International Journal of Intercultural Relations 87 (2022) 72–84

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Intercultural Relations

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel

Socio-cultural starting positions among recently arrived Syrian refugees in the Netherlands: A latent class analysis

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Early acculturation
Syrian refugees
Socio-cultural typology
Inter-minority relations
Latent class regression analysis

ABSTRACT

Although changes in socio-cultural positions appear to take place shortly after arrival, there is a growing concern on socio-cultural differences in receiving societies and it is widely recognized that socio-cultural positions are important for further participation and well-being, few scholars examined socio-cultural positions among recently arrived refugees in Europe. At the same time, not much is known about how these positions relate to pre-migration, migration and post-migration characteristics, while these could be key indicators of early acculturation. This study explores Syrian refugees' socio-cultural starting positions by using a unique dataset including 3209 Syrian refugees in the Netherlands from which we develop a typology based on various indicators: Syrian's social contacts, emotional ties and cultural value orientation, both within and outside their origin group. A Latent Class Analysis showed that though Syrian refugees have been in the Netherlands shortly, they can be divided into three distinct socio-cultural types; the 'origin secured', 'double bonds' and 'destination focused' type. Latent class regression analysis provided insight into pre-migration, migration and post-migration indicators associated with Syrian's socio-cultural types. Having attended university before arrival, experiencing acceptance by receiving society members, being mentally stable and speaking Dutch indicated socio-cultural embedding (the 'destination focused' type). Syrians who were students in Syria, stayed in reception longer and participated in activities less and those who were not going to school in the Netherlands were more likely to belong to the 'origin secured' type.

Introduction

In recent years, Europe has dealt with a large influx of refugees. The largest share consisting of refugees from Syria, as an estimated 1 out of 13 million Syrians fleeing after the outbreak of the civil war in 2011 settled in Europe (Connor, 2018). In the Netherlands, more than half of the refugees who received a (temporary) residence permit were of Syrian origin in 2014, rising to more than 70% in 2016. Nowadays, almost 100.000 Syrians reside in the Netherlands (CBS, 2020).

Concerning refugee settlement, there is a large body of research, some specifically studying Syrian refugees in Europe (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018; Van Heelsum, 2017; Huizinga & van Hoven, 2018; Lubbers & de Valk, 2020; Pajic, Ulceluse, Kismihók, Mol,

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2022.01.009
Received 26 February 2021; Received in revised form 9 December 2021; Accepted 17 January 2022
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& den Hartog, 2018; Shneikat & Ryan, 2018). Yet, most studies focus on (Syrian) refugees' structural positions (education and employment), leaving refugees' socio-cultural positions (contacts, identification and value orientation) understudied, especially among recent arrivals (see Roblain, Malki, Azzi, and Licata (2017) on early-stage acculturation preferences for an exception).

In this study we do concentrate on socio-cultural positions among recent arrivals, which is of importance since the first period after arrival can be crucial for further development of refugees' life in the receiving society (Ghorashi, 2005; Stevens, 1999). While structural positions generally take more time to develop (Bakker, Dagevos, & Engbersen, 2017), changes in socio-cultural positions appear to take place quickly after migration (Martinovic, Van Tubergen, & Maas, 2009). Besides, there seems to be a growing concern about – especially socio-cultural – differences between inhabitants with or without a migration background (den Ridder, Miltenburg, Huijnk, & van Rijnberk, 2019), highlighted since the recent refugee influx. Nonetheless, for newcomers, socio-cultural positions – both within and outside the origin group – can enable further participation and wellbeing (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Phillimore, 2018; House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988).

Focusing on socio-cultural starting positions means we have to do with early acculturation processes. Acculturation, in which originally cultural orientation within the origin group is crossed with social orientation towards the receiving society (Berry, 1980, 1997), is generally studied among settled immigrants or refugees (Sabatier, Phalet, & Titzmann, 2016), while early acculturation processes have not received as much attention, especially among refugees (see: Amiot, De la Sablonniere, Terry, & Smith, 2007; Diehl, Lubbers, Mühlau, & Platt, 2016; Jasinskaja-Lahti & Yijälä, 2011 for examples of studies on early and pre-migration acculturation among migrants). Though both established and recent arrivals had to find their way in relating to the origin group and receiving society, early acculturation processes may differ for various reasons (Bornstein, 2017). It takes time to ground somewhere and newcomers might not have had as much opportunities for interaction yet. Also, in contrast to settled migrants and refugees for whom these experiences are more in the past, recently arrived refugees' initial acculturation might especially be impacted by pre-migration indicators such as socio-economic status (Martinovic, van Tubergen, & Maas, 2011; Verkuyten, Thijs, & Bekhuis, 2010), migration indicators such as their often involuntary and dangerous journey (Feller, 2005; Jorden, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009; Phillimore, 2011; Schweitzer, Melville, Steel, & Lacherez, 2006) as well as post-migration indicators of recent experiences in reception (Bakker, Dagevos, & Engbersen, 2014; Laban, Gernaat, Komproe, Schreuders, & De Jong, 2004; Nielsen et al., 2008), social climate, unfamiliarity with host country language and mental health problems, which can affect their (initial) acculturation process accordingly (Phillimore, 2011; Ryan, Dooley, & Benson, 2008; Statham & Tillie, 2016). In addition to what we already know about acculturation of more settled migrants and refugees, refugee specific pre-migration, migration and post-migration indicators could thus be key in founding refugees' socio-cultural starting positions. Indicators to which studies on acculturation processes hardly pay attention.

The aim of this study is therefore to provide insight into refugees' early socio-cultural acculturation by exploring socio-cultural starting positions among recently arrived Syrian refugees in the Netherlands. Building on and further elaborating Berry's previous (Berry, 1980, 1997) acculturation research (see also: Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010), we do so by means of developing a typology based on several indicators: Syrians' social contacts, emotional ties and cultural value orientation, both within and outside their origin group. Such a typology can be useful to reduce complexity to understand the multilayered and dynamic process of (socio-cultural) acculturation, while at the same time get a grip on indicators that differentiate. Moreover, the more the indicators coincide, the stronger the future impact of Syrians socio-cultural starting positions might be. After establishing the typology, we provide insight on pre-migration, migration and post-migration indicators associated with the various socio-cultural types. The questions that arise are: 1) Whether and which different social-cultural types can be distinguished within the group of Syrian newcomers? 2) If and which pre-migration, migration and post-migration indicators can be associated with Syrian's socio-cultural types?

We conduct our analysis among a new refugee group, using a unique and large dataset. Zooming in on socio-cultural starting positions is unique for the Syrian group and as far as we know, has not been done before among recent arrivals. Besides reducing complexity concerning early socio-cultural acculturation, insights into Syrian's social-cultural starting positions can inform policy regarding their further participation and wellbeing as well as future approaches for new groups of refugees.

Theoretical framework

Acculturation and socio-cultural dimensions

The concept of acculturation originates from the assumption that immigrants need to adjust to the receiving society (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016). However, contrary to what traditional assimilation theory assumed, embeddedness within the receiving society and the origin group does not necessarily exclude one another, especially regarding socio-cultural acculturation. Berry's research on acculturation strategies (1980, 1997) is most well-known concerning this. According to Berry, acculturating individuals face two central issues: 1) the dominant social orientation, reflecting involvement with the receiving country, and 2) the heritage cultural orientation, capturing involvement with the origin group.

Like Berry, we distinguish between orientation towards the receiving society and origin group when developing a socio-cultural typology for Syrian refugees. However, Berry's model is based on dichotomies; orientation towards the origin group is captured by cultural practices, and orientation towards the receiving society is described in terms of social relations with receiving society members without a migration background (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Yet, orientation towards both can manifest in terms of social contacts, identification or cultural practices (Schwartz et al., 2010). Moreover, receiving society members with a migration background are just as much part of the receiving society and should additionally be taken into account concerning newcomers' social relations (see also: Koops, Martinović, & Weesie, 2017). Taking this into account can contribute to an adjusted and more accurate representation of the distinguishable acculturation types.

So, in addition to Berry, we separate three dimensions, and compare Syrians' orientation towards their origin group and entire receiving society within the social, emotional and cultural dimension (see also: Esser, 2001, 2004). As our typology elaborates on Berry's acculturation scheme, it could be expected that more different socio-cultural types can be distinguished (e.g. orientation towards none of the groups, origin group only, origin group and receiving society members with a migration background, only receiving society members with a migration background, both receiving society members with and without a migration background, origin group members and receiving society members without a migration background or only receiving society member without a migration background).

The social, emotional and cultural dimension

The *social dimension* is about the extent to which migrants maintain social contact with their origin group members and with receiving society members. Deriving support from group members has been found important as a social safety net, both early on and later in the settlement process (Ferrier & Massink, 2016; Noh & Kaspar, 2003). At the same time, contacts with receiving society members without a migration background have been found useful in different domains such as language learning and finding employment (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew, 1998). Moreover, contacts with receiving society members with a migration background can be of importance, for example because newcomers find it is easier to interact with them and they might be able to provide experience-based support (Damen, Van der Linden, van Dam, & Dagevos, 2019; Vermeulen, 2021). There is no question of a 'trade-off', refugees can maintain both social contacts within and outside the origin group.

The socio-cultural position of refugees is also reflected in the *emotional connection* with the home and host society (Berry, 1997; Esser, 2001, 2004; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012). Often, the emotional bond is measured by the degree of ethnic identification (Verkuyten, 2005), which can serve as an 'anchor' during the processes of transition and adaptation to a new society (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006). Since forced migration involves substantial changes, refugees might particularly need points of stability (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016). As with social contacts, double ties are conceivable (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012).

The *cultural dimension* comprises the extent to which refugees approach the receiving society regarding cultural values, preferences and beliefs. Within each country, the dominant group generally determines its core values. However, norms, values and beliefs are not fixed but show variation, also within the receiving society. This means there is no such thing as a standard for a countries' culture to which 'cultural acculturation' can be measured. Yet, characteristic for the Netherlands and other European countries is the broad process of individualization, which is most visible in core values about individual freedom and equality (Duyvendak, 2004; Inglehart, 2020). In contrast with the social and emotional dimension, cultural orientation seems more mutually exclusive. However, individuals might endorse individualistic values in some contexts (e.g., at work) and more collectivistic values in others (e.g., at home) (Schwartz et al., 2010).

A socio-cultural typology

To develop a socio-cultural typology for Syrian refugees in the Netherlands, the question is whether and which indicators on the different dimensions as described above coincide. Previous studies have shown a strong interaction (Esser, 2001, 2004). For example, cultural agreements can form a lubricant for social contact, while cultural differences may form an obstacle. Conversely, cultural influence can take place through contact and exposure (Lubbers, Molina, & McCarty, 2007). Also, preference for social contact with receiving society members may increase as a person identifies more strongly with the receiving society (Leszczensky, 2013). Conversely, emotional ties may strengthen if migrants have positive social contact with receiving society members (Phinney, Berry, Vedder, & Liebkind, 2006; De Vroome, Verkuyten, & Martinovic, 2014). Finally, migrants who identify strong nationally are more susceptible to cultural influence (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), but on the other hand, cultural distance can strengthen cultural conflicts and negative perception, with less emotional connection with the receiving society as a result. Combining all three in a typology can be useful to reduce complexity while at the same time getting grip on indicators that differentiate. Moreover, the more indicators on the different dimensions coincide, the stronger group boundaries can be and the greater their consequences. Establishing the typology provides us with insight into Syrian's socio-cultural starting positions and thus early socio-cultural acculturation.

Individual background characteristics

Apart from exploring socio-cultural starting positions by means of a typology, we aim to provide more insight into early socio-cultural acculturation by exploring which pre-migration, migration and post-migration indicators can be associated with Syrians' socio-cultural types. While acculturative types are generally used to predict other outcomes (see for example, Politi, Bennour, Lüders, Manatschal, & Green, 2021), predicting refugees' socio-cultural starting positions based on these indicators can contribute to our understanding of characteristics that differentiate and thereby expand our knowledge on those indicators founding early acculturation. Although we do not know the interpretation of the typology yet – it must first be determined by a latent class analysis – and there is no existing theory on a socio-cultural typology as such, we highlight some indicators which we expect to be of importance based on previous studies into indicators of acculturation, to get a grip on which persons belong to which type.

When it comes to *pre-migration indicators*, Martinovic et al. (2011) have shown that higher home country socio-economic status (SES) can be related to more interethnic contacts, and Verkuyten et al. (2010) showed this can be related to more openness to other cultures. At the same time, this could be explained through the homophily principle (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001);

individuals prefer to engage in social relations with people similar to themselves. This is particularly true for educational homophily (Kalmijn, 1991) and those with higher home country SES could thus be expected to belong to a socio-cultural type orientated more strongly towards the receiving society, as receiving society members without a migration background are generally higher educated. On the other hand, evidence on the integration paradox indicates higher SES individuals might experience more discrimination (van Doorn, Scheepers, & Dagevos, 2013; De Vroome, Martinovic, & Verkuyten, 2014) which can be expected to be associated with withdrawal from the receiving society.

Looking at *migration indicators*, it can be expected that the longer and more difficult one's journey has been, the longer it will take for someone to be ready to engage in the new environment (Feller, 2005; Jorden et al., 2009; Phillimore, 2011; Schweitzer et al., 2006), e.g. a socio-cultural type orientated more strongly towards the origin group.

Focusing on *post-migration indicators* concerning experiences in reception, it can be expected that a longer period in the reception center is related to a stronger socio-cultural orientation towards the origin group due to lack of opportunities to engage in everyday life (Bakker et al., 2014; Ghorashi, 2005; Laban et al., 2004; Larruina & Ghorashi, 2016). Also, socio-cultural orientation towards the receiving society might be less strong if one had to move a lot between different reception centers, due to the lack of opportunities to engage in meaningful contacts or psychological distress coming from relocation (Goosen, Stronks, & Kunst, 2013; Nielsen et al., 2008). The more activities one engaged in within the reception center, the stronger the socio-cultural orientation towards the receiving society might be, because those engaging in activities have started to rebuild lost resources (Bakker et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2008).

Also, some additional post-migration indicators labeled as *indicators of life in the Netherlands* are expected to be associated with Syrian's socio-cultural types. As mentioned, there are growing concerns about socio-cultural differences within society. If refugees feel the social climate in the receiving society is not accepting towards migrants, this can lead to dis-identification and withdrawal (Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Solheim, 2009; McCoy & Major, 2003; Noh & Kaspar, 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003), e.g. a socio-cultural type orientated more strongly towards the origin group. Moreover, mental health problems are distinctive for refugees (Bartels, 2003; Gerritsen et al., 2006). While these might have originated before arrival, they can emerge after resettlement and consequently form an obstacle to entering into social and emotional ties in the receiving country (Bakker et al., 2014; Phillimore, 2011; Ryan et al., 2008). Another possible indicator for socio-cultural embedding is Dutch language proficiency, as being more proficient in the host country language could provide more confidence and make it easier to engage in social contacts, learn about cultural values and feel connected (Statham & Tillie, 2016). Though structural integration is more often understood as a result of socio-cultural embedding, similar mechanisms as for language could be at play for example for those refugees who are going to school or having a job in the Netherlands (see for example: Carrington, McIntosh, & Walmsley, 2007; Gallie, Paugam, & Jacobs, 2003). As such, structural participation could this be expected to strengthen socio-cultural embedding.

Data and method

This study was based on the survey 'New Refugees in the Netherlands' (NSN2017), conducted at the request of and funded by four Dutch ministries. The survey is part of a larger project (Longitudinal cohort study refugees) aiming to gain insight into refugees' early integration. The survey was carried out in 2017 by research agency Labyrinth led by The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP). There was a collaboration with Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the Research and Documentation Center (WODC) and the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), who designed and tested the questionnaire altogether. The survey was conducted among Syrians aged 15 and older who received a (temporary) residence permit in the Netherlands between January 1st, 2014 and July 1st, 2016 (coinciding with the period of a high influx of asylum seekers in the Netherlands).[1] Their children born in the Netherlands and family members who reunited in 2014/2015 were also included.

To reach respondents, a single random cluster sample was drawn from the target population by Statistics Netherlands. Next, the questionnaire was tested thoroughly and translated into Modern Standard Arabic. A commonly used sequential mixed-mode survey design was employed; respondents were first informed about the study and invited to complete the survey online (CAWI). The invitation included a phone number for further information or to deny participation (which was not used frequently). Refugees who did not respond online or via phone were given a reminder with an invite to complete the survey in person with an interviewer (CAPI). As a strategy to reach as many respondents as possible, interviewers from the research agency would visit respondents up to four times to make an appointment for participation, unless the person had already declined to participate.[2] All interviewers spoke Arabic and were from the same origin country as the respondents. The interviewer's feedback on both their experiences with the approach and the conversations was very positive.

In total, 3209 Syrians completed the survey, corresponding to a response rate of 80.6%. The high response rate can partly be attributed to the personal approach, but it also shows people were eager to participate. Lastly, the survey file was weighted by Statistics Netherlands to match the distribution in the sample with that in the population. The sampling, extensive fieldwork, bilingual

[1] After arrival in the Netherlands, asylum seekers have to register at the central registration center and are then provided accommodation in reception centers until their permit is granted and social housing is available. Permits are granted based on investigation of their asylum claim by the Immigration and Naturalization Office and are valid for five years, after which one can apply for permanent residence if all 'integration obligations' are met. Almost all Syrians who arrived in the Netherlands during the recent years were granted temporary leave to remain rather quickly compared to refugees from other countries (except for Eritreans) due to the situation in their home country (CBS, 2020). Depending on the year of arrival, most refugees in this study had to wait a few more years in order to apply for permanent residence at the time of survey.

[2] See (Kappelhof, 2018) for more details on the survey design and implementation.

interviewers, high response rate and weighting of the data resulted in a unique, large scale and high-quality data set which allows us to provide insight into early acculturation among a new group of refugees. For this study, analysis was based on all 3209 respondents. Out of these respondents, 32% were female, the mean age was 34 years, 30% arrived between 2010 and 2014, 65% arrived in 2015 and 5% arrived in 2016.

Measures

The *social dimension* was captured by respondent's social contact within and outside the origin group. To measure contact within the origin group, a mean score variable was constructed (r = 0.53) based on the items: 'How often do you have contact with Syrian friends or acquaintances?' and 'How often do you have contact with: Syrian neighbors or Syrian people in your neighborhood?'. To measure contacts with receiving society members we distinguish between those with and without a migration background, as this is a distinction frequently made by newcomers themselves. For contact with those without a migration background a mean score variable was constructed (Ω = 0.82) based on the items: 'How often do you have contact with: Dutch friends or acquaintances?', 'How often do you have contact with: Dutch neighbors or neighbors?', 'Are there often, sometimes or never Dutch friends or neighbors visiting you?' and 'Do you often, sometimes or never hang out with Dutch people in your free time?'. For contact with nationals with a migration background the following question was included; 'How often do you have contact with people from other migrant groups in your spare time? All three variables were measured on a scale from 1 (every day) to 5 (never) and recoded so a higher score corresponds to more frequent social contact.

The *emotional dimension* was captured by the emotional bond with the home and receiving country. The emotional bond with the home country was measured by one item 'To what extent do you feel Syrian?'. Answer categories ranged from 1 (very strongly) to 5 (not at all) and were recoded so a higher score corresponds to stronger ethnic identification. Two items were used to measure the emotional bond with the receiving country. Respondents were asked 'To what extent do you feel Dutch?' for which respondents could choose from the same answer categories as above and a higher score corresponds to stronger identification as Dutch. In addition, respondents were asked 'Do you feel at home in the Netherlands?'. They could choose from three answer categories (1 = yes, 2 = sometimes yes, sometimes no, 3 = no) which were recoded, so a higher score indicates feeling at home more strongly.

The *cultural dimension* was included by the extent to which Syrians endorse liberal values regarding homosexuality and gender equality. While cultural value orientation is much broader than these values, these were the values available in the data. Moreover, these values are important given the broad process of individualization that the Netherlands and other European countries have gone through, most visible in values about individual freedom and equality. We measured value orientation regarding homosexuality by the item; 'It's a good thing homosexuals can marry each other'. Respondents indicated to what extent they agreed (1 = totally agree, 5 = totally disagree) and answers were recoded, so a higher score indicated more liberal value orientation. To access respondents value orientation concerning gender equality, respondents were given four statements; 'The man can best take responsibility for the money', 'It's more important for boys than for girls to earn their own money', 'Decisions on major purchases should best be taken by the man' and 'A woman should stop working when she has a child'. Respondents indicated to what extent they agreed (1 = totally agree, 5 = totally disagree) and a mean score variable was constructed (Ω = 0.72) for those who answered to at least two of the four statements (N = 3179) ranging from 1 to 5 in which a higher score corresponds to more liberal values.

As *pre-migration indicators* we included coming from a large city in Syria, having attended higher education in Syria or another country, being a student or having a job or not having a job in Syria as dichotomous variables. As *migration indicators*, the length of the journey in months was included as a continuous variable. Negative experiences during the journey were included as a count variable, adding up all possible experiences (extortion, robbery, sexual violence, assault, shipwreck, or kidnapping). As *post-migration indicators*, the length of stay in reception centers in months and the number of reception centers one stayed in were included as continuous variables. Activities engaged in during their time in the reception center was included as a count variable, adding up all possible activities (take Dutch classes, learned Dutch yourself, volunteered, had a paid job or engaged in education). To capture indicators of *life in the Netherlands,* experiencing the social climate as accepting towards migrants was included as a mean score variable based on four items: 'As a migrant you get every opportunity in the Netherlands', 'In the Netherlands your rights as a migrant are respected', 'The Netherlands is a hospitable country for migrants' and 'The Netherlands is open to other cultures', ranging from 1 to 5 for which a higher score corresponds to more experienced acceptance (Ω = 0.77). Having mental health problems was included as a dichotomous variable based on a cut-off point on the MHI-5 scale[3] (0 = no mental health issues, 1 = does have mental health issues). Being proficient in Dutch was included as dichotomous variable, indicating one never experienced difficulty while speaking. Lastly, going to school in the Netherlands was included as a dichotomous variable as well as having a paid job.

Demographic indicators were included as control variables. Gender was included as a dichotomous variable (0 = male, 1 = female). Age and length of stay in the Netherlands were included as continuous variables. Living with children and/or a partner were included as dichotomous variables, as was living in a non-urban municipality (< 50.000 inhabitants).

[3] The Mental Health Inventory 5 (MHI-5) is a measuring instrument that gives an impression of people's state of mind in the last four weeks (Rumpf, Meyer, Hapke, & John, 2001). Respondents were asked how often (0 = never, 5 = constantly) they felt: very nervous, depressed and gloomy, calm, so bad that nothing could cheer you up and happy. A sum score was calculated based on these answers. For each person, the values of all questions were multiplied by 4,resulting in a minimum score of 0 and maximum score of 100. The lower the score, the worse one's psychological health. In this study, the frequently used sum score of 60 points was used as a cut-off point indicating mental health problems (Driessen, 2011).

Method of analysis

Latent class analysis (LCA) in Mplus was used to develop a socio-cultural typology based on indicators on the social, emotional and cultural dimensions. In such analysis, people are systematically divided into groups sharing certain characteristics (Magidson & Vermunt, 2004). The more the characteristics of an individual and the latent class overlap, the greater the chance for the individual to belong to that class (see Online Resource 1 for details on latent class probabilities). By using this method, we learn if indicators of the social, cultural and emotional dimensions can be divided into similar groups derived from the data (Hagenaars & McCutcheon, 2002) and which indicators differentiate. After class membership was defined for all Syrians, we applied latent class regression analysis with auxiliary variables (R3step) to determine the associations between Syrians' socio-cultural types and individual background indicators. Using this multivariate multinomial regression analysis, we investigate those associations in comparison with a reference type, controlling for mutual correlations between the background indicators. Models were estimated using a hierarchal method.

Results

The latent class model

There are different criteria to base the choice of the number of classes on, but in general, the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) and the Adjusted Bayesian Information Criterion (ABIC) are seen as proper measures (Yang, 2006): the smaller the better the model fit. Another criterion is the Lo-Mendell p-value (LMR), which indicates the probability that data was generated by a model with 1 class less than the estimated model. The entropy measures how well the classes can be distinguished based on the estimated probability of a certain class (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996). Preference is given to the best-fitting model with the fewest classes. Based on these considerations, we chose a model with three latent classes. Fit statistics for the LCA can be found in Table 1. Though the model with 4 classes shows the lowest BIC and ABIC, the LMR-test shows a model with 4 latent classes does not fit the data significantly better than a model with 3 latent classes. Also, on theoretical grounds it made more sense to go with 3 latent classes. Additionally, univariate entropy was investigated to assess how well the latent indicators identified the latent classes. Table B in Online Resource 2 provides the univariate entropy values for the variables included in the LCA. The indicators 'contact with other migrants (0.46), 'Syrian identification (0.10), and 'gay marriage' (0.09) have the highest univariate entropies and are thus best able to discriminate between the socio-cultural types.

A socio-cultural typology

The preferred model for the LCA identified three latent classes representing three distinct socio-cultural types. We allocated summary labels to each class, based on a combination of mean scores and item probability on the eight observed variables. These scores can be examined to identify Syrians' socio-cultural type and are relatively closely linked to three of the four outcomes in Berry's acculturation model.[4] The mean scores on the indicators of our LCA are shown per class in Table 2.

Interestingly, though we can see variation within the latent classes, mean scores within the latent classes all go in the same direction. Syrians belonging to the type labeled '*origin secured*' (36%) generally identify strongly as Syrian, little as Dutch and engage in frequent contact with other Syrians. They have little contact with other migrants, are generally conservative when it comes to gay marriage and somewhat conservative about gender equality. In contrast, Syrians belonging to the type labeled '*double bonds*' (40%) engage in rather frequent contact with both Syrians and receiving society members without and with a migration background. Concerning values on gay marriage and gender equality they are somewhat in between conservative and liberal. Even though they feel Syrian strongly, they tend to also feel moderately Dutch. The analysis also identifies an '*destination focused*' type (24%). Syrians belonging to this type generally report a relatively strong identification as Dutch and little contact with other Syrians. They engage most frequently in contact with receiving society members without a migration background and little with other migrants. Furthermore, respondents within this type adhere rather liberal values and generally identify not as strongly as Syrian. Indicators on the three dimensions thus coincide considerably, resulting in three distinct latent classes, which invigorates our proposal to combine them in a typology.

Table 1
Latent Class Analysis fit statistics.

Classes	BIC	ABIC	*p* for LMR	Entropy
2 Classes	62,820.348	62,737.735	< 0.001	0.76
3 Classes	62,301.138	62,186.751	< 0.001	0.67
4 Classes	62,126.656	61,980.494	0.252	0.66

[4] Within our typology, we don't find a type close to the fourth combination from Berry's model, a marginalized group. This is not surprising, as small or non-existent marginalization groups have been found in other cluster analyses (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008; Unger et al., 2002). The possible fourth class in our LCA does not comprise the marginalized group but is rather the 'double bonds' class divided into two smaller classes.

Table 2
Characteristics of socio-cultural types from LCA, means with standard errors in brackets.

Variable	Origin secured[a] (36%)	Double bonds[b] (40%)	Destination focused[c] (24%)	Mean[d]
Contact Syrians (1–5)	3.5 (0.041)[bc]	3.8 (0.030)[ac]	2.9 (0.079)[ab]	3.4 (0.019)
Contact Dutch (1–5)	2.8 (0.066)[bc]	3.5 (0.030)[ac]	3.6 (0.044)[ab]	3.3 (0.018)
Contact other migrants (1–5)	1.4 (0.026)[bc]	3.8 (0.027)[ac]	1.5 (0.038)[ab]	2.4 (0.026)
Gay marriage (1–5)	2.0 (0.060)[bc]	2.4 (0.045)[ac]	3.3 (0.092)[ab]	2.5 (0.024)
Gender equality (1–5)	3.2 (0.041)[bc]	3.3 (0.028)[ac]	3.8 (0.044)[ab]	3.4 (0.016)
Syrian identification (1–5)	4.2 (0.036)[bc]	3.9 (0.037)[ac]	3.1 (0.138)[ab]	3.8 (0.021)
Dutch identification (1–5)	2.8 (0.067)[bc]	3.1 (0.034)[ac]	3.6 (0.039)[ab]	3.1 (0.019)
Feeling at home[e]				
No	2	1	1	1
Sometimes	26	22	10	20
Yes	72[bc]	77ac	90[ab]	78

[abc] Superscripts indicate significant mean differences between the item means in the three latent classes based on two-sample t-tests. All item means significantly differed between respondents belonging to the three latent classes. [d] The missing values in the indicator variables were dealt with in the LCA by Mplus, which handles missing values using Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) by default. In the column 'mean' missing values were not imputed due to estimation errors for weighted means on imputed data, non-imputed weighted means are displayed for the total sample. [e] Feeling at home was included as a categorical variable. Therefore, instead of mean scores latent class probabilities are displayed.

Individual background indicators and the socio-cultural types

The LCA has answered the first research question: socio-cultural starting positions among Syrian refugees in the Netherlands can be summarized on the basis of three socio-cultural types. The second research question focuses on which individual background indicators can be associated with Syrians' socio-cultural types. The results are discussed in terms of relative risk ratios (rrr), showing which indicators increase or decrease the chance to belong to a certain socio-cultural type in comparison to the 'double bonds' type.[5] The results for life in the Netherlands indicators are interpreted in terms of associations since we cannot make strong causal claims as these could simultaneously be impacted by Syrians' socio-cultural positions. Results for the models, which we build step-by-step, can be found in Table 3. Model 1 covers the socio-demographic control variables, in model 2 we added pre-migration indicators, in model 3 migration indicators were added and in model 4 we added post-migration indicators. Model 5 represents the full model, including other indicators of life in the Netherlands. We discuss the results of the full model per bloc of indicators, unless they differ from results in previous models.

Concerning *demographic indicators,* having children living at home can be associated with a lower chance to belong to the 'destination focused' type, while the other socio-demographic indicators do not in- or decrease the probability to belong to one of the three socio-cultural types.

As for *pre-migration indicators*, we found that, in line with our expectations, those who attended higher education in Syria or another country have a higher chance to belong to the 'destination focused' type than to the 'double bonds' type. Interestingly, according to the final but not the previous models, those who were still in school in Syria are more likely to belong to the 'origin secured' type. The region of origin could not be associated with Syrians' socio-cultural types, taking the other indicators into account.

Zooming in on the *migration indicators*, we see that opposite to what we expected, for Syrians who have had more negative experiences, the chance is lower to belong to the 'origin secured' type and higher to belong to the 'destination focused' type compared to the 'double bonds' type. The duration of the journey could not be associated with belonging to a particular socio-cultural type.

Regarding *post-migration indicators*, the length of stay in the reception center plays a role. As expected, for Syrian refugees who have stayed in the center(s) longer, the chance is higher to belong to the 'origin secured' type and lower to belong to the 'destination focused' type in comparison with the 'double bonds' type. The number of activities engaged in during the stay in the center(s) could also be associated with Syrian's socio-cultural types, the more activities one engaged in, the lower the chance to belong to the 'origin secured' type. A significant association was not found for activities during reception and the 'destination focused' type in model 5 but model 4 does show a significant and positive relation, which can possibly be explained by for other forms of participation added in model 5. We did not find a significant association between the number of moves between centers and Syrians' socio-cultural types.

We also included other *indicators of life in the Netherlands*. As expected, experiencing a stronger degree of acceptance regarding migrants was negatively associated with the 'origin secured' type and positively with the 'destination focused' type. In contrast, mental health problems could be positively associated with the 'origin secured' type and negatively with the 'destination focused' type. As expected, a better command of Dutch was negatively associated with the 'origin secured' type and positively with the 'destination focused' type. Regarding the structural positions of Syrians in the Netherlands, going to school in the Netherlands was negatively associated with the 'origin secured' type. Having paid work in the Netherlands could not be associated with Syrians' socio-cultural

[5] We chose to include the type 'double bonds' as reference category because this can be understood as an extension of the integration type, combining both origin group and host country orientation and has been widely recognized as the most fruitful acculturation strategy (Benet--Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Berry et al., 2006). In doing so, we are able to capture to what extent individual background indicators relate to maintaining within the origin group (origin secured vs. double bonds) and orientating towards to host society (destination focused vs. double bonds).

Table 3
Multivariate latent class regression analysis of the socio-cultural types, 'double bonds' as reference category, in relative risk ratios (rrr)[ab].

Variable	Model 1 Origin secured	Destination focused	Model 2 Origin secured	Destination focused	Model 3 Origin secured	Destination focused	Model 4 Origin secured	Destination focused	Model 5 Origin secured	Destination focused
Demographics										
Female	1.449**	0.917	1.372*	0.974	1.270	1.174	1.260	1.218	1.215	1.256
Age	1.000***	1.000	1.000***	1.000	1.000**	1.000	1.000**	1.000	1.000*	1.000
Length of stay in NL	0.995	0.999	0.996	0.998	0.996	0.995	0.996	0.995	1.001	0.999
Children living at home	1.024	0.589**	1.060	0.618*	1.077	0.606*	1.055	0.616*	0.998	0.595*
Living with a partner	1.004	1.598*	1.019	1.514	0.994	1.511*	1.007	1.486	0.946	1.394
Non-urban municipality	0.987	1.016	0.985	1.062	0.981	1.085	1.000	1.091	1.029	1.112
Pre-migration indicators										
Urban origin			1.016	1.044	1.013	1.028	1.038	1.034	1.059	1.110
University Syria/ abroad			0.980	1.640***	0.987	1.557**	1.052	1.525**	0.989	1.534**
No job in Syria = ref. cat.			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	–
Student Syria			1.047	1.111	1.022	1.102	1.166	1.063	1.650*	0.966
Job in Syria			0.901	1.186	0.902	1.100	0.974	1.047	1.077	0.944
Migration indicators										
Length of journey					0.998	0.993	0.997	0.994	0.998	0.944
Negative experiences during journey					0.911*	1.293***	0.919	1.271***	0.900*	1.315***
Post-migration indicators										
Length of stay reception centers							1.044**	0.971	1.037**	0.964*
Number of reception centers							1.009	1.051	0.994	1.058
Activities in reception centers							0.687***	1.139*	0.728***	1.124
Life in the Netherlands										
Experienced acceptance									0.791*	1.550***
Mental health problems									1.372**	0.514***
Speaks Dutch									0.759*	1.489**
Goes to school in NL									0.432***	0.740
Paid job in NL									0.673	0.874
McFadden's Pseudo R^{2} [c]	0.006		0.008		0.015		0.026		0.045	

*$p < 0.05$,** $p < 0.01$,*** $p < 0.001$. [a] A relative risk ratio (rrr) greater than 1 means a greater chance (compared to the reference group for categorical variables) to belong to a certain type with respect to the type of 'origin secured', an rrr smaller than 1 means a smaller chance. [b] The missing values of the underlying variables were estimated using multiple imputation in Stata. [c] McFadden's Pseudo R^2 was obtained by replicating the LCA regression analysis in Stata using mlogit, since Mplus does not provide r-square for models estimating latent classes. Estimates for the mlogit models may differ slightly from those obtained by LCA regression as mlogit does not take into account the uncertainty in the distribution of the latent classes unlike in the LCA regression analysis. Nevertheless, the McFadden's pseudo r-square provides an indication of the explained variance. The pseudo r-square can be interpreted like r-square, but values should not be expected to be as big as values from 0.2 to 0.4 indicate excellent model fit (McFadden, 1974).

starting positions.

McFadden's pseudo r-square provides an indication of the explained variance of the separate models. As shown in Table 3, pre-migration indicators do not add much to the variance already explained by the socio-demographics (0.008 compared to 0.006). In the subsequent models more and more variance is added, resulting in a total of 0.045 for the full model.

Discussion and conclusions

Due to the outbreak of the civil war in 2011, many Syrians had to flee their country. While most settled in neighboring countries, some made the journey to Europe. After arrival, their acculturation process began and this first period after arrival is crucial for further development of their lives in the receiving society. Both academically and policy wise, it is vital to gain insight into refugees' socio-cultural starting positions because of changes in socio-cultural positions during the first period after arrival, growing concerns on socio-cultural distance and the possible benefits of socio-cultural embedding for refugees' further participation and wellbeing. Yet, few scholars have examined refugees' socio-cultural starting positions. With this explorative study conducted in the Netherlands among 3209 Syrian refugees we contributed to the existing literature in three ways: (1) we explored socio-cultural starting positions among recently arrived refugees, (2) we used latent class analysis to develop a socio-cultural typology elaborating Berry's well known acculturation scheme by including the social, cultural and emotional dimensions simultaneously as well as including inter-minority relations, and (3) we provided insight in indicators associated with Syrian's early socio-cultural acculturation.

Although Syrian refugees have been in the Netherlands relatively shortly, already different socio-cultural types can be distinguished.[6] Latent class analysis showed that the social, emotional and cultural dimensions coincide, resulting in three distinct socio-cultural types: 'origin secured' (36%), 'double bonds' (40%) and 'destination focused' (24%). This shows the three dimensions are highly related, and for example, it will be rare for someone to be very conservative, but having a lot of contact with receiving society members without a migration background. Subsequently, the future impact of Syrians' socio-cultural starting positions might be stronger. However, while there is enough overlap for these socio-cultural types to represent distinct classes and all means of the subsequent classes significantly differed, there is also variation within these classes.

Though the input of our latent class analysis was elaborating on Berry's (1980, 1997) acculturation scheme (see also: Schwartz et al., 2010), Syrian's socio-cultural starting positions are largely comparable with three out of the four acculturation outcomes as identified by Berry. Yet, a remarkable difference is the importance of contact with other migrants in distinguishing Syrian's socio-cultural types based on univariate entropy scores. Respondents in the class 'double bonds' scored exceptionally high on contact with other migrants (3.8). In contrast, those in the 'origin secured' and 'destination focused' type scored very low (1.4 and 1,5). The large differences between the classes signals to the importance of interaction with all members of the receiving society and may be explained through closeness to other migrants socially, emotionally and culturally in contrast to residents without a migration background (Damen et al., 2019; Vermeulen, 2021). As such, the 'double bonds' type might be understood to show integration while those in the 'destination focused' type would fit into Berry's assimilation outcome. Comparing to Berry's outcomes, we do not necessarily find a wider variety of socio-cultural types among Syrian refugees in the Netherlands, but the interpretation of the 'double bonds' type differs, due to adding inter-minority contacts. The importance of interaction with all members of the receiving society has implications for both theory and integration policy as both can build on this, including inter-minority social-relations as integral part of early acculturation.

Individual background indicators might especially distinguish early acculturation processes. Exploring which persons belong to which type, we found pre-migration indicators could be associated with Syrians' socio-cultural types in two ways. On the one hand, having attended higher education before arrival in the Netherlands was positively associated with belonging to a socio-cultural type more strongly focused on the receiving society. However, being a student in Syria as opposed to not working or not being in school was positively associated with the 'origin secured' type in the final model. Since in the final model structural participation indicators were added, this is possibly due to differences between participating before and after arrival; those who used to be in school but do not participate in the Netherlands yet could be more strongly oriented towards the origin group. We did not find evidence for an integration paradox, but as our respondents have only just settled in the Netherlands most are not as much involved in the more structural spheres of society yet, but it could be that once engaging in higher SES contexts these associations might change.

Considering migration indicators, we found that Syrian refugees who had more negative experiences during the journey generally orient themselves more strongly towards the receiving society. More negative experiences, therefore, do not seem to be associated with seeking primary support within their own group nor does this obstruct orientation towards the receiving society. Though opposite to our initial expectations, it could be that these negative experiences were with other Syrians, resulting in an aversion to their origin group (Antink, 2019). Accordingly, it is thus not as surprising that having had negative experiences would result in weaker origin and stronger receiving country orientation.

Also, post-migration indicators were associated with Syrians' socio-cultural types. Syrians who stayed in the reception center longer often orient themselves more strongly to their own group ('origin secured' type) and less strongly to the receiving society ('destination focused' type), possibly because they have had fewer opportunities to connect with the receiving society or have

[6] This does not mean there was no socio-cultural diversity before Syrians' migration. However, for this study, we focus on Syrian's interaction with the receiving society, taking into account their orientation towards both the origin group and receiving society when it comes to mapping their socio-cultural starting positions. As explained before, while contact and identification within the receiving society can only develop in interaction, cultural value orientation might not necessarily be subject to change.

developed a passive attitude (Ghorashi, 2005; Larruina & Ghorashi, 2016). Refugees who engage in activities during the reception period, for example learning the language or doing voluntary work, often orient themselves less strongly towards the origin group. These activities can facilitate the possibilities to rebuild lost resources such as social contacts, cultural knowledge and skills (Bakker et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2008). Policy wise, a shorter and more active period in the reception center can limit refugees' socio-cultural distance to society.

Looking at other indicators of life in the Netherlands, mental health and feeling accepted seem important conditions for socio-cultural proximity to the receiving society. Experiencing more acceptance by receiving society members was negatively associated with orientation towards the origin group and positively with orientation towards the receiving society (McCoy & Major, 2003; Noh & Kaspar, 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Indicating the social climate can impact newcomers' early acculturation. Though this finding is framed positively, it signals to possible detrimental effects of the social climate which is in line with previous studies on the rejection-disidentification model, showing experiencing more discrimination or less acceptance can lead to stronger ethnic group but weaker host society identification (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009). Besides, mental health problems was positively associated with remaining within the origin group and negatively with focusing on the receiving society, confirming mental health problems can form an obstacle to enter into social and emotional ties in the receiving country (Bakker et al., 2014; Phillimore, 2011; Ryan et al., 2008). That mental health problems complicate structural participation has already been established, but these negative consequences seem to go even further and also interfere with socio-cultural ties formed within the receiving society. As expected, being more proficient in Dutch was negatively associated with maintaining in the origin group and positively with belonging to a latent class more focused on the receiving country (Statham & Tillie, 2016). Going to school in the Netherlands was also negatively associated with the 'origin secured' type, as going to school can be seen as a form of structural participation strengthening socio-cultural embedding due to opportunities for interaction (see also: Carrington et al., 2007; Gallie et al., 2003).

Interestingly, while integration is often understood as the ultimate acculturation strategy, our latent class regression analysis does not show complete support for this. Looking at all the individual background indicators that were used to predict Syrians' socio-cultural types, most 'positives' are associated with the 'destination focused' type (e.g. those with a better language proficiency, who experience more acceptance and who are mentally stable are more likely to belong to this type), while no significant differences were found between going to school or having a paid job in the Netherlands and belonging to either the 'double bonds' or 'destination focused' type. This could substantiate the idea that people can also participate in the structural spheres of society if they are not fully destination focused, but it could also be we did not find such associations due to little variation in especially the paid work variable due to the relatively short length of stay. In addition, our 'double bonds' type differs most from Berry's acculturation outcomes (1980, 1997) as it includes inter-minority contacts. It is possible that by including this alternative measuring of the social dimension, the 'double bonds' turn out less positive than the classical integration outcome according to Berry's scheme would.

Notwithstanding our contributions, there are some limitations to our study. First, we based the cultural dimension only on items about homosexuality and gender equality. Often-heard critiques are that these are limited and not evidently shared throughout the receiving society. Moreover, questions arise whether the core values of a society can be captured by only a few statements and whether cultural conceptions of citizenship are eligible (Reijerse, Van Acker, Vanbeselaere, Phalet, & Duriez, 2013; Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010). While we agree that cultural value orientation is broader than the items we included in this study, these were the items available. These, among other values, are important, given the broad process of individualization that the Netherlands and other European countries have gone through. This does not mean everyone thinks or should think the same about these, but they are seen as core values about which there is general consensus in the Netherlands, to which newcomers have to relate. Besides, this study is not about whether or not these values are endorsed, but about how the scores on the cultural dimension coincide with those on other dimensions.

Furthermore, our target group can be regarded as a vulnerable population to study. Not only because of their previous experiences but also because of their legal status. Refugees in the Netherlands first receive a temporary residence permit, which can result in ongoing uncertainty about the future and consequently (social) isolation, mental health problems and dependence (e.g. Bakker et al., 2014; Laban et al., 2004; Da Lomba, 2010). This vulnerable legal status might thus restrict refugees to fully participate and put their socio-cultural starting positions at a disadvantage. Unfortunately, we were not able to include objective or subjective forms of legal recognition in our analysis – since having a temporary residence permit was one of our selection criteria and no other questions were asked on legal recognition. Future studies could include such measures in order to establish their impact on early socio-cultural acculturation.

Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of our data. Despite our expectations about the association between individual background indicators and Syrians' socio-cultural types being based on theoretical grounds, the nature of these relationships can be unclear, especially for the indicators of life in the Netherlands which can partly be reciprocal. For example, the feeling of not being accepted can be stronger the greater the social-cultural distance is, and language can be learned through social interactions. Thus, some caution is required when interpreting those associations. In the future we could try to replicate the latent classes using multiple waves in order to better distinguish the direction of these relations. Moreover, while the bloc with other indicators of life in the Netherlands adds most to the total explained variance, the total explained variance of the full model is still rather low. Other indicators such as (subjective) legal status and pre-migration forcefulness (Echterhoff et al., 2020) could be taken into account in future studies explaining additional variance in Syrians' socio-cultural starting positions. Moreover, multilevel models could be envisaged to measure post-migration characteristics, retrieve objective levels of acceptance (Green, Visintin, & Sarrasin, 2018) and including interactive effects between pre-migration/migration/ and post-migration characteristics may be of interest.

The socio-cultural diversity displayed for Syrian refugees is unique for this group, and as far as we are aware of has not been studied like this among other groups of (recently arrived) refugees. It could be interesting for future studies to replicate this among different

groups of recent arrivals to examine to what extent a similar typology can be developed. It would also be interesting to replicate this analysis among the same respondents to investigate changes in socio-cultural positions over time. As we focus on the first period after arrival, this means the socio-cultural types that emerged from our data should be understood in terms of starting positions, indicating the first snapshot of Syrian's ongoing acculturation process. As these types are not static, it is very likely there will be changes over time. Such type of studies would help to provide insight into the dynamic nature of the acculturation process.

Funding

The survey used for this study is part of a larger project (Longitudinal cohort study permit holders), conducted at the request of and funded by four Dutch ministries.

Conflicts of interest

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2022.01.009.

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