians would like to stay here because Turkey is really not that different from our culture, it's really, there are lots of connections*" (1). However, Syrian refugees do want improvements in terms of status, employment, education, and social treatment even if they do not express these sentiments openly to the Turkish government and public.

All in all, the lack of concrete transitional programs in Turkey has resulted in a maladaptation of Syrian refugees to Turkish society and led to personal traumas and conflicts associated to assimilation in Turkey. These experiences have developed sentiments that are a direct byproduct of the failure of the Turkish government and society to provide refugees with an easy transition into the host country. The lack of these formal and concrete programs do not necessarily result from a lack of attention to detail but from a rhetoric of the Turkish public and government that sees Syrians as temporary guests. Syrians interviewed for this thesis exhibited attitudes that entailed traumas, grievances, discrimination, resentment, isolation, frustration at unemployment, and lack of educational opportunities, but they are not propelled to develop radical ideologies and actions despite the current literature that would suggest so.

Therefore, I cannot claim that Syrian refugees in Turkey are radicalized based on the existing literature on radicalization because the experiences expressed to me in interviews exhibit resentments on how media portrays them, the lack of integration into Turkish society, traumas and grievances in Syria and Turkey, and identity crises but the individuals did not radicalize. Instead, the context in which Syrian refugees have found themselves socially and economically has not become a hot bed for the for radicalization in Turkey. As Veldhuis and Staun (2009) suggest, the experiences that Syrian refugees are undergoing may just lead to peaceful social movements or to no movements at all.

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APPENDICES

1.1 Interviews

- (1) Interviews with A.A, Istanbul, Turkey, 2015
- (2) Interviews with M.A., Gaziantep, Turkey, 2016
- (3) Interviews with A.I., Gaziantep, Turkey, 2016
- (4) Interviews with Z.A, Gaziantep, Turkey, 2016
- (5) Interviews with A., Istanbul, Turkey, 2016

1.2 Interview questions

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. What is your age?
3. How many children do you have?
4. How long have you been married?
5. Where did you get married?
6. What religious body do you associate yourself with?
7. How do you feel about living in Turkey?
8. Your spouse?
9. What are your hobbies/interests?
10. Is this a place you'd want your children to grow up in? why?
11. How are Syrians being treated in Turkey?
12. If Syrians continue to be treated in this way, what for you, would be just? How can Syrians receive justice?
13. What do you feel about Western involvement in the region?
14. Turkey's involvement in the region?
15. Have you changed since the war? How?
16. What needs to be done in Syria?

17. Would you engage in any political activity in the future?
18. Have your ideas on life changed during your time in Turkey?
19. How have you changed since the revolution started in Syria? Arrived in Turkey?
20. How would you describe your integration into Turkey?
21. How would you describe your life in Turkey?
22. Is there a specific moment you can think of that crystallizes your experience in Turkey thus far? How was that like?
23. What sorts of emotions do you tie to being a Syrian living in Turkey? Do you think other Syrians living in Turkey would agree with you? Disagree?
24. How did you feel when you arrived in Turkey?
25. Can you tell about an incident that occurred with a Turkish person?
26. How do you feel today living in Turkey?
27. Has anything changed?
28. How would you describe your relationship with Turkish people?
29. Do you consider yourself as assimilated or accepted in Turkey? Why?
30. How do you reflect on your life here in Turkey?
31. What do you think your children would go through if they continued living in Turkey?
32. Is this the kind of society you want to live in? Bring up your children?
33. Do you feel that you belong to this society?
34. Does Turkish society need to change for Syrian refugees?
35. If you stayed in Turkey for a long time, what would you do differently? What would you change?
36. Is there anything in Turkey that makes you feel part of the society?
37. Any individuals or groups or places that you go to find comfort in from living in Turkey?
38. What do you do on your free time?
39. How do you feel about how Turkish media is portraying Syrians?
40. International media?
41. What do you feel about the Turkish education system for Syrians?

42. What would you say is your identity now in Turkey?
43. Is there any experience that you want to talk about since we last spoke?
44. What sorts of changes have occurred since our last conversation?
45. Could you tell me a little bit more about your social life in Turkey?
46. How do you feel about your integration into Turkey?
47. What do you think about Syrians' legal status now in Turkey?
48. What do you think about how the media portrays refugees?
49. What are you doing in your free time?
50. What do you think is the biggest problem Syrians face in Turkey?
51. What do you want for your future?
52. What do you think about the situation that's going on in Syria?
53. What do you think about the EU-Turkey agreements involving Syrian refugees?
54. Are there any events or issues that you think of as important about your life that we left out?