Immigrant members of the Swedish Democrats
A qualitative study regarding the process in which immigrants become politically active within the Swedish Democrat party.
I would like to personally thank my supervisor Glenn Sjöstrand. Without your accessibility, precise critique and advice this study would not have been possible.

Eric Hartshorne 20/1-2015
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Abstract

This study focuses on the process that individuals who have migrated to Sweden go through when joining the Swedish Democrats (SD), a nationalistic and anti-immigration party. SDs history is filled with Racism and violence, since the parties remodelling in 1988, where the party removed its more extremist and violent grouping, SD have become the third largest political party in Sweden. Through the classic outsider theories of Elias (1999) and Becker (2006) this study is driven to explore a new theoretical view on the process of role and organizational change. By looking at what pushes the individuals away from their former organizational belonging and what pulls them towards SD, this study will try and understand the thought process and decision making of the group, immigrants in SD, around the time before and during their organizational change. As a secondary point to this paper the respondent’s sense of identity and belonging to SD will be studied. How has their change to SD affected their identity as a group and how do other groups affect them when they (SD) are trying to establish their identity. The research behind this paper is based on interviews with individuals that have migrated to Sweden and are public members of the Swedish Democrats.

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Key Words – Political Socialization, Sverigedemokraterna, Outsiders, Powerlessness, Organizational change
1.0 Introduction

When entering the political field ones personal values and beliefs are lifted into the public spotlight. Regardless if it is running for presidency in the United States\(^1\) or being a part of a city council in a small town in Sweden, the public will be interested in whom they are placing their democratic vote upon. Politics can in many ways lead to social interaction. It can be an opportunity to gain access to a social group and become an active member in a group. Sharing values and ideas with others and being able to publicly announce ones belonging is both stimulating for the individual but also positive for group integration and identity.\(^2\)

With almost thirteen percent of the votes in Sweden’s 2014 parliament elections the Swedish Democrats (SD) are now the third largest political party in the Scandinavian state.\(^3\) Over the past three elections it is possible to see how the party has grown from not gaining entry to parliament in 2006\(^4\) to becoming the sixth largest party in their first access to parliament in 2010\(^5\) to where they are now in 2014. With the growth of SD there is a new type of voter who supports the anti-immigration party. Recent studies show how many of those who voted for SD in the 2014 elections are former Moderate voters, highlighting a trend in which those who vote for SD are not the same as four years ago. As the party continues to grow SDs new supporters are more than former Moderates, SD is gathering supporters from all over the political landscape, from left to right.\(^6\) Furthermore the party has seen an increase in members from different ethnical backgrounds. All though there are no exact numbers for the amount of individuals with immigrant backgrounds that are members of SD or voted for the party, they, the party welcome this as they feel it works against the perception that SD is a racist party.\(^7\) The Swedish Democrats political and ethical foundation is built upon nationalism and culture conservatism. SD openly stands for reduced immigration. They believe that the current amount of people coming to Sweden not

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1 Stanyer 2013:1
2 Walsh 2010:54
3 Valmyndigheten 2014
4 Valmyndigheten 2006
5 Valmyndigheten 2010
6 Novus 2014
7 SVD 2014-04-27 & SR 2013-12-12
only harms the country’s economy, but also its cultural legacy. With this in mind one may ask how is it that more and more immigrants are being drawn to the political party?

1.1 Purpose and Issue

The purpose of this essay is to explain how and why individuals that have migrated to Sweden decide to join the Swedish Democrat party. As mentioned, SD is a nationalistic and anti-immigration party, what drives these people to join the party, people who themselves have migrated to Sweden. What the study focuses on is the process in joining the party and the social consequences and privileges for the respondents that followed their political activism with SD. Moreover the study will try and comprehend how the respondents identify themselves with the party and how other groups in society affect this identity building. This will be studied by looking at how the immigrant members of SD compare themselves to different groups in order to establish their collective identity.

The main point of this paper, the process from leaving one group to another, is well documented (see Alexander 2006, Ebaugh 1988, Settle et.al. 2010). What separates this study from others is the group in question, immigrants in an anti-immigration party. When speaking to other about the study the most common response to immigrants actively participating in an anti-immigration party would be “well that is strange” or “how can immigrants be in SD? They are against immigrants”. If I were to use Ebaugh’s theory here, it could be a discussion regarding socially desirable and non-desirable role exits. This means that certain role changes are accepted in society, for example a prostitute becoming a doctor, while a non-desirable change would be a doctor becoming a prostitute. What my study can offer is another approach to the process of role change or organizational change, another point of view in an already well-documented field.

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8 Sverigedemokraterna “Invandringspolitik” n.d.
9 Al-Khamisi 2014, SR 2013
10 Ebaugh 1988:156
2.0 The Swedish Democrats (SD)

The Swedish Democrats politics is based upon three central issues. SD is most known for its immigration politics, a question, which no matter what forum it is discussed in, sparks emotions from the speakers. SD is pro-assimilation and would like to reduce the amount of immigrants coming to Sweden. The party argue that the current amount of migrants coming to Sweden is a threat towards Sweden’s national identity and safety. Furthermore SD say that they understand that the right to seek asylum in a country is a human right yet they oppose the idea that asylum should lead to permanent residence, ideally the refugees should return to their countries of origin once the ongoing conflict or humanitarian crisis is averted. SD believes that refugees should be assisted in their own countries instead of bringing them to other countries. Beside the question of immigration, SD is known for promoting harsher penalties for criminal offences and especially violent and repeat offenders. In addition SD have campaigned on the idea that Sweden’s elderly need to receive a more efficient and humane treatment. The way to improve the quality of life for Sweden’s elderly generation would be through lowering taxes for elders and allowing those that can work to do so and those who can not to be able to receive adequate treatment. Moreover they believe those elders that do need treatment should receive better meals and that the government should assist elders with the cost of medical treatment and medicine.

In order to understand the Swedish Democrats of today we must look back into their short but eventful history. SD originated from a party known as Bevara Sverige Svenskt (BSS) which translated into English becomes “Keep Sweden Swedish”. BSS was an attempt by collective members of various nationalistic, Nazi and fascist organizations, to create a group that would appear more democratic and politically correct. One side of the party would print and distribute racist propaganda while the other side would try and work within the legal and democratic side of politics. This ended up dividing the party between what former members call “ordinary people” and

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11 Sverigedemokraterna "Invandringspolitik" n.d.
12 Sverigedemokraterna "Invandringspolitik" n.d.
13 Sverigedemokraterna "Krafttag mot brottslighet" n.d.
14 Sverigedemokraterna "Partiet för en värdig ålderdom" n.d.
15 Ekman 2014:17
the skinheads, the later being part of several violent attacks and bombings. Over the years SD have worked franticly to change their perception and move away from their violent and extremist history. Since the founding of the Swedish Democrats, which grew out of BSS in 1988, the political party has seen a transformation from being a municipality focused organization, to becoming the third largest party in Sweden.

During their transformation, members of the party have at several occasions been caught in situations not acceptable for persons within politics, such as the “iron pipe” scandal in 2012 when three intoxicated members of the party verbally abused a famous Swedish comedian who had fled from Iraq as a baby with his family. The drunken night continued with the three SD politicians arming themselves with iron pipes in what they claim was an act in self-defence as a single drunken man verbally abused them. This is just one example of SD politicians acting out in ways that arguably are not fit for politicians, more examples will be lifted further on in this paper. SD is often accused of being a racist and/or fascist party within the media and there are groups in Sweden that work hard to prove these claims.

As mentioned, SD has worked hard over the years to improve their perception within the Swedish public. In Dan Andersson’s "Så fick Sverigedemokraterna makten (How the Swedish democrats gained power, 2014)" the former secretary of state has tried to show and understand how the right wing party gained its modern day popularity. According to Andersson, SD is trying to apply a romanticised type of politics, which is built on Sweden’s socialist welfare history. Contrary to class-structure approach, the SD of today applies a social cultural view on society. To clarify, this means focusing on the importance of following the Swedish norms in place and making a clear distinction between what is Swedish and non-Swedish behaviour.

16 ibid 26
17 Sverigedemokraterna, "Historia" n.d.
18 Valmyndigheten 2014
19 Baas 2014:108
20 ibid 111-112
21 Inte rasist men (http://www.interasistmen.se/) & Expo (http://expo.se/)
22 Andersson 2014:31
23 Andersson 2014:33
2.1 Recent research

When conducting the background research necessary for this study it becomes clear that a majority of the studies regarding political socialization and how and why certain groups engage in political activity is focused on the adolescent age of the individuals. As this study focuses on individual’s recent part of their lives, a different approach has been necessary. In James Stanyer’s book; “Intimate Politics, Publicity, Privacy and the personal lives of Politicians in Media Saturated Democracies”, Stanyer discusses how politicians in modern and developed states needs to deal with the media reporting constantly on their every move and how their right to privacy changes when becoming openly active within politics. Examining how the media reports on politician’s sex life and how it affects their career and relationships to other colleagues and professionals proves this. Although my study of politically active members of SD does not apply to scandals and their sex life there are some valid points to drawn out of Stanyer’s study. “Intimate Politics” focuses on highlighting the amount of publicity around politicians and the exposure their personal life is put through. The studies focus it to highlights how politicians are affected by the way other groups look upon them and how this affects the public group.

When involved in a political environment, like most social environments, society expects certain behaviour from the members within the association. The more time an individual invests in such a social environment the more they understand how the field works, which rules are important to uphold and how to behave. As the individual becomes more integrated they are able to affect the political direction of the group at influence its members. This is political socialization according to Richard Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt, the more time one spends within a field the more one can affect the field, the group the belong to and the followers of the group.

24 Humphries et. al 2013, Rabaglietti et al. 2012
25 Stanyer 2013:73-74
26 ibid 155
27 Dawson and Prewitt 1969:10
28 Dawson and Prewitt 1969:57
Continuing on the socialization perspective, it is possible to see how individuals start in politics for social reasons. Individual’s social surroundings can affect which direction they take, politically. As mentioned earlier, most studies that I have been able to find tend to focus on how the younger generations are affected by family and friends when becoming politically active. Friends and family are important for how an individual choose to activate themselves politically as they influence the person in their everyday life. Yet according to a study conducted by Settle, Bond and Levett, it is more of a social integration process that paves the political path we walk.29 This path is that of civic orientation, how we act and behave, our habitus if you are of the Bourdieu type. Hence, when becoming politically aware, ones family and friends do play a role in which direction an individual ends up going, but it is important that we do not stop asking why we make the political choices we make. It is more than the individual’s local social network that influences their political orientation. It also is an attempt by the individual to fit into a society, and the specific block in society that they wish to be part of.30

From a cultural sociological point of view we can see how groups in society are in a struggle with each other to obtain the power of their identity.31 This statement is from Jefferey C. Alexander’s Cultural Sociology in which Alexander states that there is a need to confirm the existence of a social sphere and it is only when a group or an individual is an active part of this sphere that they can demand political activity. 32 Moreover, Alexander states that in order to change the political sphere there must be conflicts between groups in society; this is what creates the gaps in the political field that new political groups later fill.33 These gaps are not necessarily easy to fill according to Robert Putnam. In his “Bowling Alone” the well-known American political scientist touches upon the subject of political participation as he discusses how American voters have declined in numbers over the past 20-25 years.34 Putnam realizes that the number of volunteers and workers involved in local and national

29 Settle et.al 2010: 243
30 ibid 250, 252  
31 Alexander 2006:83
32 ibid 85
33 ibid 87  
34 Putnam 2000:38
political organizations have dropped in the United States as the same way the amount of voters has dropped. 35 One reason for this, according to Putnam, is the professionalization of the staff working with political organizations. What this leads to is a higher amount of knowledge needed in order to be a wanted part of the group, thus leading to those that do not have the required amount of knowledge being unwanted and left out. 36 Having this knowledge the group has the ability to begin attempting to affect and change its political surrounding, which is the main goal for a social movement. 37 According to Piotr Sztompka, a leading sociologist from Poland, social change is conducted through a top down or a bottom up approach, the latter being the most relevant for this study. The reasoning being that bottom up movements are orchestrated by grass root level groups, working in unison to try and create a social change, SD was founded through bottom up grass route work. 38

In a recent study conducted by Swedish group “Demoskop” one can see that out of the 12.9 % that voted on SD in 2014, 4.1% of them are former Moderate party voters. 39 ”, One major change from the 2010 elections according to the study is that those who voted for the Swedish democrats in 2014 see themselves as more of a right-wing oriented party, compared to those who voted for SD in 2010 who saw themselves as a more right/centre party. 40 This study is relevant because the majority of the respondents in my study have been politically active before joining SD, and a majority of them have been active within Moderaterna, the moderate party. The quantitative study, shows from a political science view, why voters chose SD instead of the parties they voted for in 2010. According to the study the orientation of the party in specific questions such as immigration, law and nation and defence/armed forces has changed the way the members of the party view their political belonging. 41

35 Putnam 2008:41
36 ibid 40
37 Sztompka 1993:74
38 ibid 74
39 Timbro 2014:4
40 ibid 7, 8
41 ibid 14
3.0 Theoretical approach

When conducting the background research that was necessary for the study presented in this paper I found it quite difficult to apply a certain theory on the phenomenon. Norbert Elias study of Winston Pavre, England in “The Established and the Outsider” provided a starting point. His theory is based upon society being divided into two separate groups, one established group and one outsider group. The established group in Elias study consisted of people who had lived most of their lives in the area and were active within local organizations. The outsiders on the other hand had only spent a short amount of time in Winston Pavre, not being granted access to any of the local organizations. Even though they were no ethnical or nationalist differences between the groups they were clearly divided.42 This divide was created by the established cluster in order to establish which group was in charge of the area, this was conducted by making the new group feel as if they were worthless and not a part of society.43 The established saw the outsiders as unruly and ill mannered, they were not as “good” as the established.44

However, as more data was collected for my study it became obvious that a theory that divides society into two groups would not be sufficient. In order to comprehend the process where a member of a group successfully makes the change to another group, I found it essential to apply Becker’s “Outsiders. Studies of social defiance”. Becker looks upon the position of the outsiders from more of a social psychological perspective. Becker studied jazz musicians and marijuana users in Chicago. What Becker found is that not only do certain groups see these people as outsider, the musicians and drug users see themselves as outsiders too. They are a collected group of non-desirables with their own culture.45 They, the outsiders, see other groups as regulators, people in place to uphold certain rules and values that are important for their specific view of society.46 Another important point from Becker’s study is the people who remain within organizations, even if they feel that they are outsiders. In

42 Elias 1999:29
43 ibid 33
44 ibid 27
45 Becker 2006:78
46 ibid 28
order for these individuals to leave their current engagement they must first find a suitable replacement group. When they eventually conduct the switch to the new organization it must be in a public manner, this so all parties involved are now aware of the persons’ new belonging. At last when the move has been done and the person is officially an outsider, they realize that their position as an outsider gives them a sense of knowledge and power. Only they as outsiders may have this position as they see society in a way that makes them unique.

Although Becker touches upon the subject of organizational change, another theory would need to be analyzed as part of this study, therefor Hirschman’s Exit, Voice and Loyalty. Hirschman uses an economics point of view in order to understand organizations. If a member of an organization is unsatisfied about their situation they have three options. They may Exit the organization and look for another, they may use their Voice in order to display their discontent with the situation or they may be Loyal and say nothing. Loyalty is what keeps the members from exiting the group, this is conducted by those in charge by ensuring the members that they have a possibility to influence the organization, that they are an important part of the group.

Being able to affect an organization is key for the happiness of its members, if they sense that there is no possibility to affect they will begin to display their dissatisfaction and if all else fails then the individuals only option is to leave the organization.

The theory that has grown from this study is based on the individuals feeling of powerlessness. This lack of power pushes the individual further away from the rest of the group, creating a gap between the individual, now moving towards an outsider position. Once the person in question comes to realize that his or her position within the group is lower than expected, they begin to question their identity and their belonging to the group. Therefor they start to look at other groups within the same

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47 Becker 2006:39
48 ibid 81
49 Hirschman 1970:78
50 ibid 77
51 ibid 76
52 Hirschman 1970:78
field. How these outcasts come into contact with another group can differ, it can be an act of defiance towards their previous group, switching to a rival group, in a form of curiosity or questioning the public opinion of an organization. One important factor is that the group, which they are now actively looking for, differs from their previous engagement. The individuals where unhappy with their situation in their previous group, the new group must work in a different manner to please their social needs. Once a new group has been recognized the change may be conducted. As Becker mentioned, in order for the move to be completed the person must somehow display their change publicly, so those involved know which the person now belongs too.\(^{53}\) Another vital point in order for the change to be successful is for the person to gain a position of power and status within the new group. This creates a stronger bond to the group, the new members are now a part of an outsider group that they feel is growing as they feel that it is possible to influence which direction the group should take.\(^{54}\) The more integrated the new members become the more the group can gain confidence from him/her and a feeling of knowledge. In order to maintain their newfound power and to strengthen their group identity they, the members of the organization, look upon other groups within the same field. The group then moves closer of further away from certain organization, depending on how much they share in common. As the outsider distances itself from other clusters in society they, the established groupings, begin to take notice of the outsiders and begin to work against them in order to obtain their own feeling of power and knowledge, to maintain their status as the established group.\(^{55}\) These attacks on the outsider group strengthen the community feeling of the outsiders as they work through situations that affect the individuals in many ways; this can be both physical and psychological attacks. As the outsider group undergo these attacks they maintain their position as an outsider, a different thinker, this is what gives them an advantage to the rest of society, only they possess a certain type and/or amount of knowledge.\(^{56}\)

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53 Becker 2006:39
54 ibid 44
55 Elias 1999:58
56 Becker 2006:81
3.1 Summarize of Theoretical points

To conclude this theoretical presentation I will try to compress my theory into a number of points.

1. A person recognizes that they no longer are an established part of their group. They have no influence within the group and are not in a position of any power or status.

2. They begin looking for other groups that they could move to, meanwhile staying within their ongoing engagement.

3. They eventually contact another group in society, often a group with different work methods and are seen as outsiders, different thinkers, compared to their now previous group. There after the may begin the transition to the new organization.

4. In order to complete the change to their new group the person must publicly show their new belonging, proving that they no longer belong to their previous group. They are given a position of power and status that fills their needs that where not met in their previous group, this in order to keep the person in their new group and make sure they are pleased.

5. Their new group is different than other groups, they are outsiders and they see society in a different way. This is from where the outsiders gain their sense of power and identity. They are outsiders with inside information.

6. Opposing group’s attack the outsiders and they feel their position as the established group is threatened. This strengthens the belief of the outsiders that their cause is just and that they are in possession of information that separates them from the rest of society. Furthermore it strengthens the group’s collective feeling of belonging and their collective identity.
4.0 Methodology & Ethics

4.1 Methodology
The idea of this study is to try to understand how and why some members of SD that have migrated to Sweden want to be a part of this political party. In order to gain this type of information I felt that it was necessary to try and grasp the thoughts and ideas of each individual that has participated in this study and then compare them to each other. Furthermore, as I at the time had not decided what the remaining themes of the thesis would be I needed to be able to collect data in a way that gave me an opportunity to change questions depending on the respondent thoughts and ideas. This opened an opportunity to find out what the respondents themselves found interesting about their position.

In order for this study to be accurate and reliable it was important for me to narrow down the field in which I was to study. The reasoning behind my decision of how to draw my target group for the study was formed by the simple fact that I wanted to study the thoughts and reasoning behind a single group within SD, that of those with foreign decent. Although the questions asked would give a broad perspective on what the respondents see and feel regarding to different situations and hypothetic thoughts the final analyses must be much more specific in order to see some type of result.

In order to understand immigrant members of SD, one should study immigrant members of SD. This is know as a “method of agreement”, hence, to understand a certain phenomena or group one should study that group, talk to them and learn from the members of the group. Therefor to try and understand the process that individuals with foreign background go through in order to join the Swedish democrats (SD) and also to understand the creation of an “us” and “them” grouping between SD and anti-SD groups, I chose to use a qualitative approach. Such an approach is preferred in order to gain a deeper understanding of the data collected. Moreover qualitative method offers the ability to steer and control interviews along with other data collecting opportunities.

57 Esaiasson et al 2012:115
58 Dalen, 2007:11
In order to use such a method in a flexible way a semi-structured interview process was applied. What this offered was the possibility of first choosing several themes that the interview would follow and from their change the questions within the interview to subjects that are of importance to each individual (see appendix). The flexibility offers the possibility for the interview person to have input in where the questions are leading and what is important for he/she to share. One issue regarding interviews is that it is not possible to observe the participants in their political/social environment. Instead one must rely on what the participants say and analyze afterwards. This put extra pressure on me as the researcher during the interviews as I had to find a way of understanding a process through the stories and examples of the participant. As mentioned, a semi-structured approach gives the researcher the possibility to change questions during the interview itself, opening up opportunities that might not have been possible with a quantitative method or a structured interview process. The range of people that where to be interviewed was based on strategic selection. What this means is that for the study, I through a local gatekeeper, chose individuals that fulfilled the qualifications necessary for me to understand the field. In order to gain access through the gatekeeper I needed to reaffirm that the study was to be conducted with a scientific approach and not a political one. I will discuss this further in the ethics part of this methodology report.

Thus, through the gatekeeper I gained access to members of the Swedish Democrat party, practically this was done by the gatekeeper sending me a list of members of his local organization, members that he knew where of foreign decent. This is the only information that I was given by the gatekeeper regarding the participants. The gatekeeper himself would not contact the participants with any information regarding the study so that he in no way would pressure the members of his party to participate. Thereafter I personally contacted and established interview opportunities with those members that wished to be a part of this study. As their where some logistical issues I divided the interview sessions into three separate occasions. The interview session held two interviews. This gave me the chance to adjust my interview guide before the

60 Cresswell, 2009:179
61 Bryman, 2008:415
62 Cresswell, 2009:178
remaining interviews. This also gave me the opportunity to test locations where to
hold the interview, test my recording device and improve my interview skillset in
steps.\footnote{63 \textit{Dalen}, 2007:36-37} A biographical interview method was applied in order to understand the
individuals thinking over time and how it may have affected the process. Not only did
this method offer me as the interviewer a chance to hear how the respondent
themselves have seen their transition but also the chance to gain more knowledge of
the respondents history and values.\footnote{64 \textit{Miller}, 2000:74,75} All together a total of seven interviews where
conducted with six respondents for this study.

The questions asked (see annex nr 1.1 and 1.2 p. 47-48) where in different degrees
private and needed the answers to remain confidential. The fact of the matter is that
because of the level of privacy asked within certain questions some individuals and
groups that where contacted for the study chose not to participate. Even if this may
seem problematic, I decided that in order to understand the respondent’s view of
certain groups and situations, there was a need for questions of delicate nature such as
religion, political identity and also threats to their person. Instead of trying to ignore
these subjects and use some sort of backdoor analyses, methods that are often seen as
breaching the privacy of the respondents,\footnote{65 \textit{Bryman}, 2008:137} I tried to be as honest and straightforward
as possible. Making sure the respondents understood their rights and the fact that they
did not have to answer every question asked.

Once the interviews had been conducted, each interview was transcribed in order for
me to be able to make an accurate analysis of the collected data. As the interviews
where conducted in Swedish I chose to transcribe in Swedish and translate certain
parts of the interviews. These specifically translated portions consist of quotes that I
found where important to the report.

\footnote{63 \textit{Dalen}, 2007:36-37}
\footnote{64 \textit{Miller}, 2000:74,75}
\footnote{65 \textit{Bryman}, 2008:137}
4.2 Ethics and politics

4.3 Ethical guidelines
In my study I will be following the guidelines for Swedish research that are made up of four pillars.

The first “Informationskravet” stands for information requirement and highlights the importance of that the respondents know that their participation is optional and that they at any time can remove themselves from the study. Furthermore they have the right to know about the study itself and how it is conducted, both information gathering and the final analyses process. When approaching the gatekeeper a need to explain the information requirement was of high importance in order to gain the contact information to the future participants. Moreover, when contacting each individual respondent the study was explained and the fact that the study is optional was established. And finally before the start of every interview the participant was reminded that the study is optional and that they themselves can choose to end the interview at any time. As I contacted the different local SD-organizations in Sweden, I was greeted in different ways. Out of the 6-7 local organizations that I contacted only one assisted me with the contact information required for the study. The only reason I was given from the other groups was that they had no interest in being a part of the study. As I mentioned under the methodology chapter, I believe that the delicate nature of some of the questions in this study may have made certain groups decline their invitation to participate.

Secondly, the “Samtyckeskravet” or the consent requirement, assures the respondent that they have total control of their participation in the study. This focuses mostly on studies regarding children whom need a legal guardians approval for their participation. Building on the consent requirement the respondents in the study where reminded before every interview that their participation is optional and that they can remove themselves of the study all the way until the study has been applied for grading from the university. The participants have been informed of the fact that the final study will be published in DIVA which is a publishing tool for 36 universities in Sweden.
“Konfidenskravet”, the requirement for confidentiality is in place to protect the respondents' anonymity. Thus in order to protect the respondent’s identity all contact information must be handled accordingly as well as their anonymity within the study itself. As I have conducted my study within an organization and the participants where contacted through a gatekeeper only I know which individuals in the end decided to be a part of the study. Because of the delicacy of certain questions it is of the most importance that the respondents remain anonymous in the study order to do so I have removed all names and locations from the material presentation. Furthermore, there will be no comparing between organizations with different geographical sites in order to maintain the highest level of anonymity a lopsided amount of participants in a certain location, all of this in order to ensure the anonymity of the respondents.

The fourth and final requirement is “Nyttjandekravet” which refers to the use of the collected data that it is only to be used in the study at hand and not published in any other way, except for within the study.

4.4 Respondent’s privacy and political aspects

One issue at hand when conducting the study was that of the respondent’s privacy. As the participants of this study are active public members of a political party it is important that they are to remain anonymous throughout the study.

Another issue that must be discussed is the fact that this study focuses on members of a political party. The reason being if the party would try and affect the presentation and publication of the collected data how would I respond. To start, the gatekeeper has chosen to not be a part of the study, only to supply me with the information necessary to contact the respondents. Furthermore the gatekeeper is the only person within the party that has been contacted except for the participants, the gatekeeper does not know which of the individuals recommended have actually decided to participate, this in order to maintain their anonymity. Most importantly, it is necessary

66 Berg 2009:90
67 Bryman 2008:131–132
68 Bryman 2008:145
for me to maintain my own distance to any political views that I may have. This in
order to not stain the scientific purpose of the study. In order to achieve a high level
of plausibility within the analyses of the study it is important that I as the researcher
keep an open mind and that I instead of trying to find a certain answer, allow the data
to show me the field.

4.5 Participants

The individuals whom have decided to be a part of this study are all public members
of the Swedish Democrats and are active in two separate SD-affiliates. Even though
the participants descend from various backgrounds they have much in common. A
majority of the respondents have some sort of academic background behind them,
mostly through different versions of post-high school education. Furthermore, all but
one of the participants had been active within other political organizations before
joining the Swedish Democrats, with a majority of these being active in The Moderate
Party and others being within the Social Democrats.

Most of the participants have held a position of some sort within the labour market
before their work with SD, either in the countries from where they have migrated or
like the majority in this study, within Sweden. To clarify, all of the participants have
migrated to Sweden at some point in their life; hence they are all born in another
country than Sweden. From where the respondents have migrated differs from within
Europe to the Middle East to western Asia. The respondents have migrated to Sweden
for different reasons, those for Western Europe have moved for jobs and better
economy. Those that have migrated from Poland, Turkey and the Middle East have
done so for different reasons. They have experienced class struggles along with ethnic
and religious conflicts, giving them a different perspective on certain issues, such as
asylum seeking and exclusion. The ages at which they migrated differ as well; the
age-span is between four years old to thirty, so most of them arrived in Sweden at a
relatively young age.
5.0 Result/Material

5.1 – From A to a Swedish Democrat, the process of becoming a member of SD

When listening and reading the interviews that have been conducted for this study it is possible to see how the respondents have all been active within politics at different levels. Something that is clear, is that in the process from going from the respondents prior political party to the current political belonging the respondents have faced a change how the different groups have treated them.

“The hierarchies that where in the Social Democrats, they don’t exist, you go to [SD] meetings [and] he/she who is on the board or is a councillor [is there], It’s such a short distance between the ordinary member and the city councillor and the member of parliament [within SD]”

IP 2

The distance the respondent is refereeing to is not geographical but social distance. What this social distance creates is a barrier between the “ordinary member” and those higher up in the political groups hierarchy. This can lead to the members of the group feeling left out, as if they are not an important part of the group. Other respondents have implied that their former political parties work specifically to create a distance between the ordinary member and those of higher positions, the talk of a type of powerlessness for those left our and a greediness of sort from those in charge.

“Yes, well first I heard that they [SD] didn’t want to be in the EU and I didn’t want to be in the EU I was a “moderate” and the only thing I saw was them [The Moderate party] sending notes to pay 100kr, 150kr, every time I got notes from different [groups]… I didn’t know them but they were not appealing to me, their personality and their way to be”

IP 3

The respondent seems to distant herself from the party before making the change and looking into a different political party:
“..., that [type of] politics I understood that it was not for me, and not those people either [members of former party], because they had an agenda, themselves and nobody else, that’s how I experienced it”

IP 3

What we can see is that members have felt left outside and in some ways used, as in case financially, by their former parties, hence leading to the individuals search for other viable options. It is clear to the individuals that they are not an internal part of the party and the social distance within the group has left the already uncertain members questioning why they should stay within the same organization. These members eventually start to consider themselves outsiders, by being left out of decision making and questioning the reason to “pay” for the group belonging. 69 They start to look for other options, and reasons to make the change to a different organization. This feeling of powerlessness is consistent with the views of many other former party members. In a recent study conducted by Timbro for Dagens Nyheter we can see where SD have gained their new votes for the 2014 elections, the new sympathisers are former Moderate voters that have gone over to the Swedish Democrats. 70 The study shows how SD has moved on the political landscape according to its voters. With more supporters coming over from the Moderate party, the new members see SD as more right orientated party than voters did in 2010. 71

With the growth of SD since it’s remodelling in the early 2000’s, the party is constantly looking to grow and acquire new members. What SD uses to be able to attract these new members is the opportunity to obtain role of status and power within the organization, something many have lacked in their previous engagements. One respondent explains his commitment in the Moderate party and his frustration over his powerlessness:

“I was in a local group, they had their own little moderate club….I had some type of members acquirer role but nothing of any value….I was active, but hidden away so to speak. Nothing of value, well I did [something of] value in my own way, but nothing larger”

IP 5

69 Elias 1999:35
70 Timbro 2014:4
71 ibid 8
Once again, a form of powerlessness left the respondent questioning his participation in the group. After a well-known member was excluded from the moderate party, a member who the respondent shared political values with, he decided to leave the party and join SD. The Swedish Democrats where at the time a small party, not just in the amount of members but also the social distance between the different members within the group. The respondent was able to gain access to the core of the at the time small political party:

“...There was a cell that had been created here in southern Skania, that is where I have been a member ever since that time, [I] became more and more familiar with the leaders of the party, and grew in their hierarchy,”

IP 5

The possibility to rise in rank within the organization seems to be a reason for the final change to SD according to some of the respondents in this study. As can be seen from the examples presented to this point, many of the individuals felt as if their former political engagement could not lead them further, but instead they felt as outsiders without the opportunity to influence what was going on in their former organizations. Even the respondents feel mostly positive when talking about their move to SD there are consequences as well. Being part of SD or sharing the parties political values may leave you stigmatized by other groups, especially if the individual is in a group that oppose SDs opinions. This can be seen in IP 5’s reason for leaving his former party:

“.... He [former moderate MP] had a very people friendly approach, so not the typical moderate party way (IP demonstrates what he thinks by making a face and a “pigs nose”). He wrote letters to SydSvenskan, they were always to the further right politically, that was a little outside of our political field, he was tossed out [of the party] at an annual meeting, he was an MP, he was tossed out by the moderates here [Malmö] and I thought it was awful”

IP 5

As mentioned above the individuals that share certain values with SD but are not a part of the political group become outsiders within political organizations that they, at
the time, belong to. This is a response from the established members of the group in order to demonstrate the norms and values of the group and who is in control (S or M). Furthermore, when the established group has pushed away the outsiders within the group, as in this case publicly, it becomes clear for the outsiders left within the organization that their behaviour and/or ideas are not welcome within the group. What followed in the case of the expelled councillor was that the respondent felt the need to question his existence within the organization:

“He was a good person, he was an MP in Stockholm, and how could you exclude him? They said he had some odd opinions. But I have the same opinions as him, am I not welcome anymore? They said well yes you are but only if you can keep your opinions to yourself, then you can be a member”

IP 5

If the respondent was ambivalent to his political belonging before confronting the established members of the group he became very certain of his need to leave the group afterwards. What the confrontation led to was a direct establishment of the IP’s status in the group, if he chose to maintain and be vocal about his values and ideas then he would be deemed and outsider and no longer be needed or wanted within the group.

When explaining why they have left one organization, several of the respondents refer to their former political group as a person. (IP 3, IP, 5, IP 2) This fictional person can be seen as a regulatory supervisor, a person whom ensures that the rules and values of a group are maintained. As the individuals move towards a change in political belonging they do so by breaking certain rules in their present group, pushing them away and becoming more and more of an outsider. Hence, with the establishment of the individuals as outsiders and the earlier mentioned powerlessness, the change to becoming a Swedish Democrat was in motion.

A majority of the people interviewed for this study began to show an interest in SD before making the switch, they had begun investing in social side bets, looking at

72 Elias 1999:30
73 Becker 2006:135
74 ibid 131
other organizations and beginning to participate in them.\textsuperscript{75} What attracted them was, amongst other things, more openness in the party, compared to their previous political engagements. A former moderate party member explains:

\begin{quote}
...what was attractive was that one talked about things that no one else talked about. Everything else I perceived as [inaudible] you say one thing but did another, I didn’t like that. I prefer a straight line.”
\end{quote}

\textit{IP 4}

When asked if he has experienced any differences after the change:

\begin{quote}
\textit{IP}: in the moderate party one put a lid on things. . .
\textit{E}: So then you made the change, how where you treated when you entered into SD?
\textit{IP}: I was treated really well, its like you say you are treated the way you treat others.
\end{quote}

\textit{IP 4}

Instead of being felt left out and powerless is his former engagement the IP was warmly welcomed into SD and is given a forum where he feels that he can talk openly about the issues that interest him. Another interviewee experienced similar circumstances:

\begin{quote}
...I felt [we needed to talk about] what are the values in Sweden, which values we must sustain in order to maintain some type of connection... and once again, no other party then SD even had those discussions, it was something you waved away.”
\end{quote}

\textit{IP 2}

Once again, someone that has been active in a political party before joining SD see themselves in a situation where they can not affect the questions that are important for them. They are powerless within their political organization because the established group do not want to touch certain subjects. In the same way that IP 5, IP 3 and IP 4

\textsuperscript{75} Ebaugh 1988:94
felt left out of the group and powerless within the group so did IP 2, not being able to discuss the issues that where important to him. Even if there only was one of the interviewees that left their earlier political party because of a specific event, a majority of the IP’s felt as if they where being left out of the discussion and decision making. If we retrace back to what IP 2 said about the distance between “ordinary members and politicians” within SD, it becomes obvious that the individuals status and place in hierarchy affects their attitudes to the group. As I have mentioned earlier, almost all of the individuals in this study where politically active before joining SD, but not one of them felt that they had an important role to play within their former political organizations. After contacting SD and as they began to learn about the organization they experienced a different group of people compared to what they had heard in the media:

“I was welcomed, I was expecting what you expect by when you hear information about SD in the media, I was expecting a few angry old men in some basement. But that wasn’t the case instead there where some pretty smart people there and they thought it was fun that I had joined. It was like any political association they just had different opinions. ”

IP 2

The respondents preconceived ideas of what a SD-group would be like was quickly dismissed upon gaining access to the group. He continues:

“It was different, you feel like you’re developing an organization and there is a lot to do. But it’s positive and people want to make a change for the better. So, you welcome new members in a good way, because we need new members all the time.”

IP 2

When one has entered the organization, the ability to affect the parties’ outcome becomes relevant, instead of being bystanders like in their earlier political engagement; the respondents now have an ability to lift the questions that are important for them, individually and as a group.
I have so far in this thesis tried to explain the groupings within the Swedish Democrats, focusing on how the respondents have perceived their former political engagement and their current engagement with SD. The latter being mostly positive and open compared to what they felt towards other groups. All of the respondents in this study felt as if their switch to the Swedish Democrats was the only option available and furthermore, a change that they feel proud of. As I have mentioned, the openness and tolerance that the respondents recognize with SD accelerates their willingness to openly display their political belonging.

Returning to IP 4 we can see how he felt as if his former party acted behind his back and how the “put a lid on things”. The fact that the respondents see their new political group as welcoming and also different in its approach to the outsiders seems to have created a situation in which the respondents feel they can openly show their political engagement and find a source of identity and security within their group, a group of outsiders. This openness and the opportunity to gain a position of power and status within SD is what pulled the respondents towards the political party. The respondents felt powerless in their previous political engagement. In their former political engagement the respondents felt as if the established members of that group pushed them (IP) away from the group. This was upheld by maintaining a social hierarchy that created a social distance between the “ordinary member” and those in power. Forcing the outsiders to look for alternative groups.

5.2 – The Swedish democrats and “the others”

Once the individuals have gained access to their new political group they begin to take part in different social gatherings. Some attend daily meetings as part of their role within the organization, others meet monthly at social meetings for members of the party. But, all of the respondents of this study have in one way or another taken part in public gatherings with the party. This can either be by handing out pamphlets or standing at “valstugor”, tiny cabins that political parties use to discuss and spread their message to voters before elections. In doing so, the individuals show in a very open manner that they belong to a certain group with certain values and ideas. I
wanted to ask and see how the interviewees had experienced such occasions. More often than not when SD organizes public gatherings there are demonstrators from other groups there to show their dissatisfaction with the party, which is often accused of being fascist, racist and Islamophobic.

The respondents have all been part of such accusations and explain what they have seen:

“I don’t know what they call themselves, left, right party communist or social fascists I don’t know what it is, they use violence.”

He continues:

“They have the right to have a different opinion even the most extreme. But when they start to become threatening and handgripna [hands on], throwing items and so…. I got an egg, it could have been a rock”

IP 1

The respondent had said earlier in the interview that he once had had an egg thrown at him that hit him in the head. Even though this is the only example of physical violence from the participants others can tell of psychological violence, threats and slur shouted at them from opposing groups.

“….I was scared that it [publicly active in SD] would affect my children somehow. I can always tell someone of if they try and run me over*76 or something like that, but I am afraid that [my] children can get something at school.”

IP 6

Another member who migrated from a former Soviet state talks about the people working against SD:

“People are awful, there is no legal protection for people thinking differently, it is the same as in Poland but [they were] communists. It is the

76 *Swedish expression for someone trying to prove someone wrong vigorously
same, except that they [in Sweden] are not murdering yet, and it is the same.  
I have never seen this before, such aggressive and horrible people.”    

IP 3

It seems that the members have a clear idea of who the opposite group are and what their objectives are with their anti-SD actions. The examples given by the respondents are plenty and well developed:

“Well there is a group that comes to destroy. Ordinary folk are passive or ask critical questions or they are with us. But there is never someone that starts a fight. But those that are there to fight are organized, it is people that organize themselves and that is what we usually face. We recognize them quite often.

IP 2

In this example the respondent and his group have a clear idea of who the opposite group are, enough even to recognize them publicly. This is what makes this specific situation unique, although the other members have been put in similar positions, they can not point out their opposition and recognize them individually. The other group, or what the respondents refer to, is the social movement that focuses on working against SD on different levels. Certain politicians have an open agenda when it comes to working against SD while the organized groups that IP 2 are talking about use several different methods, including violence, according to SD, to combat their politics. The people involved from SD’s side see this as something unique for them and for Sweden:

“It’s unique for all of Europe, this, it’s unique, it doesn’t exist in France, it doesn’t exist in Belgium, because I’m their quite often. Nowhere, this, this political correctness that is to absurdum”

IP 1

When an anti-SD group attacks the members of the Swedish Democrats they, the members of SD, feel as if their values and political ideas are being threatened. After the respondents have first been made outsiders of their earlier political associations, their collective group is now being deemed as non-desirable, as outsiders from other groups in society. What is different from the earlier circumstances is that now the

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77 Rosén, DN, 2014
individual is no longer by themself, now they are part of a group that share the same values that made them outsiders. As a result there is a group of outsiders gathered under a shared group identity, being attacked by other groups in society. They have now created a culture with integrated outsiders, consequently the group not only has a public identity, but also they welcome other likeminded individuals that feel like outsiders to join them in the organization. Not all of the respondents feel as if the work from opposing groups affect them this way, but they are aware of the situation:

“Well I haven’t personally felt it [negative picture of SD], sure I’ve been out at election meetings etc. and felt a degree of aggressiveness from certain groups, but it is nothing that effects me directly. I am probably pretty strong psychologically, I have had many years behind me [Says jokingly and laughs]”

IP 4

These attacks from other groups have created a divide between the different political groupings, leading to a situation that from the SD-members point of view is undesirable and unsolvable because of the opposing groups behaviour. One frustrated member explains the situation:

“I don’t see them as groups, I don’t care which groups they are anymore.... there are other groups that are not even political, it can be unhappy youth that just want a fight, and this is the best forum to do it [fight] because they get a pat on the back like they did something good.”

IP 2

As these groups are attacking SD the members of SD seem to feel as if it is society in a broader perspective that is attacking them. When these groups are rewarded for their actions towards SD they grow and in turn establish SD as the outsider group within their society. From SD’s perspective this can be seen as their group being stigmatized in a display of power and triggering us and them thinking. One theme that the politically active in this study continually refer to is that of stigmatization and that
these attacks are a type of defence from the established groups, the respondents see this a sign of weakness and that it reflects the way discussions are held between the groups:

“It’s two reasons, either people are afraid or they don’t have enough knowledge, sometimes I get the feeling that people feel one way but say something else. Because people are afraid of being accused of being in SD if you criticize immigrations”

IP 2

When asked if the respondent talks about these questions with his colleagues:

“I try not to, the rhetoric that they use is the same as the medias and it always ends up with one being called a Nazi or something like that. Preferably you don’t want to have that discussion with them, you need to know much more about these questions before you talk about these issues, they just use buzzwords*80 about opening our hearts.”

IP 2

Many of the respondents felt as if the opposing groups could not be talked to. The most common reason being a lack of knowledge, it is the members of SD that are aware and knowledgeable when it comes to the questions that are important to them. They often speak of an ignorance and unwillingness to read and learn about their outsider group, so much that one interviewee first began looking at SD because of such an accusation:

“I began to read about the party, it said nowhere [in the parties program] that they wanted to get us immigrants out [of Sweden] it was just ignorant people…”

IP 3

This type of argument is common for those who sympathies with SDs political agenda and the outcome is especially common according to the respondents. One respondent tries to explain how she has been put in situations where she has had to explain political issues to those who, according to her, do not understand:

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80 *Words without specific meaning that seem to sound good
[Discussing an example about the EU and how a respondent had to explain it for a friend]

“That is exactly the way it is, you lend me 100kr and I give you 20kr...oh that’s how you mean, then she was embarrassed because she was so dumb”

IP 3

In these types of discussion the outsiders have a different role, they see themselves as the insiders due to their knowledge of the field. They are the group that has the power for the simple reason that they believe to be in possession of the accurate facts and reasoning behind certain issues. With this accumulated power it would be reasonable to think that the outsider group would seize every opportunity to outduel their counterpart, yet most of the respondents see it as earlier mentioned, a lost cause and eventually the discussion leads back to (SD) being called racists, fascist and extremists. In turn it seems that some members experience the same type of powerlessness that drove them from their earlier political engagement:

“At political meetings held at squares like before elections that’s when these groups start to yell and throw things, but democracy is about listening to your opponents opinions... we have never gone to a left wing party meeting or what ever they call themselves and started whistling and throwing things”

IP 1

The opposing groups are seen as counter-productive, as destructive forces that do nothing but attack the core values of the SD members. These direct attacks towards SD obviously affect the way that the Swedish Democrats treat and interact with the groups involved. The preconceived opinion of all opponents to SD becomes one of lower intelligence and an in-ability to communicate; this is the established group’s weapon in creating an outsider group according to the interviewees.81 Yet it seems that the outsiders that now are members of the SD use this in order to relocate their position on the social and political ladder:

“He the Social democrat said; you with you’re [bad] view on humanity, so I asked him, what view on humanity. He hade no answers, he just stood there,,. I asked him, why are you fighting us so much now. Are you afraid of

81 Elias 1999:33
us, we who have such a poor view on humanity,.. It’s you that have a horrible view of humanity. I have lived here as a foreigner, they [other groups] just have buzzwords and say you with you’re view of humanity and you’re racist.

This is just one of several examples of how the members of SD have gained power in their discussions with other groups, showcasing that they are now the group that has access to the knowledge necessary for the discussion at hand. As I have mentioned earlier, most of the research regarding political participation focuses on the early stages of the individuals’ entry to politics. Once again, as this study focuses on the adults, there are other factors that need to be taken into account. Although we have been looking at the members of SD in this specific study as outsiders we must still take notice to the age and position of these individuals.

So what does this conclude to eventually? In one of the mentioned studies about the political participation of youth it is possible to see how the participant’s political participation was affected by their social and economic status. The conclusion of that study is that the higher an individual’s social and economic status is the more likely it is that they will be politically active.82 The SD members now see themselves as the knowledgeable leading to a heightened feeling of social status. As I have tried to demonstrate in this part, the respondents react to how other groups look upon them and the actions they take to work against SD. What lifts them is the feeling of knowledge, importance and power. Having this position of power opens an opportunity to feel superior to the other groups, especially those working against SD.

82 Humphries et. al. 2013:1265
5.3 – Identity of the modern Swedish democrat

When trying to examine the identity of the modern Swedish democrat we must look back into the past of the Swedish Democrats to understand certain phenomenon surrounding the party. The literature that has been selected for this presentation is due to its political standpoint, anti-SD. The reasoning behind this should become clear the further one moves in this text, but in order to clarify, one should try and understand the relation between modern SD, historical SD, and the groups that work against SD and where the participants in this study place themselves.

The year is 1993, three individuals are arrested in central Stockholm and when they are apprehended by authorities it turns out the individuals are carrying hand grenades. All of this happens close to a political gathering held by a well-known anti-racist and anti-SD leader, former left party leader Gudrun Schyman. The arrested individuals turn out to be members of SD, including the Chairman of the SD youth organization (SDU).[^83] There are many examples of SD members acting violently and using racial and racist propaganda and slurs, yet this is one if not the most extreme example of what SD members have been involved in. The fact is that the specific event mentioned above took place over twenty years ago. SD has changed, not only at a managerial point, but the members’ perception of SD has changed. When I questioned one member of SD about the violent history of the party she answered the following:

“*There are no violent groups, I don’t know any violent [groups] in SD... not even “Svenskarnas Parti”[^84] are violent. They are attacked, I know lots, they are always attacked and the media writes nothing about it, I haven’t heard anything about them [opposite groups] attacking and mutilating people.*”

[^83]: Ekman 2014: 15
[^84]: A right wing group seen as more extreme and violent compared to SD

The respondent does not relate in any way to the former more extreme ways of SD and its members. Like the grenade incident, SD has had its fair share of violent
moments and many examples of extremist behaviour, yet, for the modern members, especially the immigrant members that have been a part of this study, they feel no association with this type of behaviour. Another member of SD, one that has been active in politics for close to fifty years, states:

“… SD is a party that the Swedish people have voted for, no matter if we like it or not. As long is there is no violence, they day the violence comes is the day I leave.”

IP 1

The Swedish Democrats are no longer an organization to which individuals are drawn to if they are looking for a violent solution to their issues. As presented in part one of this result presentation, the fact that the respondents experience SD as an open, non violent and modern political organization is quite remarkable when looking at the organizations history. Not only has this modern identity of the Swedish democrats and its members changed the way they look at the organization, moreover this identity and the attacks on this identity from other groups seem to draw the supporters within SD closer, strengthening the bond between the individuals within the group:

“Yeah I think we get stronger as a group, we talk about this [attacks on SD from other groups] together and because naturally some people in the group find it tougher to be accused of being one thing or another, receiving those types of accusations”

IP 4

Consequently in order to handle the situations that are a part of being a Swedish Democrat today the group works together, discussing certain situations and how they affect individuals and how they can grow as a group. When I used words such as demonstration, crusade and other more extravagant ways of showing political opinion the respondents reacted and often changed the terms, using words such as gathering and meetings. Once again, the out-dated view of SD being a group of skinheads running around and vandalising has been updated and turned to anti-violence and pro-democracy organization. These are the most vital values when discussing what the individuals in this study feel about their political engagement. One member knew about the reputation that SD had when she started to become interested in their
politics, so she read about the party and according to her there are no violent groups in SD, she is not sure about other groups that are often compared to SD:

“I do not know about them, Keeping Sweden Swedish, because I was in the Moderate party then and not interested in those greenhorns, it was mostly members that showed the worst side of them, the worst and dumbest people.”

As we can see the individual wanted nothing to do with the negative sides of SD and the other group’s politics, this summarizes the respondents’ identity and their view on SD. It is these “greenhorns” which the respondent referred to that have historically been behind many of the brutal attacks against groups and people. Individuals associated to SDU* and Info – 14, a magazine with connections to the party, have been connected to several killings of individuals and bombings against a journalist couple in Stockholm. 86 Another interviewee explains his view on violence:

“I am against violence in all forms, I don’t think that it leads anywhere, the only time one can use violence is when you’re defending you’re family or your country. But then it should be under forms that the government has decided.”

This modern version of the cleaner and anti-violence SD has grown out the often radicalized and violent SDU. 87 With the Skania region taking charge of the party under the leadership of Jimmie Åkesson*88 SDU changed the parties perception and began using more democratic methods in an effort to transform the party’s reputation of being extremist and tied to racist and fascist organizations. 89 This is the Swedish Democrats that the respondents refer to. A political party that in their eyes is modern, transparent and democratic.

85 Swedish Democrat Youth Organization*
86 Wåg 2014:98
87 ibid 99
88 *Leader of the Swedish Democrats from 2000,
89 Wåg 2014:102
5.4 - Islam – The ultimate opposition to SD

To this point the focus of this study has been the push and pull process in the respondents move to SD. The respondents, who have all migrated to Sweden, originate from different countries around the world. Yet only two of them are from countries where Islam is the leading religion. Additionally, not one of the respondents sees Islam as their own religion. As stated earlier in this thesis, SD fear for Sweden’s cultural heritage and believe immigration to be a contributing reason for the loss of mentioned heritage.

SD has ties to several anti-Muslim organizations such as the English National Defence League, known for public and violent actions towards Muslims.90 This has harmed the work of Jimmie Åkesson and his followers attempt to change the perception of SD as extremist party to a Social conservative and culture nationalistic party.91 Yet as mentioned, many members of SD have a stigmatized approach to Islam.92 This can be seen in the comments made by the respondents in this study:

“I do not want to be treated by a Muslim doctor... she can be a Muslim but not have things that connect her to it because I associate that with ignorance and that makes me feel bad because I am from a different country and have different values, I cannot understand why you have to have rags around you are head just because God said so...”

IP 3

Another respondent refers to certain members of his political opposition as jihadists for reasons unknown. The link between Islam and politics is one that seems to make the respondents feel threatened, one IP states clearly: “We [SD] are against Islamism, the political part of Islam”. The participants in this study seem to feel that when groups migrate to Sweden they should distance themselves from their values in order to be assimilated into society. One respondent explains an example from a former workplace:

90 ibid 105
91 Wåg 2014:106
92 Müller et. al.
“...”We had a problem, we had five or six Muslims working there, I’m sure they where from former Yugoslavia, and they felt hurt because we hade a beautiful ornament, a pigs head with an apple in it, and it had been there the entire time since 1969, then all of a sudden it disappeared... It was Muslims that felt hurt, I said excuse me, who came first, Muslim or Swedes.... “

IP 3

The respondents felt as if her Muslim co-workers where being treated differently, in an unfair manner. One of the respondents in this study decided to become politically active because she also felt that the Muslim community were given unfair advantages compared to other immigrants.

A majority of the respondents in this study have experienced situations in which they feel that Muslim immigrants are given unfair advantages. Furthermore IP 3’s statement regarding Muslim doctors is far from the only stigmatized comment towards the religious group. Most of these comments are focused towards the fact that the Muslim culture is far different from the Swedish culture, with one respondent claiming that Muslims in Sweden conduct thousands of rapes. The Muslim community is often seen as unable or unwilling to follow the Swedish traditions and norms from the respondent’s point of view.

The respondents idea appears to be that when you are in Sweden you act as a Swede, you accept the values and norms which SD believe Swedish society is built upon. What this means is that the individuals or groups that are not aware of these norms and values, become outsiders not being able to integrate because of their heritage and behaviour:

“Migration is good for every country for those who come to that country, but then you must respect the principals of that country. There are many written and non-written laws and you need to respect them.”

IP 1
6.0 Analysis & Conclusions

In order to try to understand the data collected and presented in this study we must look at how the respondents have made the leap from in their eyes being politically inactive to politically establish. All but one of the participants in this study began their political journey in SD. The others were active in several organizations prior to joining the political party. What all of the respondents have in common is that their starting point was a feeling of powerlessness. This is the first step, they realize that they no longer are a part of the established group. For example, IP 5 felt as if he was “hidden away” in his organization. This sense of powerlessness drives the person to question their position within the group just as Hirschman stated. The individual feels that they no longer can influence the organization; they are not an active or important part of the group. This causes the person to begin to distance themselves from the group and begin to accept the role as an outsider. Continuing with IP 5, his values and ideas where no longer welcomed, this was clear when he confronted his group after a member was publicly tossed from the party. If he were to stay in the party he would have to renounce his values in favour of the parties and its program. By not doing so the person has used his “Voice” to alert the group that he is dissatisfied with the situation and his position. As the group does nothing to accommodate the individual’s position and feeling he is left with only a few options, either leave the group or remain in the group, giving up their own beliefs.

When he decided that he would not give up his beliefs both parties accept him as outsider, allowing him to scout the field and begin to contact other organizations. As the second and third steps are completed in unison (Theoretical approach p.14) what is it that pulls the individuals to SD? What I have found in this study is that the reason the participants have established themselves in SD is the feeling of power and status it gives. Many of the respondents refer to SD as the only viable option, that the other political organizations are afraid to talk about certain subjects, making them unique within the political field (Theoretical approach p.14). One thing is clear, as the respondents have began to contact and enter SD they have all been welcomed with

93 Hirschman 1970:77
94 ibid 33
open arms and quickly been given a position of some value. This gives them a purpose within the organization, instead of being a passive member as in their previous engagement, the persons are invited to be active members of SD and to be a part of the decision making in the organization. This puts the newly acquired SD member in a position of power, which is something they lacked in their previous engagement. The members of SD are a collective group of outsiders, different thinkers according to themselves, who dare to question the norms and values of the political and social structure. This in turn leads to a unique feeling of superiority when the members are allowed to display their knowledge within the field that they relate to as their own.

Furthermore, the group identity of the participants in this study is one of loyalty and strength. In a form of unity the members help each other through spells of attacks from opposite groups and the everyday hassle of being a public member of a nationalistic party. Not only do these attacks of the groups strengthen their belief in their political cause and tighten the bonds between the members. In addition, it reinforces their belief in the identity to which they have grown attached, as Swedish Democrats. As can be seen in the result portion, the members identify themselves as well-educated peace pursuing intellectuals that have an awareness that the majority of society lacks. As a group they are in possession of information and knowledge that separates them from the rest of society.  

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In order to maintain this perception of SD’s political and social position along with their identity the members are continuously comparing themselves to other groups in society. The groups that collectively perform the attacks against SD are a type of measuring stick for the members of the Swedish Democrats. They see these groups as the least desirable in society, that they are often poorly educated within the subjects that they stand behind according to SD and that the violence they use is a type of defence mechanism.  

This identity is, as mentioned earlier in this thesis, differs from the former Swedish Democrat identity. The members of todays SD have the opportunity to form the identity of the group in a way that they see fit. Having the

95 Becker 2006:81-82
96 Elias 1999:58
possibility to carry out such an identity forming organization strengthens the
member’s alliance with the party and their own feeling of importance and knowledge.

“It was different, you feel like you are developing an organization and there is a lot
to do. But it is positive and people want to make a change for the better”.

IP 2

The feeling the members have about their participation and establishment within the
group triggers a will to expand and evolve the organization leading to the sense
empowerment. They are aware that they can imprint their identity and the values and
norms they feel should be a part onto the group.

To summarize this conclusion, we can see that the people in question, immigrants in
SD, have been pushed away from their previous political engagement. The
respondents have been left out of decision-making process, without any power or
status. Thereafter SD has pulled the respondents towards their organization by
promoting more openness in the political discussion and offering positions of power
and status. These positions are available as the social distance between the different
members of the group is relatively short. As IP 2 stated, “It’s such a short distance
between the ordinary member and the city councillor and the member of parliament
[within SD]”. As the respondents see this shorter distance between the hierarchies
they see an opportunity to influence the group and as mentioned in the theoretical
approach on p.14 and here, this offers them a chance to gain a position that fulfills
their social and political needs. 97

Moreover, the group gathers strength in the fact that they are outsiders and no longer
wanted in their former political engagement. This gives them a sense of strength as
they believe to see society from a different perspective and the attacks against SD
only strengthen their belief. They believe it is a role they must hold; they must be the
outsiders with insiders’ information in order to be able to change Sweden.

97 Hirschman 1970:78
7.0 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to try and understand the process in which the respondents went from their previous engagement to being active within SD. When conducting a qualitative study the purpose is to try and see the process from the respondents’ point of view, how they have experienced their particular situation. What this study shows is not an analysis of SD and members in general. The study has focused on a small group within the political organization and focused on the social reasons for their organizational change, not their political beliefs. What the study has shown is an attempt to understand the specific group actions and what consequences and privileges have followed their entry into SD. Moreover the study has focused on the recent history of the respondents, this has given the specific reasons and the thought process behind the individuals move to SD. What the study has not been able to present is how the respondent’s immigrant background has affected their decision in joining SD. If the study had covered members of SD from all backgrounds there would be cause to generalize the results but that is for future research of the field. Therefore as this study solely focuses on the small group and the time just before and around their move to SD, it is that process and that time that the study attempts to understand.

Still, I believe that the purpose of this paper has been upheld as the study has shown why the group in question, immigrants within SD, have joined the party. The secondary questions grew out of the respondents own experiences, leading to an interesting discussion regarding personal identity and group identity. Although this was not an initial focus for the paper it did offer another perspective on the respondents thought process, which in turn helped understand their decisions. As the respondents feel that their groups’ identity and sense of togetherness is strengthened by attacks from other groups it might be time for these groups to rethink their strategies. During the time that this study was conducted Sweden’s political landscape went through several drastic moments. If an election where to be held today, SD would hold closer to 16 % of the votes, an increase of more than 3 % since the
elections in September and at the moment their seems to be no reason for these numbers to reduce.98

7.1 Methods discussion

In order for this study to dig deeper into the field studied there are several other methods that could have been applied. Gaining access to the everyday routines of the respondents and being able to perform a participating observation would give a much deeper understanding to how they act within the group and how others within and outside of SD react to them, immigrants within SD. It would have been very interesting to interview people from other political parties to see what they think of the situation, and how they react and act towards immigrants in an anti-immigration party.

7.2 Final notes – SD and Islam

As SD continues to oppose Islam in public ways we must tread carefully, a recent statement from Member of Parliament, Björn Söder, displays some of SDs darker history. Söder stated that Jews, Kurds and Sami people are allowed to live in Sweden, but they are not Swedish, they do not share the same values and traditions that we do.99 One may ask, who fits in to the Swedish Democrats mold as a Swede? Is it based on shared heritage and traditions? SD states that their cultural conservatism is necessary to defend the Swedish culture. But who is a part of this culture, and who decides where the cultures boundaries should be drawn?

Non the less, with Danske Folkepartiet, Front National, Golden Dawn and SD all active and strong within their respective countries there is a strong conservative, nationalistic and right-wing wind blowing across Europe. The question we must, is this the calm before a storm, or is it just a passing breeze?

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98 Novus 2014-12-16
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Interview guide I, IP 1 & 2

Inledning
1. Presentera intervjuns upplägg och se om respondenten har några inledande frågor om studien.

IP - Bakgrund
4. Hur kom det sig att SD blev ”ditt” parti?
5. Vad är din kärnfråga i politiken, vilken tycker du är viktigast?

Relationer
6. Hur skulle du beskriva din relation till de andra partimedlemmarna?
7. Utanför jobbet och politiken, umgås du med människor av olika härkomst? Bara invandrare? Bara ”Svenskar”?
6a. Är många av dina vänner politiskt aktivta?
6b. Hur ser de på din politiska aktivitet?

Deltagande
8. Brukar du delta vid politiska möten med SD?
8a. Om ja, vilken roll brukar du ha och hur aktiv brukar du vara?
8b. Om nej, varför inte? Är det några särskilda individer som brukar leda talan (inga namn krävs)?
8c. Finns det vissa som man lyssnar på extra noga, är det vissa ledare i gruppen? Varför är de ledare? Har de varit i partiet längre, har de någon klar statusposition, har de vuxit upp i området?

Reaktioner från relationer
11. För att återgå till vänner/familj/bekanta, hur reagerade de när du började med politiken och just SD?
12. Var det någon som hade en negativ reaktion och hur reagerade de?
13. Hur tror du samhället ser på de med utländsk bakgrund i SD.
14. Hur känner du för deras tankar/äsikter?
15. Anser du dig vara ”svensk”, hur skiljer sig mot andra med utländsk bakgrund som inte är ”svenskar”? (Dra Zlatan exemplet)
16. Vad har du för mål med ditt politiska deltagande och vad hoppas du uppnå med det?

Avsluta
17. Fråga om IP vill läsa studiens resultat innan/eftersom den har publicerats. Dubbelkolla att det förstår sina etiska rättigheter och mina skyldigheter som ”forskare”.
Interview guide II – IP 3,4,5 & 6

Inledning
1. Presentera intervjuans upplägg och se om respondenten har några inledande frågor om studien.

IP - Bakgrund
4. Hur kom det sig att SD blev ”ditt” parti?
5. Kan du berätta lite hur det är att vara politiker/politiskt aktiv inom SD?
6. Vad är din kärnfråga i politiken, vilken tycker du är viktigast?
7. Kan du berätta vad det bästa/sämsta/roligaste/mest intressant/jobbigaste med att vara aktiv i SD och ha utländsk bakgrund är? Fokusera mer på processen om hur man gick in och blev en del av SD.

Relationer
8. Hur skulle du beskriva din relation till de andra partimedlemmarna?
   6a. Är många av dina vänner politiskt aktiva?
   6b. Hur ser de på din politiska aktivitet?

Deltagande
10. Brukar du delta vid politiska möten med SD?
11. Hur går det till vid dessa möten? Brukar du ha någon aktiv roll i dessa möten?
   8a. Om ja, vilken roll brukar du ha och hur aktiv brukar du vara?
   8b. Om nej, varför inte? Är det några särskilda individer som brukar leda talan (inga namn krävs)?
   8c. Finns det vissa som man lyssnar på extra noga, är det vissa ledare i gruppen? Varför är de ledare? Har de varit i partiet längre, har de någon klar statusposition, har de vuxit upp i området?
12. Hur bemöts ni på offentliga möten, känslor, tankar, exemplen

Reaktioner från relationer
13. För att återgå till vänner/familj/bekanta, hur reagerade de när du började med politiken och just SD?
14. Var det någon som hade en negativ reaktion och hur reagerade de, konsekvenser?
15. Hur tror du samhället ser på de med utländskbakgrund i SD.
16. Hur känner du för deras tankar/åsikter?
17. Anser du dig vara ”svensk”, hur skiljer sig mot andra med utländskbakgrund som inte är ”svenskar”?
   (Dra Zlatan exemplet)
18. Vad har du för mål med ditt politiska deltagande och vad hoppas du uppnå med det?