



Figure 1: Traditional Syrian women cooking in their Arabic house yard – Painting: Nazeer Baroudi

Master Thesis

Refugees' Navigating Social and Symbolic Boundaries Through Food Practices

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ABSTRACT

Food is so strongly tied to culture and identity and undeniably establishes symbolic boundaries between groups. Syrian food is a relatively a new research topic that is attracting more attention in recent years as part of the growing interest in the refugee crisis since 2015, when refugees, especially Syrians, started to cross the Mediterranean Sea and arrived in Europe. This qualitative study is conducted to explore, how Syrian refugees draw/bridge boundaries through food practices, from an insider position who understands Syrian culture and is able to interpret refugees' responses meaningfully. This research is done based on twenty in-depth interviews with Syrian refugees from mixed socioeconomic, cultural backgrounds whose ages range between 24 and 40 years old. All respondents have been living in the Netherlands since 2015. All interviews took place between December 2019 and March 2020 in various cities in the Netherlands. This study revolves around the cultural identity of Syrian refugees by drawing a timeline from the moment they arrived in the Netherlands until the date of the interview.

In the conclusion, results show that there is an experienced difference between home and the host country that, from the very beginning, causes boundary drawing and crystallizes the lines of cultural boundaries. Maintaining boundaries with the Dutch natives and sustaining a sense of home are simultaneously established through food that enables the maintenance of an embodied sense of comfort. The construction of cultural identity through food has many dimensions that reach further than everyday activities. It has triggered interest in researching the social phenomena of food and culture. This is not only related to the food itself (taste, ingredients) but also the practices surrounding food consumption (cultural differences regarding hospitality, the eating, ritual, ethnic restaurants, religious values; moral and gender roles). Stereotypes and role expectations play a large role here as well. They clearly show that people are often simply unsure how people from another group may respond. Then, there's also the double-edged sword of food that attaches refugee migrants to their country of origin, while it establishes a platform to share identity and communicate with people. The warm ties to food and a place of belonging can also create barriers against the host country, where life is felt to be unstable and cultural differences are constantly experienced. This catches Syrian refugees between the hammer of change and the anvil of resistance/acceptance. Hence, cultural change is inevitable and identities are not only constructed, they are reconstructed and resettled based on new mechanisms of acculturation.

On the other hand, the bridging-potential food has, is relatively high, because people seem more inclined to 'taste' unfamiliar food than they want to meet or be around unfamiliar people. The practicality of communication and boundary crossing demonstrate the pleasure of breaking bread with Dutch people, which is critically seen as a positive reinforcement when food creates connection this way and helps smooth out difficulties of communication in a pleasurable way.

Keywords: Syrian refugees, integration and acculturation, food practices, cultural identity, symbolic and social boundaries

Chapter 1. Introduction

Food has gained the interest of sociologists and as a sign of culture, a signal of capital, an expression of identity and an indication of cultural change and groupness (Bourdieu, 1984; Freedman et al., 2014). Social groups establish their identity in terms of food habits and choices. It is not only the individual's taste that defines their culture, but the collective identity, that is determined by one category and one social class, defines attitudes, beliefs, identities and values. This categorization of identity asks group members to be classified as in-groups and out-groups, where practices, preferences and capital provoke attention to multiple layers of distinctions and symbolic boundaries (Bourdieu, 1984; Bail, 2008; Baumann et al., 2017). In other words, food choices bring people together as an essential part of their social interaction and collective activities. It builds bridges amongst cultures as a tool of communication and relationship fostering. For instance, *Conflict Café* in London celebrates the power of food that brings people from Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Turkey, Colombia, Nepal, Syria, Jordan, and Burma together to break bread and create lasting relationships (Bar-el, 2016).

More to the point, food brings people together and eases communication, however, it drives people apart when the shared food preferences are perceived as 'strange' or 'distasteful'. This is particularly true when social interaction is deemed as different and ill-mannered. In both cases, food choices, taste decisions, and attitudes can cause feelings of social inclusion and belonging, while simultaneously, causing exclusion from other groups, especially the dominant culture which has already established a social entity with its own standards and practices that are all tied to their socialization processes and social setting. At this point, food eases categorizing people under one homogeneous group that uses specific tools, ingredients, and names, that distinguish their dishes from other groups'. Categorization classifies people under a general identity that is pre-defined by their origin. This categorization is good for individuals when they fit in one group, but it gives an overgeneralized stigma to all refugees rather than treating them case by case and individually. Like language and dress code, Johnston et al., (2014) argue that the symbolism of food choices forms social boundaries, which objectify, embody and transform the subjective, psychological relations between people into social differences formed by unequal access of unequally distributed resources (Weber, 1978; Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont, 1992; Lamont & Molnár, 2002).

In the age of globalization, transnational migration, and internationalization, the world witnesses increasing movements of people from more varied national, ethnic, linguistic and

religious backgrounds (Vertovec, 2007). Habits and traditions cross borders with migrants who join and encounter new culture with totally different identity and food practices, which activates their knowledge on and their relationship with their food culture (Patterson, 2014). Shedding light on this relationship provides a strong basis to understand personalities, assumptions, and how cultural differences and similarities are culturally located and socially constructed (Almerico, 2014). In 'superdiverse' societies (Vertovec, 2007) and the global system, meanings attached to food culture are in conflict with individual and collective consumption patterns, since global markets allow consumers to define themselves and say who they are (Caglar, 1997), in particular when identifying oneself is shaped by historical, cultural and socioeconomic influences.

An interesting and highly relevant case to understand these influences is studying Syrian refugees, who come from one of the oldest and richest cultures in terms of food. In Syria, the earliest recipe dates to the seventeenth century BC (Freedman et al., 2014). Syrian food choices are dependent on the vegetables and grains cultivated and the meat of livestock. Wheat is a basic ingredient in Syrian food. After Islam, some types of food were prohibited, such as pork and meat from dead animals, (that had been dead for a long time before consumption, or were not slaughtered according to sharia 'halal'). Hence, symbolic boundaries were drawn based on religion.

Interestingly, there is little literature about the food choices of Syrian refugees, with Muslim majority, and it is worth studying and filling this gap in knowledge. Therefore, this paper tries to answer the following question: *How do migrants, especially Syrian refugees living in the Netherlands, draw symbolic and social boundaries through making food choices?* To answer this question, the study adopts a thematic analysis approach that fits for the traditions of qualitative research methods, after conducting twenty in-depth semi-structured interviews with Syrian refugees carrying residence permit to stay in the Netherlands.

The research has two related and complementary points of contribution. The first is socially relevant because Syrian refugees under the process of integration use different tools, including food, to bridge boundaries with the local majority represented by Dutch people and other ethnic groups. Hence, the focus is mainly on social inclusion, cultural practices, and interaction through meals and meetings. Refugees use food-as an important part of their culture to interact, socialize (Ager & Strang, 2008), while also establishing boundaries through which they are identified. Similarly, researching food choices describes how meanings are structured and interprets the meanings particular to Syrian refugees as individuals and groups (Holt, 1995),

as it pays attention to cultural differences. Concretely, this regards memories and the formation of an ethnic community. Food is not only the bridge between refugee migrants and their new homeland, it is also a powerful tool to help them hang on to their own social/cultural identity (Hall, 2014; Weller & Turkon, 2015).

This can be both positive and negative. On the positive side, sharing cultural differences and similarities, traditions and food gives refugee migrants a chance to build bridges and helps the host country to understand, even enjoy other cultures as well as benefiting from a diverse atmosphere. On the negative side, building groups within the refugee community tends to create boundaries and gives off the notion that refugee migrants don't want to intermingle with the host country (Freedman et al., 2014). This can happen implicitly and unintentionally when refugees and host communities talk about and share information about their food choices explicitly and consciously in a mixed setting. These types of interactions with food-related activities make this a valuable social phenomenon worth studying.

Second, this thesis adds key contributions to our sociological and anthropological knowledge on the social consequences of foodways and styles of cooking of refugee migrants and ethnic groups (Freedman et al., 2014). Through going beyond food and researching food habits and choices based on race-ethnicity, a better understanding of others in general, and Syrian refugees in particular, will develop. In other words, studying food from a sociological perspective enables us to make sense of the reality and the symbolic consumption of food in refugee migrants' daily lives (Almerico, 2014). Moreover, the study reminds social scientists and migration researchers that new actors have been added to the social equation of European super-diversity, whose social needs, cultural interactions, cultural capital and participation trajectories should be taken into consideration (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2007; Vertovec, 2007). It means that they are not only refugees who left their countries and came to Europe, they are also people who are able to criticize and recognize their identity and others'.

To know where theoretical concepts intersect, the next chapter provides a literature review on the sociology of food, boundaries and integration. Chapter 3 provides detailed information on the research procedures, sampling, characteristics of the interviewees and the contexts in which they live. Chapter 4 presents the findings and Chapter 5 comes up with conclusions, limitations and suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2. Theoretical background

The central object of this section is to review theories and previous research on food practices, boundary making and formation. It also provides clear definitions with examples of the main terms used in this research.

2.1 Who are Syrian refugees?

Before delving into the theoretical background, it is good to start by giving a clear definition to 'refugees' and 'refugee crisis' in its general term. On its website, the United Nations define a refugee as "someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence". Refugees left their countries of origin because they were no longer safe or they were persecuted regionally, ethnically or politically. In 2015, a huge number of refugees crossed the EU borders. In particular, Syrian refugees escaped their country because of war taking place there since 2011 which later turned into a catastrophic civil war and militant conflict among many local and regional powers (Gibbons, 2017). Since 2015, ninety thousand Syrian refugees have been registered and granted a residence permit to stay five years in this Netherlands (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

The 'refugee crisis' was a result of the huge influx of refugees who crossed the Mediterranean Sea in 2015. According to the UNHCR, the increase was about 850% in comparison to 2014. This influx created a vast deficiency in the ability to respond to this number of refugees, their needs and provide them with the necessary support they required in an efficient timely manner. For this reason, the refugee crisis has become a central topic connected with several challenges in European societies, like fragile social support, medical healthcare and well-being of refugees (Heijer et al., 2016). Concerning food in camps (AZC), refugees are served an unfamiliar, warm meal produced by an industrial catering service that normally provides ready-made food to hospitals. Refugees are not always allowed to take food or drinks to their rooms. They have to eat at the restaurant of the camp (Vandevoordt, 2017).

Additionally, reports show that the reception of refugees has not been particularly warm (Berry et al., 2016). While refugees were looking forward to establishing a sense of home and a desire for belonging to a larger group, they were not very welcome in the Netherlands and other European countries. In the Dutch context, Engbersen et al. (2015) argue that the Dutch system has failed to deal with different aspects of integration issues, like belonging, isolation and marginalization. It takes only the official term of integration which means that people 'must' learn

the Dutch language and know about Dutch culture according to (DUO, Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs) official website of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. As a first-generation group, Syrian refugees have been through a stage that demands a continuous emphasis on difficulties concerning cultural differences, diaspora, new possibilities, requirements. At the same time. Historical presumptions and stereotypical images are shared and reinforced by mass media, which judge refugees as those who came to Europe to take Europeans' jobs and money and as one ethnic group that is living at this moment outside the spatial and historical frame of culture. The absence of access to resources of health, information, and knowledge of cultural spaces excludes refugees from European spheres and establishes symbolic barriers (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2019). Similarly, the stress of acculturation and integration causes lowered self-esteem (Phillimore, 2011). For that, some refugees envision returning to their countries once the conflicts are settled. Let us see how symbolic and social boundaries are defined.

2.2 Symbolic and social boundaries

In recent years, the concept of 'boundaries' has been under the microscope of sociologists. This concept opens up the door to widely study and express the social process based on an interdisciplinary approach that invites researchers to critically focus on national, social and cultural identity, gender, class, and ethnic inequality, in addition to spatial boundaries (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). The diverse mechanisms of boundary work offer escape from rigid thinking in line of 'identity', which can only be one thing, whereas boundaries can be a promising framework for understanding how migrants perceive identities (Lamont & Molnár, 2002), and how symbolic boundaries occur when social boundaries crossed (Bail, 2008). As a refugee migration study, this focuses mainly on the dimensions of boundaries which are linked directly to cultural identity and social inequality. It also talks about the forms of power and relationships with the dominant culture through food practices, as it will be discussed soon after giving a clear definition of symbolic and social boundaries. For exploring other types of boundaries, the study adopts a previous study of Lamont (1995), distinguishing between socioeconomic, cultural and moral boundaries after comparing national identity and national boundary patterns in France and the United States. For instance, while solidarity and warmth are important to one group, hard work and money is important to another group.

To define boundaries precisely, Lamont & Molnár (2002) make a distinction between symbolic and social boundaries. They agree with Epstein (1992) and define symbolic

boundaries as a set of conceptual dissimilarities that categorizes people who share commonalities or similarities under one group, and provides them with a clear identity and consequently a group membership that differentiates them from other social groups. Symbolic boundaries, as Durkheim (1971) and Lamont (1995) suggest, construct a clear symbolic cohesion and group solidarity through a shared identity that differentiates between people inside and outside a group. For instance, some Middle Easterners eat on the floor with their fingers rather than with a spoon, knife or fork. Such a practice may lead to social exclusion and causes some groups to not engage with others and regard the practice as unacceptable. They see other groups as strangers with a limited understanding of food preferences and big differences in food judgment criteria that confirms the necessity of boundary formation and maintenance (Barth, 1998). Hence, people describe their cultural repertoires and show similarities within one group, while they distinguish themselves and stand out through their particular moral, cultural and socioeconomic principles (Lamont, 1995, p.354).

In contrast to symbolic boundaries, Charles Tilly (2004) defines social boundaries as an interruption in social interaction between two groups who live in a place that allows distinctive relations amongst members of one group. It also allows distinctive relations between two groups and boundary crossing on the individual level. These relations identify both groups on both sides of the boundary. Symbolic boundaries define the relationship between refugee migrants and the host community. How power relations are identified and how refugees perceive the 'Other' who is represented by Dutch natives. Thus far, symbolic and social boundaries clarify the nature of relationships and social networking which justify people's choices when they tend to go for special lifestyles within specific social circles that provide them with social support and limit interaction with the host community (Bottero, 2007). For example, the production of black West Indian migrants' community in the USA was a result of the cultural differences that created symbolic boundaries and activated social barriers that prevented them to acculturate into the country (Tilly, 2004).

In another work that specializes in ethnic and migration studies, Andreas Wimmer (2008) provides a clear classification of how social actors use boundary shifting and modifying strategies to change the boundaries in everyday interaction. For this study, I will take only one of these types, which is modifying boundaries, and use one subtype which is individual boundary crossing (to view the whole taxonomy of Wimmer's boundary-making strategies, see figure 1, Wimmer, 2008, p.1044). I exclusively use this strategy because it most suits individual actors who try to reclassify themselves or assimilate into a local group to escape the stigma of

minority. For instance, Indians got the 'Spaniard' status in Mexico after they rejected being treated as 'Indio's'. They also adopted some Spanish practices, such as hiring other Indians to raise pigs (Russel, 2015, p.76). Wimmer (2008) & Gordon (1964) agree that assimilation is a form of boundary crossing, like the conversion of individual Taiwanese to Christianity when arriving in America (Foner & Alba, 2008). However, scholars see that such assimilation affects the boundary itself and they are generally interested in groups that maintain a distinctive identity (Wimmer, 2008) whose meanings can be continually understood.

2.3 Food, self, cultural and ethnic identity

To understand the daily life of refugees, food choices and consumption are relevant tools because eating and drinking are crucial layers of identity and social life (Vandevoordt, 2017). Preparing or sharing food with other refugees or host nationals is an act that bears symbolic and physical significance since it is a reason for individuals to communicate with other individuals or groups, and it defines an individual being a member or not in a specific group (Wilk, 1999). One-to-one interactions determine which cultural differences are significant and which are not (Barth, 1998). This section focuses on the sociology of food to describe how food is connected to identity and socialization boundaries.

The multidimensionality of food describes its different aspects and functions. Food is not only a mix of ingredients people eat or grow. Food has an aesthetic feature that should be pleasing and attractive to the eye as well as tasty. The French sociologist Claude Fischler (1988) gives two different dimensions to define the human relationship to food. He moves from the nutritional and biological functionality to the cultural and symbolic function through which people express their desires as part of their behavior. When people are isolated or feel lonely, they are inclined to eat for meeting nutritional conditions, which lack social factors that are more fulfilling and essential. Fischler (1988, p.2) moves also from the individual to the collective and the psychological to the social. He argues that individuals are able to distinguish themselves from members of other groups, when they simultaneously create a sense of belonging to their own social group. Archer (2007) discusses that this distinction comes from the regular 'inner conversations' that position members inside or outside a group. This sense of belonging and identity is formed by migrants throughout experiencing the 'Other' and constantly defining cultural differences (Hall, 2014). Another study for Larson et al. (2009) suggests that psychological and social factors play an important role when people choose their food. For

instance, children follow the food choices of their schoolmates more than they follow the food served in their homes. Moreover, they share their preferences for certain ethnic restaurants and visit them regularly to express identity. This is how the American version of Chinese food or pizza developed through cross migration and sharing of cultures.

Food choices are connected to behaviors that reflect one's ethnicity and beliefs often identified by religion (Almerico, 2014). When people eat, they reaffirm their morals and cultural identity that are constructed when compared to the 'Other' (Wilk, 1999). For instance, Middle Easterners eat from one plate on occasions like weddings to show solidarity and support to each other. Food manners, or etiquette in how a group eats, and how they prepare their food, is often reflected in one's social group (Elias & Scotson, 1994). They also give others an opinion about their food in the past and present and judge others for their food choices. Previous research discusses how food practices, like meal size, healthy or unhealthy choices bring on judgement and produce concepts about the eaters (Baumann et al., 2019).

Looking at food practices from a sociological perspective and analyzing the actions of everyday food habits provide a lot of information about the symbolic meaning of food. The sociology of food is a term that was coined first by the sociologists Mennell et al. (1992) in their book, *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture*. This field studies the social fact of how people make meaning and produce eating behaviors, ethics and preferences (Poulain, 2017). For instance, the buyers of organically produced vegetables define themselves as a group of 'green consumers' based on shared behaviors and intentions (Sparks & Shepherd, 1992). Hence, food choices communicate many sides of a person's identity when they feel inclined to follow a specific diet and avoid another. It is the "food voice" concept that was introduced by Hauck-Lawson (2004). When human beings make, sell, buy, distribute and serve food, they establish a set of rules not only to govern how they cook and eat, but distinguish themselves from other groups (Almerico, 2014). Food connects people emotionally and provides them with a sense of belonging and identity.

In the age of globalization, food habits are changing constantly and food choices are not static due to cultural diversity, availability of products. In Northern Europe, the Döner kebab has become part of the dietary habits of the local people. In places like Berlin, it has even become a 'national' dish, while 'Kapsalon' is considered a Dutch dish. Along these lines, food is used as a medium to build relationships between people, while food and relationships are important parts of universal human culture. When people communicate with each other and feel the sensitive

side of building relationships, they navigate boundaries, recognize both cultural differences and similarities in terms of food and relationships in a new social context, and see how social structures are institutionalized and formed (Schwartz, 1992). Behaviors and attitudes are constituted towards others when people categorize themselves using 'us and them'.

Immigration also imposes its reality and highlights inevitable changes in cultural identity through food choices and social interaction with the surrounding otherness (Weller & Turkon, 2015). There are two contradictory poles, the first (neophilia) attracts them to try new foods since human beings need change and variety. Hence, boundaries are spanned and bridges are built between social groups. Meanings and interactions cannot be totally constant and stable. Instead, they are changing, subject to dispute, and fragmented, as long held identity is exposed to other cultures (Sewell, 1999). Previous research assesses this cultural change as being part of the adaptation process in the phenomenon of acculturation which takes place when two groups with structural forces come into contact with each other, which changes the cultural patterns of one or both groups, provided that forces enable/constrain human agency (Redfield et al., 1936; Peñaloza, 1994, Patterson, 2014). In this research, attitudes and behavioral patterns are linked to the acculturation process, which is defined by Mendoza & Martinez (1981) and Berry (2003) as the process of cultural adjustment which embeds adoption of a new culture as a result of a close interaction between two distinct cultures. As a good example of changing attitude, New Zealand interacts with and attracts Muslim and Jewish travelers through halal food restaurants (Wan Hassan & Awang, 2009).

The second (neophobia) pulls people back and makes them resist change due to fear of the unknown, which is built in the subconscious. The desire is to maintain one's cultural identity and practices, especially when they feel their identity is under the threat of diversity, differences, or will disrupt their uniformity (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). From a sociological perspective, change in and a minded-resistance to food preferences offer insights about the processes of acculturation, assimilation and integration (Choe et al., 1994). By focusing on the theory of social and symbolic boundaries, people are identified by a specific social group and food choice when its members behave symbolically as included or excluded implicitly or differentiate themselves from others through in-group/out-group comparison.

As refugee migrants, their ethnic identity is constructed and reconstructed according to the experienced, new social space. The 'politics of place' as Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (1996) say, requires the maintenance of cultural boundaries from the sides of both migrants and host

communities. Thus, food is a medium that allows people to cross cultural boundaries, while it complicates the relation between local and ethnic groups on both sides of boundaries. It includes a complex set of attitudes, preferences and social relations. These relations are represented by the same group members sharing one identity and there is a possibility of developing social relations (Barth, 1998). Gender plays an important role in rebuilding traditions and forming boundaries.

Symbolic boundaries such as traditions, music, and cuisine are maintained by gender roles (Yuval-Davis 2004). A good example here is the Syrian Jewish women, who left Syria at the end of the nineteenth century and made great contributions to maintain the Jewish identity in Mexico (Kershenovich, 2002). It surely offered an intergenerational bridge that allowed them to preserve their identity and reinforced a symbolic boundary. At the same time, it made women's integration more difficult and challenging as they use their tacit knowledge to maintain their identity.

When migrants re-construct their identity, they put in place a sense of connection to the past, and thus construct a new way of thinking about cultural identity, (Hall, 2014, p.236). Through food practices, refugee migrants use their sense of reality and imagination to identify themselves, because they need to establish or hang on to their identity after experiencing dramatic changes in their spatial and temporal setting. After diaspora, Syrian refugees use different media to share their food identity with others. For instance, cookbooks have been recently written by two Syrian immigrants. For instance, *Sham Al Aseel (2020)* introduces people to 170 recipes from the Damascene cuisine. *Mijn Syrische Keuken (2018)* includes recipes from the Aleppian cuisine through amazing stories which directly are connected to identity. Those stories are either personal or historical and relate emotionally and traditionally to culture. Through sharing their recipes, they feel that the spirit of their identity is called on. How food identity helps people to acculturate into culture and how integration is perceived by scholars are the points of discussion of the following sections.

2.4 Cultural participation and Integration in the age of diversity

Sociologists look at the social groups in countries that have hosted refugee migrants as established groups (Elias & Scotson, 1994; Scholten et al. 2019). These groups, which live in unstable social settings, have uselessly been trying to integrate into a larger society with

established, stable groups. Under these established groups are a lot of sub-groups that belong to diverse social backgrounds. This has created heterogeneous societies in which the process of assimilation and integration is problematized. For this reason, it has become difficult to define what an established group is and who the newcomers are (Scholten et al. 2019). Moreover, there is a rapid change in the urban scene which turns more cities into majority/minority, multicultural communities. As a consequence, the concept of superdiversity emerged amid this growing complexity of diversity (Vertovec, 2007). However, there is a kind of distinction between refugees and migrants and it can be controversial and problematic in itself, because it sorts out a new heterogeneous group – namely: refugees – which has a variety of different requirements that can be specially implemented for them (Alencar, 2018). In terms of food, the coping mechanisms of migrants are different from refugees who were forced to be in a new social space. In other words, it might be hard to say that they are integrated into the new community even if they have the same choices.

Scholars refer to 'integration' as a process in which migrants 'adapt' to the European societies (Ager & Strang, 2008; Scholten & van Nispen, 2015). However, the term itself is still under discussion and does not have a unified and solid understanding due to the different goals, nature, and meaning of integration made by refugees and host communities (Lomba, 2010). Integration can be used interchangeably with adaptation, acculturation and assimilation for many reasons. First, there is an overlap between official integration that is a compulsory trajectory and the acculturation/assimilation process. Second, the process itself depends on individuals' abilities and skills compared with the established groups. Third, there is a variety in Europeans' understanding of the concept of integration and how they deal with diversity based on race in the UK (Favell, 2016), religious tolerance in the Netherlands (Rath et al., 2001), culture in Greece (Kiprianos et al., 2003), ancestry in Germany (Kastoryano, 2002) and heritage in Sweden (Runbolm 1994);

The 'assimilation' approach means that the norms of the dominant culture are the only acceptable and applied practices. Social problems, like marginalization, take place because those who must integrate lack a set of needed qualities which are required in the host society. This approach is identified as a one-way process that divides society into insiders and outsiders. The insiders do not have to do anything because they are either natives or white migrants. Outsiders are those who came from a migration background and they have to assimilate into the host community (Schinkel, 2018). Hence, social boundaries are established because of the relationship between insiders and outsiders. How both parties behave towards each other and

how insiders conceptualize themselves and look at the 'Other' contributes greatly to reinforcing social boundaries. In the European context, social boundaries are constituted based on the concept of 'foreignness' through which Europeans consider migrants and refugees 'too foreign' to be equal to white citizens (Klarenbeek, 2019, p.5).

2.5 Cultural and social capital

To explain the eating practices and consumptive tastes of Syrian refugees and how cultural boundaries are formed, it is applicable to use Bourdieu's (1984) habitus and cultural, economic, and social forms of capital. Habitus eases coming up with classification patterns, where the socioeconomic status becomes embodied through habitus and, therefore, it offers an effective tool through which to analyze behaviors relating to food and eating (Bourdieu, 1984). This research uses 'embodied' cultural capital termed by Bourdieu (1979; 1984) referring to built-in dispositions acquired accumulatively and expressed through 'behaviors and practices'. In the consumptive tastes of food, personal and ethical preferences are described very well. Previous research showcases the importance of consumption in boundary crossing and maintenance because it frames identities under clear definitions that highlight cultural differences and classificatory concepts (Holt, 1995). Similarly, the concept of social capital is used here as it is defined by Bourdieu (1986) as interacting with other groups and building connections, while it also considers relations of individuals in the same group. Hence, food practices take place within a 'network of social relationships' (Delormier et al., 2009, p.220) and reveal many aspects of the lived social space

Cultural differences are compared to one another to shape and define the dominant culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). For instance, the diet of American people had a negative effect on Mexican migrants' body image dissatisfaction and laid more psychological and social pressure on them in terms of settlement and boundary maintenance and crossing. Their self-esteem was negatively affected and there occurred eating disorder and conflict between radical or slight changes that applied to their diet regimes, and the whole process of acculturation (Joiner & Kashubeck, 1996). For refugees, however, Ager & Strang (2008) argue that their self-esteem becomes higher when they share an important part of culture with the host community. It is noticed, here, that self-esteem differs according to the situation and social domain.

From a cultural perspective, Cutler et al. (2005) develop the term "ethnic capital" based on the study of Bourdieu & Wacquant (2007) that addresses ethnic group boundaries, social,

human, and specific capital. They define “ethnic capital” as “the set of individual attributes, cultural norms, and group-specific institutions”. This definition shows the causal relationship between the cultural capital of an ethnic group and its social and economic performance, which defines a group boundary. Similarly, Bourdieu & Wacquant (2007) highlight the importance of cultural resources used as capital and allow migrants to cross boundaries, ease economic mobility, and find alternatives to their cultural capital. A good example about ethnic capital is how female Turkish migrants in the UK used their social skills as a cultural aspect to work in organizations, do social work and cross boundaries (Erel, 2010).

2.6 Conclusion

This section has provided a brief summary of literature relating to food practices, the formation, crossing and maintenance of symbolic and social boundaries. It has defined the main concepts of research and shed light of the boundary mechanisms. It has also framed the social process of integration and how boundaries are constituted when groups interact and express their preferences and behaviors. It has shown that cultural capital is another factor that affects the relationship between refugee migrants and the host community. The literature review helps finding the common background to answer the research question. The following chapter describes the methods and procedures used in this investigation and shows how the main concepts are measured and operationalized.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This qualitative exploratory research attempts to answer the following question: *How do migrants, especially Syrian refugees living in the Netherlands, draw symbolic and social boundaries through making food choices?* To reach a better understanding and attesting to richer and more in-depth data, a qualitative study is conducted to draw a timeline that starts before the arrival of Syrian refugees to Europe and continues when refugees get into direct contact with the Dutch marketplace and people. It also explores whom participants feel they are different from or similar to. This, as Lamont (2000) argues, tracks the map of evaluation they use when they talk about their likes and dislikes.

This study investigates the food choices of Syrian refugees as a phenomenal, social activity that is connected to many dimensions. Moreover, it adopts an inductive approach which is associated with qualitative studies and where the relation between theory and research is seen through the collection of data which is a strong source to generate theories (Bryman, 2016), especially when there is little theory to test the food choices of Syrian people. This surely hampers quantitative research because it does not allow investigating the attributes of meaning which people make when they consume food. Then, the study tries to provide a better understanding of the refugees' behaviors based on an interpretive tradition and phenomenological philosophy that focuses on exploring how people make sense of the world.

Similarly, it departs from interpretive and critical traditions in qualitative sociological research. The interpretive paradigm helps in understanding the subjective, meaningful experience of Syrians when navigating, forming and crossing boundaries through their food preferences and attitudes. This complexity of boundary mechanisms and dynamics will not be understood without interpreting them from their specific perspective (Weber, 1920). Then, how Syrian refugees make sense of memories and nostalgia, how they consume food and how they socialize as a group through food are understood through investigating them accordingly.

Interestingly, the critical tradition with its critical-race theory paradigm helps me to focus on the social structure of Syrians as a group in the Netherlands and how they build relations with the Dutch natives. It also focuses on the symbolism of social interaction and food communication inside and outside the group to reflect my perspective as an insider researcher and come up with constructed knowledge (Horkheimer, 1972). For that, I address different

concepts like integration, acculturation, cultural differences, cultural identity and gender roles in establishing the cultural identity of Syrians as a group, as well as focusing on the context of the situation in all its aspects according to the literature and findings. Therefore, this section offers a panoramic view of both the research design and contextual setting that provide a foundation for the next sections. More importantly and specifically, preconceptions are avoided because they affect the questions raised and consequently influence the opinions of participants and the observation in its natural setting (Bryman, 2016).

3.2 An insider research

The role of qualitative researchers is paradoxical as it is between assessing how people make sense of their world and the researcher's biases and preconceptions that might influence their understanding of what people try to convey. These types of sociological studies that deal with vulnerable groups need some degree of closeness to the individuals researched. For this reason, I conduct this research uniquely from an insider position as I share the same cultural background of all participants. I am also involved in the same process of acculturation and understand very well the meanings expressed by participants. I am able, then, to establish a meaningful connection with the participants, with whom I speak Arabic and avoid any misunderstandings that can take place when interviewing people using a second language.

My status as an insider and a complete member researcher of the population I am studying, allows me to share the role and characteristics with participants (Adler & Adler 1987; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). However, it was important that I remain reflexive in my position and take a neutral stance that separates my experiences from participants' data analysis. This enables me to gain knowledge from participants who were the source of data and the ones who would tell me their stories.

Previous studies value the effective role of the insider researcher who shares a less threatening identity that can delve into taboos, moral and cultural issues or questions that could harm refugees as a vulnerable group who came from special experiences (De Haene, Grietens, & Verschueren, 2010). In some studies, or during their daily lives, they are asked many questions that underestimate their culture or country at the same time. My insider status gives me more acceptance compared to an outsider (Adler & Adler, 1987; Shah, 2004).

3.3 Interview guide / topic list

Because this study focuses on human experiences, I make use of phenomenological interviews which are very concerned with how people make sense of the world (Bryman, 2016). These types of interviews are very helpful when people talk about their feelings, opinions and perceptions. Then, to answer the research question, twenty semi-structured interviews are conducted with eight female and twelve male participants based on an interview guide that resonates with the process of operationalization, literature review and the research question (see appendix 2). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews gives me the opportunity to respond to the answers given by participants and elaborate on them with follow-up questions that provide clearer input and related data (Bryman, 2016). Moreover, semi-structured interviews grant my research an easy and genuine access to the natural world of participants because they facilitate the discussion and give the respondent the space to answer the questions without any ambiguities.

The interview guide consists of six parts. The first part contains socioeconomic questions to know where respondents come from and have an overview of their levels of Dutch, marital status and where they currently live. The second part deals with food consumption and food choices. This gives an indicator about cultural preferences, behavior and attitude of the participant. The third reveals the cultural differences and tracks refugee's knowledge about and perception of the Dutch food culture. The fourth covers the Syrian food culture and memory and how participants make sense of their culture as groups and individuals. The fifth part contains questions about integration and cultural participation and investigates the level of communication between Syrian refugees and the Dutch through interaction during collective and individual social activities. The last part has inspirational questions to realize the plan of the participant for the coming years.

The questions are simple, brief and about a specific topic to enable the participants to easily respond based on their own opinions and experiences (Roulston, 2010). Moreover, the questions are open-ended questions, which do not lead the interviewees in any stage of the interview. The interviews are conducted in Arabic using a digital mobile application and mobile device to record them accordingly. I am very keen on including the nine different kinds of questions and techniques mentioned by Kvale (2008). The questions are 'introducing', 'follow-up' questions posed during and after the interview, 'probing', 'specifying', 'direct', 'indirect', 'structuring' and 'interpreting', in addition to 'silence' or a pause that gives participants time to

think and answer without giving any examples or leading signals (Kvale, 2008, p.51). After obtaining their approval to conduct the interview and record it, each participant is interviewed confidentially.

3.4 Sampling and Interview procedure

According to their relevance to the context of the research question, Syrian refugees are a distinct population that live in all cities of the Netherlands. This means that there is a variety in the resulting sample, which helps me closely get to everyday activities and experiences. Therefore, I strategically use a mixture of purposive and snowball sampling to select Syrian refugees who have been living in the Netherlands with a residence permit. Interviewing asylum seekers who have no status yet is not efficient because they do not live in one place and are still confined in the frames of refugee camps.

In total, 20, 12 male and 8 female refugee migrants from Syria were interviewed as individuals and couples. There is a difference between individual and couple interviews. The couple interviews are almost affected by the husband leading in providing the answers, except when the wife had something extra to add. I also noticed how she looked at her husband before giving any answers as if she was taking the permission to speak. As it is clear, the number of female and male respondents is not equal due to networking issues, as it is not easy to reach female participants due to cultural gender beliefs. I tried to reach respondents via friends or the first recruited participants, who nominated a number of potential participants and shared their mobile phone numbers after they had asked them whether they were willing to be interviewed. Some of them apologized for not participating after I contacted them and explained my research. They were either busy or not interested in interviews. One candidate asked whether this research has any financial benefits. As there was no financial benefit, he did not participate in research. I contacted another one who did not meet the sampling conditions because he has got no residence permit yet. For that, both interviews were cancelled.

The participants in this research are selected based on three criteria. First, as Bryman (2016) suggests, I paid attention so that respondents came from different cultural backgrounds in terms of education and the Syrian city in which they were born. The participants came from: Damascus, Damascus countryside, Aleppo, Aleppo countryside, Deir Ezzor, Homs and Hama.

This gives the study a deeper insight about group differences between the various Syrian refugees. Secondly, there is a variety in the geographical location of the participants who are interviewed to see if there is a difference between living in big cities or smaller towns. For that, the respondents have been interviewed at their residence cities: Amsterdam, Den Bosch, Graave, Haarlem, Huizen, Kerkdriel, Naarden and Wijchen.

Finally, there is a variety in age. The range is between twenty-four and forty years of age who have been living in the Netherlands for one to four years. Marital status is also taken into consideration to see whether food choices change or not. Single young people, married, and a single mother are interviewed. The participants are informed in case of any risk or benefit occurrences and are given sufficient information about the research. Then, this study takes ethical and cultural issues into account strictly because of the vulnerability of the target social group and it is conducted based on the ethical guidelines of the Erasmus University using a standardized consent form (see appendix 1). From the very early stages of data collection, data and privacy issues were prior conditions. Cultural issues, like interviewing wives in the presence of their husbands, were treated very wisely.

Thus, the contrasting socioeconomic profiles help make key comparisons between patterns and allow to develop theoretical arguments (Bryman, 2016). Recruited interviewees provide a variety of opinions, emotions and behaviors that ease categorizing them into patterns due to theoretical concepts until the research reaches theoretical saturation, which is key to purposive sampling. Thereafter, the interviews are conducted until no new data emerges in the context of the research interest. Categories are well developed and their relationships are clearly validated and well associated (Bryman, 2016). This makes it easy to hypothesize the relationship between reality, meanings and different operationalized concepts. Table 1 provides an overview of the participants' gender, age and educational background. Each interview took 40 minutes on average. Some interviews took more than an hour, while other interviews took only 30 minutes according to the interviewee's information and time.

Table 1. Key demographics of refugee participants in the Netherlands

Pseudonyms	Age	City/Town	Gender	Presence of partner	Education and Job
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Anas	25	Kerkdriel	Male	No/single	Secondary school/hairdresser
Dalal	32	Graave	Female	Yes	Secondary school/volunteer
Fayez	24	Wijchen	Male	No/single	Preparatory school
Hani	34	Amsterdam	Male	Yes	Preparatory school
Helal	36	Haarlem	Male	Yes	Former Uni student/volunteer
Ibrahim	39	Naarden	Male	No/single	BA Mechanical engineering
Jamila	38	Amsterdam	Female	No/single mother	BA of economics/chef
Khaldoun	28	Den Bosch	Male	No/single	Secondary school/painter
Khaled	28	Haarlem	Male	No/single	Former Uni student/volunteer
Mahmoud	25	Den Bosch	Male	No/single	Chef Assistant
Maram	33	Amsterdam	Female	Yes	BA of economics/housewife
Nada	33	Haarlem	Female	Yes	University student

Ruba	24	Amsterdam	Female	Yes	Former Uni student
Said	25	Amsterdam	Male	Yes	University Student
Saleem	37	Huizen	Male	Yes	Technician
Sawsan	25	Amsterdam	Female	Yes	Secondary school/housewife
Siham	28	Huizen	Female	Yes	Sport coach
Sulaima	27	Amsterdam	Female	Yes	Former Uni student/ trainee
Yousef	37	Amsterdam	Male	Yes	Chef
Ziad	32	Den Bosch	Male	No	Former Uni student/ PostNL employee

From personal experiences in research, I found that the majority of Syrian refugees are not interested in research and do not easily give information about themselves due to security issues that are related to the Syrian regime. They are either reserved or do not prefer to participate in research because they are not sure that the information will only be used in academic fields. They think that their information will be shared and used for security issues. This makes finding participants from this group more difficult for an outsider. However, building trust with all participants is an essential step to establish a collaborative approach with them, which facilitates critical discussions and transfer of knowledge. For instance, I talk to them as an active member of the group who will try to deliver their message through research and will share my completed thesis with those who wish to read it.

I tried to attend a social activity in Amsterdam, where only refugee women were invited to make and introduce Syrian food. After contacting them, the women did not give me consent to attend with them because I am male and they are all women from the same country. This was one of the disadvantages of being an insider researcher and a complete member of the group which gave me a stigma (Adler & Adler, 1987).

3.5 Transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity

Validity, reliability and objectivity of quantitative research parallels with transferability, dependability and confirmability of qualitative research which intensively studies a small group or individuals sharing certain patterns (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, this study provides a thick description of details that establishes a database from which it can benefit and compare to other environments. By that, transferability is achieved in this research. Similarly, all data and records are submitted to be saved in a place that ensures that trustworthy research can be conducted and tracked on all phases of research starting from data collection and ending with writing the final results and conclusion. Then, dependability is validated by submitting a copy of interviews transcription, photographs, recordings and conversations when available, and other stages of data analysis like coding and conceptualization.

While complete objectivity is impossible in insider social research, I am very careful that my personal knowledge about this group and the theoretical knowledge do not affect my research. Thus, confirmability is, to a reasonable extent, reached in this research. However, authenticity, as was suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1986), is hard to achieve in this research because I cannot reach all Syrian refugees living in the Netherlands as they are not in one city or one place that would allow them to achieve such levels. (Bryman, 2016). However, I find myself sometimes struggling between 'loyalty tags' being part of this group, especially when they talk about their difficulties and challenges in the country and behavioral claims" with which I should comply when it comes to research rules and objectivity (Adler & Adler, 1987, p.73). This duality in role makes my research challenging, because participants assume that I understand them. However, I avoid subjectivity as I function as a researcher in both stages of data collection and data analysis.

3.6 Methods of analysis

3.6.1 Operationalization and indicators

The process of operationalization revolves around the main concepts taken into consideration in order to answer the research question. Each concept focuses on boundary crossing and maintenance through food practices and options and all concepts are interrelated since they go through food as a socialization process that highlights cultural differences and measures consumption, communication and acculturation concepts.

3.6.1.1 Food consumption and cultural identity

How and where participants select their commodities gives clear indicators about the construction of identity and shows that Syrian refugees are selecting their products with intention based on their cultural background (Rabikowska, 2010). Consumption practices are defined as “social actions in which consumers make sense of consumption objects” (Holt, 1995, p.1). Food consumption is operationalized based on *classification practices* that categorize Syrian refugees under one relevant group and reflect similar processes of socialization (Holt, 1995). Cultural identity and socioeconomic backgrounds affect food choices to a great extent. By contrast, what people remember when visiting a Syrian restaurant or consuming Syrian food is questioned in a way to know how people make meaning of their food. How permeable this is and how concrete and solid their choices are. Food consumption includes how refugees cross the boundary and maintain their identity.

3.6.1.2 Symbolic and social boundaries

The concept of boundaries generates many different related dimensions, like boundary making, boundary crossing and boundary maintenance (Lamont & Molnár, 2002. p.168). Here, the participants are asked whether they attend a cultural activity or consume a food product from the other culture. How respondents see the symbolic differences that create barriers between them and other social groups is researched. On the other hand, symbolic boundaries are established based on strategies followed by social actors as individuals and groups (Wimmer, 2008). The institutional strategy of boundary making emerges from ethnic, cultural, moral or religious boundaries, which classify the group under a certain category. The ‘agency

level' strategy gives the group a clear character and identity that allows people to go in or out the group (Lamont & Fournier, 1992; Wimmer, 2008).

3.6.1.3 Integration and cultural participation

This concept is operationalized by exploring how people are connected to the society they live in through their definition of integration and their knowledge in this study about Dutch culture. Information and social interaction are important indicators that show whether Syrian refugees classify themselves as a Syrian community or they adapt into Dutch culture. However, the categorization is not caused by lack of information and contact with the host community. Rather, it is reinforced throughout social processes that include exclusion and integration, and is maintained despite the occurring changes on social membership (Barth, 1998). In other words, social and symbolic boundaries can persist even in the presence of social interaction and ethnic contact.

Moreover, this concept is defined by the social climate and cultural atmosphere people live in. There are important factors that affect the process of integration, like inclusion, exclusion and cultural capital (Williams & Soydan, 2005; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2007 & Ager & Strang, 2010). Hence, cultural capital plays an important role in the process of integration and accepting the culture of the 'Other'. Food plays a crucial part in socialization through using Syrian food in cultural activities to build bridges and communicate with the Dutch.

3.6.2 coding and analysis strategies

After conducting the interviews, they were translated from Arabic into English and coded using a deliberate thematic analysis approach. Then, the interviews were turned into theoretical concepts and concrete terms, as it will be clarified in the following passages.

Thematic analysis provides flexibility and accessibility to data analysis as it eases the search for themes and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, it easily connects the existing knowledge with reality and facilitates theorizing in an understandable manner, as well as helping to either hypothesize or come up with some unexpected findings, especially because the study is about cultural practices. Within analytic traditions in general and grounded theory in particular, thematic coding is a very applicable tool that comes up with a rich and complex amount of data that is extracted from the data set. As clarified previously, my data set consists of twenty interviews which give the theoretical position of research. For this study, thematic

analysis is used to report food experiences, a variety of meanings and the reality of participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, it is used as a critical realist method that describes how Syrian refugees make meaning when they face new realities and new social settings.

Therefore, as Braun & Clarke (2006) suggest, thematic coding was applied in its six different stages that develop my themes in relation to the research question, the interview guide and research interest. The first stage started with familiarizing myself with data. Because I myself collected the data, there was an interactive stance to get acquainted with it through interviewing, reflecting and transcribing all interviews into a written document. I brought that data together in one file and read it before starting the coding process. Reading helped me to get initial meanings and directions to reach the basis of analysis. The second phase started with the initial coding. In this stage, it is important to code everything rather than coding strategically. Every extract is coded to check whether it can be interesting in later stages or not. A thematic map is introduced after coding extracts more than once and linking them to many potential themes. The third phase takes place after all codes are collected across the data set. In this stage, the focus of analysis is turned from codes into themes. Codes were analyzed and matched to potentially make a concrete, however, a broader theme. Codes were named and sorted to recognize their connection with themes. During this stage, codes and subcodes were created and brought together with related extracts. To review all themes and coded extracts, the fourth phase took place, which is essential to see whether the assembled extract and themes can make unified patterns. Hence, it was important to check the availability of data that enables me to talk about a certain theme sufficiently. Otherwise, the theme was abandoned or put under another theme when possible. After that, both defining what all themes were about and refining the content of themes description were done in the fifth phase. For each theme, an elaborated analysis was written to keep referring to my research question and focus my data on the research purpose. Writing my results in a convincing, valid way, which is the objective of the sixth phase. In this phase, themes were supported by examples that attract the reader and make a coherent story about the research data. There was a clear link between the research question and the theoretical background since they are the turning point of my research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). ATLAS.ti helped me organize my data set, associate the main codes to subcodes and classify the codes and create networks to link codes together and represent the data in a clear manner. Figures 2 & 3 (see also appendix 3) clarify how codes are linked together to minimize the number of codes and easily represent the data in a written form. Obtained findings and results are described extensively in the next chapter.

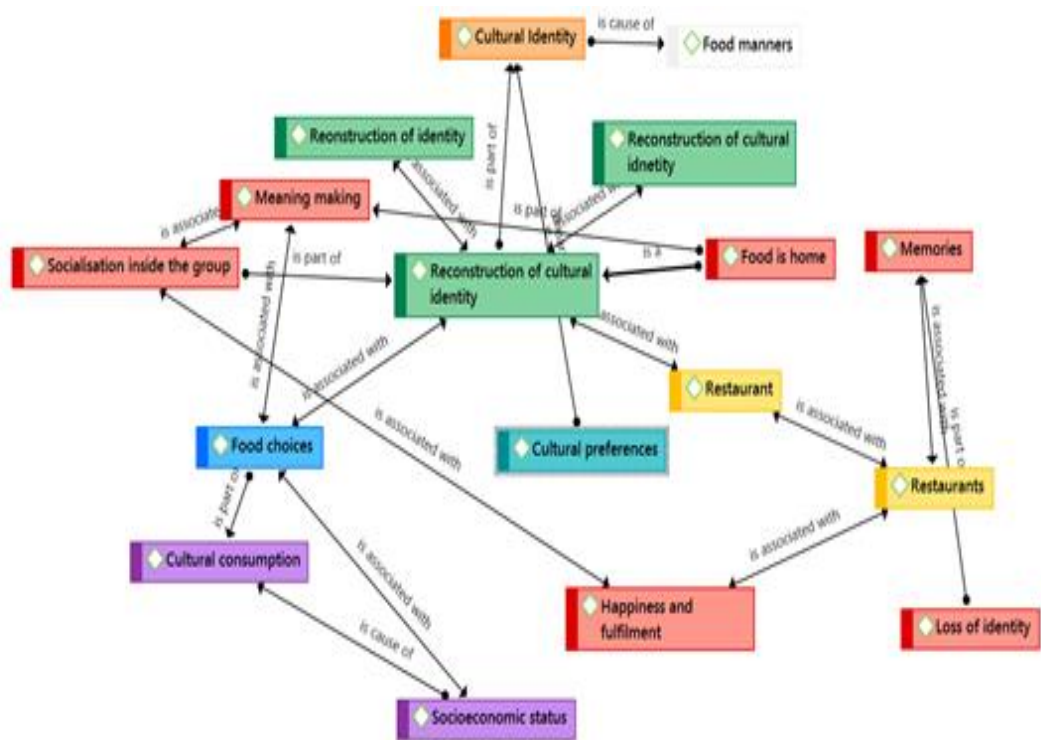


Figure 2: Coding Process (Networking) - Defining the Re-Construction of Identity

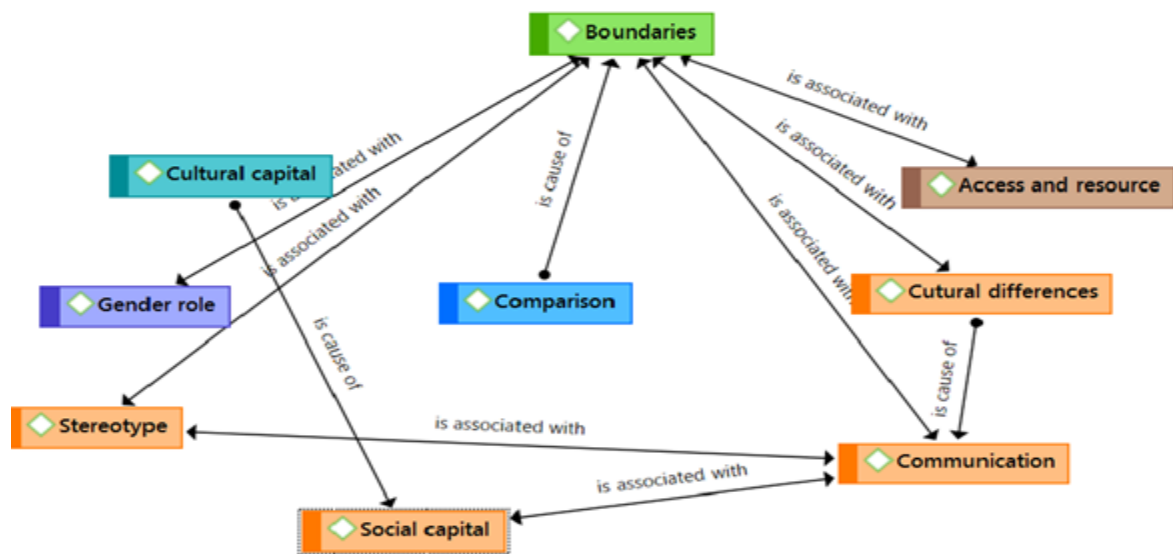


Figure 3: Coding Process (Networking) - Defining Core Symbolic and Social Boundaries

Chapter 4 Results and analysis

4.1 General results

Before starting to showcase the results, it is good to bridge the methodological part and give an overview of interviews for the purpose of providing a deep understanding.

First, all participants express how they consume mainly Syrian dishes similar to those they used to eat in Syria. Most of the recurring dishes are written down in the following sections. However, there are many differences between their food consumption in their country of origin and the Netherlands in terms of preparing food and due to socioeconomic status, inserting new dishes (neophilia) due to the exposure to new cultures and the way they produce food in terms of time and gender roles. Secondly, respondents socialize inside the group to construct their identity and as a way of boundary drawing (Bottero, 2007). Hence, the moment of the construction of identity is a moment of boundary drawing and crossing. Refugees who have family members go with family circles to interact with each other, eat, meet and feel at home. Ziad, Dalal, Maram, Saleem, Hani, Sulaima and Siham are good examples. By contrast, single refugees go with Syrian friendship circles of similar singles with the same age (24-28 years) and level of education, like Khaldoun, Fayeze, Mahmoud and Anas. This happens because culture and gender play an important role in this way of socialization. Married people are able to meet married counterparts and socialize with them, while it is not always possible for singles to meet married couples. Then, due to social upbringing and culture, male singles meet other male singles because they will make food together and socialize when cooking, unlike in Syria, women make food for the family members. An exception is Ibrahim, who is 39 years old, and lives in a very limited circle of Syrian friendships and finds it hard to communicate with married people or Syrians from different cities because of age and cultural differences within the group.

Second, there is very little, direct contact with Dutch people. Social interaction with Dutch people is exclusively and practically established with language coaches, buddies and social associations who organize intercultural events, where Dutch and refugees meet and eat around one table. This can be classified, on one hand, under functional interaction and formal communication to help refugees integrate into the Dutch culture, and proves the low status of participants' cultural capital on the other hand (Daenekindt & Roose, 2017). Moreover, these Dutch people are typically not representative of the whole Dutch society because they are either empathetic to the issue of refugees and like to help them or work at startups and organizations

with inclusive societal goals. Individual communication with Dutch people is very limited and depends on the individual's ability to accept the 'Other' and use the Dutch language to establish one-to-one contact. Families with kids in small towns are more able to establish informal communication with their Dutch neighbors because there is no cultural diversity in their surroundings that lessens their direct contact with the Dutch people and allows them to identify themselves within an ethnic group (Sibley, 1995). There is limited contact with one or two Dutch neighbors who regularly interact with them and visit each other. Dalal, Saleem and Siham are examples about this type of interaction. Those participants evaluate their communication as informal, but there are dynamic barriers present, like cultural differences, religion and language, that prevent them from feeling comfortable as they feel with their Syrian friends. Most of the respondents say that the interaction with Dutch people is hard and limited to occasional activities and cannot reach informal communication, which reflects cultural divergence between both groups. It is always in the formal frames of interaction and based on needs. They also see that it is very difficult to interact with the Dutch, in particular the youngsters who have their own life with their Dutch friends and families. Most respondents describe the Dutch as 'introvert' and alienated who do not take the initiative to interact with the 'Other'. Anas argues that there is a moral boundary due to drug use and alcohol, while Said talks about the cultural differences between Dutch and Syrian in terms of socialization. By contrast, Khaled sees that the elderly people are easier to communicate with because they feel alienated and are less busy than the youngsters, with whom the participants draw stronger boundaries based on moral dynamics.

In the big cities, where the multicultural environment dominates, Syrian refugees are less exposed to the Dutch who are the minority in some neighborhoods. Instead, they are exposed to Syrian peers or other nationalities that facilitate their job opportunities or ease their life needs through communication in Arabic and basics of Dutch. Amsterdam Nieuw-West is a perfect example for such contacts, where the majority of inhabitants are Egyptian, Moroccan or Turkish migrants. Maram, Sulaima and Hani represent this category which speaks the same language with Egyptians and Moroccans or engage with similar culture, like Turkish culture. Hence, people can place themselves in multiple groups that allow them to fit in ethnically, religiously and/or culturally (Sibley 1995). In superdiverse neighborhoods, distinctions and boundaries are established based on socioeconomic position which classifies Syrian and other similar groups under one group that has similar lifestyles and consumption patterns (Butler & Robson, 2001). On the other hand, ethnic and racial boundaries are blurred because they are governed by community rules which have central legitimacy and universality (Wimmer, 2008).

Another moment of social interaction is done through Syrian restaurants and start-ups that introduce Syrian food to Dutch people. The participants mention that there are many Syrian restaurants in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Utrecht. Dutch people visit these restaurants and, in doing so, get acquainted with the Syrian food culture. Similarly, start-ups cater Dutch social or business events with Syrian food. They also organize workshops for Dutch people to introduce them to new recipes and make these dishes by themselves.

In general, all respondents say that they have been under pressures and stress since they arrived in the Netherlands. The process of integration in its official term, learning a new language, acculturation to and living in a new society where options of work and study are limited to specific fields, all put substantial pressures and responsibilities that need to be followed up to finish their integration trajectory in time. There are other issues, as previous research reveals, like lack of information, lack of language skills and the differences in the standards and qualifications, that establish social boundaries and limit their access to resources (Wall et al., 2017; Alencar, 2018). The next sections will address the construction of Syrian identity, navigating social and symbolic boundaries and the cultural differences in terms of food options.

4.2 Participants' Preconceptions and perceptions

After exploring and navigating the boundaries, social actors react to them or enact them in a way that includes or excludes them from other groups. By analysing boundaries pragmatically, this reveals how actors perceive a boundary and relate themselves to it in one way or another in order to realize stability and accept/or reject change (Wimmer, 2008). During interview and analysis phases, a timeline is drawn to see how they perceive the Dutch culture and whether they had any presumptions or preconceptions. The timeline starts before the arrival of Syrian refugees to Europe and continues when refugees get into direct contact with the Dutch marketplace and people. Before they arrived in the Netherlands, most of the participants did know very little about the Dutch food culture and many of them did not plan to come to Europe. Nada says she expected to change her food habits totally because "Europe is Europe". Mahmoud says that safety and stability were more important than any other things in life:

"Before I came here, I did not think about any choices because there were more important things than food"

All they knew is that the Netherlands is part of Europe which is presumably different from their country. However, they did not expect to find their food choices in the Dutch market. Yousef says that “we did not know when we arrived that there is Syrian bread”. The moment they arrived; refugees worked on two lanes, the first one was looking for their identity, when they wanted to find their food or make something similar to their food. They know that they need extensive efforts to secure the food options that anchor their identity to their homeland. The second one was to explore the Dutch food culture when they were in the refugee camps. Food allowed them to explore the Dutch culture, perceive the cultural space which has many barriers to cross.

4.3 The construction of identity in the Dutch context

This section serves to outline how Syrian refugees reconstruct their identity and make different meanings throughout food. It also provides a panoramic view on Syrian food choices and revolves around individual relations inside the Syrian group, ethnic restaurants and the main food dishes and ingredients they mentioned in the interviews. The findings discussed here are directly attached to food and cultural identity, including socialization, family ties and social structure.

Previous studies have suggested a strong relationship between food and identity. Food is not only a biological process we need, there are equally important meanings behind food that establish people's individual and collective identity (Rozin, 1999; Watson & Caldwell 2005). Syrian refugees share their food as part of their socioeconomic status and cultural capital and present it to show how they socialize and meet together to eat at the same time. In a clear family setting for example, this shared custom enables them to wait for each other and not eat until both parents are around the table. This reflects their social structure and how important parents are for enhancing family ties and preserving their cultural traditions on a daily basis. However, those who live alone and far from their families miss this very much because they often cook and eat alone. They remember their families in Syria and their memories tend to be awakened when they smell and taste Syrian dishes in the Netherlands and get together to eat and socialize. Their formative period in their country of origin and the horror of events they experienced there, are paradoxically part of both their traumatic and their nice memories.

Food choices of the respondents contribute hugely to the construction of their cultural identity in the new place because these choices give them a sense of comfort and familiarity

with the place. They partially feel that they are at home or at least create a moment of pleasure, remembering and recreating a similar atmosphere to what they experienced in Syria. The availability of Syrian food raw materials, thanks to globalization, has enabled Syrians to reconstruct their identity, create a socio-cultural environment and reproduce traditional foods they used to make in Syria (Bardhi et al., 2010). As Maram, who lives in Amsterdam, says:

“Concerning food choices, I live in a place where I can find everything. It is a diverse place and there are many Dutch and international supermarkets, like Turkish and Moroccan supermarkets. We can buy halal food and all the needed products to make our food.”

Like other choices, food choices have become more diverse over the last years. These choices pertain to different mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion because it defines people's identity and gives refugees the space to express their preferences and adopt their habitual aspect of their self-identity and familiar ethnic food (Bourdieu, 1979; Caglar, 1979). Yousef explains this when he says:

“In Amsterdam, you can get what you need, even the Dutch supermarkets start to bring Syrian or international goods which the Dutch do not eat. Bulgur, for example, lentils and many products. This is business related. They bring the products that are needed for this place. Amsterdam has a great diversity of people and supermarkets bring them what they consume.”

As the aforementioned quotes show, refugees who live in big cities are able to get what they need easily and without going to another place. By contrast, refugees who live in smaller towns bring what they need, although they have limited choices or depend on vendors who bring what they consume into their homes. In Den Bosch, for example, there are few Turkish supermarkets which help participants reproduce a similar mood of consumption. This lays more pressures on Syrians to get their food choices and adapt into the place.

Unlike people with a relatively high socioeconomic status, whose food tastes become lifestyle, the parameters of food consumption are different because they have a set of three tastes: taste of familiar ethnic food as it is clear in the last passage, taste of abundance, which resonates to a big extent with Bourdieu's taste of necessity, and taste of healthy food which depends on individual lifestyles and boundary navigating (Baumann et al., 2019). Out of familiarity and necessity, Syrian refugees need to find their food or cook similar dishes they used to eat in Syria. This requires extensive efforts to secure food options that anchor their identity to their homeland and use the same ingredients known in the participants' traditions.

They look first for materials that enable them to make a home of food (Parasecoli, 2014). Home making was done either by going to the markets or asking their Syrian peers about food products. Participants report that ethnic supermarkets, like Turkish and Moroccan were the first shops to find the needed food products. Similarly, the most common cuisine mentioned by participants was the Turkish because it came from the same region of the Middle East and has many similarities with the Syrian cuisine. They also start to cook the dishes they used to buy in their country of origin because it is much cheaper to make at the new home in the Netherlands. Dalal gives an example of making sweets at home:

“Yes, the sweets for example. In Syria, we used to order these dishes from the dessert’s shops, confectionaries or patisseries. Everything was reachable and delicious. We could bring these dishes from these shops. Here, there are little dessert shops and they are very expensive. In the Netherlands, we cannot afford the prices to bring ready-made dishes. It is much cheaper to make them at home. In Syria, I never made them”.

They either share food recipes with each other and their family members in Syria and other countries via smartphones and digital technologies, or they look them up on the internet. There is a proliferation of Syrian vloggers who share thousands of traditional food recipes via YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. This gives a poignant example of the emotional power of food which makes Syrians collect their recipes from a diasporic world and share it everywhere (Freedman et al., 2014). As Alencar (2018) argues, digital platforms are used by refugees to give them emotional support and help them cope with adaptation challenges. Nada’s mother shares with her some Kurdish dishes she has never made in Syria, but she likes to make here, as she says:

“I have made some dishes that are related to my cultural identity and I have never made when I was in Syria, like some Kurdish dishes which my husband did not know before. He was surprised by these dishes because they are typical Kurdish.”

The socioeconomic status of Syrian refugees did not deprive them of producing their own food rather than buying it from shops. The pleasure of making food lies in the happiness of making food at home and offering low-cost meals. This reflects the complexity of identity and how refugee migrants reconstruct it in a powerful manner. This resonates with what Barth (1998) discusses about identity and boundary maintenance. Many Syrian refugees want to

maintain a connection to the home they lost and left behind. Memories and continuous communication with their families in Syria make them behave conservatively, resist the change, form symbolic boundaries and find their identity in their daily practices, especially food culture which is, like music, considered the most important element of identity. So, indeed as Fischler (1988) argues, food is not only a nurturing functionality; it is socially and psychologically significant.

“Without pomegranate, we cannot go in our kitchen.” Jamila says. Like other participants, Jamila tells in her interview how Syrian food is connected strongly to Syrian culture. Through food choices, different meanings of Syrian culture were explored. All participants explain that most of what they consume is Syrian food that comes from their culture. Their food consumption was influenced by the geographical location from where they came. Syria is described in their conversations, in their food making, consumption and the raw materials that enter food production. The geography and four seasons have a remarkable effect on their food choices. As Said says:

“Our Syrian food depends on what our land produces. Eggplant, zucchini, cucumber, tomatoes, potato, beans in all its kinds, lentils, chickpeas and wheat to make the best bread in the world.”

Their attachment to their socioeconomic status and Syrian nature is very clear in the colors and seasonal choices of their dishes. They serve all their dishes together on the table, Dalal, Maram and Jamila say, as they have a special way of presenting them that highlights the aesthetic – over – functionality form of their food culture and the taste of abundance (see figure 4).



Figure 4: Food meal clarifies the aesthetic features of food served on the ground. Shared by one of the participants

In Syria, they used to store big quantities of food because they depended on their lands that produce vegetables per season. They dried some crops and vegetables or squeezed others in summer and cooked them in winter, while they fermented and pickled other products to consume them along the year. As Saleem describes in the following quote, the participants express their food preferences, what they like to consume and how they get the products they need to make their food.

“Even the way we buy our food products is different. We go to the market to buy big quantities of food, chicken, potato and rice. I think this is because of war and the lack of food resources during the war and even before. We do not have fruits and vegetables the whole year. Here, it is different because we have everything in the market and in every season.”

The participants name their regular dishes they do on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Most of them repeat the same names of dishes with slight differences due to the region they came from in Syria. There was heavy emphasis on typically lamb, rough and fine bulgur, chicken and rice dishes (makloubah and mansaf); shourba (soup made from lentils), beans and tomato sauce, okra and tomato sauce with lamb; salads which contain familiar vegetables (tomatoes, cucumber and lettuce); yogurt (shakrya, fattah and fattet makdous); and desserts

made from and decorated with pistachio nuts (see figure 5), walnuts, knafeh, cheese, milk whipped cream and honey. They also mention their vegan choices like (moussaka, mujaddara, baba ghanoush, mutabbal and hummus). Sawsan talks about the tea herbs, such as mint, chamomile, anise, lime and melissa officinalis, that are either not available or their names are different. Those herbs are a dried tea used for medication as a cure for cold, flu, stomach cramping or they have calming effects on people's nerves. All these choices reflect their historical identity and lifestyle.



Figure 5: homemade Warbat with milk whipped cream. Photograph: one of the participants

Furthermore, the interviews clarify how different they are although they came from the same place. Syria is a place where people are culturally different based on their region. However, their food describes them as Syrians since they introduce it as Syrian food. In the eye of the beholder, food gives Syrian refugees a collective identity that blurs all differences within the group. Most of the participants talk about the identity of food of their cities they came from. They tell how diverse their society is in terms of food. From east to west and from north to south, there is a social competition based on regions, cities, races and religion. They talk about the difference in names of the same dish, which signifies their diverse culture and refers to the different meanings they make of food. For example, Sawasn explains:

“Shakrya for example has another name in Aleppo. If you say shakrya, people will not recognize it. We call this dish “Arman blaban”. The same dish with a different name. In Lebanon, it is called “Laban bi’ommouh”. From here, you can know that it is a matter of identity and culture because every dish has a story that connects it to the place”.

Moreover, when a group in a region adds a specific ingredient to a dish, it will be identified by that group as part of their identity and their traditions. Khaldoun talks about Homs kibbeh and Homs Mahashi (the name came after the city of Homs). He says it is Homs because people there add special species to it which makes its taste different. Nada and Yousef talk about different names for the same dish with the same ingredients. Hummus and Msabbaha have the same ingredients, while its name in Damascus is Msabbaha and Hummus in Aleppo and other Syrian cities. There is a conflict of identities when it comes to food choices because food names are part of the history and culture of people (Freedman et al., 2014). As Helal explains:

“The Aleppian nut (fustok Aleppian, pistachios) is called in Turkey Aintabi fustok, while it is originally planted in Syria. There is a dispute over the identity of food.”

This social competition offers a clear explanation of Syrians’ consumption patterns and tastes because they distinguish themselves from their equals or other social groups. Moreover, it identifies their cultural, collective identity and clearly draws bonds between Syrian refugees and their collectivist communities (Hofstede, 1984). Their food defines their social relationships, family roles and traditions and represents their attitudes toward social life and communication. Syrian parents are the head of Syrian families, they strengthen and inspire the relationship amongst family members and this is something most of them miss. Married refugees who have family members construct their family traditions in the Netherlands, even if they do not meet

every day like in Syria. By contrast, single, young refugees create a circle of Syrian friends through which they can share their food and construct a Syrian atmosphere. Said says that their family meetings are “sacred” as he says:

“We create an atmosphere as if we were in Syria. We go to my parents’ place. My brothers and I sit with our father and the women prepare the table and they serve the food on table. We have to be all around the table, the little kids are playing around us. My father and mother are on the head of the table, while we sit around them.”

Syrian hospitality is embodied in the quantity of food they present to their guests. Nada says that “you should eat as much as you love someone”. An abundant table should be ready all the time. In particular on occasions like Eid Al Fitr, Eid Al Adha, doors are open for everyone. Unlike the Dutch, Syrians do not have certain, set times to eat, especially if they have a guest. The moment guests arrive in their place, a table should be prepared with drinks which are almost accompanied by nuts, cookies, dates, toasted seeds, pistachio and raisins. They enjoy both eating and talking and the amount of food the guest eats signifies how much he loves his hosts. Jamila gives an example about that:

“If we have a guest, who visits us suddenly and without any appointment, he should stay to have all the meals with us and reside 3 days sometimes. In Aleppo, the hospitality is amazing. If we have 10 visitors, we make food for 50 people because the quantity is not important. If we have a guest, we have to give him all we have and serve him to feel comfortable. We also have another habit in Syria. The host cannot leave the table as long as the guest is eating. He should stay with the guest and eat with him until the guest is full.”

After the meal (see figure 6), Syrians provide fruits, tea or coffee and desserts. Every detail of hosting someone is important for both the host and guest. Through food, they express their happiness and joy to visit and meet each other. However, the taste of abundance may be perceived as being of low socioeconomic status according to European criteria. Following Baumann et al. (2019), it seems to juxtapose the high-SES preference for smaller portions of high quality. In this case, the fact that Dutch people may find these foods ‘exotic’, the problem of abundance seems to get lifted from the equation. So, it is always abundance in relation to quality: a lot of hamburgers and fries as opposed to a lot of Syrian coffee and sweets, for example.



Figure 6: Table with sweets, cookies and fruits. Photograph

Taste of ethnic food is also represented by visiting a Syrian restaurant, which is crucial to construct the identity of refugees. Most of the participants describe their visits to those restaurants. They visit those places to bring back their memories with friends and families in Syria. The names of restaurants in the Netherlands are *Sham* (Damascus), *Bread and Salt*, *Damas* (Damascus). All these names come from Syrian culture and have a great significance in the minds and memories of Syrians. They use these names to give their visitors a sense of identity and belonging. Most of the participants mention the Syrian shoarma, which has a special taste for its garlic recipe (mayonnaise). It is important to present dishes and provide food services in a way that is culturally acceptable and that their minds are able to analyze and deconstruct into its core meaning; identity, nostalgia and memories (Ha & Jang, 2010). Fayez expresses why he goes to a Syrian restaurant:

“Yes, I went to many restaurants. It is nice to visit a Syrian restaurant because you can feel at home, the way they serve food, appetizers, and the quantity of food is just like any restaurant in Syria. It is better than the Dutch restaurant and the service is better. At the Dutch restaurant, you will get exactly as you order no more no less. In the Syrian restaurant, you will get more services and food choices.”

However, the participants say that there is a big difference between restaurants here and those in Syria. Participants Ibrahim, Said and Ruba talk about these differences in service

and the place. In Syria, the restaurant area was much bigger than restaurants in the Netherlands and the social atmosphere is totally different. There is a nostalgic moment for the smell of grilled meat, music, families, amusement parks and fountains at restaurants. This difference gives refugees a feeling of disappointment because it reminds them of their bigger losses after leaving their homeland:

“When we went to the restaurants in the old city of Damascus, Rabweh, Ain Figeih or Saidnaya, we could enjoy the fountains, the smell of grilled meat and the social atmosphere they created. It was amazing to go there and enjoy the amusement park.” (Said)

“When we used to go to the big restaurants in the vicinity of Damascus airport, we visited big resorts not only an ordinary restaurant.” (Ruba)

In the new cultural context, restaurants are reinvented and reconfigured to suit for the place and be a destination of both Syrian and other nationalities. It is a platform to introduce Syrian culture through food in the Dutch cultural space. The cultural landscape of Syrian refugees has been dramatically changed because of the loss of their place. Through food choices, they remove the Syrian cultural landscape to the new place and find a relatively ‘home’. This section is all about the construction of identity and how participants use food as a coping mechanism to resist the change and bring back their traditions, food practices and memories, which partially give them a sense of security and happiness. The next section will show the details of food consumption.

4.4 Boundary navigation and formation

This section delves into food consumption that involves processes of boundary crossing and boundary maintenance. Food relations inside and outside the group contribute to the formation of boundaries. Foodways clarify how practices are consciously made to accentuate cultural differences. “If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion.” (Barth, 1998, p.15). As Barth says, the tug of war between refugee migrants and host communities to build social bonds results in the production of ethnic and local food in the frames of symbolic boundaries (Freedman et al., 2014). Navigating boundaries starts when respondents explore the Dutch food culture during their first contact with the Dutch in refugee camps. Then, the COA organization, which is responsible for arriving refugees, provides them with meals that refugees negatively describe as the ‘black box’ because food was felt to be

disgusting and depressing (see figures 7 & 8). Many refugees feel anxious and alienated expressing their frustration about the exotic taste of food and the way refugees receive food. Nada and Jamila express their feelings clearly in the following:

“When we were waiting for the procedures and lived in the refugee camp (AZC), they provided us with small black boxes that contained sickly meals. I suffered a lot from those disgusting meals and I was really depressed because of that food. We learned later that these boxes have expired and some organizations donate them to refugees.” (Nada)



Figure 7: Refugees served food meals at a Dutch camp restaurant. Photograph: Yoram van de Velde/De President



Figure 8: Sample of the meals (black box) provided by the COA organization – Retrieved from Google

“Our culture is different from the Dutch culture. If someone does not have a food card at the camp, he will not be able to get food from COA until he gets a new card. It was very dehumanizing and humiliating to wait for food aids. When I asked to bring my kids from another place to see them at that camp, the COA organization rejected that because they do not have enough food for them. That was subjugating and disappointing. It is too systematic and bureaucratic.” (Jamila)

As the last quote shows, Syrian refugees could not get food without extracting a green card that tracks the process of food distribution. This was very shocking to people who came from a culture where food is abundantly available. The systematicity of food distribution and the different dynamics of hospitality were the first step toward boundary formation. Moreover, the participants perceive the Dutch food as monotonous, unvaried and tasteless because of the repeated meals every single week along their residence in camps. Thus, the first contact with Dutch food is negatively sensed because of this ‘black box’ and the way food is offered. This causes people to be reluctant in trying Dutch food again and hamper boundary crossing.

“I thought that this food is allocated specially for the refugees in camps. After that, I discovered that this food is available in supermarkets, in addition to some fast-food meals, like salad, boiled eggs, pasta and potato. It is the same food that we used to eat in the camps but with more options. In the camp, we had to eat a limited number of meals that are repeated every week. We asked them to change this food for us so that they provided some fish meals.”

Another important point is how Syrian refugees understand the diet regime of Dutch people and the systematicity of food habits and choices. They start to recognize the cultural differences and social conventions that define their identity as a group compared to other groups. They shape their self-conception as the ‘Other’ and start to compare their practices with the Dutch. On the other hand, they expose the cultural differences between the Dutch and Syrian people. All participants agree on the point that the Dutch have their own lifestyle, they do not wait until everybody comes around the table, rather, they eat at certain times: 8:00, 12:00 and 18:00 o’clock. There is a shared behavior of a whole system that technically institutionalized the Dutch meal timing, which shows the collective intention of the Dutch as a group (Ostrom, 2009). During the interviews, the respondents describe themselves as “we, our or us”, while they describe the Dutch as “they, their or them”. Different lifestyles were explored during boundary navigation.

To cross cultural boundaries, some of them try Dutch food as a new dish for pleasure or because they want to look for more differences. Hence, Dutch people share their recipes with Syrian refugees, who start to try new dishes, see habits and practices that allow them to cross cultural boundaries and explore the “Other”. This symbolic process of socialization cannot be generalized to all respondents. In reality, it depends on the goals of every individual and defines the inclination and role of self-identity (Fischler, 1988). In other words, when refugees feel unsettled, alienated, experience big losses or their goal is to come back to their country of origin, they position themselves in unnoticeable space between the host country and home and, subsequently, will never feel at home. Unstable life makes stable boundaries and builds high walls of exclusion. Boundary formation can be generalized on all participants because the availability of Syrian food enables Syrians to keep distant from Dutch food choices and maintain cultural boundaries through recreating an experience of ‘home’ in the host society (Bourdieu, 1977). It is their comfort zone that is produced psychologically by the symbolic meaning of their food. It also hinders the reachability to Dutch people and Dutch food. On the level of individuals, it depends on refugees’ ability to either isolate themselves due to psychological barriers or settle, which needs special traits, well-developed competencies and a certain level of adaptability.

4.4.1 Boundary crossing

Access to other cultures’ food contributes to the reproduction of culture formation of identity rather than maintaining it. Thus, access to other cultural activities makes both cultural and symbolic boundaries permeable (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). There is a fine line between boundary formation and boundary crossing because exploring the ‘Other’ of both sides is a moment of boundary making, maintenance and crossing at the same time. When refugees share their recipes with their Dutch peers through social activities or individual meetings, they describe that their ‘food ingredients’ give a cultural meaning that is directly related to identity. Syrian refugees have shared values and behaviors in terms of food manners, hospitality, the making of food, the production of food and the social significance of food culture. Like other cultural activities, eating with a group of people can be an act of nostalgia. Khaldoun invites the Dutch to try Syrian food and look closely at Syrian culture:

“I will not tell him or her about our food, I will invite them to eat at my home. I invited my language coach to eat at my place. I offered her a dish of Homsî kibbeh. It was very delicious and she

asked me to give her the recipe to try to make it at her home. I think that she tried it, but it will not be as delicious as we make it because we know the secret of taste and it is difficult.”

Properly speaking, there is a big difference between explicit and implicit identification. While Syrian refugees identify themselves as one group that has similar preferences, they talk about it very consciously when they meet a new, different culture. However, it is unconsciously acquired by socialization and food choices, which are consumed spontaneously and naturally. Syrian refugees identify themselves with certain food choices, like halal food and specific products they consume regularly. They go shopping to select suitable zucchini for mahashi, eggplant for mutabbal, the spices they need to eat. They also bring the extra ingredients they add to their dishes to distinguish them from other groups and unify them as one group.

Another way of boundary crossing is exploring food traditions/choices of other cultures. Boundary crossing is attracted by discovering the ‘Other’ and consuming exotic foods. It also signifies how people are contradicted by building new memories and applying cultural change because they experience a new culture. Syrian refugees’ food habits start to change in many aspects even if this change is not clear yet or fragile. Many participants report no longer consuming sugar, eating more vegetables and reducing fat quantities. Siham and Sulaima say:

“When we saw how the Dutch people have healthy food, we started to rethink our choices. Like reducing the quantity of sugars in our food or adding a lot of oil or fats and ghee. We consumed a lot of sugar to make sweets in Syria. When we met the Dutch people, we discovered that they do not use sugar for tea or coffee.”

“I started to drink tea and coffee without sugar and drink a lot of green tea instead of red tea.”

This type of individual crossing of boundaries takes place as a result of the influence of the dominant culture as an attempt to assimilate into the culture and avoid the stigma (Wimmer, 2008), when meeting Dutch people who give them the impression of different, but better upper-class practices. It is a way to find a common background that brings both Dutch and Syrian people together. They do not show exaggerated practices that make them far from each other. They also see that Dutch and Syrian dishes share many ingredients, although they are combined in a different way. Both cuisines emphasize more or less vegetables which are used to accompany the main courses as soups or salads. The most popular vegetables are eggplant, tomatoes, cucumber, parsley and spinach.

The difference between both cuisines is that Syrian food is seasoned with spices, like cinnamon, cloves, cumin, the seven spices, fine coriander and coarse black pepper. For example, Ziad says:

“We add different kinds of spices. Spices are very important to add flavor to food. If you eat boiled eggs, for example, you have to add salt, cumin, black pepper and olive oil. Dutch people do not add these things to their dishes.”

Other differences are related to breakfast choices and the use of garlic and onions in Syrian dishes. Furthermore, Syrian refugees use a lot of sugar when they drink tea or make their fresh sweets, unlike the Dutch who rarely use sugar with tea and coffee. As an example, Ibrahim states:

“Breakfast is different, our breakfast depends on white bread, olive oil, labneh, cheese and olives. By contrast, they eat butter, ham and brown bread. Differences start with the first meal. We eat beans and onion, especially on the weekend. It does not come to the mind of Europeans to eat onions in the morning. Garlic and onion are almost never consumed in this culture.” (Ibrahim).

Unlike Sulaima and Suha, Ibrahim and Yousef paradoxically see that Dutch people eat different kinds of meat, in addition to pork and beef. They get in direct touch with the daily food habits of Dutch people and argue that their food is not healthy as Syrian food is. From a cultural perspective, Ibrahim and Yousef use their preexisting traditions to empower themselves within the environment they are dealing with. By contrast, Sulaima and Suha use different strategies that enable them to reinvent their traditions in a way that suits their life in the new place (Sewell, 1999).

Through their contact with Dutch people, few participants do not only get acquainted with Dutch food, they also make it regularly at home. The Dutch share their recipes with them. Dalal tells how she makes the Dutch recipe exactly as her Dutch friend shares it with her. Helal makes some Dutch dishes in a Syrian manner. Siham states that making a Dutch dish at home makes her Dutch neighbor happy. The rest do not try it at all because they either perceive cultural differences and create images about Dutch food as mentioned earlier, or they are unwilling to change their food habits.

The participants cross cultural boundaries when they interact with the Dutch community. They use different identities and different 'sub selves' to be suitable for different layers of social domains and play many cultural roles (Wells, 2001). Such use of identity is a strategy to overcome existing boundaries and deal with them to get into other social groups. This certainly depends on the individual skills that shape the process of boundary crossing. Fayeze illustrates this when he says:

"If we have a guest, we have to make him feel comfortable because it is a priority for us. If we have a Dutch guest at our place, we will not eat the same we eat when we are alone. We will not eat from one dish, rather, each one of us has his own dish and we will take from the Mansaf to the dish. We have to take his habits and traditions into consideration."

"It is very important, if you know their culture, you will pay attention to your behaviors and actions. You will not do something they consider shameful or they do not do. We will be more careful about our actions before them when we understand their culture." (Dalal)

Both quotes expose how Syrians try to cross boundaries by finding balance between habits acquired in Syria and the Dutch lifestyles they encounter. They know how social structures vary and how groups are different in terms of food manners, behaviors. When they compare themselves to the Dutch people, they see that such differences can be sensitive to the Dutch and could affect their social interaction with them. They are afraid to be stigmatized and excluded by the other due to groups hierarchy and differences in resources and civilizing processes (Elias & Scotson, 1994).

In another context of boundary crossing, some recognized that Dutch people follow a healthy diet, when they eat boiled rice without ghee or butter, they depend on vegan foods that have no oil or fat ingredients. Others see that this is unhealthy, however, has all nutritional values human beings need to feed their bodies. In the Syrian cuisines, there are many dishes like baba ghanoush, mutabbal, mujaddara, salads and moussaka that are healthy and contain no fats. These are presented to Dutch people as part of the original Syrian cuisine. These dishes enter the Dutch culture as they can be made at home easily and do not cost much time and effort.

"The Dutch people have an impression about our food choices and they assume that we do not like their food. When I told them that we started to make some Dutch food at home, she was very happy." (Saleem).

Furthermore, most of the participants reduce the time they spend cooking and making food. They look at time through the eyes of Dutch people who value time in a different way. They perceive that Dutch people do not have time to cook because of many reasons. First, the individualistic character of North-Western European people does not allow them to spend plenty of time cooking because time is money and eating is a practical task that is accomplished within timeframes and systematicity (Ostrom, 2009). Helal gives an example about this:

"When we came to the Netherlands, we used to spend three hours on cooking. Today, because we are busy, we spend half an hour making the same dish. We started to manage our time more than we used to do before. The first time we invited people to our place we spent about six hours preparing the meal and dishes. The second time I spent only two hours and a half or three hours preparing everything and I was alone. My wife was then busy with our son."

Second, the rationale of time consumption is different because it is part of late-modern societies. Secondly, the cultural capital of Dutch people is different and they prioritize other cultural activities and don't spend their time making food. As Saleem says:

"Dutch people like to try new food because they have limited food choices due to practicality and nature of life. They also think about healthy food choices. Syrian people live to eat, while Dutch people eat to live and enjoy other aspects of life."

Third, in late-modern societies, commodification affects consumption processes and lifestyles by providing standardized patterns, like the ready meals which are sold in supermarkets and suit the alienated nature and lifestyles of 'Western' food consumers who lack time to cook as they prefer to earn more time at the expense of the pleasure of eating (Giddens, 1991, Costa et al., 2002). Many respondents explain how Dutch people do not accept to try making some Syrian dishes because they need a lot of time to prepare and eat. Maram looks at that and explains:

"The Dutch people consume a lot of frozen and ready-made meals or they cook for one week and keep their food in the freezer. In the Supermarket, you can find a lot of food choices, like salads, pasta, boiled eggs or cheese."

In this context, contemporary lifestyles demand to experience more cultural activities, and, subsequently, being busy and practical becomes symbolic of a 'full' and 'valued' life (Darier, 1998). Joining a late-modern society makes the participants see that the level of

responsibility is higher than it was in Syria and the new social reality requires new skills, new codes of communication that cannot be acquired without getting into the process of acculturation, which time is a crucial part of it. Five years to get citizenship including three years of integration trajectory. Here, time starts to be important and precious in the new place. Some refugees experience this change in different levels. Some see that this change is a necessary step to adapt into the Dutch culture, while others see this change as a big pressure because of many new things that need to be accomplished at the same time.

"I think that it is a new task that we need to make. In Syria, my mother used to cook. Here we have to cook and I have to allocate one hour at least to make food." (Fayez)

"In the Netherlands, it is different because we have many appointments, a language school and the school of my daughters. We also participate in social activities which are organized by some organizations." (Saleem)

The last two quotes show the unstable life of Syrian refugees because of the change in the cultural space. In Syria, they lived in a fixed and stable tempo of life and their time was distributed based on their social landscape. Khaldoun talks about the social aspect of food which witnesses many changes in the Netherlands, as he says:

"In Syria, we used to meet more than here. Every week, we meet three or four times per week and my mother used to make three or four dishes. Here, there is a difference. The difference is that there are many things that distract us from food. For example, study, appointments and work. We do not think any more about food. Rather, we think about other things. No problem whatever the dish is."

In the Netherlands, a huge cultural change takes place and refugees need to be in time for their appointments, get their documents and financial issues done by organizations that facilitate their settlement. They are still in the process of official integration and in the unstable mood of time and cultural change. This surely invites them to exert more efforts to rationalize the sequence of time spending on their social activities and manage it efficiently and effectively to resonate with the new cultural space. Syrian refugees change the mood of consumption to cross the boundaries by adopting new Dutch food habits and rethink their cultural practices that are rooted in identity because it is impossible to assimilate completely into the Dutch food culture. It is difficult and challenging to be accepted and adopted by refugees. There are major aspects of identity that remain the countenance of Syrians and identify their preferences and

manners. On the other side of the boundary, if refugees find that some food habits are relatively easy to adopt, gender, race and skin are not. Language and some signals cannot be adopted unless one is accustomed to them in the early stages of life, although they play an essential role in defining mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion (Bourdieu, 1979).

4.5 Gender roles

Engagement with different institutions at various cultural and societal levels plays a crucial role in shaping gender roles (Boehnke, 2011). Gender roles are changing due to the changes taking place in societies. In modern societies, for instance, a shift toward an egalitarian gender role has been witnessed (Boehnke, 2011). This happens as a result of changes in the politics of spending and women's participation in the labor market. At the same time, the concept of 'parenthood' leads itself to adopting more traditional gender roles, especially the role of mothering in its duties. Previous research states that women are often the 'gatekeepers' of family and food supply and are responsible for transferring cultural values and norms (McIntosh & Zey, 1989). For this research, Results show that this is very rooted in the culture of Syrian refugees and it is no surprise since Syrian society is relatively, if not completely traditional in comparison with European, progressive and modern societies. Syrian women are responsible for making food in most of the families. In Syria, Kitchens were their 'royal house' and they spent hours preparing food for their families. Food brought women together to cook and construct traditions on each occasion. They celebrated the making of food and made cooking a feast that brings siblings and neighbors together. As Jamila states:

Yes, in Syria, ladies stay at home. Men go to their jobs and women are responsible for housekeeping, cooking, dish washing and cleaning. They clean up the house and start to prepare the food before their kids and husbands come back home. In the evening, if they have any meeting with her friends or family, they will go out. The tempo and rhythm of life are totally different.

Time is divided based on the social and cultural system that rules their community. In the collectivist society, people spend more time and effort socializing and supporting the group members. Syrian women are dedicated to nurturing their families and they were brought up to be devoted and altruistic (Kershenovich, 2002) and put themselves in a less responsible place. The Syrian food culture depends mainly on gender segregation. The religious nature of Syrian people gives gender roles a significance in their social structure. Men 'help' their wives in

housekeeping issues, such as cleaning and shopping, but they do not share the same responsibilities with them. Traditions prevent the majority from doing that. For example, if they help women in cooking, they will rarely take her role in the kitchen, wash the dishes or do other household chores. Khaled notices the differences between Syrian and Dutch culture when he says:

“Yes, I was invited once by a Dutch family. They did not make Syrian or Dutch food. They made Indonesian food, which was delicious. I noticed that there is no difference between men and women in Dutch culture when it comes to the making of food. For instance, if the woman makes the food, then the man will wash the dishes. In our culture, women make food and wash the dishes. We might help in making food, but we do not wash the dishes.”

This positions women at the head of upbringing tasks and with all cooking responsibilities. This means that they are considered responsible for transferring the traditions and culture through generations. For example, a Syrian friend of Maram who has three young sons, tells her that she has to cook for her kids, even if they live in another apartment. Her kids have to be around the table to eat together as a family. Similarly, Maram explains how important it is to share Syrian food with her kids at home. It is also essential to let them think about halal food when they go shopping. Her kids have realized that there are some kinds of food they are not allowed to eat, so they ask her before buying any product whether it is halal or not. She says:

“I like to keep Syrian food traditions at my home and I keep telling my daughters about our Syrian food. When we go to the Supermarket, they ask me whether these products are halal or not because I taught them well that they only should eat halal food.”

Ruba is also keen on teaching her daughter the Syrian culture so that she behaves at home as a Syrian and with her Dutch mates as a Dutch. This means that Ruba is going to teach her daughter the strategies she herself uses to adapt to Dutch society and cross the boundary to survive in both cultures. Women do not only transfer food traditions to their kids, they also use food as a tool to socialize with the new community. It is an active tool to participate in Dutch society when language does not help. The majority of female participants introduce their food to Dutch people as a form of identity. They attend and actively participate in social activities to make food for Dutch people. Sawsan describes one of these activities, which was allocated for female refugees (see figure 9 & 10). In this activity, Syrian women showed the guests how they

meet and make food, as they shared their food recipes with every dish they offered to people.
Sawsan adds:

“Yes, in December 2020, I attended a social activity, I was invited with some Syrian women to make food for a company. We went to their place and used their kitchen and cutlery to provide them with different Syrian dishes. We made vegan and meat dishes and socialized with them through our food culture. They were very happy with the food and we were very happy to introduce them to our culture”



Figure 9: photo from the activity attended and shared by the participant



Figure 10: photo from the activity attended and shared by the participant

Syrian women learn how to skillfully cook from their mothers before and after they get married. They take the traditions of their family and learn everything about family and upbringing in a traditional way. They also miss their family kitchens and their mothers in Syria. Dalal tells how much she misses her mother when she smells Syrian food because her mother's food had a special taste. Similarly, Jamila says that her best food trainer is her mother who lives in Syria, while Maram brings back the smell of her mother's coffee which has a special ceremony in the morning (see figure 11). This reinforces their cultural identity and enhances their wish to create the same atmosphere to their families, guests and friends. Maram expresses how she shares her Syrian coffee with her Dutch teacher and Syrian friends and adds:

"The smell of coffee reminds me of the coffee of my mother in the morning. She used to accompany it with special dates from Saudi Arabia, raisin, and nuts. It was very nice to drink coffee with her."



Figure 11: morning coffee ceremony. Photograph shared by Myriam.

In particular women's connection to their families in Syria reinforces Syrian refugees' cultural identity, which helps them to reconstruct their social upbringing and how they transfer their cultural habits to their children through food practices. Their families in Syria keep asking them to not only preserve their traditions and habits, but also to ensure that their kids adopt them because if they come back one day, kids might recognize the culture of their ancestors. All this creates boundaries against females' acculturation to European societies, especially because they reproduce their traditions and norms by making this daily contact with their culture through the making of food and housekeeping. They spend most of their time cooking, bringing up their kids and following up on their kids' activities. Those who reproduce their gender culture and redistribute the power unequally between men and women contribute to the marginalization of women in an egalitarian gender-related society. This requires women to face two dynamics of symbolic and social boundaries. The first is related to facing their culture represented by many responsibilities and cultural mindset. The second is related to the new, secularized culture that considers their headscarves a problem and judge them as Muslims and refugees (Diehl et al., 2009).

Gender plays an important role in food time consumption because it affects other aspects of life, in particular the life of refugees. Men, in Syria, do not have to cook due to traditions which decide that women do housekeeping and childcare tasks, even if women work, they still have to take care of their home. Men have to work and are responsible for the spending and expenditures of everything. This gives men the power of decision making and independence, while it makes women more dependent and unequal to men. Thus, it is hard to change this mindset and opens the door to women to easily integrate into an open culture. Some men are afraid to lose the power and some women do not accept this change.

4.6 Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is considered symbolic and creates different dynamics of symbolic boundaries through attitudes, preferences, behavior and knowledge. The cultural differences between Syrian refugees and the Dutch put cultural tastes in a state of binary oppositions between 'respectable' and 'prestigious', high and low culture, good and bad; favorable and unfavorable considerations, in addition to the type of consumption (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Cultural capital is created out of cultural practices and signals. Some cultural resources are recognized and fit, while others are devalued (Erel, 2010). Refugee migrants use many aspects of cultural capital to communicate with the Dutch community. The participants place big emphasis on traditional foods when they meet Dutch people or people from different backgrounds. They show their cultural identity and promote their cultural capital the way they think that it is impressive and efficient. Their self-evaluation becomes higher because they share a rich aspect of their culture that gives them acceptance and appreciation amongst the Dutch (Ager & Strang, 2008). Mahmoud expresses his joy when introducing Syrian food to the Dutch:

"When I was in Ter Apel camp, the COA invited a guy from Ecuador and me to serve some food from our culture. I cooked ouzi and yalanji for them. They were very happy with both dishes. I was very surprised that they liked the dishes, which made me happy that I introduced them to something about my culture."

The quantity of food and the way Syrians serve their food are part of their cultural capital. They like to explain to the Dutch how they receive their guests and how important it is to present their food in a special way. They tell the Dutch that there are special plates for guests that are not used until they have a special visitor. They also have a 'guest room' at their homes. This room is always ready to receive visitors with or without an appointment. From the Dutch

perspective, this might not be a point of interest because it is rooted in Syrian culture and cannot be applied for the Dutch lifestyle. An example about that is how Siham explains:

“The main difference is hospitality and the quantity of food we serve when we have a guest. The first time we invited Dutch people to our place, they were astonished by the quantity of food served on the table.”

Examples of cultural capital signals can be like thinking that introducing people to what a delicious Fatteh is important to reflect attitude; knowing when and how to consume food on a specific occasion refers to formal knowledge that Syrians transfer to the Dutch people. Moreover, not only liking Syrian food but to try it everywhere is worthy means that they have enough confidence in the Syrian taste, which reflects cultural preference and attitude. Having a sense of how conspicuous food consumption should be for pleasure, socialization and cultural identity reflects behavior and attitude; and the possession of food utensils and cutlery is attitudinal and behavioural symbols that create boundaries amongst groups (Bourdieu, 1979). By contrast, when Dutch people try to introduce their food culture, they introduce their preferences, attitudes and knowledge. Khaldoun and Maram give a clear example about that. Khaldoun went with a Dutch friend to a brewery. He provides a clear example about that when he says:

“I went with a friend of mine to a brewery and she started to explain to me how beer is produced and how we can know the good beer. She thought that I am interested in these drinks, while it is prohibited in our culture to drink alcohol.”

These recurring signals of cultural capital make them prominent and important in structuring the symbolic and social boundaries, particularly when the recipient of these signals recognizes the cultural differences which, sometimes, are very subtle and slight. On the other hand, they are structured unconsciously as a result of the family upbringing and socialization (habitus). In fact, they express the culture of people explicitly and clearly, while they are intentionally or unintentionally introduced (Bourdieu, 1979). Maram gives another example about the difference in the cultural capital between Syrian and Dutch people. She is aware of these differences as she says:

"If I like these traditions and etiquettes, I might accept it, However, if something is related to halal food, like how to drink a glass of wine or beer, I will not adopt it for sure. Their food has a lot of pig fats or alcohol, while we do not eat pork or drink alcohol."

At the same time, there is a high esteem to the other aspects of the cultural capital of Dutch people. Some participants express their impression about the level of modernization and scientific progress the Dutch culture has reached. Anas explains what is important when he talks about the Dutch culture.

"The Dutch food culture is not important. I think it is nice to know about historical information, how they lived, what they did to achieve these great things and reach this amazing level of civilization"

They also depreciate their culture because of dislocation, loss of social power, nostalgia and low self-esteem. Ibrahim talks about the industrial advancement of Europe and sees that the European people are better than Syrians because of the great achievements they have achieved for humanity. Ibrahim says:

"Yes, for sure, we are less than Dutch people. Europe has a great industrial history. For example, when I say that I have a French car, a German fridge, an Italian coffee or a Dutch painting, I will appreciate this culture and be aware how they are better than we are."

Furthermore, some describe that the Dutch food options are healthier than what Syrians eat. Sulaima tells in her interview how she can notice easily the Dutch who have healthy choices and are limber and have better appearances than other nationalities who eat fast food and a lot of fats. Saleem also talks about that when he compares the Dutch with Syrians:

"I can say that their food is healthier than our food. Their meals are healthy and the ingredients are mixed and boiled without any additives. They do not depend on sugars or fats. We add sugar and cherry to meat when we make kebab karaz or Safarjalya."

The aforementioned quotes indicate how Syrian refugees see the Dutch culture in comparison with theirs. This takes place as a result of the direct exposure to a new culture, whereas Syrians feel inferior to the Dutch. The continuous social comparison causes low self-esteem because of the inability to perform effectively as a Dutch citizen in terms of Dutch standards. In other words, differences in the language skills of and different socioeconomic conditions form different realities. This establishes symbolic boundaries and hinders the change of the current conditions and social status of refugees. Low self-esteem also comes from the

stereotypical image Europeans created about refugees in general to exclude them from public spheres (Alencar, 2018; Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2019). Jamila talks about some stereotypes.

“When I arrived in the Netherlands, I received many questions from the Dutch who have never heard of my country. They asked me questions like: did you have a fridge? Did you live in the tent? Did you have a home? My answer was a big smile because I came from Syria, especially Aleppo city.”

As refugees perceived as third-world country people and categorized as Muslims and refugees at the same time, they are disappointed by the devaluation of their professional and educational skills. Europeans have been looking at other societies as primitive, undeveloped, uncivilized and unable to perform based on universal principles. This image has been created based on a colonial vision that incarnates the imperialism of Western culture and gives Europeans the right to be responsible for civilizing other peoples and “expand beyond its own domain” (Said, 1993, p.52). This implies inequality based on culture and race. Yousef has experienced that since he started to work in the Netherlands and he stresses the issue of trust between refugees and Dutch people.

“Because they do not trust us yet. For example, one of the problems that I faced when I started to work here is that they have an image about us that we are underdeveloped people, we do not know how to clean up things or we do not know what neatness means and they are upper-class people. When they see us working and making food, they start to change their preconceptions and presumptions. However, the majority are still thinking the same.” (Yousef)

The sociocultural background of refugees and the nature of conditions have a crucial role in reinforcing the boundary between both cultures and reproduce stratification in Dutch society. When refugees feel unaccepted, they think inferiorly about themselves, which affects their social functioning and makes them go for lower choices like sharing food culture with the host society and using food as an important aspect of cultural capital. Ibrahim says:

“A friend of mine is a bachelor of arts. He studied English literature in Syria, but he works as a chef at one of the restaurants in the city of Amsterdam.”

Some Syrian refugees turn food into an economic resource to cross socioeconomic boundaries related to the mechanisms of Dutch labor market and problems related to diploma evaluation and language difficulties. Similarly, Syrian restaurants and start-ups have cultural and social functions to introduce Syrian food, open new ways for business and facilitate

personal interactions, as it is an opportunity for showing the social status of refugees who use another part of cultural capital to socialize through and invest in it (Freedman et al., 2014). In this context, refugee migrants use their food practices to cross cultural boundaries and expand their social networking within Dutch society. Jamila, as a good example, explains:

“When I make moussaka for my Dutch clients, I tell them that this is a vegan dish that does not have any meat or dairy. I also explain to them that we make this dish in the villages and mountainous regions because the ingredients are connected to what the farmer has. Onion, olive oil, tomato eggplant, this amazing recipe gave it a great taste. When they ate this dish, they loved it a lot because they know its story. I made food for 40 people that day.”

As shown in the last statement, the power of host culture and the symbolic authoritative dominance of the Dutch social system invite Syrian refugees to use another aspect of their cultural capital to actively socialize with Dutch people. However, this cultural capital is still ruled by ethnic and classed ways that bind refugees and limit them in economic and cultural ways (Erel, 2010). It is sometimes exposed to exploitation by social organizations which recruit Syrian refugees to make food for events without any added value or monetary contribution. Maram and Ruba highlight this point, as Ruba says:

“We are very hospitable and generous and we think that this is something nice to share, while they are being exploited by some people in organizations, like what is the added value of participating in and cooking for these events without any benefits. This is a bit disappointing.”

To network with the Dutch community, organizations focus on food as an important cultural capital and ask refugees to make food for social activities. They highly estimate that Syrian refugees are good at cooking and devalue or disregard other high technical and professional skills. When people use part of their culture to suit the new place, they use it at the expense of other aspects of cultural capital (Erel, 2010).

4.7 Identity and Boundaries

People draw different kinds of boundaries based on many dimensions. Boundaries are formed when refugee migrants are exposed to and assess another culture. Food choices, an important part of identity, exclude Syrian refugees from specific social settings in the Netherlands. The main boundary drawn is that Dutch people drink alcohol and eat different

kinds of meat which Syrian people are prohibited to eat. Hence boundaries are institutionalized by religion and social upbringing. This causes the participants to take a step back from communicating with Dutch people because of cultural norms deemed unacceptable. This often has a direct effect on their cultural participation. Hence, the importance of identity is highlighted to affect people's choices, while some boundaries are undermined to learn more about culture or allow people to engage in more cultural activities. For instance, Dalal communicates actively with the Dutch and feels comfortable when she interacts with them. However, as a preventive action, she tries to prevent her son's identity now and, in the future, when she asks him to keep far from places where alcohol is served:

"My son, who is 11 years old, sometimes meets his classmates to have a drink. I am trying to prevent him from engaging with these meetings because his mates drink beer, which is not allowed to look at or drink alcohol in our culture. At the same time, this might affect his future in the Netherlands because he will feel alienated in a hostile environment".

Hence, Dalal is very aware that by preventing her son from going with his friends, she affects her son's relationship with his peers. Some cultural norms do not allow her to break the rules and include her son in Dutch culture because it will exclude him from Syrian culture. Such boundaries are impermeable because they are established by the religious process of boundary institutionalization. The cultural differences between Syrian and Dutch people are important in this context because they define morality in a different way. The Syrian morality is derived from religious basis like all civilizations of the Middle East whose food choices are extracted from ceremonies and rituals (Kershenovich, 2002).

Furthermore, Syrian refugees have moved from a collectivist to a purely individualistic society. These differences of social structures affect the relationship between Syrian and Dutch people. In the collectivist society, relations are totally different and group solidarity comes from the social situation in which people support each other as part of their membership as they share duties and obligations. How people share food with other group members and how they eat together, cook together and meet to eat and socialize is part of their in-group existence (Greif, 1994; Mesquita, 2001). By contrast, a postmodern individualistic society, social welfare is institutionalized and affects the relationship between actors to make them fit in the group through their limited relationships with other members in the same group and other groups (Hofstede, 1984). How Syrian refugees look at social relationships is different from Dutch

people. The participants define their boundaries through the quantity of food, food preferences and behaviors that are influenced by time and place and affect cultural identity. These dynamics are rooted in memory and construe the relationship between different social groups which have different standards and criteria to evaluate communication and relations. Consequently, the accessible knowledge of both groups is interpreted based on the cultural perspective of each group.

As discussed, most cultural activities are organized by social entities that are responsible for either helping refugees to adapt or supporting them to follow up on their documents and procedures. Respondents report that there are very little spontaneous individual initiatives taken to let Dutch and Syrian people meet. Even their individual meetings with language trainers are organized by a third party that facilitates these meetings for practical reasons like learning the language or exploring culture. This affects the continuity of relationships because after they meet and eat there occurs no constant communication or, at least, the level of communication is not as Syrian refugees expect when they make contact with the Dutch. However, Syrian refugees talk positively about the Dutch as respectful to their rights, which is one of the attributes of individualistic societies (Hofstede, 1984). There is a contradiction in dealing with the communication issue because the Dutch help them a lot, but do not create a friendly relationship. This explains the power of both cultures and the unique identity of both people and shows how symbolic boundaries and patterns of inclusion and exclusion are shared and interpreted in different situations (Cohen, 2013).

4.7.1 Cultural and socioeconomic boundaries

Results show Syrian refugees draw cultural, socioeconomic boundaries based on food choices. These restrictions play a great role in maintaining cultural identity and discouraging the acculturation process.

The socioeconomic and cultural boundaries are clarified when participants were asked whether they visit any Dutch restaurant or try to follow the same dietary habits of the Dutch. Many state that Dutch restaurants are very expensive to visit. Moreover, they will not feel at home because they do not understand the menus. This gives them a sense of insecurity and discomfort to order what they like to eat. Furthermore, cultural differences in terms of hygienic rules make another factor for insecurity and increase the sense of threat. It is a matter of trust in the first place. Yousef makes it clear when he talks about restaurants:

'I think that all restaurants have a problem with hygienic rules because some employees or chefs are not committed to these measures, let alone the oil that they use for days without changing it. Because I work in a restaurant, I do not trust whether what they serve is healthy. I prefer to make food at home because I know what I eat.'

Similarly, Ibrahim prefers to take his food from home rather than buying it at work because it is not affordable. When he compares himself to the Dutch, he feels the difference. Ibrahim states this:

"Another example, when you go to a restaurant, every table has alcoholic drinks. If I go there, I will not feel included at all. Moreover, if you are invited to a restaurant by a Dutch group, you will see that all of them are drinking wine or beer and we drink tea or coca cola."

Most of the participants recognize the difference between Dutch and Syrian food culture as there are many moral and cultural boundaries that prevent them from trying it. Cultural differences are unnegotiable and inevitable for Syrian refugees because they came from a different cultural background. They assume that these differences cannot be accepted by the first generation. The second and third generation might be more able to accept or re-position these differences. Concretely, Syrian refugee children follow the same food habits of their classmates. Following the rules of schools, they bring toast, cheese, jam, milk, water, fruits and vegetables. Siham tells how the teacher at school asked her daughter to not bring any Syrian bread with her to school, while Maram explains how the classmates of her daughter thought that the Syrian bread is a pancake. These cultural boundaries and dietary habits have been transformed into laws that rule the assimilation process of 'outsiders' and create new barriers between Dutch and Syrians because they are issued by schools. This direct interference with food choices should be rethought by both cultures in a way that functions as social diversity. Otherwise, the place contributes to the formation of boundaries.

Place itself is important for boundary making (Albeda et al., 2018). Unfamiliarity with the cultural environment intersecting the memories of the past and the interactions inside familiar circles and with unfamiliar people have been conducive to experiencing a different taste of the same food. All participants report the difference of food taste between the Netherlands and Syria. They describe how food in their country of origin was tasteful, healthier, organic and delicious. As an example, Mahmoud says:

“I think that the quality of vegetables and fruits in Syria is better than it is here. Pepper, tomato, cucumber or any kind of vegetable. In Syria, we used to eat organic, unlike here, most of the products are chemically treated. Even meat and chicken. In Syria, it is much better than the Netherlands. The taste is totally different.”

Similarly, Khaldoun is trying to find a reason for that feeling, he describes the difference of taste caused by memories that provoke his longing for those days when everything was nice. He uses his imagination and reality to constantly see the cultural difference between homeland and the new setting. He says:

“Like the broad bean (ful medames). We used to make it on Friday as most of the Syrian families did. We went to the shop and got a big dish for the whole family. She told me that this product is not available here, they only have small beans which are not as delicious as the big one. The taste is different. There are many dishes that have a different taste. I think it is a matter of memories and nostalgia.”

In fact, this is not a product of imagination. While Hall (2014) says that immigrants use their imagination to identify themselves, Appadurai (1996) argues that this is a constitution of ‘functional social phenomenon’ as a result of the direct contact with the surrounding community. This seems to be caused by the instability of the socioeconomic dynamics of Syrian refugees, the inability to adapt to the cultural environment and their attempt to integrate the surrounding into their own practices.

4.7.2 Social capital and communication boundaries

Different forms of capital are interlinked to each other and affect each other in different ways (Erel, 2010). Refugees create their social networks to test which aspect of cultural capital is congruous with the capital of the place they live in. To understand the nature of communication between Syrian and Dutch people, I asked the participants about friendships because they are voluntarily built in the consent of both sides. They have no pressures or obligations ruled by systems or laws. Friendship clarifies individual relationships between refugees and the host society, as it uncovers the reality of social networking and bridging.

Results show that social networking is affected by the cultural capital of social groups. The more the cultural differences, the more difficult networking and communication will be. That emerges due to many reasons. Again, Dutch people see that Syrian refugees come from the Middle-East with xenophobic implications created based on their race as Muslim refugees

(Bowskill et al., 2007). Boundaries are established by the dominant culture to give a hierarchical structure to social relationships. This causes groupness and social closure (Wimmer, 2008). Dutch people have already created stereotypes which need a long time to change and be authentically replaced by a realistic image. This makes communication difficult because all reactions are based on presumed actions and thoughts.

Stereotypes obstruct their communication and make it under psychological and identity pressures. They feel these boundaries are tenacious and impermeable, although they try to cross them. Because of that, Syrian refugees present themselves in a different way. They play on a particular stage as people who behave in a way that resonates with Dutch culture. They compare themselves to the Dutch practices and follow their cultural manners, which negatively affects their self-image. On the other hand, they play off stage when they meet their Syrian peers to establish positive self-concept and self-esteem. Dalal explains how important this is:

“It is very important, if you know their culture, you will pay attention to your behaviors and actions. You will not do something they consider shameful or they do not do. We will be more careful about our actions before them when we understand their culture.”

By contrast, Fayez argues that it is not important to him to learn about Dutch culture because he can live in the Netherlands without the need to communicate with Dutch people. He sees that the cultural gap cannot be filled. However, he will follow the Dutch manner to eat if he meets Dutch people as he says:

“If we have a guest, we have to make him feel comfortable because it is a priority for us. If we have a Dutch guest at our place, we will not eat the same we eat when we are alone. We will not eat from one dish, rather, each one of us has his own dish and we will take from the Mansaf to the dish. We have to take his habits and traditions into consideration.”

Cultural differences put Syrian refugees in uneasy situations, where they feel their cultural resources are less valued in an unstable setting. Differences in taste and food choices cause indirect exclusion (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This is because of the diaspora and distress they have experienced after the Syrian war, which contributes to the loss of social bonds and the erosion of the power of culture which is connected to the place they lived in one day (Bourdieu, 1979). Furthermore, the forced choices and lack of decision making to resettle in

a different culture cause a boundary work through which Syrian refugees construct similarities and differences between themselves and Dutch people. Helal shares part of his story and says:

“I am working currently as a volunteer. I started to study pediatrics last year. But I found that it was a stupid decision to abandon the study of sociology and follow another and lower study. I followed this study because of the pressures laid by the municipality’s case manager. They pushed us to work and find a job. For that, I selected to study pediatrics.”

As Helal says, they feel disadvantaged and unprivileged because they left their own social and cultural setting, which is the source of their power. This affects their settlement in the new social setting, where resources of information are limited and knowledge is unevenly shared.

The institutionalization of the integration process has led to the institutionalization of resources and indirect exclusion of Syrian refugees from the cultural and social scene (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018). Hence, the conceptualization of discrimination has been twice reproduced. The first time is because of the cultural differences and the low status of refugees’ education and resources. The second time is caused by cross-national differences and low social status which refugees experience in comparison to the dominant culture. This, by consequence, legitimates the host culture and underestimates minorities’ culture. How they perceive food culture allows Syrian refugees to see the Dutch as a homogenous group that eats monotonously certain kinds of food, like stamppot, toast, boiled rice, minced spinach, spareribs, sausages, wine, beer and pork. They consider the Italian, Turkish, Spanish, Lebanese, South-American, American and Asian restaurants are part of the cultural diversity, not part of the Dutch way of food making. On this note, Syrian refugees do not adopt these food choices to adapt into Dutch culture, but to enjoy the atmosphere of diversity. Paradoxically, the diversity of traditions, cultural differences and identity make integration challenging and bounded by many barriers.

Syrians’ food consumption reveals Syrians’ relationships and defines their beliefs and attitudes as social beings. Food choices represent symbolic codes that explain patterns about social ties and relationships. Their socialization and social ties are totally different from their Dutch peers whose relationships are rationally selected and practically represent postmodern

individualism in all its aspects. This draws boundaries between Syrians and Dutch people. Hence, social capital has been transformed into a symbolic capital and power to identify them as one group that networks internally and externally as Syrians. They see big differences in the concept of friendship, hospitality, solidarity and warmth of food serving and presenting, in addition to the socialization process itself which is very systematic and structured in Dutch society. This contributes directly to the institutionalization of boundaries and imposes many barriers on social interaction.

Chapter 5. Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Implication for practice

This paper has aimed to explore: *How do migrants, especially Syrian refugees living in the Netherlands, draw symbolic and social boundaries through making food choices?* After conceptualizing Lamont & Molar's (2002) symbolic and social boundaries based on Lamont & Lareau's (1988) different dynamics of moral, cultural and socioeconomic boundaries, results reveal six patterns of boundary work.

First, maintaining boundaries with the Dutch natives and sustaining a sense of home are simultaneously established through food that enables the maintenance of an embodied sense of comfort. Second, Syrian refugees use food as a coping mechanism to resist the change and bring back their traditions, food practices and memories, which partially give them a sense of security and happiness. Third, the socioeconomic status, the abundance of food and hospitality are important factors to establish symbolic boundaries between Syrian refugees and the Dutch. Cultural capital of Bourdieu (1979,1984), including behaviors and preferences and the different dynamics of hospitality are the first step toward boundary formation. The recurring signals of cultural capital make them prominent and important in structuring the symbolic and social boundaries. Fourth, when refugees feel unsettled, alienated, experience big losses or their goal is to come back to their country of origin, they position themselves in unnoticeable space between the host country and home and, subsequently, they never feel at home. Fifth, the place itself is important for boundary making (Albeda et al., 2018). Unfamiliarity with the cultural environment, memories of the past and interactions inside familiar circles and with unfamiliar people have been conducive to experiencing a different taste of the same food. This has been contributing to the loss of social bonds and the erosion of the power of culture which is connected to the place they lived in one day (Bourdieu, 1979). Sixth, women face two dynamics of symbolic and social boundaries. The first is related to facing their culture represented by many responsibilities and cultural mindset. The second is related to the new, secularized culture that considers their headscarves a problem and judge them as Muslims and refugees.

At the same time, the study illustrates how Syrian refugees go for two symbolic usages of food that go with two ambivalent lines. The first one shows their diverse signals of attitudes, preferences, tastes, and style. This includes the construction of their cultural identity, memories, emotions, nostalgia, home making as well as constructing boundaries between them and the

host society (Parasecoli, 2014). Food choices, including attitudes, halal food, gender differences, hospitality and the quantity of food presented were the most prominent characteristics that distinguish the Dutch people from Syrians. Syrian refugees use food to express their emotions and tell stories about who they are. Food culture is one of the strongest aspects of their culture that enables them to communicate with other social groups in the host society and gives them self-evaluation at the same time. The knife cuts both ways: cultural differences of tastes and interests, cultural capital gaps and adopting other food options cause self-esteem to become low. This creates boundaries of inequality and reproduces the stratification of a new group in the Netherlands.

The second line highlights their new practices, change in food consumption and new dishes they start to make. This change was a result of the direct exposure to new cultures and different flavors in a country with a relatively high level of globalization. The reduction of time consumption took place because refugees cross cultural boundaries, try to adapt to culture and acculturate to an unfamiliar rhythm of life.

The analysis demonstrates that boundary drawing comes after boundary crossing, through which refugees assess the Dutch cultural space and their own cultural environment. Through interacting with a new cultural space, they understand cultural differences and perceive boundaries. Based on boundaries, they either bridge cultures or create boundaries to exclude themselves after experiencing difficulties of communication (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). There is a difference of tastes and social status between Syrians and Dutch. The taste of Syrian food is not the same for a Dutch guest at a Syrian's place as for Syrians themselves. This reflects the mood of consumption and clarifies different perspectives and consumption patterns that create distinctions and boundaries amongst both groups. By result, Syrian refugees find themselves subject to limited access to possibilities and narrow social networking because of social and cultural capitals which filter their communication channels and impose limited contact based on functionality and necessity, including social activities. Hence, different types of social boundaries are established after constructing symbolic boundaries and there is ambiguity in drawing or crossing the boundary.

The Syrian group is still relatively new in Dutch society. They have not been yet into the process of constituting a group and have not created a clear community, like the Moroccan community, that excludes them through different boundary mechanisms from the Dutch cultural space (Dibbits, 2007). Thus, it is important to rethink the cultural policies, social and symbolic

boundaries to make them more inclusive and comprehend more diverse cultural practices to motivate more people and communicate directly to the diversity of Europe. Wimmer (2008) highlights the important role of people on the other side of the boundary who accept or reject newcomers. When policy makers cannot count on a refugee migrant's ability or willingness to learn the language and integrate into this systematic process under certain standards and compulsory frames, the dynamics of boundaries should be rethought and communication practices should be reviewed.

5.2 Strengths and Limitations

This research is not only conducted by an insider researcher who shares the same values and culture with the participants, it is, on one hand, done based on long-term personal engagement with social situations, like migrant refugee acculturation and integration boundaries. On the other hand, it comes from the familiarity of the lived experiences and challenges people face when they relocate to a new country. Thus, exploring the food choices and cultural preferences of refugees in their natural setting is a key strength (Benbasat et al., 1987). Another key strength is that this research has achieved validity, transferability and authenticity by building trust with participants, who represent the research partners, based on disciplinary, critical collaboration, although a set of reflexive, emotional and subjective involvement took place inevitably (Mata-Codesal et al., 2020). Additionally, the study's main focus was interpreting the food choices of Syrian refugees living in the Netherlands and shedding light on symbolic boundaries established by both Syrian and Dutch people. Hence, social boundaries are redefined and highlighted based on the responses of participants who share everyday life practices and difficulties in terms of communication and social inequality. This flexibility is a strength because it responds to the theoretical interests and participants, especially as an insider researcher who is uniquely positioned to access the Syrian refugees' group.

Furthermore, this study addresses food choices and cultural preferences. I think that it has numerous benefits for both refugees and communities. It might invite refugees to reconsider their relationships with the Dutch people, which possibly causes a change in the participants' relations with the community (Vaughn et al., 2017).

On the other hand, this study has several empirical limitations, which could be addressed in further research. The first is related to my research position as an insider, which kept me engaged in much self-reflection, especially because I share similar experiences and

emotions with participants. The second is that this study has focused on one perspective of boundary making, which is the perspective of Syrian refugees. This has not provided a general image of the symbolism of food preferences, social construction and interaction between Dutch and refugees. The third one is that the research has a varied sample, which enabled selecting participants from different cultural backgrounds in order to compare their food preferences and attitudes, but some challenges took place when using varied samples (Robinson, 2014). For instance, the diversity of data made it difficult to generate meaningful themes during the phases of analysis (Robinson, 2014). Finally, an insider researcher status could have an effect on the response of participants because some perceive me as a researcher, who presumably knows a lot about their habits, but wants to analyze their behaviors and preferences.

5.3 Further Research

This study prepares the ground for future work with the same typology. According to the first limitation, it is relevant to research the preferences of Dutch people on the other side of the boundary and see how they perceive Syrian refugees' food options and attitudes. The research question might be like: which symbolic boundaries have the Dutch established when interacting with Syrian refugees? This shows the dynamics of boundary making from the perspective of Dutch people and provides a comparative model of boundary formation. Such a comparison allows research to track and trace how preferences, gender roles, race and attitudes are used to assess the 'Other' and justify judgement (Lamont, 1995).

Another study can focus only on Syrian refugees in the big four cities to see how they identify themselves inside the refugee orbit and outside the Syrian identity. How they are attached to other ethnic groups and how they establish symbolic boundaries are the interests of research to see how super-diverse neighborhoods affect the acculturation process of Syrian refugees. The study shall provide comparisons with other migrant/refugee groups; following certain respondents over a couple of years to understand changes in different cultural aspects and economic patterns, in addition to comparison with other cultural products like clothing, decoration, music or books.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Consent form for participating in research

Project Title: Refugees' Navigating Social and Symbolic Boundaries Through Food Practices

Purpose of the Study

This research is being conducted to understand how migrants, especially Syrian refugees living in the Netherlands, draw symbolic and social boundaries through making food choices. For that, I am inviting you to participate in this research project to get some insights about your food habits.

Procedures

- You will participate in an interview lasting approximately [45 to 60 minutes]. You will be asked questions about food consumption on a daily basis, your social activities with the Dutch and about integration.
- The questions of the interview will be related to your experiences, so there will be no right or wrong answers.
- Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be interviewed.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

As far as I can tell, there are no obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.

I am aware that the possibility of identifying the people who participate in this study may involve risks for the participant's reputation, help, social relations, etc. For that reason—unless you prefer to be identified fully (first name, last name, occupation, etc.)—I will not keep any information that may lead to the identification of those involved in the study. I will use only pseudonyms to identify participants.

Potential Benefits:

Participation in this study does not guarantee any beneficial results to you. As a result of participating you may better understand why I am doing this research and be aware of the importance of culture to introduce to your Dutch peers.

Confidentiality

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product. Moreover, only trained research staff will have access to your responses. Within these restrictions, results of this study will be made available to you upon request.

As indicated above, this research project involves making audio recordings of interviews with you. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, only pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location in the researchers' offices or on the researcher's password-protected computers and will be destroyed within ten years of the initiation of the study.

Compensation

There will be no financial compensation for participating in this research

Right to Withdraw and Questions

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. The data you provided before you stopped participating however will be processed in this research; no new data will be collected or used.

If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the primary investigator:

Statement of Consent Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree that you will participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

I agree to participate in a research project led by Jaber Mawazini. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed.

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.
2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by (a) researcher who is a master student at Erasmus University – Rotterdam. The interview will last approximately [45-60] minutes. I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. I also allow the recording (by audiotape) of the interview. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I am at any point of time fully entitled to withdraw from participation.
4. I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.
5. I have been given the explicit guarantees that, if I wish so, the researcher will not identify me by name or function in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. In all cases subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies at the EU (Data Protection Policy).
6. I have been given the guarantee that this research project has been reviewed and approved by [Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication - Erasmus University Rotterdam] and by the EU Ethics Committee. For research problems or any other question regarding the research project, the EU Ethics Committee may be contacted through [information of the contact person at the Ethics Committee at Erasmus University.
7. I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I have been given a copy of this consent form co-signed by the interviewer.

	NAME PARTICIPANT	NAME PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
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Signature and Date	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE
	DATE	DATE

Appendix 2. Topic list

The participant was thanked for his participation in research and provided with full information about the participation, risks and benefits if any, in addition to how privacy conditions were treated in strictest confidence. Participants will be asked to provide their approval to record the interviews and sign the informed consent form.

Socioeconomic questions:

1. Would you please tell me about yourself?
2. What is your name?
3. How long have you been in the Netherlands?
4. Do you speak Dutch? What is your level?
5. How many kids do you have if you are married?
6. How old are they?

Questions about food consumption:

1. When you arrived in the Netherlands and before that, how did you think about finding Syrian food or that you are going to cook this kind of food?
2. How do you choose your food?
3. What are the criteria on which you base your food choice?
4. please name your top 5 favorite Syrian dishes from your city?
5. Would you please name 5 Syrian dishes you eat regularly?
6. How do you describe your food manners to someone from another culture?
7. What are the Syrian dishes that you have not prepared yet in the Netherlands? Why?
8. What are the Syrian dishes that you have prepared yet in the Netherlands not in Syria? Why?

9. How much are you keen on buying halal food? How and Why?

10. What kind of food do your children take when they go to school?

Cultural differences:

11. What are the cultural differences between Dutch and Syrian people when it comes to food?

12. How can you describe your Syrian food for a Dutch person?

13. How can you describe the Dutch food for a Syrian person?

14. What is your favorite cuisine after the Syrian cuisine?

Food culture and memory:

15. If you have ever been to a Syrian restaurant, can you describe your visit to the Syrian restaurant?

16. How can food help you feel at home in the Netherlands?

Questions about integration and cultural participation:

17. What does integration mean to you?

18. How do you integrate yourself?

19. How important is it to know about the Dutch culture? Why?

20. If you have ever been to one of the integration events, how can you describe them?

21. Who organized this event?

22. How did you know about it?

23. What are the cultural activities that you have attended or attend?

24. How do you communicate with Dutch people? Formally, informally, why?

25. How can you describe your relationship with the Dutch people?

Closing questions:

26. What is your plan for the future?

27. How do you work on achieving them?

Thank you very much for your time. Here the participant is thanked for contributing to this research.

Appendix 3

Table A.1 the main themes and subthemes

Main theme	Sub themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The construction of cultural identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaning making • Memories • Restaurants • Socialization • Food stories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundary navigation • Boundary making • Boundary crossing • Boundary formation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolic boundaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol • Halal food • Gender roles • Hospitality • Quantity of food • Time consumption • Moral, cultural and socioeconomic boundaries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarities or convergences • Tensions and ambivalences • Socialization • Cultural interests • Relationships building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviors • Attitudes • Preferences • Social capital