



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM



“One hand can’t clap”

يد واحدة لا تصفق

A research into the social connections of newcomer families in the context of home schooling due to COVID-19-induced school closures



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Abstract

The overarching goal of this research is to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of COVID-19-induced school closures on social inequality in educational opportunities of newcomer children in the Netherlands. Parents are expected to take a crucial role in home schooling their kids, which is likely to increase social inequality (Bol, 2020; Dietrich, Patzina, & Lerche, 2020; Kollender & Nimer, 2020). This research starts from the premises that home schooling is more difficult for parents who are relatively 'new' in the Netherlands (Van der Hoeven, 2020; Van der Ent & Stam, in press) and that these parents are likely to have smaller social networks to ask for support. This research concludes that social connections – especially with someone experienced in the Dutch institutional context – mitigate obstacles concerning home schooling in newcomer families. The school closures have functioned as a magnifying glass, magnifying the obstacles for newcomer parents to support their children's education. However, these obstacles, predominantly the language barrier (Van der Ent & Stam, in press), do not disappear when the COVID-19 virus does. Neither does the need for additional support. This research underlines that a buddy system – a personal connection between a newcomer child (and often parents) and somebody who is experienced in the Dutch context – is a good way to provide such additional support, especially since its positive effects are broader than boosting the educational level of the child. This research illuminates the value of a 'buddy' for the child, parents, and even for society as a whole, by advancing integration as a two-way process.

Keywords:

Social capital – integration – social inequality – superdiversity – COVID-19-induced homeschooling

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“I cannot do everything on my own,
one hand can’t clap”

Fatima, Yemeni mother

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented measures in education. On March 16th, 2020, the first lockdown was announced in the Netherlands. This lockdown included the closure of all schools, until June 2nd, 2020. Schools continued the curriculum through online classes that their pupils could follow from home. This put a great responsibility on parents (Bol, 2020; Van der Ent & Stam, in press). A dangerous situation according to sociologist Thijs Bol: the more you leave to parents, the larger the inequality between children becomes (in: Van der Hoeven, 2020).

The school results of primary school students after the first lockdown already reflected the inequality between children. The 'learning growth'¹ of primary school pupils has decreased for all social-economic groups (Haelermans et al., 2021b). The results of 350 000 Dutch primary school pupils, showed an average learning loss of two to three months, which equals the period of time of the lockdown (Engzell, Frey & Verhagen, 2020). However, the effects of the lockdown have been most severe for pupils from a low or average social economic status (SES)²: the learning loss of these pupils is approximately 1,5 times larger compared to their peers from a high social-economic background in all assessed domains (receptive reading, spelling and math). Moreover, pupils with a non-Western migration background have gotten further behind than their peers without a migration background or with a Western-migration background (Haelermans et al., 2021b). This is even more worrisome knowing that social inequality in educational opportunities has already doubled in the Netherlands over the past five to ten years (Kooijman, 2018). As Bol (2021) puts it, the school closures function as a magnifying glass, making all social inequalities more visible.

What if you are expected to support your child in home schooling, but you are not familiar with the Dutch language and the Dutch school system? At the moment, this is the situation for many newcomers with school-going children in the Netherlands. The term newcomer (nieuwkomer) refers to people who are not born in the Netherlands, but have moved to the Netherlands intending to stay for a relatively long time (Stals, 2020). So, the term includes refugees, permit holders and people who have come to the Netherlands for other purposes, such as family reunion, study or work. When you are new in a country, it may be very challenging to support your child in home schooling. A recent study on the experiences of Syrian youngsters in the Netherlands during the first COVID-19-induced school closure points out three reasons why home schooling is more difficult for children in newcomer

¹ Learning growth indicates the progress in educational skills between a test in the middle and a test in the end of the year (*Cito-middentoets* and *Cito-eindtoets*).

² Social economic status is based on parents' educational level. In case this was unknown, it has been supplemented with information on the household income.

families: they often live in relatively large families, with limited financial resources and their parents often cannot support them due to the language barrier (Van der Ent & Stam, in press).

If you cannot solve something by yourself, you may ask a friend, family member, or neighbour. In other words, you may consult your social network. However, newcomers, who have only been in the Netherlands for a couple of years³ are likely to have limited social networks. What has caught my interest, is the discrepancy between the need for extra support in home schooling, whilst knowing fewer people to ask for this help. Social capital theory provides a rich body of literature to study the value of social networks (i.e. Bourdieu, 1983; Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2003). This research aims to gain insight into the social connections of newcomer families in the Netherlands and to what extent their connections are useful for home schooling their children. I set out to answer the following research questions:

What role do social connections play in facilitating home schooling in newcomer families?

1. What types of social connections do newcomer families have in the Netherlands and how do they experience it?
2. What are the (potential) benefits of social connections for newcomer families in the Netherlands?
3. What factors influence the social connections of newcomer families in the Netherlands?
4. What is the value of a home schooling buddy for newcomer families?

The term *home schooling buddy* refers to an initiative launched by OpenEmbassy. In this research project, I have collaborated with OpenEmbassy, an Amsterdam-based organisation striving “to support a swift, seamless and dignified process of integration” (OpenEmbassy, 2021a). OpenEmbassy recognised that home schooling can be extra difficult for newcomer families and launched a project to support them: Homeschooling Buddies (Thuisonderwijsmaatjes). The goal of this project is to support newcomer families in home schooling and online education of their children. OpenEmbassy matches a *buddy*, a volunteer – somebody who is experienced in the Dutch language and school system - with a newcomer family, to support the family with homework, computer problems, planning, et cetera. In other words, OpenEmbassy facilitates the formation of social connections in order to support home schooling in newcomer families. The project is underpinned by the key principle of social capital theory: “social networks have value” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19); social connections can help someone to “get ahead” (Briggs, 1998, p. 178). The collaboration with OpenEmbassy allowed me to get to know the stories of newcomer families, in order to better

³ Participants of this research have been in the Netherlands for a period of time between 1 and 8 years.

understand the interplay between social connections, integration and education. The next chapter elaborates on the collaboration the Homeschooling Buddies project.

The stories of parents and buddies participating in the home schooling buddy project form the main body of this research. The data has been primarily collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews. The literature on superdiversity, integration, social capital and educational inequality provided a framework to make sense of the data. The concept of social capital has been widely used in the literature on integration (i.e. Ager & Strang, 2008; Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019; Zetter et al., 2006) as well as in the literature on education (Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2011), and is therefore indispensable in this research.

The purpose of this research is to contribute to a better understanding of the impact of COVID-19-induced school closures on social inequality in educational opportunities of newcomer-children in the Netherlands. By doing so, it adds to the debate on the influence of parents on the educational opportunities of their children (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2016; Kooijman, 2018; Knigge, 2019). This topic has gained renewed attention due to the COVID-19-induced school closures (Bol, 2020; Dietrich, 2020; Engzell, Frey & Verhagen, 2020) and, amongst the Dutch public, by the popular documentary series 'Klassen',⁴ which portrayed the challenges at school of diverse children, also during the first lockdown. Just when the series was broadcasted, the schools in the Netherlands closed again.

⁴ Translation: Classes (referring both to school classes, and social classes). For more information and all episodes see <https://www.human.nl/klassen.html>

“There is so little you can do and so much is needed.
You can just see it going wrong.

It is like I am in the middle of an episode of Klassen”

Lieke, buddy



Chapter 2
OpenEmbassy's
Home schooling Buddies

2. OpenEmbassy's Homeschooling Buddies

For this research project, I have cooperated with OpenEmbassy.⁵ OpenEmbassy is a social enterprise based in Amsterdam, but operating countrywide. OpenEmbassy “strives to support a swift, seamless and dignified process of integration” (OpenEmbassy, 2021a). The organisation works on an individual, community, and policy level. They offer individualised support for newcomers, build inclusive communities of newcomers and Dutch residents and advocate for positive change in the civic integration process.

At the end of March 2020, during the first COVID-19 lockdown in the Netherlands,⁶ OpenEmbassy set up a project called *Thuisonderwijsmaatjes* (Homeschooling Buddies). The goal of this project is to support the home schooling of children in newcomer families. OpenEmbassy matches a *buddy*, a volunteer, who is experienced in the Dutch language and the Dutch school system, to a newcomer family, so they can support the family with, amongst other things, homework, computer problems, or planning. The matching is done by a *matcher*, who also functions as a focal point for both the buddy and the newcomer family after the match has been made. Some matchers are from Syria and Eritrea themselves, which facilitates the communications with newcomer parents since most of them are from Syria or Eritrea. Initially, the project was set up to deal with school closures. However, when the schools opened again the project continued, because the newcomers' need for additional support remained, according to OpenEmbassy.⁷ Also in the next school year (2021-2022), the project will continue (OpenEmbassy, 2021b).

Presently, over 400 volunteers and 600 children have signed up (OpenEmbassy, 2021b). The ages of the children participating in the project range from 6 to 17 years old. By far, most of them are in primary school. The buddies who volunteer for the project are very diverse. Their ages range from approximately 18 to 70 years old. Some of them have work experience in education, but this is not a prerequisite. It has to be noted that these are not all 'active matches'. For various reasons, some matches are not in contact anymore. For example, because the availability of the volunteer has changed or because the child has reached the goal of the support (such as practising for a specific test). At the moment, the precise number of active matches is not known. This is due to a very informal registration procedure (mainly using WhatsApp) at the start of the project, since the project was set up at a very rapid pace because of the urgency of the crisis situation. Moreover, there is usually little

⁵ For more information see <https://www.openembassy.nl/en/>

⁶ During the first COVID-19 lockdown in the Netherlands, the schools were closed from March 16th until June 2nd. After that, schools opened with several adaptations (e.g. smaller groups, partially online, fewer days).

⁷ The remaining need for additional support in education was also confirmed in the interviews with parents in this research.

contact between the matches and OpenEmbassy after a match has been made (personal communication, March 8, 2021). Currently, OpenEmbassy is professionalising the project, which entails a more detailed and formal registration and a more active role of the organisation after the match has been made (personal communication, March 11, 2021).

In the light of this professionalisation, OpenEmbassy has launched a research on the project of Homeschooling Buddies. This research has two main goals: (1) to evaluate the home schooling buddy project, to improve the project and measure impact; (2) to acquire knowledge on homeschooling among newcomers in order to pinpoint weaknesses in the Dutch educational system that are causing inequality. My research contributes predominantly to the second research goal of OpenEmbassy.

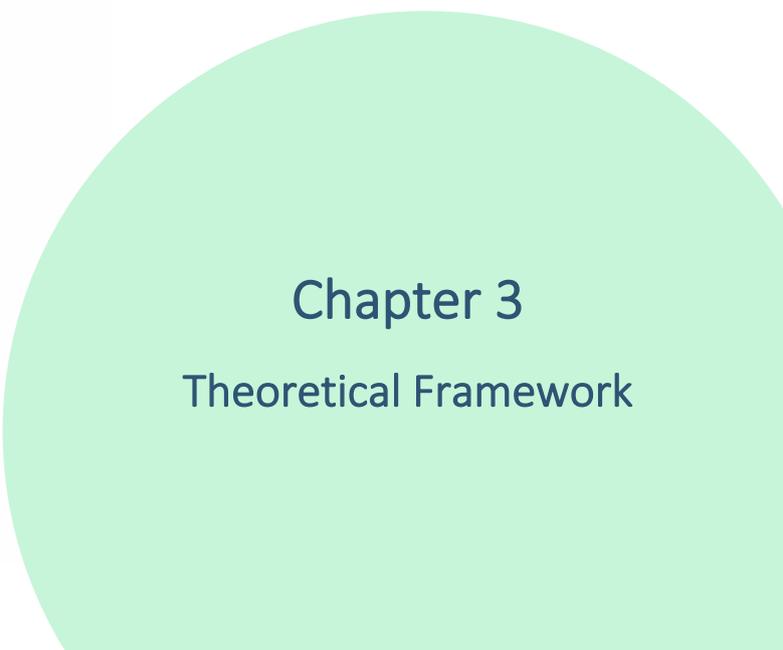
The collaboration with OpenEmbassy allows me to get to know the stories about home schooling, from the perspective of the parent and the buddy. It also provided the opportunity to research a possible solution (having a home schooling buddy) to the problem of increasing inequality of educational opportunities in newcomer families. This is the topic of the fourth sub-question: *What is the value of a home schooling buddy for newcomer families?* The research also yields valuable information for OpenEmbassy. The insights can help the organisation to improve their project as well as to advocate for positive change in the situation of newcomers at the policy level.



“When I arrived at their [the Syrian family’s] house, they quickly cleaned the room, turned off the TV, opened the door for good ventilation because of Corona of course, took everything off the table, and sent the other children upstairs, while they are actually living in a small house. It signalled ‘the living room is for teaching now, that is important.

Later, the mother came with fruit and a freshly baked cake. It was a mix between hospitality and ‘this is important for our children, they have to study, so they can succeed in the Netherlands. That ‘drive’ right from the start, I found that interesting to see.”

Johan, buddy



Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Superdiversity

The term *superdiversity* describes the “transformative diversification of diversity” (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025). This cryptic sentence becomes more tangible as Vertovec, the founding father of the concept, describes the increasing diversity of immigration in the UK:

Compared to the large-scale immigration of the 1950s-early 1970s, the 1990s-early 2000s have seen more migrants from more places entailing more socio-cultural differences going through more migration channels leading to more, as well as more significantly stratified, legal categories (which themselves have acted to internally diversify various groups), and who maintain more intensely an array of links with places of origin and diasporas elsewhere.” (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1043)

This process of superdiversification is advancing at unprecedented speed, scale, and spread (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015), mostly concentrating in urban areas (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018). In the Netherlands, 70% of the largest non-Western migrant groups (originating from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles) live in the four major cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht) (Huijnk, Dagevos, & Miltenburg, 2017). As a result of this process, many cities in the United States and Western Europe have recently become *majority-minority cities*: cities consisting of minorities, without one dominant ethnic or racial majority group (Cruel, 2016). Amsterdam is an example of such a superdiverse *majority-minority city*. Figure 1 shows the cultural composition of the people of Amsterdam in 2016.⁸ It shows that only 49% - a minority - of the city population is of Dutch descent. The four established migrant groups and the group of Dutch descent under age 15 (row b) are equal in percentage (37%) and thus have an equal impact on how the city develops in the near future. Thus, the minority of Dutch descent is about to become even smaller and the superdiversification of Amsterdam is likely to follow through.

⁸ It should be noted that the number of asylum seekers skyrocketed in 2015, especially from Syria (commonly referred to as the refugee crisis). Nearly sixty thousand asylum applications were submitted in the Netherlands that year (IND, n.d.). These new arrivals are not reflected in the numbers of Figure 1 yet, since most of them were in asylum seeker centres at the time.

Figure 1

Ethnic background of the city population of Amsterdam (a) all age groups and (b) under 15 years (Crul, 2016)

Amsterdam population	Dutch descent	Moroccan descent	Turkish descent	Surinamese descent	Antillean descent	Other non-European descent	European and US descent
(a) 100%	49%	9%	5%	8%	2%	11%	16%
Under the age of 15	Dutch descent	Moroccan descent	Turkish descent	Surinamese descent	Antillean descent	Other non-European	European and US descent
(b) 100%	37%	17%	8%	10%	2%	15%	11%

The concept of superdiversity describes a demographic reality (of an increasingly diverse population) and provides an analytical lens (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018). Through this lens, researchers can develop an understanding of “the ways in which older and novel demographic complexities shape societies” (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018, p. 180). Despite some disagreement in earlier days (Back, 2015; Ndhlovu, 2016), the concept continues to gain traction among scholars (Meissner & Vertovec, Comparing super-diversity, 2015; Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; Foner, Duyvendak, & Kasinitz, 2019). According to Fomina (2010) and Phillimore, Humphris, & Khan (2014), superdiversity offers the potential to fill the current “post-multicultural theoretical void” (Phillimore, Humphris, & Khan, 2014, p. 3). By acknowledging superdiversity as its *locus* (demographic reality in which the research is situated) and its *focus* (analytical lens), this research contributes to filling a part of this theoretical void.

Superdiversity as a demographic reality

The demographic reality of superdiversity has far-reaching implications for people arriving in a new society. As a result of super diversification, in many areas where migrants arrive there is no coherent majority culture anymore (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018). Blommaert explains how in a superdiverse society, “immigrants need to ‘integrate’ in the many niches that compose their actual social environment” (Blommaert, 2013, p. 194). These niches are the many subcultures in society, originating from migrant communities, religion, age, sexuality, profession, and so on. Features that suggest integration in some niches of social life may simultaneously be features suggesting a lack of integration in other niches. Blommaert illustrates this with the example of a Muslim woman wearing a hijab in a Western country. Wearing a hijab can be perceived as not integrated into the dominant values of the host society and at the same time as fully integrated into the religious culture of the Muslim diaspora, or even as integrated into a global aesthetics of femininity in a specific peer community. If citizenship is understood as “a particular degree of integration” (Blommaert, 2013, p.

195), the current superdiverse society makes it very difficult for immigrants to be perceived and accepted as full citizens:

We expect them to be 'fully' integrated into every niche we detect in society. Failing that, immigrants will perpetually be regarded as dis-citizens, even sometimes anti-citizens as in the case of more radical Muslims in various countries of the West. (Blommaert, 2013, p. 195)

So, according to Blommaert, superdiversity poses the threat of “dis-citizenship” (Blommaert, 2013, p. 195): some people are not regarded as ‘real’ citizens by others.

Blommaert’s study provides a relevant notion for this research: newcomers do not only have to integrate into Dutch society but also in many subcultures and social contexts. However, many migration policies stress the need for migrants to adapt in order to fit into such a national culture. For example, the aim of the Dutch participation declaration trajectory (participatieverklaringstraject) is to familiarise newcomers as soon as possible with the norms, values, and rules of play of the Dutch society (Huijnk, Dagevos & Miltenburg, 2017). Newcomers are given one year (after registering at a municipality) to sign the participation declaration as a part of the civic integration process, to declare that he or she will respect these values and actively wants to contribute to the Dutch society (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, s.d.; for a UK-based example see Casey, 2016).

Such policies assume a single majority culture, which is inconsistent with the demographic complexity that underpins superdiversity (Blommaert, 2013; Crul, 2016; Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). Therefore, the superdiversity literature suggests that the traditional understanding of ‘integrating into the Dutch society’ (or any other superdiverse society) may no longer be applicable today. That is why, superdiversity urges scholars and policy makers to rethink the meaning of integration (Blommaert, 2013; Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018; Klarenbeek, 2019). Section 3.3 elaborates on the reconceptualisation of integration in the context of superdiversity.

Superdiversity as an analytical lens

As explained previously, superdiversity is also an analytical lens, which requires a researcher to be open to complexity and to be attentive to the language being used (by others and by the researcher him/herself). To recognize superdiversity in migration research is to recognize that factors beyond the country of origin play a major role in integration processes. Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore (2018) argue that multicultural perspectives (as opposed to superdiverse perspectives) often underappreciated the impact of variables like legal status, length of stay, age, gender, or level of education on integration outcomes. Such variables may, “either individually, or intersectionally”, be more relevant than one’s country of origin in this regard (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore 2018, p.

180). According to Crul (2016), emerging superdiversity “calls for a shift of focus from fixed entities like ‘the ethnic group’ to a dynamic interplay between different characteristics of individual members of ethnic groups and the fluid relationships between them; in other words: a shift from an ‘ethnic lens’ to a multidimensional lens” (p. 54).

Acknowledging superdiversity implies moving away from binary language to describe interactions between migrants, other inhabitants and the state, such as them/us, autochthonous/allochthonous, and immigrant/native (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018; Klarenbeek, 2019). According to the superdiversity literature, thinking in such binary terms⁹ does not sufficiently capture the reality on the ground anymore, because of the diversification of both groups.

3.2 Acculturation strategies

The term *acculturation* refers to “the changes that happen to groups and individuals when two different cultures meet” (Phillimore, 2011, p. 578). In principle, these changes may take place in either one or both cultural groups. In practice, one group tends to experience more change than the other (Berry, 1997). Berry refers to the one that changes most as *non-dominant* (also *acculturating group*) and the other as *dominant*, recognizing the power imbalances (numerical, economic, political, or otherwise).

When migrants enter their new environment, they will have to make choices about the composition of their social networks and the importance they attach to holding on to, or letting go of, certain cultural perceptions and patterns, whether or not forced and conscious (Vermeulen, 2021). Their choices combine into a so-called *acculturation strategy*. Generally, the literature distinguishes four acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation (i.e. Berry 1997, 2006; Phillimore, 2011; Vermeulen, 2021). These acculturation strategies indicate to what extent a newcomer is socially and culturally oriented towards his/her own cultural identity and the host society respectively (Figure 2).

Building on Berry, Vermeulen explains these acculturation strategies as follows:

In the case of assimilation, the social and cultural orientation of the migrant is towards the host society. A separation strategy means the individual is socially and culturally orientated towards their own origin group. Integration means that the individual leans towards both their own origin group and the host society. Finally, in the case of marginalisation the individual withdraws and

⁹ I have attempted to reduce the use of such binary terms to a minimum in this research. However, in some cases it was perceived inevitable, especially when using the terms of other authors or policy makers, or concerning the concept of bridging social capital, which is quite binary by nature.

displays no orientation towards either the host society or their own origin group. (Vermeulen, 2021, p. 3)¹⁰

Figure 2

Acculturation Strategies (adapted from Phillimore (2011) and Berry (1997))

		Cultural maintenance Is it considered important to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?	
Contact & participation Is it valued to maintain relationships with larger society?		Yes	No
	Yes	Integration <i>mutual adaptation</i>	Assimilation <i>one-sided adaptation</i>
	No	Separation/Segregation¹¹ <i>chosen or enforced by society</i>	Marginalisation <i>can result from exclusion or discrimination</i>

Of course, these are mere analytical categories. In reality, newcomers combine multiple strategies. For example, they may *assimilate* in the context of work and education but *marginalise* with regard to religion and family traditions. For the mental health of migrants, it is important that they can follow their preferred acculturation strategy (or combination of strategies). Much research has been done on stress related to acculturation (i.e. Berry, 1997; Dyal & Dyal, 1981; Finch & Vega, 2003). Phillimore states: “Too much change, lack of support, pressure to adapt too quickly or inability to follow the desired strategy can all result in acculturative stress, and when major problems are experienced individuals can be susceptible to mental illness” (Phillimore, 2011, p. 579).

Berry (1997) argues that integration is commonly regarded as the preferred acculturation strategy, both societally and psychologically. To attain integration “mutual accommodation is required [...], involving the acceptance by both groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples” (Berry, 1997, p. 10). In more concrete terms, it requires non-dominant groups to adopt the basic norms and values of the larger society. Meanwhile, the dominant group has to redesign national institutions, such as an educational system, to fit the needs of all groups (Berry, 1997).

¹⁰ In this research the English summary of Vermeulen’s research has been referenced, because it allows for direct quotes. The full report in Dutch and an Arabic summary are available through: <https://www.scp.nl/publicaties/publicaties/2021/02/18/open-armen-en-dichte-deuren>

¹¹ According to Berry (1997, p.10), *separation* is chosen freely by the non-dominant group. If this situation is enforced by the dominant group, it is called *segregation*. Phillimore (2011, p. 579) leaves the term *segregation* out of her adaptation of the framework.

Also policy makers favour integration (Phillimore, 2011). However, it is frequently used by policy-makers to imply assimilation (Phillimore, 2012) rather than a process of mutual adaptation (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). The next section elaborates on the concept of integration. What does it really mean and to whom?

3.3 Integration

“Successful integration helps people to realize their full potential” (Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP. In: Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p. 7). With this quote, the former UK Minister of State for Immigration states clearly why integration is desirable from an individual perspective. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) highlights why integration is desirable for society as a whole: “The positive integration of migrants in a society free from discrimination and xenophobia is directly proportionate to the migrants’ potential contribution to development” (IOM, 2018, p. 63). This research is underpinned by the assumption that integration is desirable. At least, if the term is used as conceptualised in the section below.

Integration as a two-way process

In a traditional view of integration a non-dominant group is being “inserted” (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p. 20) into the dominant culture. This perception can be found in civic integration policies as illustrated in section 3.1 (Rijksoverheid, 2016; Rijksoverheid, n.d.; Casey, 2016). An attentive reader may have noticed, that Berry’s traditional terminology of dominants and non-dominants in the section above does not sit well with with the argument for a less binary terminology in the light of emerging superdiversity. That is why Grzymala-Kazłowska and Philimore (2018) argue that the new context of superdiversity requires a new definition of integration, because of the “growing complexity, acceleration of changes and increased interconnectedness across societies as well as diversification of migrants” (p. 181). Let’s rethink integration.

An agreed scholarly definition of the term integration is lacking (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019; Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2002; Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018). However, most scholars agree that integration is a two-way process, meaning that both the migrants and the receiving community adapt. In a symposium on integration, Alison Strang eloquently described the necessity of a two-way conceptualisation: “We are looking at the change of whole of society and how [the] whole [of] society can involve and include meaningfully all the diversity that exists within it. Which means that change cannot be in a single direction” (Strang, personal communications, May 21st, 2021).

Conversely, most scholars agree that conceptualising integration as a one-way process – a non-dominant group being “inserted” (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p. 20) into the dominant culture -

constitutes problems, such as anchoring anti-integration narratives by problematising migrants (Strang & Ager, 2010). Being “too one-way” is severe criticism within the field: “disproportionally emphasising the responsibility of ‘people with a migration background’ and underestimating the role of the receiving society” (Klarenbeek, 2019, p. 1).

International treaties also recognise the responsibility of the receiving society. The EU Common Basic Principles, adopted in 2004, state that “integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States” (Council of the European Union, 2004, p. 17). The Geneva Convention declares that it is the responsibility of host countries to create the conditions that enable integration (e.g. access to jobs and services) and an acceptance of refugees in the host society (United Nations, 1951).

Drawing from boundary theory (Alba, Reitz, & Simon, 2012; Tilly, 2004) and relational equality theory (Anderson, 2010), Klarenbeek takes the conceptualisation of integration as a two-way process one step further. Klarenbeek distinguishes three general understandings of integration as a two-way process: “(a) insiders are affected by the integration of outsiders; (b) insiders can influence the integration of outsiders; and (c) insiders and outsiders integrate with each other” (Klarenbeek, 2019, p. 2). She argues that only the third understanding can truly deal with the problems associated with one-wayness. However, most researchers start from the first or second understanding, and are therefore not truly two-way, according to Klarenbeek:

Integration is still portrayed as a one-sided affair: outsiders need to integrate with insiders, not the other way around. If outsiders do not identify with insiders, outsiders have an integration problem. If insiders do not identify with outsiders, it is still the outsiders with an integration problem. (Klarenbeek, 2019, p.9)

Vermeulen depicts his image of integration as a two-way process as follows:

Integration is a relational process, which could be compared to traffic joining a busy motorway: drivers give each other the space and time to merge into the moving traffic so that everyone can then continue to travel in the same direction together. (Vermeulen, 2021, p. 10-11)

Vermeulen’s motorway-metaphor seems to uphold the first two understandings of integration: the cars that are already on the motorway drive in the same direction, and the new arrivals have to fit in. However, mutual adaptation is necessary to make it work. Vermeulen also acknowledges that cultural perceptions and patterns can change on both sides, when new social networks arise between newcomers and people already living in the host country. So, he also leans towards the third understanding, but the fact that he mentions that new arrivals have to merge and drive in the same

direction implies still more adaptation on the side of the newcomer. Regardless of whether this is the most ideal conceptualisation, I think Vermeulen’s conceptualisation is the most adequate way to talk about integration in the current Dutch context, because it accounts for the structural component of integration: more adaptation is required from newcomers to be able to navigate their new environment in a way that may “realize their full potential” (Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP. In: Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p. 7). Therefore, this research adheres to Vermeulen’s conceptualisation of integration, because it takes into account both the relational component (concerning the relationships between people) and the structural component of integration (e.g. adaptation to societal institutions).

More or less: measuring integration

To measure what is ‘more’ and what is ‘less’ integration, it is necessary to define what “integration as an end state” (or: “completed integration”) would look like, albeit utopian (Klarenbeek, 2019, p. 3).

Klarenbeek defines an “ideal-type integrated society” as “a society without any social boundaries between legitimate and non-legitimate members” (Klarenbeek, 2019, p. 3). This definition is underpinned by two concepts: *social boundaries* and *social standing*. Social boundaries are the differentiations people make to form how they feel and behave towards others. In other words, social boundaries are what separates ‘us’ from ‘them’ (Tilly, 2004). The existence of a social boundary that differentiates between ‘legitimate members’ and ‘non-legitimate members’ affects people’s social standing: the people who are perceived as ‘legitimate members’ enjoy a higher social standing. This resonates with Blommaerts notion of “dis-citizenship” (Blommaert, 2013, p. 195), which entails that some people are not regarded as ‘real’ citizens, as was described in section 3.1. This grants them a higher power position within society, which “provides them better access to all forms of capital¹² (economic, political, social, cultural, and symbolic), and gives them the power to deny such access to non-legitimate citizens through mechanisms of social closure and stigmatisation” (Klarenbeek, 2019, p. 4). Thus, according to Klarenbeek, integration would be the change of the social boundary which makes migrants the ‘them’ in the eyes of local people. Social boundaries may still exist, as long as they do not impact the social standing of citizens as legitimate members of society. In a fully integrated society, *all* citizens would be legitimate members of society.

The UK Government has also formulated a vision on completed integration, in their terms “integrated communities”: “communities where people – whatever their background – live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities” (Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, 2018, p. 9). This vision underpins the ‘Indicators of Integration Framework’ (which will be explained in the next section) which will serve as an important frame of

¹² Section 3.4 elaborates on the forms of capital, specifically social capital.

reference in this thesis. However, Klarenbeek's focus on social boundaries (and the social standing and power position flowing from it) will also serve as an analytical lens.

When measuring the position of migrants, often two dimensions are distinguished. Firstly, the structural dimension of integration, including labour market, education, housing and health. Secondly, the sociocultural dimension, including networks, cultural factors and attitudes, and forms of identification (Vermeulen, 2021). In this research both domains will be taken into account; it is the interplay between the structural (education) and cultural (social networks, culture and attitudes) that has caught the researcher's attention now that the pandemic pushes education into the private realm by the forced introduction of home schooling due to school closures.

Government policies are primarily concerned with the structural dimension of political and economic participation (i.e. indicators such as the percentage of newcomers with a job or the number of voters with a migration background) to describe the outcomes of integration for refugees (Korac, 2009). Many scholars, however, have stressed the need to focus not solely on structural dimensions, but also on sociocultural (i.e. the experiences) dimensions of integration "to better evaluate the refugees' perspective, attitudes and behaviours regarding belonging" (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019, p. 185). That is one of the reasons why this research focuses on the experiences of home schooling and social connections in newcomer families, and not, for example, school grades or the objective number of social contacts. Numbers do not tell the full story.

Klarenbeek states that "to study relational integration, one needs to move beyond comparing the average achievements of outsiders with insiders who function as the benchmark of this comparison (objective differences)" (Klarenbeek, 2019, p. 14). According to Klarenbeek, scholars should ask instead whether and how such inequalities are constituted by social boundaries (perceived differences) between legitimate and non-legitimate citizens. However, in this research, some comparisons between newcomers and people originating from the Netherlands will be made. I argue that it is not a matter of 'instead', but rather 'and'. I acknowledge the risk of deficit thinking (Agirdag & Korkmazer, 2015; Smit, 2012): a benchmark set by insiders (receiving community) may exacerbate ideas of 'deficits' of the people who do not achieve the benchmark. On the other hand, making comparisons between different groups (e.g. different cultural backgrounds) can also be an effective instrument to surface inequality of opportunities (e.g. Bol, 2020; Haelermans et al., 2021b; Engzell, Frey & Verhagen, 2020). This offers insights into the barriers people may encounter and thereby inform inclusive policy development. After all, "the worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal" (Aristotle. In: Palaiologou, Spithourakis, & Nikolaou, n.d.).

The Indicators of Integration Framework

Worried about pressure on resources, cultural threats and social tension, and disillusioned by multiculturalist strategies (which seemed to be producing silos of communities rather than mixed communities), the UK government commissioned the development of an evidence-based framework to better understand “what we mean by integration and what we are actually trying to achieve. What does ‘good’ look like in integration?” (Strang, personal communications, May 21st, 2021).

This resulted in the development of a framework consisting of fourteen key domains¹³ (Figure 3), which should provide a basis for newcomers to feel at home in the UK (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019).¹⁴ For each of the domains, a list of outcome indicators and indicators of good practice at the local and national level are comprised. To develop this framework, the researchers spoke to hundreds of refugees and “everyday people living in the neighbourhoods” (not only people who are particularly involved with refugees) (Strang, personal communications, May 21st, 2021). Thus, this framework addresses the need, expressed earlier, to focus more on the sociocultural dimension, the experiences, of integration (i.e. Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019).

The Indicators of Integration Framework is underpinned by four key principles: integration is (1) multi-dimensional, (2) multi-directional, (3) a shared responsibility, and (4) context-specific (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). Building on these principles and earlier work of Ager & Strang (2008) and Philimore (2011), integration is defined as: “a dynamic, multidimensional, and two-way process of adaptation to a new culture, which takes place over time” (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019, p. 184). This definition is adopted in this research because it was based on the findings of the thorough research described above and is therefore aligned with the Indicators of Integration Framework, which is used as an important frame of reference in this research. The Indicators of Integration Framework itself does not formulate a definition phrase, but they elaborate on the meaning of integration based on the four key principles.

First, the multidimensional principle entails that integration cannot be measured by a single domain; it is the interaction between the different domains that matters. To illustrate this interdependence, it was found that pushing newcomers to get into paid employment as soon as possible often has a negative impact on other aspects of integration, such as establishing social connections (Collyer, Morrice, Tip, Brown & Odermatt, 2018) and language learning (Morrice, Tip, Collyer & Brown, 2019).

¹³ Every oval in the Indicators of Integration Framework is by the authors referred to as a “domain”. The rectangles are referred to as “categories”. For every domain there are “indicators” of integration, which can be found in the toolkit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homeoffice-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019>

¹⁴ Earlier versions of the Indicators of Integration Framework were published in 2004 and 2008 (Ager & Strang, 2004; 2008).

A second key principle of integration is its *multi-directionality*. Integration is multidirectional in terms of time: progress in integration is not linear. It can stagnate and even revert (Philimore, 2012; Atfield, Brahmhatt, & O'Toole, 2007). Another aspect is that integration is multi-directional in the sense that it is a process of 'mixing' across multiple differences – not just ethnicity:

This framework does not assume the existence of a homogenous society in which a minority group may be 'inserted'. On the contrary, the Indicators of Integration framework is based on an assumption that society is made up of people who diverge in multiple ways and that different people who may feel marginalised in some contexts will be powerful in others. (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p. 20)

Indeed, the multi-directional principle acknowledges the implications of superdiversity as outlined in section 3.1. The authors also recognize that this is especially complex in super diverse (minority-majority) cities, because there is not a majority culture where migrants can integrate into (also described by Crul, 2016).

The third principle concerns *shared responsibility*. Alison Strang voiced this principle as “it takes two to tango!”: mixing can only happen when all participants are involved (personal communications, May 21st, 2021). Strang and her colleagues argue that integration is the task of both newcomers and members of a receiving society, as well as societal structures (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019).

The fourth and final principle is that integration is *context-specific*, meaning that it can only be measured in a particular time and place, and in relation to particular populations (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p. 20). Stating that integration is multi-directional (principle 2) and a shared responsibility (principle 3) underwrite the perception of integration as a two-way process.

Figure 3 shows the most recent version of the framework (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019), of which the foundations were first put down by Ager and Strang in 2004. It is important to note that the framework does not present a hierarchy, but a web of interdependent domains. For example, if you have got good language skills and cultural knowledge, you can more easily form relationships with people from the majority culture. The first category is called *markers and means* because these themes (work, housing, education, health & social care, leisure) have traditionally been used as markers (or: indicators) of integration of minority groups, but the researchers want to point out that they are also the means to integration. For example, being employed can enable someone to progress in the other domains of integration, such as housing and social connections.

Figure 3

The Indicators of Integration Framework (Ndofor-Tah, et al., 2019)



When the researchers talked to the people in the neighbourhoods, both the locals and newcomers talked about relationships with one another. Relationships became the core concept of the framework (Ager & Strang, 2008). This concept is found as the second category in the framework, *social connections*. The researchers used social capital theory to elaborate on the spectrum of social connections, categorising them as *bridges*, *bonds* and *links*. These terms will be clarified in section 3.4, which will dive into social capital theory, since social capital (that is, relationships) is also – not coincidentally - one of the key concepts of this thesis research.

The category *facilitators* includes key facilitating factors that were important to newcomers as well as ‘local’ people: a shared language, a sense of personal safety and social stability, and knowledge of the culture to navigate their new cultural environment. The domain of digital skills was added later, in the 2019-edition, since access to people, services and right are often facilitated by, or dependent on communication technologies nowadays. A crucial addition, considering the lack of knowledge about digital communication practices in the context of integration (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019). Evaluating the digital skills of newcomers is even more relevant in the light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased the share of online communication dramatically. This research also includes how newcomers experience digital communication concerning online classes, online home schooling support from the buddy project and digital communication from the school.

The last domain the researchers distinguish is *rights and responsibilities*, representing the foundation upon which “mutual expectations and obligations” are established (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019, p.18). Alison Strang explains at a symposium, that the importance of rights and responsibilities powerfully came from the people living together in a neighbourhood: “The message was: if we have the same rights we can belong. If they have the same rights, we feel they are part of us. If they have different rights then they are different” (Strang, personal communications, May 21st, 2021).

3.4 Social capital

“Social networks have value” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). That is the starting point of social capital theory. Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes three main forms of *capital*: economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. All forms of capital provide power to its owner. Simply put, economic capital refers to money, cultural capital to educational qualification and other knowledge and skills that can be used to acquire social privileges such as (easier) access to education and work positions, and finally social capital refers to social connections with people who can help you in some way. According to his theory, these forms can be “converted” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 16) into one another. For example, social capital and cultural capital can be used to find a job and subsequently provide economic capital. Bourdieu defines social capital as follows:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various sense of the word. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21)

So, the volume of someone’s social capital is comprised of two elements: (1) the number of social connections (acquaintances) and (2) the *capital* – resources, such as money, knowledge or status – of those acquaintances. Thus, the volume of someone’s social capital depends on “the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic)” owned by each of his connections (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21). Thus, social capital has a “multiplier effect” on the various forms of capital someone possesses (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21).

A more recent explanation of social capital is provided by American sociologist Robert Putnam (2000): “Social capital refers to connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19). In his explanation social capital is comprised of three components: trust, shared norms and social networks. The explanations of Bourdieu and Putnam are not contradictory, but rather complementary. Bourdieu focuses more on the relationships

within an institutionalised group and the connection with other forms of capital, whereas Putnam focuses on the relationships between individuals. Their notions of “mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21) and “reciprocity” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19) amount to the same thing: relationships are a two-way process.

Social capital: bonding, bridging & linking capital

Social capital theory has extensively been used in research on integration (e.g. Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019; Ager & Strang, 2008). Especially, “bonds, bridges and links have been broadly developed in the discourse of refugee integration” (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019, p. 186).

Bonding, bridging, and linking are three forms of social capital that are commonly distinguished in the literature (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2003; Healy, 2002). The Indicators of Integration Framework (Figure 3) also uses this threefold distinction of social connections. *Bonds* refer to the close relationships people have with people they feel close to, for example family or close friends. These are connections within one’s own social or cultural group. This is where we mostly find emotional support, for example in family relationships (Ndofor-Tah, et al., 2019). *Bridges* refer to relationships with people who see themselves as having a different identity (ethnic or otherwise). *Links* refer to vertical relationships between members of a society and society at large; the social structures, services and institutions (Haely, 2002). It links people to key resources and institutions (e.g. political or economic) (Woolcock, 2003). Stone and Hughes (2002) underline the power dimension of linking social capital: links are social relations with those in authority that can be used to access resources or power. According to Strang, one needs a mix of the various types of social capital: “The argument is that one needs a healthy range of all those different types of relationships to be integrated” (Strang, personal communication, May 21st, 2021).

When talking to Syrian and Eritrean permit holders in the Netherlands, Vermeulen (2021) found that it appears to be easier for them, to make contact with Dutch citizens with a migration background (other than Syrian/Eritrean) than with Dutch citizens without a migration background. They feel culturally closer to this group and feel like this group is more open to contact (p. 4-5). This finding is very interesting for this research, because it has implications for the operationalisation of the concept *bridging*. It points out that there is no dichotomy between ‘bridging with Dutch people’ and ‘bonding with people from the country of origin’. Especially in the light of superdiversity, it is important to recognise the diversity of connections. Also, it concerns a similar context, namely that of Syrian and Eritrean permit holders in Dutch society.¹⁵ Therefore, it was expected to find that Syrian and Eritrean

¹⁵ This research has not exclusively focused on people from Syria and Eritrea, however most respondents are from these countries, especially Syria. Syria: 79,2% of the survey-respondents and 3 of 6 interviews. Eritrea: 5,7% of the survey-respondents and 1 of 6 interviewees.

newcomers in this research would also indicate that they find it easier to connect with newcomers from other countries than with people originating from the Netherlands. This has led me to introduce the concept of *semi-bridging* in this research: connections between newcomers from different countries of origin.

As explained before, superdiversity entails that societies become increasingly diverse with respect to more and more social differences. The concept of semi-bridging aims to take into account the context of superdiversity, by recognising that there are not only bridges to build between migrants and a receiving society, but also between different migrant groups. Whether a connection is a bridge or a bond depends on to what extent you view the other as being different from you. So, the differentiation between bonding and bridging should be perceived as a “continuum” (Claridge, 2018a, p. 5); someone can be *more* or *less* like you, not just *alike* or *unlike*. Semi-bridges may vary a lot in this regard, since a young Muslim woman from Syria may feel culturally close to someone from Yemen and distant from an older Christian man from Eritrea. However, they do share essential experiences: leaving home behind and being ‘new’ in the Netherlands.

The value of social capital

Briggs expresses the value of social capital as follows: “social capital is what we draw on when we get others, whether acquaintances, friends, or kin, to help us solve problems, seize opportunities, and accomplish other aims that matter to us” (Briggs, 1998, p. 176). He distinguishes between two forms of social capital as an individual good (as opposed to a collective good, e.g. the social capital of a neighbourhood). Firstly, *social leverage*, which helps someone to “get ahead”, for example through a recommendation or information for a job. Secondly, *social support*, which helps someone to “get by”, such as getting a ride from a neighbour or emotional support in times of hardship (Briggs, 1998, p. 178).

Granovetter (1973) depicts the connections in a social network as *ties*. Whether a tie is “strong” or “weak” depends on “a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterise the tie” (p. 1361). *Weak ties* connect you to distant acquaintances and *strong ties* connect you to your friends or family (indeed, similar to bonds). Granovetter argues that the *strength of weak ties* lies in their ability to connect multiple social systems. For example, when seeking a job, the weak ties are more valuable because they move in different circles than you (and your strong ties), and are thus able to connect you to people and organisations that you would not have found yourself. So, in the terms of Briggs, weak ties offer more social leverage.

Linking social capital is central to well-being (Grootaert, Narayan, Jones & Woolcock, 2004). It opens up economic opportunities to those belonging to less powerful or excluded groups and, when combined with bonding social capital, it paves the way for community development (Flora, 1998; Jordan, 2015). For refugees, linking social capital provides the opportunity to gain access to power and resources and participate in civil society (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014).

In short, bonding social capital is good for “getting by”, but bridging social capital is crucial for “getting ahead” (Putnam, 2000; Briggs, 1998). Linking social capital is a prerequisite to fully participate in society.

The dark side of social capital

Sometimes “social capital” like its conceptual cousin “community” sounds warm and cuddly [...] however, [...]. Networks and the associated norms of reciprocity are generally good for those inside the network, but the external effects of social capital are by no means always positive.
(Putnam, 2000, p. 21)

Alencar and Tsagkroni point out that there is a “dark side” of social capital: “some kinds of bonding social capital may discourage the formation of bridging social capital” (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019, p. 186). Zetter et al. (2006) add that strong bonds within one’s own ethnic group may lead to exclusion from linking social capital. Close bonds within a group (the in-group) may generate positive returns for the participating members, while at the same time harming other groups (the out-group). Since bonding concerns “building strong and dense ties in a more relatively closed network, between individuals of primarily common or similar socio-economic status and demographics” (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019, p. 185), it tends to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups (Putnam, 2000). That is why, bonding is also referred to as “exclusive” social capital (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Bridging is also referred to as “inclusive” social capital, since bridging is outward-looking and “encompasses people across diverse social cleavages” (Putnam, 2000, p. 22), such as culture, age or gender.

In the context of migration, the dark side of social capital can raise tensions between domestic and newcomer groups (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005). “The heterogeneity that immigration and diversity bring, foster social isolation and is associated with a distinctive increase of out-group distrust” (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019, p. 187; see also Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005). This can have detrimental consequences. Strong bonding within ethnic groups combined with very limited connections with other social groups (bridging) can result in higher crime and discrimination levels, a significantly lower level of tolerance, creating and hosting ‘monopoly environments’ and breeding of negative social norms (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019).

Contacts between newcomers of the same country of origin can also be hostile. Vermeulen (2021) explains that the conflicts in refugees' countries of origin can continue to create tensions within the origin group in the Netherlands. There are concerns about tensions between the most recent wave of Eritrean refugees and earlier cohorts or Eritrean permit holders. The Eritreans who fled their country recently are fleeing from the current regime, while the first wave of Eritreans were originally proponents of this regime (SZW, 2016). This also relates to superdiversity: there is no longer a (relatively) homogenous group of Eritrean migrants in the Netherlands; they may be more opposed to each other than to people from other backgrounds. Vermeulen states that "some permit holders therefore deliberately maintain a distance from their origin group, which they perceive to be unsafe" (p. 7).

This paragraph showed that there are several negative sides to social capital that one should be aware of: *bonding* may create strong in-group loyalty, which may at the same time foster distrust or even animosity towards the out-group. This mechanism can raise tensions between domestic groups and newcomers. Not all connections between newcomers from the same country of origin offer bonding social capital either. In some cases, there are tensions within the origin group. However, it is not all doom and gloom. Putnam depicts strikingly that both bonding and bridging are necessary for society to function well; there is no right or wrong social capital: "Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40. [...] under many circumstances both bridging and bonding social capital can have powerfully positive social effects" (Putnam, 2000, p. 23).

3.5 Being 'new' in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, knowledge of the Dutch language and society is mandatory for refugees to qualify for a residence permit. This is part of the civic integration duty (Inburgeringsplicht), which is required by law (Wet inburgering) since January 1st, 2007. In 2013 this law was revised, putting more emphasis on the responsibility of newcomers, following the policy trend of focus on self-sufficiency (zelfredzaamheid) (Kuijpers, forthcoming) in the 'participation society'¹⁶ of the Netherlands. Evaluation of this law pointed out many shortcomings (Algemene Rekenkamer, 2017; Blom et al., 2018). The Dutch Court of Auditors (Algemene Rekenkamer) concluded that it was not adequately stimulating participation and self-sufficiency of newcomers. Calling it a failure would be an understatement (Achbab, 2020). In 2022, a new civic integration law will take effect. The new law puts

¹⁶ In his speech of September 17th, 2013, the Dutch king stated that the Netherlands was transforming into a 'participation society' in which citizens have to be more self-sufficient, in contrast to a welfare state. The participation society was met with enthusiasm at first, but soon lost popularity (Hurenkamp, 2020).

more responsibility on municipalities and aims for a personal approach (inburgering op maat) and language development combined with participation (e.g. internship or (voluntary) work) (Kuijpers, forthcoming; Rijksoverheid, n.d.).

According to Vermeulen's (2021) study among Syrian and Eritrean permit holders in the Netherlands, structural factors (work, education, housing or language) make the biggest contribution to enhancing feelings of attachment to their host society. The permit holders feel a strong attachment to the Netherlands if they speak the language, have Dutch friends, are granted Dutch nationality and have paid work. However, Vermeulen's respondents stress that to be able to feel at home in the Netherlands, they must feel that they are accepted as full members of the host society. So, "attachment for them is a two-way process" (Vermeulen, 2021, p. 7). It is interesting to see here that the two-way process of integration is recognised by permit holders themselves, whereas section 3.3 already showed the recognition of integration as a two-way process at the academic and policy level. Vermeulen's research suggests that structural factors and the degree of acceptance play a more important role than perceived cultural differences in permit holders' identification with the Netherlands and their intention to stay.

From immigrant optimism to isolated communities

In their first years in the Netherlands, many immigrants mainly encounter Dutch people who are willing to help refugees (e.g. volunteers working with refugees) (Vermeulen, 2021). They feel welcome and accepted. However, most Syrian and Eritrean permit holders, who came to the Netherlands during the refugee crisis of 2015), are currently entering a second phase of integration. As time passes Syrian and Eritrean permit holders have to deal with more obstacles than they had anticipated: "As well as securing good access to work and developing a command of the Dutch language, permit holders find it difficult to get beyond superficial contact with Dutch natives and to build genuine relationships" (Vermeulen, 2021, p. 10). In this phase permit holders also encounter more Dutch people who show little interest in making contact, or are even hostile and avoid contact. Vermeulen (2021) found that, Syrian and Eritrean permit holders who state explicitly that they struggle with the direct and sometimes rude (at least, in their perception) forms of social interaction in the Netherlands avoid this type of contact. Also permit holders who repeatedly but unsuccessfully try to establish contacts with Dutch natives, eventually also get discouraged and start to avoid such contact.

This intersects with the phenomenon of *immigrant optimism*: in the first phase after they arrived in the new country, refugees tend to feel optimistic, because the new situation is a relief compared to the situation they fled in their home country (Maliapaard & Gijssberts, 2015; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). However, over time their frame of reference shifts; from a comparison with the

situation in their country of origin to a comparison with other people living in the Netherlands (Huijnk, Dagevos & Miltenburg, 2017). Also, their focus may move from organising the basics (e.g. acquiring a permit and housing), to finding their place in the new society (Huijnk, Dagevos, & Miltenburg, 2017); a *sense of belonging*. These changes in the experiences of refugees when entering the second phase of integration is often accompanied by pessimism (Sterckx, Dagevos, Huijk, & Lisdonk, 2014). This pessimism should not be taken lightly: research has found that a lack of opportunities and the resulting loss of hope in the new context is a more significant threat to mental health and well-being than the experience of trauma itself (Porter & Haslam, 2005).

Vermeulen concludes: “For some permit holders, immigrant optimism is followed by doubts as to whether they will be genuinely accepted as Dutch citizens” (p. 10). These doubts can have a long-term impact on the development of a strong attachment to the Netherlands and cause people to shut themselves off from Dutch society and turn towards their origin group, leading to the risk of isolated communities (Vermeulen, 2021).

3.6 Social inequality in education

Over the past five to ten years, inequality in educational opportunities in the Netherlands has already doubled (Kooijman, 2018), and the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to further increase it.

School usually mitigates the effect that parents have on the social status of their children (Knigge, 2019). Social differences can be diminished because children are normally in the same class and get the same instructions of their teacher (Van der Ent & Stam, in press). The school closures increase parents’ influence on their children’s education, and are therefore likely to increase social inequality (Bol, 2020; Dietrich, Patzina, & Lerche, 2020; Engzell, Frey, & Verhagen, 2020; Kollender & Nimer, 2020).

Data on a Dutch representative sample of 1318 children in primary and secondary education show marked differences between social groups concerning home schooling (Bol, 2020). 75% of parents with an academic education feel themselves capable to support their children with schoolwork, compared to only 40% of the lower educated parents (Bol, 2020). The initial findings of this study indicate that the school shutdown in the Netherlands is likely to have strong effects on the inequality in educational opportunities (Bol, 2010, p. 1). Also in Germany, researchers found “pronounced differences in home schooling efforts by social background” (Dietrich, Ptzina and Lerche, 2020, p. 1).

These results are even more worrisome in the light of the findings of the *Inspectie van het Onderwijs*.¹⁷ Their report *De Staat van het Onderwijs*¹⁸ (2016) shows an increasing difference between

¹⁷ The Dutch agency for inspection of educational institutions.

¹⁸ Translation: the State of Education; annual report of the Inspectie van het Onderwijs (see previous footnote)

underprivileged and privileged children. For example, children of higher educated parents are more often advised a higher educational track than their final test results (Cito-eindtoets) indicate. This is the other way around for children of lower educated parents: they often get a lower advice from their teacher than their final test results indicate (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2016; NOS, 2016).¹⁹ According to sociologist Herman van der Werfhorst (in: NOS, 2016) children from lower social-economic backgrounds become the victim of their teacher's (conscious or subconscious) prejudice.

Newcomer children are also disproportionately harmed by the COVID-19-induced school closures. First of all, because home schooling is usually more difficult for newcomer families. Newcomer parents often cannot help their children with their schoolwork due to the language barrier. Moreover, newcomers often live in relatively large families with limited financial resources²⁰, which results in not having enough laptops (or other devices) for all family members working or studying from home (Van der Ent & Stam, in press). Secondly, going to school is extra important for young newcomers with a refugee background, because it fosters resilience, helps them to cope with possible trauma's and provides hope for the future (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2012; Ghaemina, Ghorashi & Crul, 2017; McBrien, 2005). Due to the school closures, this support disappears. Thirdly, the school closures also have a negative effect on integration, since going to school makes newcomer children feel more at home in the Netherlands (Van der Ent & Stam, in press). School is the place where they get to know the Dutch society (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). They can meet friends and discover Dutch customs and habits in informal social interactions, during lunchbreak or in the hallways for example (Van der Ent & Stam, in press). Online classes – especially when half of the classmates have their camera's turned off – do not facilitate these social processes.

Concluding, the school closures contribute to the “accumulation of risks and inequalities” and are likely to increase educational inequality for children with a refugee background and make their educational position more vulnerable (Van der Ent & Stam, in press, p. 1).

¹⁹ In Amsterdam, 22% of the pupils with lower educated parents get a lower advice from their teacher than their final test results indicate; among pupils with higher educated parents 11% gets a lower advice (Couzy, 2020)

²⁰ To illustrate: 80% of the permit holders in Rotterdam received social welfare (bijstandsuitkering) (Klok, Van der Linden, & Dagevos, 2020).



“The difference between people who were raised in the Netherlands and people who were raised in other countries is like heaven and earth.

In Eritrea, as a child we got punished. Here, children have very much freedom. Parents take into account their wishes. In Eritrea, children do what their parents want”

Leila, Eritrean mother

Chapter 4

Research Design

4. Research Design

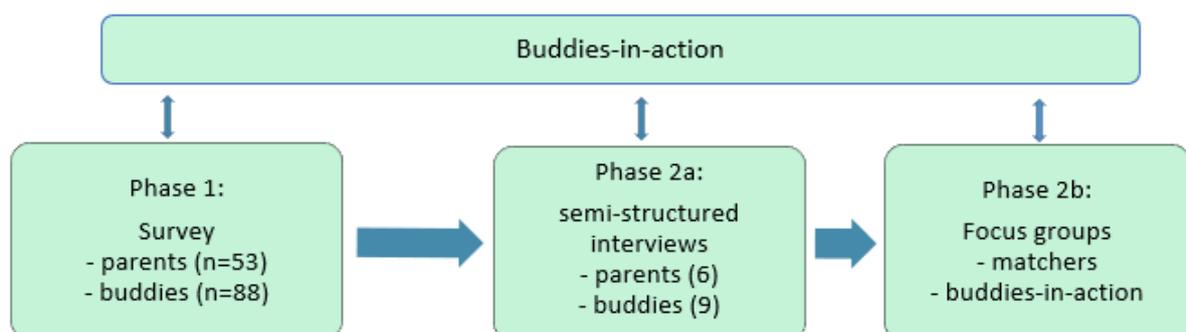
The data for this research was gathered mainly through surveys and interviews, amongst newcomer parents and buddies (the volunteers) participating in the home schooling buddy project of OpenEmbassy. Additionally, two focus groups have been conducted; one with buddies and one with the matchers, the people from OpenEmbassy who match a buddy to a newcomer family. Additionally, eight buddies functioned as action-researchers (*buddies-in-action*) to provide input for this research. This chapter discusses each of these methods in more detail. The choices for these methods are explained while being transparent about their potential limitations. Furthermore, the data analysis is discussed. The chapter ends with an ethical statement.

4.1 Research design: mixed methods & cross-sectional

This study has a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research started with a quantitative phase using surveys, which was followed by a qualitative phase focussing on semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Since the use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was planned from the start, it can be called a *fixed mixed methods design* (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2017). However, the research design has several *emergent* elements: the research design of the second phase has emerged from the results of the first quantitative phase (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The results from the survey have pointed out interesting topics for the semi-structured interviews in the second phase and informed the selection of respondents for the interviews. Both the results from the survey and the interviews have informed the design (e.g. themes) for the focus groups. The reflections from buddies-in-action provided input for all phases of the research and vice versa. Figure 4 depicts the interaction between the different methods.

Figure 4

Mixed methods research design; relationships between the methods used



This research can be characterized as a cross-sectional research design, because the data has been collected “on a sample of cases and at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative or quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables [...], which are then examined to detect patterns of association” (Bryman, 2016, p. 53). This design suits the research goal because it enables researching variation within the population of newcomer families. The interest in differences within the population of newcomers flows from the premise that the sample of newcomer parents is a very diverse group regarding variables such as education, Dutch language proficiency and culture. This follows from the concept of superdiversity (see 3.1), which emphasises the relevance of diversity on variables other than ethnicity within the group of newcomers.

A limitation of the cross-sectional design is that “if the researcher discovers a relationship between two variables, he or she cannot be certain whether this implies a causal relationship” (Bryman, 2016, p. 53). This problem of “*ambiguity about the direction of causal influence*” poses a threat to the internal validity of a study (Bryman, 2016, p. 47): how can we be confident that the relationship is not influenced by other factors? To deal with this issue, the methods used in phase 2 and the input from buddies-in-action made it possible to understand the causal direction of the relationships that are suggested by the survey data in phase 1.

4.2 Data collection

Appendix A presents an overview of the data collection. This section further explains the different methods used as well as the goals and considerations behind the data collection.

Surveys

One survey has been conducted amongst parents and a second survey amongst home schooling buddies, to get a sense of *what* experiences newcomer families have had concerning home schooling due to COVID-19-induced school closures. These surveys were developed and distributed in collaboration with OpenEmbassy. Therefore they also include questions that were focused on the evaluation of the home schooling buddies project. The surveys have been designed using Google Forms because OpenEmbassy had previous experience using this software. Therefore it facilitated them to access the survey and possibly use it again after the completion of this thesis research. The survey is a *self-administered questionnaire* (Bryman, 2016, p. 221), therefore it is important to take into account the social desirability bias: people may be tempted to answer in a way that they perceive as desirable. For example, parents may be overly positive about their effort in home schooling their children.

To avoid measurement error, it was important to design the survey very carefully. To get started, three exploratory interviews - one with a parent and two with buddies - have been conducted, to get a sense of topics that mattered to the parents and buddies themselves. For the reliability of the survey, the questions must be correctly understood by respondents. Therefore, the survey directed at parents was made available in Dutch, Tigrinya and Arabic. I have made the Dutch version in collaboration with a researcher from OpenEmbassy. The translations into Tigrinya and Arabic were made by Ghadeer and Akberet, employees from OpenEmbassy who live in the Netherlands but are originally from Syria and Eritrea. Their cultural background enables them to account for cultural differences in translation (e.g. translation of school levels). The surveys were pre-tested by two people (per survey) to “ensure that the research instrument as a whole functions well” (Bryman, 2016, p. 260). Bryman also states that pre-testing “may be particularly crucial in relation to research based on the self-administered questionnaire, since there will not be an interviewer present to clear up any confusion” (p. 260).

The Indicators of Integration Framework (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019) (see 3.3) has been used to develop the survey questions. The domains of the *facilitators* and *social connections* have been operationalized in the survey questions. Furthermore, the survey has also mapped the demographics of the newcomer families and buddies in the project (see Table 2 and Table 3). This has made it possible to describe the group that I am researching and to get insight into the variation within the group.

All parents and buddies participating in OpenEmbassy’s home schooling buddy project (*Thuisonderwijsmaatjes*) have been approached for the survey. In families with two parents, only one of the parents could fill out the survey. Table 1 shows the response rates for each of the surveys. Some people were addressed who were not eligible to respond, because they had not actively started the project yet (only registered). This lowered the relative response rate. The surveys were distributed by e-mail. To increase the response rate, a reminder was sent after one week. The matchers of the buddy project were asked to send the survey also through WhatsApp to the parents. This has increased the response rate substantially. In Table 1, the low response rates of the surveys in Dutch and Tigrinya stand out. The Dutch survey was sent to all the participants who did not speak Arabic or Tigrinya,²¹ which means that they did not receive a survey in their native language. This provides a possible explanation for the low response rate. However, the survey in Tigrinya was sent only to Eritrean (Tigrinya-speaking) participants. Their low response rate is most likely due to the mistrust among Eritreans towards institutions. Akberet explains that, growing up in harsh circumstances in Eritrea, one learns to be wary of others, and especially of institutions. She expects that many recipients thought that the survey came from the government, since Eritreans tend to think that any formal letter (or

²¹ OpenEmbassy has provided a list with participants of the home schooling buddy project including the languages they spoke.

survey) comes from the government. The fact that the survey was digital has likely increased the mistrust (personal communication, June 17th, 2021).

This research had to deal with the *problem of non-response*. That is, “those who agree to participate may differ in various ways from those who do not agree to participate” (Bryman, 2016, p. 175). For example, the parents who responded to the (online) survey may, on average, be more digitally skilled than the parents who did not respond to the survey. Therefore, the results of the survey must be interpreted very critically with regard to generalizations for the population.

Table 1

Survey response

Survey	Date	Sent to	Response (n)	Response rate
Survey parents (total)		282	53	18,8%
<i>Survey Parents – Arabic</i>	<i>4-4-2021</i>	<i>229</i>	<i>46^a</i>	<i>20,1%</i>
<i>Survey Parents - Dutch</i>	<i>4-4-2021</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>4^a</i>	<i>12,9%</i>
<i>Survey Parents - Tigrinya</i>	<i>8-4-2021</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>13,6%</i>
Survey buddies	13-4-2021	426	88	20,7%

^a one outlier excluded

Semi-structured interviews

In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents and home schooling buddies to explain the *why* and *how* behind their experiences with home schooling due to COVID-19.

Topic lists have been used to give direction to the interviews while leaving enough space to adapt to the interviewee in question (Boeije, 2014). The topic lists were added in Appendix C. The topic lists are both practice- and theory-driven: they were based on the survey results and academic literature (i.e. the Indicators of Integration Framework of Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019).

The interviews with the buddies were conducted in Dutch. With the parents, four interviews were conducted in Arabic, one in Tigrinya and one in Dutch (see Appendix A). The interviews in Arabic and Tigrinya were conducted by Ghadeer and Akberet, employees from OpenEmbassy who are originally from Syria and Eritrea. The Dutch interviews were conducted by me. For the validity of the research, the three interviewers needed to have the same interpretations of the topics. Therefore, I have thoroughly discussed the topic lists with the other interviewers prior to the interviews and again after the first interviews were conducted. This is called “peer debriefing” (Boeije, 2014, p. 158), which can

benefit the validity of the research because the researchers can reflect on methods and techniques together, hold each other accountable for the choices made, and make initial analyses.

Buddies-in-action

Eight buddies have functioned as action researchers, so-called 'buddies-in-action'. These are buddies who provided insights from their experiences in the tutoring sessions with the child. As Figure 4 depicts, the buddies-in-action provided input throughout the different phases of the data collection. Together with action researchers of OpenEmbassy, I have organised an online training about action research. The aim was to train the buddies in participatory observations and reflect on their experiences during their home schooling sessions with the child. They have communicated their observations and reflections through an online reflection form (Google Form) with open-ended questions. The reflection form can be found in Appendix D.

Apart from the online reflection forms, informal interviews have been held with each of the eight buddies-in-action. These were exploratory interviews, in which the buddies told about the situation of the child, challenges that arose during the tutoring, and any other things that stood out to them in their interactions with the newcomer families. Additionally, two in-depth interviews (later referred to as case discussions) were held with two of the buddies, because they had both encountered a complex situation in their role as a buddy. These situations were discussed in-depth together with a researcher from OpenEmbassy and myself, to get a better understanding of what is going on in newcomer families related to school. Issues such as intercultural communication, communication between newcomer parents and the school, and educational needs for children from newcomer families were discussed.

Focus groups

A focus group was organised with the matchers and project managers of the home schooling buddy project. Their input proved to be very valuable, because they speak to the newcomer parents as well as the buddies and can therefore tell two sides of specific situations that happened between a buddy and a newcomer family. Also two of the matchers and one of the project leaders are from Syria themselves. Their explanation of the cultural perspective and education system in Syria has been very helpful in the interpretation of the data. A second focus group was held with the buddies-in-action to discuss some important topics that surfaced from the survey and the interviews. This is a form of triangulation: cross-checking findings by using more than one method or source of data (Bryman, 2016, p. 697) to increase the validity of the research. The online program Mural has been used to facilitate the online focus groups in an interactive manner.²²

²² The output of these Murals is available on request. Please, contact the author through email anoukrj@gmail.com.

4.3 Respondents and representation

The collaboration with OpenEmbassy (see Chapter 2) has provided access to the population of newcomers with school-aged children throughout the Netherlands. Table 2 and Table 3 show some descriptive statistics of the survey respondents. Contrasted with descriptive statistics of newcomers in the Netherlands this helps to determine to what extent the research findings can be generalised to the situation of newcomers with school-aged children in the Netherlands. Also, the literature will help to situate the findings of this research in a larger context.

A total of 55 respondents have filled in the survey for parents (and caretakers). Two respondents, fathers from Ethiopia and Egypt, reported that they have been in the Netherlands for twenty years already. All other respondents have been in the Netherlands between one and eight years (mean: 4,7 years, see Table 2). Since the number of years in the Netherlands is likely to influence other variables, such as language proficiency and social connections, these two respondents were excluded. This brings the sample size (number of respondents) to 53 (n=53). In total 88 buddies have filled in the survey (n=88). The buddies and the parents in the survey are not necessarily a match in the project. So their answers relate to different children.

Most of the people participating in the buddy project are from Syria. Table 3 shows that 79,2% of the parent-respondents are from Syria and 59,8% of the buddy-respondents are supporting a Syrian child. The difference between the two percentages can be explained by the fact that the two Syrian matchers from OpenEmbassy were very active in approaching Syrian parents to fill in the survey. Only 5,7% of the parent-respondents are from Eritrea, while 19,5% of the buddy-respondents reported to support a child from Eritrea.

Table 2 shows that the age of the buddies ranges from 17 to 72 years old. The buddies are mostly higher educated women: 81,8% of the buddy-respondents is female and 87,5% is higher educated (Table 3). The level of education of the buddy-respondents is remarkable compared to the national population. In 2020, 32% of the Dutch population was higher educated²³ (CBS, 2021). 39,6% of the parent-respondents is higher educated, however there is also a relatively large group of parent-respondents (22,6%) who have only finished primary school.

Table 3 shows that the percentage of children in special education is remarkably high among participants of the home schooling buddy project: 17,0% and 13,6% respectively. By contrast, only

²³ Both in this research and in the national data 'higher educated' was defined as higher vocational education (Dutch: HBO) or university, according to the definition of the CBS (2021).

2,1% of the primary school children in the Netherlands attended special education in the school year 2018-2019 (Onderwijsinspectie, n.d.).

It should be considered that the sample is likely to be biased because these parents have registered themselves for the home schooling buddy project from OpenEmbassy. The direction of this bias is unclear: they have all found OpenEmbassy, which suggests that they are capable to get in touch with institutions (a minimum of digital and language skills). On the other hand, the fact that these parents have looked for support from OpenEmbassy suggests that they feel that they cannot help their child well enough nor know (and asked) somebody who can help their child with home schooling. This group of newcomers is not a representative sample of all newcomers with school-aged children in the Netherlands. For this reason, the results cannot be generalised to the larger population.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of survey respondents (continuous variables)

Parents (n=53)					Buddies (n=88)			
Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Number of years in the Netherlands ^a	4,68	1,29	1	8	4,13	1,84	1	11
Age of the child	10,55 ^b	2,97	4	17	10,53 ^b	3,11	4	18
Age	-	-	-	-	40,78	17,71	17	72

^a Parents were asked for how long they have been in the Netherlands themselves, buddies were asked for how long the child has been in the Netherlands.

^b In case respondents had multiple children participating in the buddy project, they were asked to answer the questions for the eldest child; therefore the sample mean is expected to be higher than the actual average age of children in the buddy project.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of survey respondents (categorical variables)

Parents (n=53)		Buddies (n=88)	
Variable	Percentage	Variable	Percentage
Relation to the child		Gender buddy	
Mother	77,4	Female	81,8
Father	20,8	Male	18,2
Other	1,9	Other	0
Gender child		Gender child	
Boy	62,3	Boy	53,4

Girl	37,7	Girl	46,6
Country of origin		Country of origin of the child ^a	
Syria	79,2	Syria	59,8
Eritrea	5,7	Eritrea	19,5
Yemen	5,7	Yemen	4,6
Iraq	1,9	Iraq	2,3
India	1,9	India	3,4
Morocco	1,9	Morocco	-
Turkey	1,9	Turkey	1,1
USA	1,9	USA	-
		The Netherlands ^b	5,7
		Somalia	1,1
		Afghanistan	1,1
		Romania	1,1
Level of education		Level of education	
Primary school unfinished	0,0	Primary school unfinished	0,0
Primary school	22,6	Primary school	0,0
High school	20,8	High school	5,7
Vocational school	17,0	Vocational school	6,8
Higher education	39,6	Higher education	87,5 ^c
Child in special education		Child in special education	
Special	17,0	Yes	13,6
No	83,0	No	86,4
Tutoring of the buddy ^a		Tutoring of the buddy	
Online	74,0	Online	77,3
Offline	6,0	Offline	15,9
Combination online/offline	16,0	Combination online/offline	6,3

^a contains 1 missing value

^b Parents born in Ghana, Morocco (2 times), Turkey

^c 39,8% higher vocational education (Dutch: HBO) and 47,7% university

For the interviews, parents were selected based on demographic information such as country of origin, age of the child, and place of residence, to obtain a fair representation of the diversity within the research population. The buddies signed up themselves to be a buddy-in-action (explained below). This has created a selection bias: it is likely that these buddies are more involved than other buddies

in OpenEmbassy's home schooling project. Only one interview has been conducted with a buddy who was not a buddy-in-action. He was selected because he had already been a buddy for a long time (9 months) and because he was a man, while all buddies-in-action were women. The names used in this thesis are pseudonyms. Appendix A2 provides an overview of the interviews, including some characteristics of the interviewees that may help to understand their viewpoints expressed in the results chapter (Chapter 5).

4.4 Data analysis

The surveys were analysed using Google Spreadsheets. This online software enabled easy information sharing and online collaboration with OpenEmbassy. Descriptive statistics were used to show central tendency (mode, median, mean) and dispersion (range, standard deviation). Cross-tables were created to analyse whether the data indicates a relationships between variables.

All interviews have been recorded (all respondents gave their consent). Most of the interviews with the parents were conducted in Arabic and one interview was conducted in Tigrinya. These interviews were translated to Dutch because I do not understand Arabic and Tigrinya. All semi-structured interviews were transcribed. However, the interviewers from OpenEmbassy transcribed and translated at the same time. Therefore, these transcripts are not literally. In case there would have been any ambiguity about the transcript, the interview recording could be listened again by the Arabic or Tigrinya speaking interviewer.

The use of four languages – Arabic, Tigrinya, Dutch, and English (for writing) – made this research more complicated. All quotes used in this thesis have been translated into English. In case the original source was in Dutch, it has been added in a footnote. Even though, these interviews were translated to Dutch by the Syrian and Eritrean interviewers, these translations are not included in the footnote, because they are not original quotes and may not do justice to the exact words of the interviewees. Some nuance may be lost in translation.

The interviews were analysed using the qualitative data-analysis software ATLAS.ti. Also here the online (Cloud) version was used to allow for easy information sharing and online collaboration with OpenEmbassy.

4.6 Ethics

An ethically responsible research takes more than the absence of harm. Diener & Crandall (1978) distinguish four main principles that should be respected. A researcher should always ensure that there is (1) informed consent, (2) privacy, (3) no deception and (4) no harm to participants.

To respect the principle of informed consent, it must be clear to all participants what they are giving permission for when agreeing to the interview. Therefore, the purpose and the procedure of the research was explained and participants were explicitly asked for permission to use their data, before they filled in the survey or agreed to an interview. In this research, it was very important to make sure that all participants received information in a language that they understood (Arabic, Tigrinya, Dutch or English). Therefore all e-mails to the participants were translated.

To comply with the privacy principle, all participants are anonymized. This has been done by using pseudonyms (see Appendix A). Also, the names of the children are omitted in all quotations used in this thesis. Also, recordings and other sensitive information are not preserved any longer than necessary for the research.

“Deception occurs when researcher represent their work as something other than what it is”. (Bryman, 2016, p. 133). (Unintended) deception was lurking in this research as the result of the collaboration with OpenEmbassy. Parents and buddies have received the information for this research through a familiar e-mail address from OpenEmbassy. So, they may quickly have assumed that it was only from OpenEmbassy. Therefore, in all communication it has been explicitly mentioned that this research is also aligned with the University of Amsterdam and will be published in an open thesis database. Also the logo of the University of Amsterdam has been added in the e-mails, to make the alignment more visible.

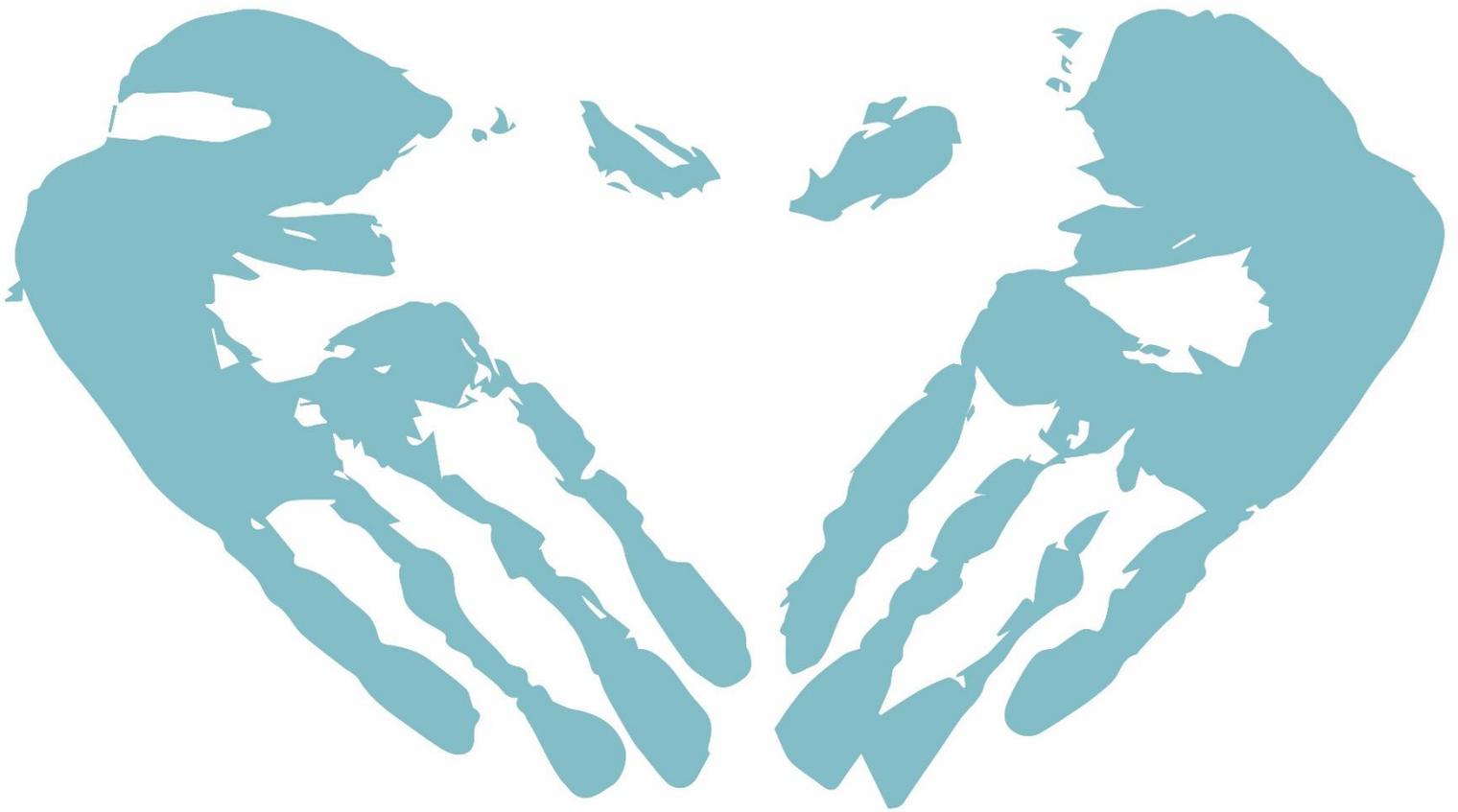
In this research, I had to be especially careful to do no harm with regards to retraumatization. All of the parents who participated in this research were refugees, who are likely to have experienced traumas due to conflict in their country of origin and/or on their journey to the Netherlands. In the interviews, it was very important to be sensitive about topics relating to the past of the respondents and to make them feel safe. This has mainly been addressed by the fact that the Syrian and Eritrean interviewers were very sensitive about these topics, because they have been through these experiences themselves.

For an ethically responsible research, it is also important to reflect on my own positionality as a researcher. During this research, I was a research intern at OpenEmbassy. Potential conflict of interest was minimised since there were no financial reimbursements connected to this position. The risk of being part of an organisation is to create a positive bias towards their work. As a researcher, I was aware of this risk from the start and preserved a critical attitude at all times.

“He is a very sweet and well-mannered boy. Keep trying, like he does, is a really powerful characteristic, his resilience.

I always say to him: the most important thing is that you are a good person”

Sanne, buddy



Chapter 5

Results & Analysis

5. Results & Analysis

As explained in the theoretical framework, social capital refers to the value of someone's social connections (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000). The 'value' can include many things: a car ride, a job recommendation or a shoulder to cry on; we all need others to "get by" or to "get ahead" in our lives (Briggs, 1998, p. 178).

This chapter is concerned with both the quantity and the quality of connections of newcomer parents: How are people connected and how do they experience these connections? Each section responds to one of the sub research questions. Answering to the first sub-question, section 5.1 assesses what types of social connections newcomer families have in the Netherlands and how they experience it. Section 5.2 dives deeper into the experiences of social connections by looking at the value of social capital: *what are the potential benefits of social connections for newcomer families in the Netherlands?* (sub-question 2). Section 5.3 responds to the third research question by presenting five factors that were found to influence the social capital of newcomer parents: level of education, language, time spent in the Netherlands, culture, and the neighbourhood one lives in. For each of these factors, its relationship to social capital has been evaluated. Section 5.4 is also connected to the third research question. It was separated because it concerns 'special' factors: how do the forms of social capital – bonding, bridging, and linking – influence each other? Finally, section 5.5 answers the last sub-question: *what is the value of a home schooling buddy for newcomer families?*

5.1 Forms and volumes of social capital

This section outlines what connections newcomer families have with people and institutions in Dutch society. In other words, what forms of social capital do newcomers possess and in what volumes?

To categorise the various sorts of social connections and to be able to link them to the broader literature, five forms of social capital are differentiated: *membership of a group* (Bourdieu, 1986), *bonding, bridging, linking* (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2003; Healy, 2002) and *semi-bridging social capital* (see also 3.4). As explained before, bonds refer to the connections between newcomers from the same country of origin, bridges to the connections between newcomers and people originating from the Netherlands and links refer to the connections between newcomers and Dutch public institutions. Semi-bridging refers to the connections between newcomers originating from different countries. As explained in the theoretical framework, semi-bridging has been added to the three traditional types of social capital,²⁴ in response to the findings of Vermeulen (2021), who found that

²⁴ I.e. the types used in the Indicators of Integration Framework of Ndofor-Tah et al. (2019) (see Figure 3).

Syrian and Eritrean permit holders in the Netherlands often find contact with other newcomers in the Netherlands (originating from other countries than themselves) easier than with people originating from the Netherlands.

The *volume* of social capital is not merely the number of social contacts someone has. According to Bourdieu (1986), the volume of someone's social capital is comprised of two elements: (1) the number of social connections (acquaintances) and (2) the *capital* – resources, such as money, knowledge or status – of those acquaintances. This section focuses on the first element. Section 5.2 elaborates on the second, qualitative aspect of social capital.

Membership of a group

One way in which people can connect to each other is by becoming a member of a group or organization, such as a sports association, volunteering work or a religious community. According to Bourdieu's (1986) definition (see 3.4), "social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to [...] membership in a group" (p. 21). Therefore, in the survey newcomer parents were asked whether they are a member of a group (such as a sports association, community home or religious organization) as an indicator of their social capital. Only 13,2% (7 people out of 53) of the parents are a member of an organisation or group. Most of them (5 people) are a member of organisations for volunteering work. Three of them reported that they are a member of multiple organisations and/or groups, which sparks the following question. If someone is a member of a group, is he/she more likely to become a member of another group too? Does membership of a group have a self-reinforcing effect?

Can and Esra fled Turkey three years ago for political reasons. Just a few months before the first COVID-19 lockdown they moved to a small village in the north of the Netherlands. Both are already a member of multiple organisations, as Can volunteers at the Heart Foundation (Hartstichting) and a foundation that is committed to fighting asthma. He is also a trainer at the local football club of his kids. Esra volunteers at the food bank (Voedselbank) (interview Can & Esra, 12-05-2021). The other interviewed parents did not mention membership of any organisation. So, the information from the interviews supports the survey data: people who are a member of one group seem to be more likely to become a member of another group too.

The interviews with the parents and the observations of the buddies-in-action²⁵ gave the impression that the children are more often a member of an association than their parents. Four (Amber, Lieke,

²⁵ This includes the information from the informal interviews, the focus group, and online reflection forms (Google Form) from the buddies-in-action.

Janna, Karen) out of the eight buddies-in-action told that the children they are supporting are a member of a sports association.²⁶

In the Netherlands, approximately 78% of the population is member of an association (Kloosterman & Coumans, 2014). This is a sharp contrast with the 13,2% of newcomer parents who have reported to be a member. Kloosterman and Coumans also found that people with a non-Western migration background are less often a member of an association compared to people originating from the Netherlands or people with a Western migration background.²⁷ Yet, the contrast found in the current research is more extreme. These results show that newcomer parents are underrepresented in Dutch associations. Section 6.2 points out how this may affect newcomers.

Bonding, (semi-)bridging & linking

The Indicators of Integration Framework explained in section 3.3 states that bonds, bridges and links are considered important for successful integration (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). This paragraph assesses the volume bonding, semi-bridging, bridging and linking social capital. These are informal social connections on an individual level, in contrast to the institutionalised social connections studied in the previous paragraph.

To indicate their volume of social capital, respondents were asked how much contact they have with people from their own country of origin (bonding), people originating from the Netherlands (bridging) and people who are also newcomers in the Netherlands but originating from another country than the respondent himself/herself (semi-bridging).²⁸ They were asked to indicate this on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *very little contact* to *very much contact*. The volume of linking social capital is indicated²⁹ by how easily (1 = very easy) or difficult (5 = very difficult) a respondent finds it to contact a public institution, such as a hospital, municipality or social worker.³⁰ Respondents were specifically asked how *much* contact they have, and not how *many* contacts they have, to take into account the notions of “reciprocity” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19) and “intensity” (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361) of social

²⁶ The buddies-in-action were asked what social connection the child has, but this was not asked to the child directly. Thus, it does not necessarily mean that the other children are not in a sports club, they may just not have told their buddy about it.

²⁷ Research among 7384 people of 15 years and older. The research does not provide an overall percentage of membership among people with a non-Western migration background, only a graph per association; therefore an exact comparison cannot be made.

²⁸ Original survey questions: (48) Heeft u veel contact met mensen die uit hetzelfde land als u komen en nu in Nederland wonen? (bijvoorbeeld met andere Syrische migranten, als u zelf uit Syrië komt) (49) Heeft u veel contact met mensen die oorspronkelijk uit Nederland komen? (50) Heeft u veel contact met andere nieuwkomers, die niet uit hetzelfde land als u komen? (Met nieuwkomers bedoelen we mensen die in een ander land geboren zijn, maar nu in Nederland wonen.

²⁹ On a 5-point Likert scale

³⁰ Original survey question: (51) Kunt u zelf gemakkelijk contact opnemen met overheidsorganisaties (zoals de gemeente, het ziekenhuis, het wijk/ buurtteam, etc.)?

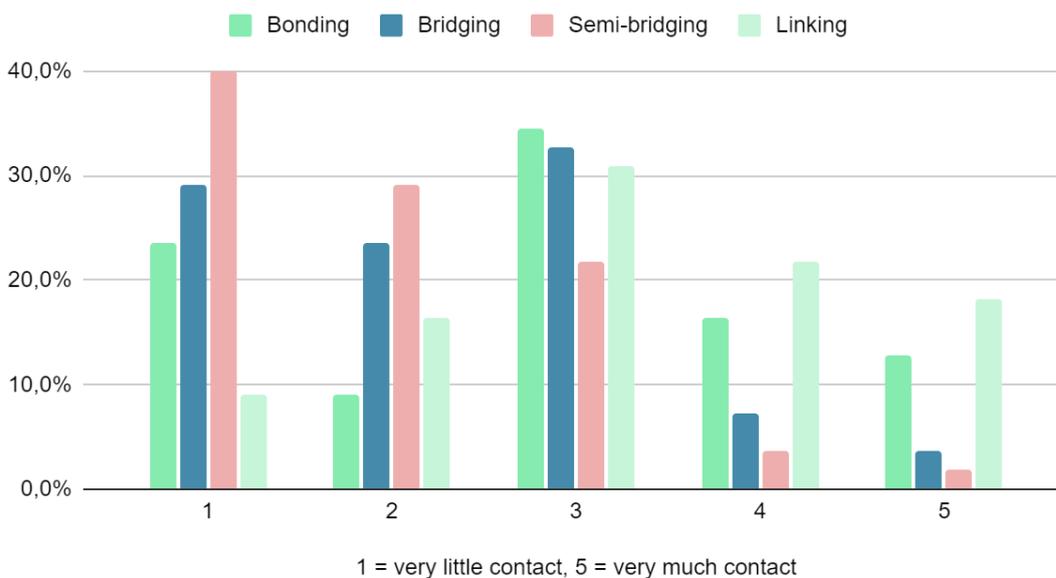
connections. In this line of reasoning, saying 'hi' to your neighbour now and then counts as less contact than regularly having a coffee together.

Figure 5 shows that the volume of social capital, in general, is quite low: most parents find that they have little contact with people in the Netherlands. In comparison, respondents indicate to have the least contact with newcomers coming from other countries than themselves (semi-bridging), followed by people of Dutch origin (bridging). How much contact these newcomers have with people from their own country of origin (bonding) varies: 29% has indicated a low level³¹ of contact while another 29% reported a high level³² of contact with people from their country of origin, who live in the Netherlands. The parents are relatively positive about how easily they can contact public institutions (linking).

Figure 5

Newcomer parents' self-reported bonding, bridging, semi-bridging and linking social capital (n=53)

Social capital of newcomer parents



According to the literature, it is important to have a healthy mix of the various forms of social capital (Ager & Strang, 2008; Claridge, 2018). However, it is hard to say what is a *low* and what is a *high* level of contact since a general indicator of a 'normal' or 'desirable' volume of social capital is lacking in the literature and national statistics. Frequency and intensity of the contact was reported by the respondents themselves. This means that their experiences of social contact are taken into account; what may be too little for one person, may be quite a lot for someone else. By doing so, this research

³¹ Indicated by a 1 or 2 on a 5-point Likert-scale.

³² Indicated by a 4 or 5 on a 5-point Likert-scale.

responds to the call, mentioned in 3.3, for more focus on the sociocultural dimension of integration, on the experiences of newcomers themselves (e.g. Ager & Strang, 2008; Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019).

Furthermore, it should be noted that the survey was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic (although not during a total lockdown), which may have had a substantial impact on people's social contacts. For example, Alaa, a Syrian mother, tells: "Before Corona, they [the Dutch neighbours] sometimes visited us, but now rarely" (interview Alaa, 26-4-2021). In the survey, it was not specified whether the respondents should answer these questions with regard to their situation before or during the pandemic.

The results presented in 5.1 provide an answer to the first sub question of this research: what (types of) social connections do newcomer families have in the Netherlands and how do they experience these connections? Based on the literature, five types of social connections are differentiated: membership of a group, bonding, semi-bridging, bridging, and linking. Generally speaking, the newcomer parents participating in the buddy project seem to have little social connections. Compared to the Dutch population at large, the percentage of newcomer parents who are a member of an organisation or group is strikingly low. There is no comparable data available for the other forms of social capital on the national level. When comparing the volumes of the different forms of social capital to each other, it stands out that very few parents reported semi-bridging contact. This finding will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

5.2 The value of social capital

The previous section has given an impression of what forms and volumes of social capital newcomer families possess. This section is concerned with the question: what does it mean? Do these connections help them to "get by" and/or "get ahead" (Briggs, 1998, p. 178)? In other words, what is the value of social capital? This question will be answered for each of the forms of social capital outlined in the previous section.

Membership of an organisation

Participation in associations and other social organisations is regarded as an important indicator of social cohesion (Putnam, 2000; Houwen, 2010). It allows for contact between diverse groups, fostering tolerance and trust in others (Kloosterman & Coumans, 2014). Frequent contact between members fosters close connections which provide support. Membership of an organisation or other (more or less institutionalised) group often provides material and social benefits, in the form of services or conviviality (Bekkers & Graaf, 2002). For Esra, the benefits of her membership to a voluntary organisation are language improvement, and the rewarding and empowering feeling of finally being

able to help, instead of 'being helped'. She tells the following about her experience as a volunteer at the food bank (Voedselbank):

Currently I work once a week, Wednesday 9 to 12 AM, at the food bank. I pack different products in a box for people who need food or other things. During the break, people are talking to each other. Of course, they talk very differently from what I am learning. But I like it, I try to understand, I try to listen, I try to speak. [...] But I like it, helping other people. Because when we came here, we were in an asylum seeker centre, many volunteers came there to help, for my children and for other children. I notice that in the Netherlands voluntary work is very important.³³ (interview Can & Esra, 12-05-2021)

This quote shows that Esra is very positive about her volunteering work. She can practice her language skills in a different way than in her language classes. She also stresses how happy she is to be able to help others because she wants to give something back for the help she has received when she just arrived in the Netherlands. This resonates with the notion that integration is a two-way process (i.e. Council of the European Union, 2004; Klarenbeek, 2019; Phillimore, 2011). Integration is about giving and taking, to establish equal relationships.

Buddy Amber (focus group, 17-05-2021) explains that the 12-year-old girl she supports is also a member of the Children's Council (Kinderraad) in Utrecht,³⁴ a project of the municipality in which children come up with ideas that could benefit the children of the city of Utrecht. Membership of this group is a good example of social capital, since many "potential resources" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 21) may be linked to it, which may help her to pursue her goals. And she has a very ambitious goal indeed: becoming the first female prime minister of the Netherlands!

Bonding

The literature on social capital shows vices as well as virtues of bonding social capital (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Briggs, 1998; Putnam, 2000). Social bonds are mostly where people find emotional support. Family and friends may help us cope with difficult situations. These may be the type of relationships one needs, to deal with the hardship of fleeing home and country.

³³ Original quote: "Nu één keer per week woensdag 9-12 uur naar voedselbank. Ik pak in de doosje verschillende producten voor mensen die heeft nodig eten of andere dingen. In de pauze praten ze met elkaar. Natuurlijk heel verschillende praten dan ik leer. Maar ik vind leuk, ik probeer te begrijpen, ik probeer te luisteren, ik probeer te praten. [...] Maar vind ik heel leuk, andere mensen helpen. Omdat toen wij hier kwamen, zaten wij in AZC, heel veel vrijwilligers kwamen daar om te helpen, voor mijn kinderen, voor andere kinderen. Ik merk dat in Nederland is heel belangrijk vrijwilligerswerk."

³⁴ For more information see <https://www.utrecht.nl/zorg-en-onderwijs/samenleven-welzijn/kinderen-en-jongeren/>

Both in the survey and the interviews, there appeared to be a lot of variation in how much contact newcomer parents have with their origin group in the Netherlands (see Figure 5).³⁵ Some explicitly turn towards their compatriots, while others turn around as soon as they see them.

Leila, from Eritrea herself, tells that she has little contact with people from the Netherlands, but a lot of contact with other people from Eritrea: “I have a lot of contact with fellow Eritreans. [...] When I meet with my acquaintances, mainly my compatriots, we mostly just drink coffee together. We also talk about school and education sometimes” (interview Leila, 10-05-2021). By contrast, the literature suggests that Eritrean permit holders in the Netherlands normally tend to be cautious in their contacts with other Eritreans, because of political tensions between the first and second wave of Eritrean refugees (SZW, 2016). Leila did not mention these tensions, but it could be that her Eritrean contacts are all from the last wave, just like herself. Yet, Can and Esra explained that they have avoided contact with people from their home country:

*[...] because we are political refugee[s] in Turkey, we are a little bit scared of other Turkish people. [When we see] other Turkish people? [We] don't speak. In my village, my family are the only Turkish people. We are very happy.*³⁶ (interview Can & Esra, 12-05-2021)

Can continues explaining that the first two or three months (when they first came to the Netherlands and again when they moved from the asylum seeker centre to their own house in a small village) were difficult because they felt scared of other Turkish people. They did not let their kids bike to school by themselves because of it. Their situation is exactly what Vermeulen (2021) described: “some permit holders therefore deliberately maintain a distance from their origin group, which they perceive to be unsafe” (p. 7).

The fear and mistrust of Can and Esra is typical for so-called “New Wave Turks” from Turkey.³⁷ The ‘counter-coup’ of the AKP party in 2016 and the party’s political ‘purges’ were a driving force for opponents of the AKP government³⁸ to flee the country, creating the New Wave. Tuncel (2021) explains that “Turkey’s diaspora surveillance contributes to a split between dominant diaspora groups and new wave migrants” (Tuncel, 2021, p.3). She describes a severe instance of such surveillance: Turkish-German employees of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) were caught

³⁵ Survey results: 34% of the parents indicated a *low* level of contact with newcomers from the same country of origin (1 or 2 on a 5-point Likert-scale), 36% *intermediate* (3) and 30% *high* (4 or 5)

³⁶ Original quote: “[...] omdat wij zijn politieke vluchteling in Turkije, wij zijn een beetje bang voor andere Turkse mensen. Verschillende Turkse mensen? Niet praten. In mijn dorp alleen mijn familie zijn Turkse mensen. Wij zijn heel blij”

³⁷ They are ‘new’ in contrast to Turkey’s labour emigrants from the 1960s and 1970s and a refugee wave after the military coup of 1980 (Tuncel, 2021).

³⁸ Mainly members of the Gülen movement (an Islamist and formerly pro-AKP group which was held responsible for the coup attempt in 2016) and members of pro-Kurdish political movements (Tuncel, 2021).

spying on New Wave asylum seekers and reporting their observations to the Turkish AKP government. Cultural prejudices and socio-economic class dynamics (New Wave Turks are considerably higher educated) further aggravate the social cleavages between these groups (Tuncel, 2021).

Fatima, from Yemen, recognises that her child needs a balance between bonding and bridging, as she states: “There is another Yemeni family, whose child goes to the same school as my child and they also play together. But I think that it is not enough. It is good socially, but for learning it is not enough” (interview Fatima, 4-5-2021). To use Briggs vocabulary, contact with another child from Yemen may be good for her child to “get by”, but she needs bridging contacts to “get ahead” in the Netherlands (Briggs, 1998, p. 178).

Concluding, newcomers in the Netherlands have very diverse attitudes towards people from their own country of origin living in the Netherlands. This variety is also reflected in the survey data presented in Figure 5. The literature and the interviews provide multiple motivations behind attitudes towards one’s origin group. For some people it provides comfort and familiarity, for others it is fearful due to conflict in the country of origin, and some recognise that staying in the comfort zone of the origin group, may not provide the social capital needed to move forward in their new lives.

Semi-bridging

The parents have reported very low levels of semi-bridging social capital: only 6% of the respondents have indicated to have a lot of contact with newcomers from another country of origin.

This is in contrast with the findings of Vermeulen (2020). According to him, Syrian and Eritrean permit holders in the Netherlands seemed to find it easier to make contact with other Dutch citizens with a migration background (different from their own background) than with Dutch citizens without a migration background. Therefore it was expected in this research that respondents would indicate more semi-bridging social capital than bridging social capital. There was no explanation found for this discrepancy between the literature and the findings of this research.

Despite the low level of semi-bridging connections indicated in the survey, some of the interviewees talked about contacts with other newcomers. For Heba, it doesn’t matter where the others come from or whether they are like her, but it makes her feel comfortable that she is not the only “stranger” in her building: “We have many different nationalities in our building and we have a good relationship with everybody. [...]. I am happy here in this neighbourhood. There are different nationalities, so I don’t feel like I am the only stranger” (interview Heba, 26-4-2021).

Nina is the home schooling buddy of an 18-year-old girl from Yemen. Nina explains that the girl has friends with a migration background: “She has friends, from her class and from the asylum seeker

centre, these are not Dutch friends”³⁹ (reflection form, 8-5-2021). These friends are not from Yemen, but she may feel culturally closer because they are Islamic and speak Arabic, too. Fatima, a Yemeni mother, also told that she meets sometimes with families from Syria and Yemen in the Netherlands (interview Fatima, 4-5-2021).

Combining the quantitative and qualitative data suggests that respondents feel not so much connected by both being *new* but rather by being culturally closer (language, religion) to the other. This enforces the perception that bonding and bridging should be perceived as a “continuum” (Claridge, 2018, p. 5): there are people *more* like oneself and *less* like oneself. A newcomer from Syria may have *less* in common with a newcomer from Eritrea, and *more* in common with a person born in the Netherlands. This would make a connection with the Dutch person more of a semi-bridge (leaning more towards bonding on the bonding-bridging continuum) than a connection with the newcomer from Eritrea. That is why the conceptualisation of semi-bridging as the connection between newcomers from different countries of origin (implying that they are similar in being *new*) may be too simplistic.

The perception of bonding and bridging as a continuum implies that bonding and bridging are not mutually exclusive, and can occur on different social boundaries.⁴⁰ Claridge explains: “Groups from a similar background are not similar in every respect, and may provide bridging links across, for instance, generations or sexes or educational achievement” (Claridge, 2018a, p. 2). The interviews surfaced multiple social boundaries other than country of origin that seemed to be relevant for their connections and to the difference they perceived with the ‘other’.

While many Syrian newcomers struggle with the openness and directness of many Dutch people, Heba has not experienced the cultural difference between Syria and the Netherlands as a problem, because she lived in the capital of Syria, and is more accustomed to having contact with many diverse people. Thus, in her case, the divide between rural and urban area’s seems to matter more than the country of origin:

About the cultural difference, I did not really experience that it could be a difference. We are used to be open, also when we were in Syria, and because of the work of my husband we had a lot of contact with many people, people who live in the capital are used to get along with many people.
(interview Heba, 26-4-2021)

³⁹ Original quote: “[Het meisje] heeft wel vriendinnen, uit haar klas en ook uit de AZC’s, dit zijn geen Nederlandse vrienden.”

⁴⁰ Social boundaries are the differentiations people make to form how they feel and behave towards others. In other words, social boundaries are what separates ‘us’ from ‘them’ (Tilly, 2004).

Buddy Johan is more surprised by the differences concerning the levels of education than the cultural differences between him and his Syrian buddies. Johan has studied law and medicine and currently has a sabbatical to do volunteering work, such as being a buddy for three Syrian boys. The boys had never been to school before they came to the Netherlands because of the war. The oldest son is in practical education (praktijkonderwijs).⁴¹ Johan expresses his astonishment about the level of the boy's schoolwork:

*I am not so familiar with those levels, but when I see their homework... Yes, maybe it is my elitist background, but if you are 14 years old and you are in the first class of high school [he explains one of the boy's school exercises which he considers very easy]. I thought 'wow'. And further they have very little language and maths [at school], but [practical] courses like care.*⁴² – Johan (interview Johan, 28-4-2021)

Moreover, I would also like to stress that not every difference can and should be retraced to some social divide. Sometimes differences simply flow from the personal characteristics of a unique person. For example, Fatima has very few bridging social contacts and explains: "I am not a very social person" (interview Fatima, 4-5-2021). This shows the diversity within the research population.

The introduction of semi-bridging in this research aimed to account for the context of superdiversity – the diversification of diversity – by recognising that there are not only bridges to build between migrants and a receiving society, but also between different migrant groups. However, during the research it became apparent that it does not do justice to the concept of superdiversity, since it still tends to essentialise people to their country of origin. Scholars of superdiversity condemn the essentialisation to ethnicity: they call for "a shift from an 'ethnic lens' to a multidimensional lens" (Crul, 2016, p. 54), equally emphasizing variables other than ethnicity, such as age or level of education, which may "either individually, or intersectionally" be more relevant for integration outcomes (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018, p. 180). So, people are not only defined by where they were born, but also by many other characteristics. The transition to a superdiverse society (i.e. Vertovec, 2007; Blommaert, 2013) makes this understanding of diversity along multiple social boundaries more and more relevant.

⁴¹ This is the 'lowest' (least theoretical) level of the Dutch high school system.

⁴² Original quote: "Ik ben niet zo bekend met die niveaus, maar als ik het huiswerk zo zie... ja dat is misschien mijn elitaire afkomst, maar als je 14 bent en je zit in de eerste klas van de middelbare school (legt een volgens hem zeer eenvoudige schoolopdracht van de jongen uit) Ik dacht echt 'wauw'. En verder hebben ze ook heel weinig taal en rekenen, maar vakken als verzorging enzo."

Bridging

Scholars and policy makers commonly regard bridging contacts between newcomers and people from the receiving society as a sign of a successful integration process (Ndofor-Tah et al., 2019). From a societal perspective such bridges are valuable because it contributes to social cohesion and counters polarisation and the formation of isolated communities (Vermeulen, 2021). From a personal perspective, bridges are valuable, because they may help someone to “get ahead” (Briggs, 1998, p. 178). Bridges between a newcomer and someone who is born in the Netherlands are usually *weak ties* (Granovetter, 1973). Weak ties are connections to distant acquaintances, with whom you do not spend a lot of time nor have a close emotional relationship. According to Granovetter the *strength of weak ties* lies in their ability to connect multiple social systems together; these are the type of networks that may help someone to find new opportunities. Esra gives a great example of how bridging has connected her to an opportunity for her children:

I have a friend who lives in Haren, Dutch people. Last year my son, who was in 7th grade, he had CITO examen, therefore I was looking for a solution for my children. When I was talking to my friend, she said: ‘[Esra], I have a friend who helps foreign children, if you want then I will get in contact with her’. I am very happy, because I was looking for a solution through my friends. Through my friends I have found the organisation [OpenEmbassy].⁴³ (interview Can & Esra, 12-05-2021)

In the context of home schooling, it was expected that bridging social capital would be very valuable for newcomers, because it may enable them to ask for help, with their child’s homework or a grammar check for an essay for example. However, the data does not suggest such a relationship between bridging capital and asking one’s social connections for help.

Table 4 shows that people who have indicated to have a lot of contacts with people from the Netherlands, have more often asked people in their networks to help their child with home schooling (67%), than people who indicated to have very little contact with people originating from the Netherlands. However, from this data it cannot be concluded that there is a positive relationship between bridging social capital and asking others for help in home schooling, since people who indicated to have some contacts with people originating from the Netherlands (intermediate), have asked the least help from their network for home schooling (28%).

⁴³ Original quote: “Ik heb vriendin die woont Haren, Nederlandse mensen. Mijn zoon vorig jaar, die zat in groep 7, hij gaat CITO examen, daarom ik zocht oplossing voor mijn kinderen. Tijdens mijn vriendin praten, zij zei "Esra, ik heb een vriendin die helpt buitenlandse kinderen, als je wil dan ga ik met haar contact maken". Ik ben heel blij, omdat ik zocht oplossing via mijn vrienden. Via mijn vrienden heb ik gevonden die organisatie.”

Table 4

Newcomers' contact with people originating from the Netherlands (bridging) and its correspondence with asking one's network for help with home schooling (n=53)

Bridging	Have you ever asked somebody in your network (e.g. neighbours, friends, family) to help your child with home schooling?		
	Yes	No	n (100%)
Low	41%	59%	29
Intermediate	28%	72%	18
High	67%	33%	6
Total	40%	60%	53

40% of the respondents asked somebody in their network to help their child with home schooling. Whether their network consists mainly of bridges or bonds doesn't seem to make a difference for whether one asks for help or not. This debunks the assumption that bridging contacts with people originating from the Netherlands enables newcomers to ask for help with home schooling.

Linking

As described in the theoretical framework, "links refer to the 'vertical' relationships between people and the institutions of the society in which they live" (Ndofor-Tah, et al., 2019, p. 17; see also Haely, 2002). According to the literature, linking social capital is central to well-being (Grootaert, Narayan, Jones & Woolcock, 2004). It opens up economic opportunities to those belonging to less powerful or excluded groups and, when combined with bonding social capital, it paves the way for community development (Flora, 1998; Jordan, 2015). For refugees, *linking social capital* provides the opportunity to gain access to power and resources and participate in civil society (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014).

Contacts between the newcomer and the school of their child can be characterised as a link because it is a connection with a public institution. In this research the concept of linking is operationalised as 'how easily can a newcomer find his/her way in the institutional context of the Netherlands?'. By institutions I refer to organisations with a public aim, this includes links to institutions which may be useful for home schooling, such as the library or tutoring classes.

Many buddies have seen the difficulties of newcomer families regarding contact with the school and operating within the institutional context. In the survey, one of the buddies responded that the child she supports had been missing school for months, because the child needed special transport to school due to a disability. His parents tried to arrange this transport, but because they did not succeed in doing so, the child did not go to school at all. This is an alarming example of what a lack of linking

social capital may lead to. Heba, a Syrian mother, explains that it was difficult for her to find tutoring classes for her children:

During Corona we had many questions, so I have tried to find tutoring for my children, but that was very difficult. Also many of my friends have searched, but they did not find anything, but luckily now we have the buddy who helps us a lot, she helped me to find a programme for studying he [her son] can use online for free. (interview Heba, 26-4-2021)

Buddy Lieke underlines that a lack of linking – a good relation and communication with institutions – can cause feelings of fear and anxiety:

There is a lot of miscommunication or mainly a lack of information about nearly everything for the parents. It seems to me that that is very difficult for them, and it automatically makes you [them] a little anxious, when the world around you is hard to understand.⁴⁴ Lieke (reflection form, 8-5-2021)

Figure 5 indicated that parents were rather positive about how easily they can contact institutions. Yet, this paragraph showed that the interviewees – buddies and parents – have quite negative experiences with the connection between institutions and the newcomer families. The interviews suggested that these parents do not possess enough linking social capital (yet) to experience its empowering benefits, described by the literature above, such as the chance to get access to resources and participate in civil society (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014).

5.3 What factors influence social capital?

The interviews with parents and buddies and (to a lesser extent) the results from the survey presented in Figure 5 suggest a large variety among newcomer families what forms of social capital newcomer families possess and in what volumes. Why do some people have more or different connections than others? This section starts with some explanations that can be derived from the survey data. The indicators for bonding, bridging, semi-bridging and linking have been cross-referenced with other variables in the survey using cross-tables. The answers on a 5-point Likert scale have been recoded as *low* (score 1 or 2), *intermediate* (score 3), and *high* (score 4 and 5). This makes the cross-tables easier to interpret, and it mitigates possible *extreme biases* of respondents. Interesting relationships were found for three of these variables: level of education, Dutch language level, and time spent in the Netherlands. The relationships between these variables and various forms of social capital are

⁴⁴ Original quote: “Er is veel misinformatie of vooral gebrek aan informatie over bijna alles bij de ouders. Dat lijkt me heel lastig voor hen en dan wordt je ook vanzelf een beetje angstig omdat de buitenwereld moeilijk is om te begrijpen”.

presented below. In addition, two other factors influencing people’s social capital were derived from the qualitative data: the influence of culture and neighbourhoods.

Level of education

It was found that the variation in parents’ social capital can partly be explained by their level of education. Table 5 shows the relationship between the level of education of the newcomer parents and their level of contact with people originating from the Netherlands (bridging). The levels of education are comprised as follows: primary education and secondary education are coded as a *low* level of education, vocational school is coded as *intermediate* and higher vocational school/university is coded as *high*.⁴⁵ 70% of the people with a low level of education also indicate that they have little contact with people originating from the Netherlands. By comparison, 44% of the respondents with an intermediate level of education and 43% of the respondents with a high level of education indicate that they have a low level of contact with people originating from the Netherlands. In other words, a low level of education more often correlates with limited bridging social capital. The differences between an intermediate and a high level of education are neglectable concerning the level of contact with people originating from the Netherlands (respectively 44% and 43% *low* level of contact). The differences between people with a *low* and *intermediate* level of education are much bigger (respectively 70% and 44% *low* level of contact with people originating from the Netherlands).

Table 5

Newcomers’ level of education and corresponding level of contact with people originating from the Netherlands (n=53)

Level of education	Bridging			n (100%)
	Low	Intermediate	High	
Low	70%	22%	9%	23
Intermediate	44%	44%	11%	9
High	43%	43%	14%	21
Total	55%	34%	11%	53

Similar tables have been made for bonding, semi-bridging and linking (see Appendix B, Table 8, Table 9, Table 10). When cross-referencing respondents’ level of education with variables indicating three forms of social capital (bonding, bridging and linking), people with a low level of education consistently

⁴⁵ Differences between educational systems in newcomers’ home countries are accounted for in most cases by means of a culturally sensitive translation to Arabic and Tigrinya by translators who are born in Syria and Eritrea respectively.

reported to have less contact, compared to respondents with an intermediate or high level of education.⁴⁶ The relationship between level of education and bridging appears to be stronger than between level of education and bonding and linking respectively. Whether a newcomer has an intermediate or high level of education seems to make less of a difference for the acquisition of social capital in their new country. The survey results do not suggest any relationship between newcomer's level of education, and whether or not they have asked anyone in their network (e.g. friends, family or neighbours) to help their child with home schooling (43% of the parents with a low level of education and 38% of parents with a high level of education have asked for help) (Appendix B, Table 11).

Language

The survey data shows a positive relationship between the language level and bridging (Appendix B, Table 12). Not surprisingly, people with a poor command of the Dutch language indicate to have less contact with people originating from the Netherlands. Table 12 shows that the relationship between these variables seems to be quite strong: 84% of the parents who reported to have a low language level also reported to have very little contact with people originating from the Netherlands. None of them reported to have many contacts with people originating from the Netherlands. Moreover, 70% of the parents who reported to have a good command of the Dutch language, reported to have quite some (*intermediate*) bridging contacts.

Many interviewees have mentioned that their Dutch language level stands in the way of making contact with Dutch-speaking people. Alaa and Youssef state: "We are acquainted with the neighbours, but we cannot talk a lot with them. If we want to talk with them, our children have to translate" (interview Alaa and Youssef, 26-4-2021). Also Leila explains that the language is an obstacle for becoming friends with Dutch people:

I have little contact with Dutch people, but if I need help I ask the woman who is helping us and my former teacher. To be friends with Dutch people is difficult I think, because the language makes is more difficult. (interview Leila, 10-5-2021)

Also for the children the language can be an obstacle for making friends. Buddy Sanne tells about the 10-year-old boy she supports: "in terms of language he cannot connect with his class mates"⁴⁷ (Case discussion Sanne, 30-4-2021).

⁴⁶ Semi-bridging is the exception here: respondents with a high level of education reported the lowest level of contact with newcomers from other countries of origin (81% *low*). However, the results do not suggest any relationship between newcomers' level of education and semi-bridging.

⁴⁷ Original quote: "Qua taal kan hij niet aansluiten bij klasgenoten."

On the flip side, Dutch-speaking contacts lead to more practice of the Dutch language. Esra explains that they usually speak Turkish at home, except for when her daughter has her Dutch-speaking friends over; which is almost every day according to father Can (interview Can & Esra, 12-05-2021). Sara, a Syrian mother, recognises the importance of Dutch-speaking contacts at school. She has seen the negative impact of sitting next to an Arabic-speaking girl on the language of her daughter:

*Presently, there are different nationalities in my daughter's class and I think that is good. Before, when we were in Nijmegen, there was another Syrian girl sitting next to my girl, and my daughter has spoken Arabic with her the whole time, so that has negatively influenced her [Dutch] language.*⁴⁸ (interview Sara & Achmed, 7-5-2021)

So, being (and feeling) able to speak the Dutch language is closely related to bridging. Having contacts with Dutch people, such as Can and Esra, may lead to a better command of the Dutch language, which makes it easier to make even more Dutch contacts. Meanwhile, not being able to speak Dutch well enough to talk to your neighbours, like Alaa, may discourage to make more Dutch contacts. Also linking seems to be positively related to parents' Dutch language level (Appendix B, Table 13). 90% of the parents who indicated to have a high language level, also find it very easy to contact public institutions. It should be noted that, since the parents have indicated their own Dutch language level, their self-confidence about their language control may also have an influence. One would expect that people who feel confident about their language skills, may also feel more comfortable to get in touch with Dutch-speaking people and institutions.

Time spent in the Netherlands

The parents who have been in the Netherlands for less than four years reported substantially lower levels of bonding social capital than parents who have been in the Netherlands for 4 to 8 years (Appendix B, Table 14). Whether someone has been in the Netherlands for 4 to 5 years or 6 to 8 years, seems to make not much of a difference in terms of how much contact they have with other newcomers from their country of origin.

According to the survey data (Appendix B, Table 15), it seems like the bridging social capital is not or hardly growing over the first eight years that newcomer parents are in the Netherlands. 57% of the respondents who have been one to three years in the Netherlands report that they have few connections with people originating from the Netherlands and almost the same percentage (56%) of the newcomers who have been four to five years in the Netherlands report similarly low levels of

⁴⁸ Original quote: "Nu zitten er verschillende nationaliteiten in de klas van mijn dochter en dat vind ik goed. Vroeger toen we in Nijmegen waren, zat naast mijn meisje een Syrische meisje ook en mijn dochter heeft met haar de hele tijd Arabisch gepraat dus dat heeft haar taal negatief beïnvloed."

bridging. This is counterintuitive, as one may expect that a newcomer may mix more and more with people originating from the Netherlands over time. Also because their Dutch would usually improve over time, as is shown in Table 16 (Appendix B), which in turn often goes hand in hand with higher levels of bridging, as is shown in Table 12 (Appendix B). So, these findings are quite surprising and demand further research with a large, more representative sample of newcomers on the relationship between newcomers' number of years in the Netherlands and their bridging social capital.

The linking social capital of newcomers seems to grow over time: 57% of the newcomers who have been in the Netherlands for six to eight years report that it is easy for them to contact public institutions and none of them report that they find it really difficult (Table 6). By contrast 29% of newcomers who have only been up to three years in the Netherlands report that they find it easy to contact public institutions and 14% finds this very difficult. This is in line with the literature of Schneider (2009), who argues that creating linking social capital requires time, since it involves sharing cultural values concerning service provision and building trust across power relationships. What is remarkable is that in the group of respondents who have been four to five years in the Netherlands, 41% reports to find it difficult to contact public institutions.

Table 6

Number of years newcomer-parents are in the Netherlands and corresponding levels of linking (n=53)

Number of years in the Netherlands	Linking			n (100%)
	Low	Intermediate	High	
1-3 years	14%	57%	29%	7
4-5 years	41%	22%	38%	32
6-8 years	0%	43%	57%	14
Total	26%	32%	42%	53

The concept of *immigrant optimism* (Maliepaard & Gijsberts, 2015; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) may provide a possible explanation for the backlash in linking social capital for the group that has been four to five years in the Netherlands and the stagnating bridging social capital. People who have been four to five years in the Netherlands (currently most of the Syrian and Eritrean permitholders) enter a second phase of integration in which they have to deal with more obstacles than anticipated (Huijnk, Dagevos, & Miltenburg, 2017; Sterckx, Dagevos, Huijk, & Lisdonk, 2014; Vermeulen, 2021). As explained before, in this second phase their focus may move from organising the 'basics', to finding their place in the new society. In this second phase, newcomers have to stand

on their own two feet, whereas in the first phase they get more assistance. For instance, the Dutch Counsel for Refugees (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland) helps refugees the first one to three years (OpenEmbassy, personal communication, June 8th 2021). Also, in the first year (sometimes longer) people may also still be in an asylum seeker centre (AZC).⁴⁹ Therefore, the interaction with public institutions may become more complex and less attuned to newcomers and more to society as a whole, such as communication with the school of their child, taxes and insurances, or becoming a member of the library.

Vermeulen (2021) explains the implication of immigrant optimism on social bridges. The Dutch people who newcomers meet during their first years in the Netherlands, are mainly people who are willing to help refugees (e.g. volunteers in an asylum seeker centre). These positive encounters in the first period in the Netherlands were also reflected in the interview with Can:

*In the first period the contact persons from refugee work [Vluchtelingenwerk], Henk and Anke, would always help for my house, for my problems. Always help. Then I will react. [...]. For example, I am doing voluntary work. My wife is doing voluntary work.*⁵⁰ (interview Can & Esra, 12-05-2021)

However, in the next phase they may also meet people who are less friendly and open towards refugees. Vermeulen found that permitholders who struggle to connect with Dutch people during this second phase may cause some people to isolate themselves from Dutch society, and turn towards their origin group instead. This may explain why the bridging social capital is not or hardly growing over the first eight years that newcomer-parents are in the Netherlands.

Culture

Only 11% of the participants has indicated a high level of contact with people originating from the Netherlands. The interviews pointed out that Dutch culture is not very inviting for social contact in the eyes of the newcomer parents. Leila explains that it is difficult for her to make contacts in the Netherlands:

What makes it difficult is the contact with others. In Eritrea you can, without any effort, have a lot of contact with your neighbours. Her in the Netherlands you have to take your own initiatives to have contact with people. (interview Leila, 10-5-2021)

⁴⁹ In April 2021, the average waiting time for asylum seekers until they know whether or not they will get a (temporary) residence permit was fifty weeks for the general procedure (Algemene Asielprocedure) and 67 weeks for the prolonged procedure (Verlengde Asielprocedure). The legal decision period is six months for the general procedure, and 15 months for the general procedure. However, the waiting time for the legal decision has skyrocketed in the past few years (IND, 2021).

⁵⁰ Original quote: "Voorbeeld eerste periode vluchtelingenwerk contactpersoon, Henk en Anke, altijd helpen voor mijn huis, voor mijn probleem. Altijd helpen. Dan ga ik reactie. Dan ga ik reactie. Voorbeeld ik ben vrijwilliger ander werk. Mijn vrouw is vrijwilliger ander werk."

Huijk et al. (2017) state that the sociocultural distance between Eritrean and Dutch people is especially large compared to other migrant groups, which is why they tend to turn towards their own origin group. In the interview this also seemed to be the case for Leila. Achmed and Sara have been living in the Netherlands for six years now. They point out that in the Netherlands everyone, including themselves, is very busy:

We don't have much contact with people in the neighbourhood. Life is busy here. I am busy with the children and we are also new here in Arnhem. My husband is also busy with his job. Here all the people are also busy with their own lives and you don't really feel that there is a social life.
(interview Sara & Achmed, 7-5-2021)

Also Can experiences that Dutch people are generally not very open to contact: “first period Dutch people is a bit cold normally”⁵¹ (interview Can & Esra, 12-05-2021). However, he explains that very slowly he can get closer to a Dutch person and he portrays with his hands how two persons in turn take a small step towards each other: “slowly, slowly, my reaction, reaction from the other side”⁵². This resonates with the findings of Vermeulen (2021), who found that (Syrian and Eritrean) permit holders generally regard the Dutch as friendly and helpful, but also as closed and distant. It is hard to get beyond superficial contact.

So, the newcomers experience that social contact with people in the Netherlands doesn't come to them very naturally. Leila and Sara's statements also suggest that it may not just be the Dutch *people* but perhaps also the way in which life is structured in the Netherlands that inhibits social contact.

With respect to linking, the interviews show that cultural differences and a language barrier often hinder the communication between the school and the newcomer. Janna, one of the buddies, describes a typical example of such a misunderstanding between the parent and the school:

I asked whether I could have the contact information of the teacher [...]. Then it turned out that the child had a conflict at school. That is why the child and mother had not talked to the school, because the mother thinks that the teacher is angry. [...] I asked her if I could read the e-mail of the teacher about the incident. The way I read it, she [the teacher] was not angry at all, but she wanted to help him. The teacher is very constructive. Why does this not come across? Language or culture?⁵³ (Case discussion Janna, 30-4-2021)

⁵¹ Original quote: “eerste periode Nederlandse mensen is een beetje koud normaal.”

⁵² Original quote: “langzaam, langzaam, mijn reactie - tegen reactie”

⁵³ Original quote: “Ik vroeg of ik de contactgegevens van de juf mocht, [...] Toen bleek dat het kind op school een conflict had. Daardoor heeft het kind en moeder nog niet gesproken met school, want moeder denkt dat juf boos is. [...] Ik heb gevraagd of ik de mail van de juf hierover mocht lezen. Zoals ik dat las leek ze helemaal niet boos, maar wilde ze hem helpen. De juf is super constructief. Waardoor komt dit niet over? Taal of cultuur?”

Rim, who matches Syrian families to buddies from OpenEmbassy, sees that newcomer parents often find it difficult to ask something of the school. She is from Syria herself and sees that the communication is difficult because of cultural differences between Syria and the Netherlands: “Newcomers don’t know how they have to ask, in our culture directness is not so good, we think it is rude”⁵⁴ (Rim, 20-05-2021).

Also Fatima from Yemen experiences the difficulties of intercultural communication: communication with Dutch people, is not just about knowing Dutch words, but also about knowing how to respond in certain situations: “I also want to learn how Dutch people think, how do they react to things. If I respond in an Arabic way, I often get into trouble. In the Dutch way, it should be direct and concrete” (interview Fatima, 4-5-2021). Language proficiency and intercultural communication seem to be prerequisites for bridging and, especially, linking social capital.

Neighbourhood

Regardless of one’s personal preferences, physical distance is a decisive factor for your contacts. Alaa expresses that she simply has more contact with Dutch families because they live nearer than Syrian families: “We know other Syrian families too, but they live far away from us, so we have more contact with Dutch families” (interview Alaa & Youssef, 26-4-2021). Most of the newcomer parents talked quite positively about their neighbours. Heba’s neighbour, for instance, always asks if they need help with something (interview Heba, 26-4-2021). Better a good neighbour than a distant friend?

This matches the findings of Van Doorn (2011): when someone’s own origin group is relatively small, the chances of meeting people of one’s origin group are smaller, which leads to more interethnic (bridging) contacts. In comparison, smaller migrant groups from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia appeared to have more contact with ‘autochthonous Dutch people’ than the large Turkish and Moroccan migrant groups (Doorn, 2011). Their findings revolve around the size of migrant groups on the national level, however based on the qualitative data of this research it seems like the findings of Van Doorn also apply to the local context.

Many participants, like Alaa, underlined the impact of their immediate neighbourhood on their social connections. The clearest example is the situation of Can and Esra. They only have Dutch social connections in the Netherlands, because they are the only Turkish (even the only newcomers) in town. On the other hand, Fatima explains that mixing is hard for her because she can’t really connect with the people in her direct neighbourhood: “In the neighbourhood where I live, there are many old people who are very closed and on their own” (interview Fatima, 4-5-2021). Sanne, a remedial child

⁵⁴ Original quote: “Nieuwkomers weten niet hoe ze moeten vragen, in onze cultuur is directheid niet zo goed, wij denken dat dat ongeleefd is.”

psychologist (orthopedagoge) and buddy of two Syrian brothers, expresses the benefit of a mixed neighbourhood for the child: “The youngest has friends of many different backgrounds and speaks mostly Dutch when playing outside. According to his parents, he gets picked up at home often to come and play outside”⁵⁵ (reflection form, 8-5-2021).

In this section (5.3) it has been explained that the low volume of bridging contacts indicated in the survey seems to be mainly due to the language barrier and that newcomers perceive that people in the Netherlands are not very open to contact. Newcomers with an educational level higher than secondary education are likely to have more bridging social capital. Contrary to what was expected, the time someone has spent in the Netherlands doesn’t seem to have a big impact on the volume of bridging social capital. Mixed neighbourhoods seem to facilitate bridging contacts.

5.4 How do bonding, bridging, and linking relate to each other?

The previous section looked at factors that influence someone’s social capital. The literature suggests that the various forms of social capital also influence each other. This chapter takes a closer look at this relationships between bonding and bridging, and bridging and linking.⁵⁶

The literature on the *dark side of social capital* (i.e. Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019) suggests a trade-off between bonding and bridging social capital. Alencar & Tsagkroni (2019) argue that “some kinds of bonding social capital may discourage the formation of bridging social capital” (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019, p. 186). The mechanism behind this would be that out-group distrust increases (which in turn discourages bridging), if people mainly have contacts within their own social group (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Putnam, 2000). In other words: the more we stick to ‘our own’, the less we trust ‘the other’ (Bobo & Tuan, 2006).

The interviews with parents and the insights from the buddies in action⁵⁷ were consistent with this theory: the newcomer families with many social bonds appeared to have few bridging contacts. This is illustrated by the following quote:

⁵⁵ Original quote: “De jongste heeft vrienden van allemaal achtergronden en spreekt vooral Nederlands met buitenspelen. Hij wordt volgens ouders ook vaak opgehaald van huis om te komen spelen.”

⁵⁶ The intention was to research also the relationship between membership of a group and the acquisition of various forms of social capital. In the survey, parents were asked about the composition of their groups (question 46 and question 47). However, since only six respondents reported to be a member of a group, the relationship between membership of a group and the acquisition of various forms of social capital has not been analysed.

⁵⁷ These insights were gathered through the focus group, informal interviews and online reflection forms.

Furthermore the family has a lot of contact with the brother of the mother and his family, who live in Zaandam. I have also met this family on [the girl's] birthday. These families are truly fond of each other and I am very happy they find so much support in one another. The family does not have many other contacts they can ask some things.⁵⁸ Lieke (reflection form, 8-5-2021).

In contrast to the literature and qualitative data, the survey data does not suggest a trade-off between bonding and bridging social capital (Table 7). On the contrary, little bonding and little bridging capital seem to go frequently hand in hand: 45% of the parents who have reported a low level of contact with other newcomers in the Netherlands from their own country of origin (bonding), also report a low level of contact with people originating from the Netherlands (bridging). Also, people with high bonding social capital did not report a low level of bridging more often than respondents who reported a low level of bonding social capital (21% vs. 45%).

Table 7

Newcomer-parents' bridging social capital and corresponding bonding social capital (n=53)

Bridging	Bonding			n (100%)
	Low	Intermediate	High	
Low	45%	34%	21%	29
Intermediate	22%	33%	44%	18
High	17%	50%	33%	6
Total	34%	36%	30%	53

This discrepancy between the expectation based on the literature and the survey results is very relevant in the light of the current debate around the potential danger of the formation of isolated communities, which are relatively closed off from the rest of society (Vermeulen, 2021). The data from the survey and the literature are not necessarily contradictory. To be precise, Alencar & Tsagkroni (2019) argued that *some kinds* of bonding social capital may discourage people to form social bridges. Maybe there is something about this specific sample – for example that they all have school-age children – that mitigates the dark side of social capital.

⁵⁸ Original quote: "Verder heeft het gezin heel veel contact met de broer van de moeder en zijn gezin, die wonen in Zaandam. Ik heb deze familie ook ontmoet op de verjaardag van [het meisje]. Deze families zijn echt dol op elkaar en ik ben heel blij dat ze zoveel steun aan elkaar hebben. De familie heeft verder niet veel contacten aan wie ze dingen kunnen vragen."

The data suggests a positive relationship between bridging and linking social capital (Appendix B, Table 18). 67% of the people who have reported a high level of bridging social capital also report a high level of linking social capital. By comparison, only 24% of the people who have reported a low level of bridging social capital, reported a high level of linking social capital. The differences between the linking capital of people with an intermediate level and a high level of bridging are neglectable. This analysis does not explain why bridging and linking are related. One explanation is that some factors may increase bridging and linking simultaneously. The earlier section on language showed that people with a higher language level often have higher levels of bridging and linking social capital.

The correlation between linking and bridging raises interesting questions: does being capable of getting in touch with Dutch institutions make it easier to connect with people originating from the Netherlands? Do bridges with people experienced in the Dutch context enhance links with institutions? The latter is interesting with regard to the buddy project. The relationships with the buddies are bridges, which, in some cases, improve the connection with the school and some other institutions, as was presented in the paragraph on linking in section 5.2.

5.5 The value of a buddy

One of the research goals was to evaluate whether and how the buddies can help newcomer families. Can a buddy system battle social inequality in education, especially now that social inequality seems to be increasing due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Bol, 2020; Dietrich, 2020; Van der Ent & Stam, in press)? The main goal of the buddy project was to help children of newcomer families with their schoolwork during the lockdown. However, during this research it surfaced that the project has broader positive side effects, too. This section zooms in on the connection between the buddy and the newcomer family, to answer the final sub question: what is the value of a home schooling buddy for newcomer families?

Child

Both the parents and the buddies were very positive about the personal relationship between the buddy and the child.⁵⁹ Various buddies mentioned that they have been invited to a birthday party or a dinner at the home of the newcomer family. Leila, an Eritrean mother, expresses clearly the close relationship with the buddy: “We have almost become family” (interview Leila, 10-5-2021).

The personal character of the relationship – being ‘buddies’ – turns out to be an important difference between the tutoring in the buddy-project, compared to regular school classes. Buddy Sanne has seen a clear effect of her support on the educational progress of the child. With a little support from Sanne,

⁵⁹ Based on the open questions from the buddy-survey as well as the interviews with parents and buddies.

mainly on where he can find books and websites to practice his CITO (final exam at primary school), the boy has worked himself up from a VMBO-T advice to a havo-VWO advice,⁶⁰ with a preparatory transition year for extra language support (kopklas)⁶¹ (reflection form, 8-5-2021). However, many buddies and parents have indicated that one or two hours support per week can hardly make a substantial difference for the education, especially the language, of the child.

Parents

The interviews as well as the surveys showed that the buddy can offer valuable support for the parents, too. As was already touched upon in the paragraph on the value of linking (5.2), buddies can also help the parents in the institutional context. This is illustrated by the following quote: “The mother also frequently comes to me with questions, for example when a new public transport card needs to be ordered, or when they get certain letters.”⁶² – Lieke (reflection form, 8-5-2021). Another buddy has arranged a translator for the parents during an important meeting at school about the results of an IQ-test of their child, which was much appreciated by the parent.⁶³ Johan explains that he finds it frustrating sometimes to spend so much time on these “simple things” instead of helping the children with their actual schoolwork:

The mother let me read a letter from school, and the school tells one of the children that he should become a member of the library. Well, all that sort of simple stuff, that is just very complex. They can't figure it out at all. Becoming a member of the library, I have literally spent three sessions on that with the oldest [child].⁶⁴ (interview Johan, 28-4-2021)

On the other hand, he recognises that exactly helping out with those things may precisely be the value of being a buddy for this Syrian family.⁶⁵ This perception is mutual: many parents and buddies experience that the buddy is a great help in the institutional context. Helping out with these “simple things” may be one of the greatest assets of a buddy.

Although the interviews with the parents as well as the buddies, gave the impression that the buddies facilitate the contact between the parent and the school, 68% of the buddies reported in

⁶⁰ These educational levels do not allow for exact translations. In the Netherlands, VMBO-T prepares a pupil for vocational education, havo for higher professional education, VWO for university.

⁶¹ For more information see <https://wijzeroverdebasisschool.nl/uitleg/kopklas>

⁶² Original quote: “De moeder komt ook vaak naar mij met vragen, bijvoorbeeld als er een nieuwe ov-chipkaart moet worden besteld, of als ze bepaalde brieven hebben gekregen.”

⁶³ The buddy and the parent have been interviewed separately; both independently talked positively about this situation (interview Heba, 26-4-2021; Case discussion Sanne, 30-4-2021).

⁶⁴ Original quote: “Toen ik daar nog was liet de moeder een brief van school lezen, en de school zegt tegen één van de kinderen dat hij lid moet worden van de bibliotheek. Nou allemaal dat soort simpele dingen, dat is gewoon super ingewikkeld. Daar komen ze totaal niet uit. Lid worden van de bibliotheek, ik heb daar letterlijk 3 sessies met die oudste aan besteed.”

⁶⁵ Original quote: “Ergens denk ik ook wel dat dat de waarde is van zo'n vrijwilligersschap”.

the survey that they do not help the parents at all with the contact with the school.⁶⁶ It is likely that the buddies who participated in the research (especially the buddies-in-action) are more involved in the project than buddies who did not participate in the research. Therefore, it is likely that the actual number of buddies who offer support to the parents besides tutoring the child is lower than in the research. However, the interviews pointed out that there is a great potential in supporting the newcomer family with practical matters and communication with the school.

Society

From a societal perspective, the buddy project may also facilitate integration as a *two-way process*, because it may foster adaptation and changing perceptions on the side of the receiving society as well as on the side of the newcomer (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019; Klarenbeek, 2019; Ndofor-Tah, et al., 2019; Vermeulen, 2021). The buddy learns about the life and culture of the newcomer and vice versa, which may contribute to a better understanding of the other. Father Can underlines that he perceives integration as a two-way process, as he states: “Always culture shopping. Culture shopping: [...] give – take.”⁶⁷ (interview Can & Esra, 12-05-2021).

Buddy Ellen is surprised that she can just continue tutoring during Eid al-Fitr (sugar festival) (reflection form, 8-5-2021). Johan tells that the intercultural communication with the Syrian family has really been a learning process for him. He describes that visiting the Syrian family for the first time was unfamiliar and very interesting to him:

*What stood out to me – besides how they live, since I do not have many people who fled from Syria within my circle of friends, so a house with all those Syrian ceramic pots and special Arabic things – but what surprised me the most is the drive of the parents, to make this [the buddy project] a success.*⁶⁸ (interview Johan, 28-4-2021)

As Claridge (2018) points out, the categorisation between bonding and bridging are not binary, but rather a continuum. A relationship can have elements of both at the same time. The relationship with the buddy can be characterised as a bridge, because it is a relationship between people from different cultural backgrounds. However, the close personal relationship indicated by both the parents and the buddies suggests some bonding too. In the context of integration bridging does not

⁶⁶ Score 1 on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from *fully disagree* to *fully agree*. Original survey question: (63) Ik help de ouders met contact met de school van het kind (bijvoorbeeld: uitleggen van e-mails, helpen met vragen stellen aan de docent).

⁶⁷ Original quote: “Altijd cultuurboodschappen. Cultuur winkelen: [...] geven - nemen.”

⁶⁸ Original quote: “Wat me gewoon erg opvalt - naast het wonen, aangezien ik in mijn vriendenkring niet zoveel mensen uit Syrië heb die gevlucht zijn, dus een huis waarin van die Syrische potten en van die bijzondere Arabische dingen allemaal staan - maar wat me het meest verbaasd heeft is toch wel de drive van de ouders om dit tot een succes te maken.”

only relate to somebody different from oneself, but also to people who can 'bridge the gap', someone who can connect a newcomer to the receiving society and new opportunities. This also seems to be a role the buddy can fulfil. For example by facilitating communication with the school and being a focal point for administrative questions. In doing so, the relationship with the buddy also facilitates linking with institutions.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

J: "All the hassle around it costs more time and effort than just explaining the school work!"

S: "You call it 'hassle', I call it the core mission. If you had focussed on the school work alone, you would not have reached the point where you are now: trust."

S: You show them how it's done, step by step. You are a door that opens, to the school and to other questions, if they dare to ask.

J: Yes, they already do that, with health insurance claims, for instance. That is great, it is so little effort for me, ten minutes and it's done.

Janna, buddy

Steve, action researcher at OpenEmbassy

6. Conclusion

This research started with the metaphor of the COVID-19 pandemic as a magnifying glass on social inequality in education. What have we seen while looking, through this magnifying glass, at the role of social connections in facilitating home schooling in newcomer families?

The first sub-question was: what (types of) social connections do newcomer families have in the Netherlands and how do they experience it? The types of social connections differentiated based on the literature are membership of a group, bonding, semi-bridging, bridging, and linking. Generally speaking, the newcomer parents participating in the buddy project reported to have few social connections. A lot of variation was noted in the volume of bonding social capital of newcomer families. In line with the literature of SZW (2016) and Vermeulen (2021), it was found that some newcomers explicitly turn towards their compatriots, while others turn around as soon as they see them.

Only 11% of the newcomer parents indicated a high level of bridging social capital. It has been researched what factors influence the social connections of newcomer families in the Netherlands (sub-question 3). For bridging, the low volume seems to be mainly due to the language barrier and the perception that people in the Netherlands are not very open to contact. Newcomers with an intermediate or high level of education are likely to have more bridging social capital than newcomers with a low level of education. Also, culturally mixed neighbourhoods seem to facilitate bridging contacts. Surprisingly, the time someone has spent in the Netherlands does not seem to have a big impact on the volume of bridging social capital.

A discrepancy was found between the literature and the survey data on the relationship between bonding and bridging. The literature on the *dark side of social capital* (i.e. Alesina & La Ferrara, 2005; Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019) suggests that having strong bonds within one's origin group may discourage the formation of bridging social capital. Yet, in the survey it was found that newcomer parents who reported a high level of bonding social capital did not more often report a low level of bridging than respondents who reported a low level of bonding social capital (respectively 21% and 45%). What is more, the survey indicated that a low level of bonding and a low level of bridging frequently go hand in hand. This finding is very relevant in light of the current debate around the potential danger of the formation of isolated communities (Vermeulen, 2021) since isolated communities can be the result of the dark side of social capital. Therefore, further research on the relationship between bonding and bridging social capital of newcomers in the Netherlands is recommended. An interesting follow-up question would be: what kinds of bonding social capital may discourage the formation of bridging social capital? Maybe there is something about this specific

sample – for example that they all have school-age children – that alleviates the dark side of social capital.

Membership of a group seems to be a scarce, but valuable form of social capital among newcomers. Only 13,2% of the newcomer parents reported being a member of an organisation or group, which is strikingly low compared to the 78% of the Dutch population at large (Kloosterman & Coumans, 2014). Meanwhile, the social capital literature suggests that membership of a group often provides benefits for an individual (Bourdieu, 1986; Bekkers & De Graaf, 2002) and society (Putnam, 2000; Van der Houwen, 2010; Kloosterman & Coumans, 2014). These benefits were confirmed in the interviews. For policymakers and community organisations, these findings point out that promoting and facilitating membership of associations may be a promising approach to foster two-way integration (see also (Klarenbeek, 2019; Ndofor-Tah, et al., 2019). Further research is recommended to understand why (non-Western)⁶⁹ newcomers are underrepresented in Dutch associations.

In response to the finding of Vermeulen (2021), the concept of *semi-bridging* was introduced in this research. Vermeulen found that many Syrian and Eritrean permit holders in the Netherlands experience that contact with other newcomers in the Netherlands (originating from other countries than themselves) is easier for them than with people originating from the Netherlands. However, the survey did not find any indications for the relevance of semi-bridging: only 6% of the respondents have indicated to have a lot of contact⁷⁰ with newcomers from another country of origin. Some interviews indicated a closer contact between newcomers from Syria and Yemen. This discrepancy between the findings of Vermeulen (2021) and this current research asks for further inquiry. Is semi-bridging a viable concept?

Considering the benefits of social capital (sub-question 2), it was expected that bridging social capital would be very valuable for newcomers because it would enable them to ask somebody (who is experienced in the Dutch context) to help their child with schoolwork. It was found that 40% of the respondents have asked somebody in their network to help their child with home schooling. This indicates that people actively looked for the help of others “to get ahead” (Briggs, 1998, p. 178). However, whether their network consists mainly of bridges or bonds does not seem to make a difference for whether one asks for help or not.

On the other hand, the connection with the buddy – which is also a *bridge* – seems to be very valuable for newcomer families. Many parents and buddies experience that the buddy is a great help in the

⁶⁹ The findings of Kloosterman & Coumans (2014) show that people with a Western migration background are not underrepresented in Dutch associations. Moreover, the respondents of this research all had a non-Western background.

⁷⁰ Indicated by a 4 or 5 on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from *very little contact* to *very much contact*.

institutional context: translating letters, helping to become a member of the library, and facilitating communication with the school. Helping out with these “simple things” (interview Johan, 28-4-2021) may be one of the greatest assets of a buddy.

Parents really appreciate the help of the buddy for their child. Some of the children showed clear progress at school with the support of their buddies. However, many buddies and parents have indicated that one or two hours of support per week doesn't make a big difference in the education of the child and that more help is needed. In line with other research on the impact of COVID-19 (Dietrich, 2020; Bol, 2020; Engzell, Frey & Verhagen, 2020), this research finds alarming signs that the COVID-19-induced school closures harm some children more than others, increasing social inequality. Therefore, this research urges policymakers to think of tailored education policies to repair the learning loss of children who are disproportionately impacted by the school closures, including children from newcomer parents. After all, “the worst form of inequality is to try to make [treat] unequal things equal” (Aristotle. In: Palaiologou, Spinthourakis, & Nikolaou, n.d.).

In conclusion, social connections – especially with someone experienced in the Dutch institutional context – mitigate obstacles concerning home schooling in newcomer families. What is more, this research suggests that the need for educational support from social connections is not limited to home schooling due to COVID-19-induced school closures, but continues to be important as schools fully open again. The school closures have functioned as a magnifying glass (Bol, 2021), magnifying the obstacles for newcomer parents to support their children's education. However, these obstacles, predominantly the language barrier (Van der Ent & Stam, in press), do not disappear when the virus does. So, neither does the need for additional support. This research underlines that a buddy system – a personal connection between a newcomer child and somebody who is experienced in the Dutch context – is a good way to provide such additional support, especially since its positive effects are broader than boosting the educational level of the child. This research has illuminated the value of a ‘buddy’ for the child, parents, and even for society as a whole, by promoting integration as a two-way process.

6.1 Limitations

A limitation was that measuring social capital is very difficult, because it does not only involve the frequency of contact, but also the intensity and quality of the contact. Social capital is concerned with the reciprocity and trust (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000), and with the opportunities a person can connect you to (Briggs, 1998). Differentiating between bonding, bridging and linking social capital is useful for studying social connections in a structural way, adding to the extensive literature on social

capital. However, Claridge (2018) argues that “the binary nature of the distinction between bonding and bridging risks simplification and reduction in analysis”. Therefore it is important for researchers and policy makers to bear in mind that bonding and bridging are not mutually exclusive: “typically a relationship will have some characteristics of bonding and some characteristics of bridging” (Claridge, 2018, p. 5). Thus, the distinction should be perceived as a continuum rather than a binary divide. This is increasingly important in the light of rising superdiversity. It makes the differentiations between bonding and bridging increasingly complex, and perhaps less relevant.

In this study the social capital of newcomers was measured as how much contact newcomers themselves reported to have with people originating from the Netherlands. It was found that the bridging capital of newcomers does hardly grow over time,⁷¹ which contradicts expectations. However, these findings are based on a sample of 53 newcomers, therefore it would be worthwhile to research the relationship between bridging social capital of newcomers and the number of years they are in the Netherlands in a much larger sample.

As a last remark on the generalisability of the findings, it is important to remember that many of the differences in findings may simply be a difference between personalities and attitudes (especially with non-representative samples of 53 parents and 88 buddies), not so much between characteristics such as country of origin, level of education or language proficiency. After all, this is a story about people.

⁷¹ Newcomers participating in this research were 1 to 8 years in the Netherlands.

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Appendix A: Overview of data collection

A1 Survey response

Survey	Date	Sent to	Response (n)	Response rate
Survey parents (total)		282	53	18,8%
<i>Survey Parents – Arabic</i>	4-4-2021	229	46 ^a	20,1%
<i>Survey Parents - Dutch</i>	4-4-2021	31	4 ^a	12,9%
<i>Survey Parents - Tigrinya</i>	8-4-2021	22	3	13,6%
Survey buddies	13-4-2021	426	88	20,7%

^a one outlier excluded

A2 Interviews

Interviews buddies

No.	Date	Duration	Pseudonym	Age of kids	Country of origin (child)	Buddy-in-action?
1.	28/04/2021	1:00	Johan	9, 12, 14	Syria	No
2.	12/04/2021	0:30	Nina	18	Yemen	Yes
3.	12/04/2021	0:20	Ellen	7, 11	Syria	Yes
4.	12/04/2021	0:30	Margriet	11, 15	Eritrea	Yes
5.	13/04/2021	0:30	Karen	9, 11	Turkey	Yes
6.	13/04/2021	0:30	Lieke	8, 12	Syria	Yes
7.	15/04/2021	0:20	Amber	10, 12	Syria	Yes
8.	15/04/2021	0:30	Janna	10, 13	Syria	Yes
9.	19/04/2021	0:30	Sanne	10, 12	Syria	Yes

Interviews parents

No.	Date	Duration	Pseudonym	From:	Years in NL	Language	Interviewer
1.	26/04/2021	1:00	Heba	Syria		Arabic	Ghadeer
2.	10/05/2021	1:00	Leila	Eritrea	4	Tigrinya	Akberet
3.	26/04/2021	1:00	Alaa & Youssef	Syria		Arabic	Ghadeer
4.	04/05/2021	1:00	Fatima	Yemen	4 ^a	Arabic	Ghadeer
5.	07/05/2021	1:00	Sara & Achmed	Syria	6	Arabic	Ghadeer
6.	12/05/2021	1:00	Can & Esra	Turkey	3	Dutch	Anouk

^a after 14 years in Norway

A3 Miscellaneous

No.	Date	Duration	Participants	Description
1.	09/03/2021	0:30	Parent	Exploratory interview
2.	08/03/2021	0:30	Buddy	Exploratory interview
3.	08/03/2021	0:30	Buddy	Exploratory interview
4.	14/04/2021	1:00	Sanne (buddy) & project leader OpenEmbassy	Discussion about a complex situation of the child supported by the buddy
5.	30/04/2021	1:00	Janna (buddy) & action-researcher from OpenEmbassy	Discussion about a complex situation of the child supported by the buddy
6.	29/04/2021	1:30	Matchers (3) & project manager (2)	Focus group
7.	08/05/2021	-	Buddies-in-action	Reflection form buddies-in-action, through Google Forms (see appendix D)
8.	17/05/2021	2:00	Buddies-in-action	Focus group
9.	20/05/2021	0:45	Rim (matcher)	Interview about her experiences as a matcher and a Syrian perspective on education

Appendix B: Cross-tables

Level of education

Table 8

Newcomer parents' level of education and corresponding level of contact with newcomers (in the Netherlands) from the same country of origin (bonding) (n=53)

Level of education	Bonding			n (100%)
	Low	Intermediate	High	
Low	48%	30%	22%	23
Intermediate	11%	33%	56%	9
High	29%	43%	29%	21
Total	34%	36%	30%	53

Table 9

Newcomer parents' level of education and corresponding level of contact with newcomers (in the Netherlands) from another country of origin than oneself (semi-bridging) (n=53)

Level of education	Semi-bridging			n (100%)
	Low	Intermediate	High	
Low	70%	22%	9%	23
Intermediate	56%	33%	11%	9
High	81%	19%	0%	21
Total	72%	23%	6%	53

Table 10

Newcomer parents' level of education and corresponding difficulty to contact public institutions (linking) (n=53)

Level of education	Difficulty to contact public institutions			n (100%)
	Difficult	Doable	Easy	
Low	39%	22%	39%	23
Intermediate	11%	44%	44%	9
High	19%	38%	43%	21
Total	26%	32%	42%	53

Table 11

Newcomer parents' level of education and whether they have asked somebody in their network (e.g. neighbours, friends, family) to help with home schooling (n=53)

Level of education	Have you ever asked somebody in your network to help your child with home schooling?			n (100%)
	Yes	No		
Low	43%	57%		29
Intermediate	33%	67%		18
High	38%	62%		6
Total	40%	60%		53

Language

Table 12

Newcomer parents' Dutch language level and corresponding level of contact with people originating from the Netherlands (bridging) (n=53)

Language level	Bridging			n (100%)
	Low	Intermediate	High	
Low	84%	16%	0%	19
Intermediate	42%	33%	25%	24
High	30%	70%	0%	10
Total	55%	34%	11%	53

Table 13

Newcomer parents' Dutch language level and corresponding difficulty to contact public institutions (linking) (n=53)

Language level	Difficulty to contact public institutions			n (100%)
	Difficult	Doable	Easy	
Low	47%	42%	11%	19
Intermediate	17%	38%	46%	24
High	10%	0%	90%	10
Total	26%	32%	42%	53

Time spent in the Netherlands

Table 14

Number of years newcomer parents are in the Netherlands and corresponding level of contact with newcomers (in the Netherlands) from the same country of origin (bonding) (n=53)

Number of years in the Netherlands	Bonding			
	Low	Intermediate	High	n (100%)
1-3 years	43%	57%	0%	7
4-5 years	31%	34%	34%	32
6-8 years	36%	29%	36%	14
Total	34%	36%	30%	53

Table 15

Number of years newcomer parents are in the Netherlands and corresponding level of contact with people originating from the Netherlands (bridging) (n=53)

Number of years in the Netherlands	Bridging			
	Low	Intermediate	High	n (100%)
1-3 years	57%	14%	29%	7
4-5 years	56%	34%	9%	32
6-8 years	50%	43%	7%	14
Total	55%	34%	11%	53

Table 16

Number of years newcomer parents are in the Netherlands and corresponding Dutch language level (n=53).

Number of years in the Netherlands	Language level			
	Low	Intermediate	High	n (100%)
1-3 years	43%	57%	0%	7
4-5 years	38%	47%	16%	32
6-8 years	29%	36%	36%	14
Total	36%	45%	19%	53

Forms of social capital

Table 17

Newcomer parents' level of bridging and corresponding level of contact with newcomers from the same country of origin (bonding) (n=53)

Bridging	Bonding			n (100%)
	Low	Intermediate	High	
Low	45%	34%	21%	29
Intermediate	22%	33%	44%	18
High	17%	50%	33%	6
Total	34%	36%	30%	53

Table 18

Newcomer-parents' levels of bridging and corresponding difficulty to contact public institutions (linking) (n=53)

Bridging	Difficulty to contact public institutions			n (100%)
	Difficult	Doable	Easy	
Low	34%	41%	24%	29
Intermediate	17%	22%	61%	18
High	17%	17%	67%	6
Total	26%	32%	42%	53

Appendix C: Topic lists

C1 Topic list for interviews with parents

Toelichting

Roze → gevoelige vraag, kijk of er genoeg vertrouwen en openheid in het gesprek is om dit te stellen

Schuin → ‘hulpvragen’, zijn meestal niet nodig, maar als iemand uit zichzelf weinig vertelt kun je deze vragen stellen zodat iemand wat meer kan vertellen.

(...) → Wat je niet zegt, maar ideeën/voorbeelden waar je aan kunt denken

Introductie & persoonlijke kenmerken	
	Kun je jezelf even voorstellen?
Namen (optioneel)	Wat is je naam? Naam van je kind?
Leeftijd	Hoe oud is je kind?
Groep/Klas	In welke groep zit je kind?
School	Op wat voor school zit je kind? (speciaal onderwijs* /regulier/schakelklas)
Woonplaats	Waar woon je?
Opleidingsniveau ouders	Wat was jouw beroep in <i>-land van herkomst-</i> ?
Land van herkomst	Uit welk land kom je? (meestal al bekend) Hoelang zijn jij en je familie al in Nederland? Hoe zijn je kinderen naar Nederland gekomen?
Onderwijsverleden kind	Kun je iets vertellen over het onderwijs dat je kind in <i>-land van herkomst-</i> heeft gehad? Heeft je kind onderwijs gehad, tijdens je reis/vlucht naar Nederland?
Evaluatie	
Verwachtingen	Waarom heb je je kind aangemeld? Wat zijn/waren je verwachtingen? Zijn deze uitgekomen? Waar ligt precies de behoefte van je kind aan het maatje/welke hulp heeft je kind nodig van het maatje?

Begeleiding van het maatje	Hoe vind je de begeleiding van het maatje? <i>Wat vind je het beste aan de begeleiding?</i> <i>Wat mis je nog in de begeleiding?</i> Wat is anders in de begeleiding van het maatje dan de begeleiding van de school? Hoe zou het zijn als je kind geen Thuisonderwijsmaatje had gehad?
Communicatie	Hoe is de communicatie met het maatje (communicatie ouders/maatje) (communicatie kind/maatje) Hoe is de communicatie met OpenEmbassy?
Het maatje	Hoe is de persoonlijke band tussen het maatje en je kind? (vertrouwen, gezellig) Heeft je een voorkeur van een maatje met dezelfde gender als je kind? Waarom wel/niet? Kijkt het maatje naar de behoeften van het kind? Welke specifieke kennis is er nodig van de maatjes? (Bijvoorbeeld: vind je het belangrijk dat iemand ervaring heeft in het onderwijs?)
Wat bepaalt of een koppel lang bij elkaar blijft?	Hoelang denk je dat de begeleiding van het maatje nodig is? Wanneer zou je stoppen met de begeleiding van het maatje? <i>Welk doel wil je dan hebben behaald?</i>
Systeemimpact	
Thuisonderwijs	
Lockdown	<i>Laten we in gedachten even teruggaan naar het moment van de eerste lockdown, het moment dat de scholen moesten sluiten. Hoe was dit voor u? Kun je iets vertellen over die eerste weken? (hoe regelde school het? Onduidelijkheid? Hoe voelde het? Hoe reageerde kind erop?)</i> Wat is de impact van Corona op je kind? Hoe gaat je kind ermee om?
Thuisituatie	Met wie woon je samen? Waar zit je kind als hij/zij met school bezig is? Hoe zou je de sfeer bij je thuis omschrijven? (gezellig, druk, rustig, chaotisch)
Behoeften kind	Waar heeft je kind extra hulp bij nodig? Is het kind gemotiveerd? <i>Kan ouder het kind motiveren? Kan maatje het kind motiveren?</i> (Psychische behoeften)
Rol van de ouders	Hoe ziet je je eigen rol in het thuisonderwijs van je kind? Bent je betrokken bij het thuisonderwijs van je kind? Help je je kind bij het thuisonderwijs? Gaat dat goed? (mogelijke obstakels: taal, kennis van de lesstof, kind vraagt/accepteert geen hulp)
Onderwijssysteem	
De rol van de school	Heb je goed contact met de school? Wat is je wens om het contact te verbeteren?

	Wat voor verwachtingen heeft de school van je? Vind je deze verwachtingen redelijk? <i>Ervaar je stress vanwege de (hoge) verwachtingen van school wat betreft jullie rol in het thuisonderwijs?</i>
Begrip van onderwijssysteem	Hoe vind je het onderwijssysteem in Nederland, is er een verschil met het onderwijssysteem in je land?
Facilitators	
Taal en communicatie	In hoeverre is taal een belemmering om je kind te helpen bij het thuisonderwijs? In hoeverre is taal een belemmering om met de school/docent van je kind te praten? <i>Hoe goed beheerst je de Nederlandse taal? En je kind?</i> Bent je zelf actief bezig met het leren van de Nederlandse taal? Spreken jullie thuis Nederlands? Waarom wel/niet? In hoeverre begrijpt je de informatie die je krijgt vanuit de school van je kind (bijvoorbeeld: uitleg over thuisonderwijs, e-mails, ouderavonden)?
Cultuur	Kun je een moment/voorbeeld noemen waarin je een cultuurverschil merkte? Maakt het cultuurverschil het voor jou moeilijk om om te gaan met het onderwijssysteem in Nederland? Hoe beïnvloedt het cultuurverschil de begeleiding van het maatje?
Digitale vaardigheden	Kun je zelf goed omgaan met digitale middelen? Kan je kind goed omgaan met digitale middelen? Heb je (en je kind) altijd toegang tot digitale middelen? (WiFi, laptop, mobiel)
Veiligheid	Voelt je kind zich veilig in de klas? Voel je je veilig in de schoolomgeving van je kind? <i>Wat is veiligheid voor je in deze context? (begrijpelijkheid, contact met ouders, met school durven praten)</i>
Stabiliteit	Voel je je thuis, waar je nu woont? En je kinderen? Ben je van plan hier nog heel lang te blijven wonen? Hoelaat gaat je kind naar bed en hoelaat staat hij/zij meestal op? (ritme)
Social connections	
Contact	Ken je veel mensen? Waar kent je de meeste mensen van (buurt, familie, vrienden, in land van herkomst) Leg je gemakkelijk contact met nieuwe mensen sinds je in Nederland woont? Waarom wel/niet? Vraagt je mensen die je kent gemakkelijk om hulp wanneer dat nodig is? Heeft je wel eens iemand gevraagd om je kind te helpen met school? Waarom wel/niet? <i>Voel je zich wel eens alleen?</i>
Bonds	Heb je hier in Nederland veel contact met mensen die ook vanuit <i>-land van herkomst-</i> komen? Zoekt je dit contact specifiek op? Heeft je met hen een andere band dan met andere mensen in Nederland? Wat doen jullie samen? (sfeer, samenstelling groep, praat je over andere onderwerpen, voel je je meer begrepen?)
Bridges	Heb je in Nederland veel contact met mensen die oorspronkelijk uit Nederland komen? Hoe is dit contact? Zijn sommigen ook echt vrienden?

	Vind (of vond) je het moeilijk om contact te leggen met Nederlanders? Waarom? <i>(taal, cultuur)</i>
Semi-bridges	Ga je veel om met andere nieuwkomers (mensen die niet in NL zijn geboren)? Is het contact met hen anders dan met mensen die zelf in Nederland opgegroeid zijn? Wat is het verschil?
Links	Kun je gemakkelijk contact opnemen met school? Als je het ergens niet mee eens bent op de school van je kind, wat zou je dan doen? Bij wie kun je terecht? (bij 'docent', en wat nou als je het niet met de docent eens bent?)
Speciaal onderwijs	
*Speciaal Onderwijs	Waarom gaat je kind naar speciaal onderwijs Ben je mee eens? Hoe is het proces verlopen dat je kind naar het speciaal onderwijs gaat? Ben je tevreden over de ontwikkeling van je kind in de speciaal onderwijs? <i>Welk verschil merk je tussen speciaal onderwijs en regulier onderwijs?</i>
Afsluiting	
Onderwijssysteem	Stel je voor, jij bent de minister van Onderwijs, wat zou je dan veranderen? <i>Hoe kan het volgens jou beter (gelijkwaardig onderwijs systeem) voor nieuwkomers?</i>
Opmerkingen	Heb je nog vragen of opmerkingen?

C2 Topic list for interviews with buddies

Toelichting

Roze → gevoelige vraag, kijk of er genoeg vertrouwen en openheid in het gesprek is om dit te stellen

Schuin → ‘hulpvragen’, zijn meestal niet nodig, maar als iemand uit zichzelf weinig vertelt kun je deze vragen stellen zodat iemand wat meer kan vertellen.

(...) → Wat je niet zegt, maar ideeën/voorbeelden waar je aan kunt denken

Introductie & persoonlijke kenmerken	
	Kun je jezelf even voorstellen?
Namen (optioneel)	Wat is je naam? Naam van je kind?
Leeftijd	Wat is de leeftijd van het kind?
Groep/Klas	In welke groep zit het kind?
School	Op wat voor school zit je kind? (speciaal onderwijs* /regulier/schakelklas)
Woonplaats	Waar woon je? Waar woont het kind?
Opleidingsniveau ouders	Wat voor opleiding heb je zelf gedaan? Weet je wat het opleidingsniveau van de ouders van het kind is? Wat is het beroep van de ouders?
Land van herkomst	Uit welk land komt het kind? Hoelang is hij/zij al in Nederland? Weet jij hoe/waarom de familie naar Nederland is gekomen?
Onderwijsverleden kind	Kun je iets vertellen over het onderwijs dat het kind in het land van herkomst heeft gehad? Heeft het kind onderwijs gehad, tijdens de reis/vlucht naar Nederland?
Impact migratie	Vertelt het kind wel eens over ‘vroeger’/over het land waar hij/zij vandaan komt? <i>Waaraan merk je dat het kind niet uit Nederland komt? Kun je een concreet moment noemen waarin je dat opmerkte?</i>

Evaluatie <i>Ik zal nu samen met jou door het hele proces willen lopen dat jij als maatje hebt doorlopen.</i> <i>Het begon natuurlijk met jouw aanmelding. Waarom heb je je aangemeld...</i>	
Motivatie Verwachtingen	Waarom heb je je aangemeld? Wat zijn/waren je verwachtingen? Zijn deze uitgekomen? Waar ligt precies de behoefte van je kind aan het maatje/welke hulp heeft je kind nodig van het maatje?
Matching	Je werd op een gegeven moment gematched, hoe ging dat? (lang wachten/contact met matcher/rekening gehouden met voorkeuren) Wat vind je van jouw match?
Voorbereiding	Voelde je je goed voorbereid? <i>Krijg je genoeg informatie over het kind van de team van OpenEmbassy?</i> <i>Hoe was in deze fase het contact met OpenEmbassy?</i> Wat had beter gekund? Hoe had OE jou beter kunnen voorbereiden?
De eerste les	Hoe was de eerste les met het kind? Wat heeft je verbaasd?
De begeleiding	Hoe ziet jouw begeleiding eruit/wat doen jullie? Wat is het grote verschil tussen jouw begeleiding en de begeleiding van de school? Hoe heeft jouw begeleiding zich ontwikkelt? <i>Doe je nu iets anders dan in het begin?</i> Wat moet er gebeuren om de begeleiding te verbeteren?
Band	Hoe zou je jouw persoonlijke band met het kind omschrijven? <i>Hebben jullie een klik? Hoe is de sfeer? Open?</i> Praten jullie ook over dingen buiten school om?
Ondersteuning OpenEmbassy	Heb je behoefte aan ondersteuning van OE? Hoe kan OE jou beter ondersteunen?
Het maatje	Welke specifieke kennis is er nodig van de maatjes?

Online	Hoe gaat het Online begeleiding geven? Als het mogelijk is, zou je dan liever offline begeleiding geven? <i>Waarom?</i>
Wat bepaalt of een koppel lang bij elkaar blijft?	Denk je dat je <i>-kind X-</i> nog lang zult helpen? Hoelang denk je dat de begeleiding van het maatje nodig is? Wanneer zou je stoppen met de begeleiding van geven? <i>Welk doel wil je dan hebben behaald?</i>
Systemimpact	
Nu jij first hand ervaring hebt met onderwijs voor nieuwkomers, willen wij graag van je leren wat je hierin opvalt en wat er beter zou kunnen.	
Thuisonderwijs	
Lockdown	Het project TOMaatjes is opgezet vanwege de Corona-crisis, denk je dat het project voortgezet moet worden als de Coronacrisis voorbij is? Welke gevolgen van de Lockdown op het kind zie je?
Thuisituatie	Kun je de thuisituatie van het kind beschrijven? Met wie woont hij/zij samen? Waar zit het kind als hij/zij met jouw begeleiding bezig is? Hoe zou je de sfeer bij het kind thuis omschrijven? (gezellig, druk, rustig, chaotisch)
Behoeften kind	Waar heeft het kind extra hulp bij nodig? Is het kind gemotiveerd? <i>Kan ouder het kind motiveren? Kan maatje het kind motiveren?</i> <i>(Psychische behoeften)</i>
Rol van de ouders	Zijn de ouders betrokken bij het thuisonderwijs? Gaat dat goed? (mogelijke obstakels: taal, kennis van de lesstof, kind vraagt/accepteert geen hulp) Welke rol zouden de ouders volgens jou in moeten nemen?
School	
De rol van de school	Heb je goed contact met de school? Is er iets dat je zou willen verbeteren aan het contact met de school? Heb je het idee dat de ouders goed contact hebben met de school?
Facilitators	

Taal en communicatie	<p>In hoeverre is taal een belemmering om je kind te helpen bij het thuisonderwijs? In hoeverre is taal een belemmering om met de school/docent van je kind te praten?</p> <p><i>Hoe goed beheerst je de Nederlandse taal? En je kind?</i></p> <p>Bent je zelf actief bezig met het leren van de Nederlandse taal?</p> <p>Spreken jullie thuis Nederlands? Waarom wel/niet?</p> <p>In hoeverre begrijpt je de informatie die je krijgt vanuit de school van je kind (bijvoorbeeld: uitleg over thuisonderwijs, e-mails, ouderavonden)?</p>
Cultuur	<p>Kun je een moment/voorbeeld noemen waarin je een cultuurverschil merkte?</p> <p>Hoe beïnvloedt het cultuurverschil de begeleiding?</p>
Digitale vaardigheden	<p>Kun je zelf goed omgaan met digitale middelen? (WiFi, laptop, mobiel)</p> <p>Kan het kind goed omgaan met digitale middelen?</p> <p>Heeft het kind altijd toegang tot digitale middelen? (WiFi, laptop, mobiel)</p>
Veiligheid	<p>Denk je dat het kind zich veilig voelt in de klas? Vertelt hij/zij daar wel eens iets over? (graag naar school, gepest, vriendjes, durft het kind iets tegen juf te zeggen)</p>
Stabiliteit	<p>Heeft het kind een goed ritme? Hoelaat gaat het kind naar bed en hoelaat staat hij/zij meestal op?</p>
Sociale connecties	
Contact (Bonds/Bridges)	<p>Heb je het idee dat het gezin veel sociale contacten heeft? (familie, vrienden, burens, collega's)</p> <p><i>Met wie?</i></p> <p>Is het kind/zijn de ouders lid van een groep, zoals een sportvereniging?</p> <p>Heb je zelf eigenlijk een groot netwerk? Uit wat voor mensen bestaat jouw netwerk?</p> <p>Ga je zelf met veel mensen van verschillende culturen om?</p>
Bridges	<p>Merk je een groot verschil in het contact dat je met nieuwkomers (o.a. dit gezin) hebt en het contact dat je hebt met mensen die in Nederland geboren zijn?</p>
Links	<p>Vragen de ouders je ook wel eens om met andere zaken dan thuisonderwijs te helpen? (bijv. belasting)</p> <p>Wat vind je daarvan?</p>

	Kunnen de ouders gemakkelijk contact opnemen met school?
*Speciaal onderwijs	
*Speciaal Onderwijs	<p>Waarom gaat je kind naar speciaal onderwijs?</p> <p>Ben je het hiermee mee eens?</p> <p>Hoe is het proces verlopen dat je kind naar het speciaal onderwijs gaat?</p> <p>Ben je tevreden over de ontwikkeling van je kind in de speciaal onderwijs?</p> <p><i>Welk verschil merk je tussen speciaal onderwijs en regulier onderwijs?</i></p>
Afsluiting	
Onderwijssysteem	<p>Stel je voor, jij bent de minister van Onderwijs, wat zou je dan veranderen?</p> <p>Hoe kan het onderwijssysteem volgens jou beter voor nieuwkomers?</p>
Opmerkingen	Heb je nog vragen of opmerkingen?

Appendix D: Reflection form buddies-in-action

Maatjes in Actie

*Vereist

1. Naam: *

2. Naam en leeftijd van kind(eren): *

Rollen & verwachtingen

3. Welke rol speelt/spelen de ouder(s) in het thuisonderwijs en in de begeleiding die jij biedt? *

4. Welke rol zouden zij volgens jou moeten innemen (in een ideale situatie)? *

5. Wat denk je dat de ouders en het kind van jou verwachten? Hoe zie jij je eigen rol als TOMaatje? *

Probeer een specifiek moment te beschrijven waarin dit naar voren kwam.

Sociale connecties

6. Wat valt je op aan de sociale contacten die het kind (en eventueel de ouders) hebben? *
Denk breed: vrienden, instanties, familie, verschillende culturele achtergronden, kunnen ze bij iemand terecht met vragen, etc.

School

7. Wat viel je op aan het onderwijs en de (relatie met) school van het kind de afgelopen maand? *

Persoonlijke situatie

8. Wat viel je op aan de persoonlijke situatie (thuis, vrienden, gevolgen lockdown, andere omstandigheden) van het kind en het effect daarvan op jouw begeleiding de afgelopen maand? *

Tot slot

9. Is je verder nog iets opgevallen waar we van kunnen leren? *

Bedankt!

Je kunt het formulier nu verzenden.