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# **A new Home, far from Home**

The assimilation process of women involved in intercultural marriages based on Internet meeting.

**Master's Thesis**

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**We can never start a new life  
We just need to continue with the old one, step by step,  
but we should try to do it in the best way we can.  
That is the destiny.**

*Imre Kertész*

# Abstract

The internet has revolutionized the way we socialize, and as a consequence the way to love. The new communication technologies have facilitated intercultural relationships. Nowadays family relations are one of the major factors in immigration to European countries. Family relations means persons who arrive as family dependents and in accordance with laws regulating family reunification.

This thesis aims to apply the classical assimilation theory stated by Milton Gordon (1964), which formulates a series of assimilation stages through which an individual must pass in order to be completely assimilated. In accordance with this theory, marriage is the final phase for a newcomer to fully incorporate into the host society.

Thus, based on this presumption and other contemporary theories, the present study has analysed how women who get involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting experience these assimilation stages and evaluated the resources used by respondents to incorporate themselves into Swedish society.

The main goal of the study was to determine if jumping to the last stage of assimilation does assure the incorporation in the social or/and labour spheres and the findings demonstrate that even though husbands are a valuable resource for assimilation, several cultural issues in Swedish society make it difficult to assure success for the newcomers.

On the other hand, Sweden is a country with a strong national sentiment and the assimilation of immigrants still is an important issue to deal with. The Swedish Integration Board has disappeared and major projects for integration have been left in the hands of the municipalities or the Migration Board, institutions that still do not know how to deal with this dilemma.

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	3
<b>List of tables</b>	6
<b>Chapter I: Introduction</b>	7
1.1 The problem and its settings	7
1.2 Significance of the study	9
1.3 Research questions	11
<b>Chapter II: Theoretical Part</b>	12
2.1 Internet: The Global Village	13
2.1.1 Cyberspace	14
2.1.2 Cyberlove	14
2.1.3 The cultural stuff	16
2.2 The actors	17
2.2.1 The newcomer	17
2.2.2 Host Society	17
2.3 Assimilation	19
2.3.1 Why assimilation and not integration?	20
2.3.2 Assimilation and intercultural marriage	22
2.4 The Assimilation Theory: Milton Gordon	24
2.5 Other important theories related to the assimilation process	25
2.5.1 Identity theory	25
2.5.2 Language and stigma	26
2.5.3 Orientation toward destination and length of stay	27
<b>Chapter III: Methodological Part</b>	29
3.1 Design	29
3.1.1 The comparative Method	32
3.2 Interviews	33
3.2.1 Participants and Recruitment Process	33
3.2.2 Data Analysis	35
3.3 Hypothesis	36
3.4 Expected results	37
<b>Chapter IV: Empirical Part</b>	38
4.1 Välkommen till Sverige (Welcome to Sweden)	38
4.1.1 Sweden	38
4.1.2 Immigration Policies	41
4.1.2.1 Danish immigration policy - comparative perspective	43
4.1.3 Conditions for naturalization	45
4.2 Experiencing intercultural Marriage	46
4.2.1 Who are they? (Profiles of the persons involve into intercultural marriage base on Internet meeting)	46
4.2.1.1 Ethnicity	47
4.2.2 From the screen to the reality: Ten love stories	48
4.2.3 Emotions on line. Does the love story continue in the real life?	57
4.2.4 Challenges of intercultural marriage base on Internet meeting	60
4.3 Experiencing the assimilation process - Milton Gordon stages	61
4.3.1 Behavioural assimilation	61
4.3.1.1 Citizenship	62
4.3.1.2 Language	63
4.3.1.3 Religion	68

4.3.1.4 Food	69
4.3.1.5 Values and other cultural stuff	71
4.3.2 Structural or socioeconomic assimilation	74
4.3.2.1 Social interaction	74
4.3.2.2 Interaction among groups or institutions	75
4.3.2.3 Labour assimilation	77
4.4 The Host society	82
4.4.1 Receptional and Behavioural Attitude: Civic assimilation. Social and structural (labour) racism	82
4.4.2 Integration programs	87
<b>Chapter V: Conclusions</b>	89
<b>Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire</b>	94
<b>Appendix B</b>	99
Interview Questionnaire: Demographic results	
<i>Female</i>	
1. Age of the respondents	99
2. Spoken Languages	100
3. Scholar education	100
4. Time living in Sweden	101
5. Number of marriages and duration of the previous marriage or cohabiting relationships in years	101
6. Number of children from previous marriages or relationships	102
7. Number of years in current marriage	102
8. Number of children from current marriage	103
<i>Male</i>	
9. Age of the respondents	103
10. Ethnicity of the respondents	104
11. Spoken Languages	104
12. Scholar education	105
13. Current occupation (In Sweden)	105
14. Number of marriages and duration of the previous marriage or cohabiting relationships in years	106
15. Number of children from previous marriages or relationships	106
<b>Bibliography</b>	107

## List of tables

<b>Table 1:</b> Total Population of Sweden	39
<b>Table 2:</b> Number of Immigrants in Sweden 2006 (December 31st)	40
<b>Table 3:</b> Ethnicity of the respondents	48
<b>Table 4:</b> General overview of respondents' attitudes	56
<b>Table 5:</b> Stages of Swedish language	65
<b>Table 6:</b> Levels of Swedish Language education attended by Respondents	65
<b>Table 7:</b> Occupation in home country or previous country of residence	78
<b>Table 8:</b> Current occupation (In Sweden)	79
<b>Table 9:</b> Cases of discrimination grounded in ethnical issues (2001-2006). Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO)	85
<b>Table 10:</b> Comparison of assimilation stages for women who get involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting	91

# Chapter I: Introduction

## 1.1 The problem and its settings

The last decade of the 20th century marked a very important stage in human history. The development of many new electric-electronic instruments and software has been making human life easier, safer and faster. One of these special tools is the internet, which has become very popular in the last 20 years.

In 1996, I wrote a thesis in Mexico about how new technologies in communications (Internet) could be used in printed media (newspapers and magazines). At that time I had no idea that the internet was going to cause a technological revolution at all levels. International and national organizations, companies, governments and of course, private people, have been changing not only the way they communicate, but also the way they do business, buy, learn and live. The internet has even revolutionized the way to socialize, meet new people, make friends and, as a consequence, the way to love.

According to the website World Internet Usage and Population Statistics, as of October 2006, there were 1,091,730,861 Internet users worldwide. This number has increased 202,4% since the year 2000.<sup>1</sup> The same study notes that private people do not mainly use the internet as an information search engine, but to socialize and meet new people.

Overall, this means that the new communication technologies have facilitated intercultural relationships.

Nowadays the main reason for immigration to European countries consists of refugee migration (asylum seekers) and family relations, which means people who arrive as family dependents and in accordance with laws regulating family reunification.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps a high percentage of seekers of family reunification visas are couples who fall in love through the internet.

Love online or "cyber love" is now a very common term for people who have contact with the internet. The internet has no borders, has no dimensions such as distance or location. "Cyber love is a romantic relationship consisting mainly of computer-mediated

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<sup>1</sup> *World Internet Usage and Population Statistics*. Information obtained January 2007. <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Hedetoft, Ulf. *Denmark: Integrating Immigrants into a Homogeneous Welfare State*. Denmark: Aalborg University and the Academy for Migration Studies in Denmark, November 2006, p.3

communication".<sup>3</sup> One lover can be located in Australia and the other one in Jamaica, but because of this non-dimensional resource, they can meet at any time and share their feelings, their thoughts, and their projects for the future. The emotions online are much more intense than in real life.<sup>4</sup>

In everyday life we are in touch with other people and we perceive them as they are, tall, short, fat, slim, clever, funny, stupid... and with these facts we can decide whether we like them or not. On the internet we perceive them as we want, or as they want to be seen. The internet plays with our imagination and makes us fall in love with the person that we have built in our mind, and maybe not with the real person that is on the other side of the screen. Further on, what happens when these two people deeply fall in love and decide to make the fantasy real by starting a life together?

Then, the previously non-existent borders and differences become real. Migration problems, such as getting visas or residence permits, cultural and societal assimilation, and change of lifestyle can destroy the fairytales. The virtual love becomes real and embodied, and the real people start to exist: "the moment immigrants settle in a country, they have to acquire a place in that new society. This is true not only for physical needs such as housing, [getting food or clothes], but also in the social and cultural sense",<sup>5</sup> that is, these people start to focus on the feeling of belonging and being accepted.

They want to go out and behave as they used to in their home countries, they want to have conversations with others, they want to have jobs, go to school and not feel different from the others, but then they find themselves lost because they cannot do the activities that they did before.

"The common theme in the literature, and general belief in the population, is that intercultural couples start their relationships with a higher risk for unsuccessful union; they face the typical relationship adjustments that all the couples face, but they also must often reconcile other stressors that result from their differing cultural backgrounds [and] differences about lifestyle and family decisions. Intercultural couples often have added stress around ethnicity and culture...",<sup>6</sup> but besides all these factors, there are

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<sup>3</sup> Ben-Ze'Ev, Aaron. *Love on line*. Cambridge: University Press. 2004, p.4.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Penninx, Rinus. *Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. October 1, 2003, p.2

<sup>6</sup> Donovan, Sarah. *Stress and coping techniques in successful intercultural marriages*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. December 2004, p.3



other problems that intercultural couples who meet through the internet have to face: the problem that they have never dated or met physically before.

This is different from arranged marriages in cultures like India or the Muslim countries, where the couple has not met before marriage either, but these couples at least has the same cultural background or speaks the same language. However, what happens when something important has to be discussed and the couple simply cannot communicate, not linguistically, not culturally?

These intercultural couples who meet through the internet face the problem that they really do not know if the person who they are going to live with has any kind of addiction, criminal record, a physical or mental illness, how they face crisis moments, or the degree of tolerance or responsibility in difficult situations. "A study by Chin (1994) suggested that intercultural couples may be at greater risk for domestic violence than their same-culture peers".<sup>7</sup> To jump into an intercultural marriage by meeting the person through the internet is to jump from an airplane without checking if the parachute is working or not.

## **1.2 Significance of the study**

Individual and societal consequences come from this human mobility provoked by internet relationships. These types of couples have become a common phenomenon in which institutions and persons of many different nationalities are involved, and it is the role of the receiving society to deal with all the resultant problems of these unions. For this reason, it is important that we learn more about it.

Migrants are newcomers, who are often regarded as the classic "other" who does not belong. Such constructions of the "other" may be based on legal grounds, physical appearance or race, (perceived) cultural and religious differences, class characteristics, or on any combination of these elements. Such constructions have been used politically, e.g., by the anti-immigrant movement, and express themselves in discriminatory practices, deteriorating inter-ethnic relations, and weakening of social cohesion in communities, cities, and states.<sup>8</sup>

Why choose to focus on women who live an intercultural marriage where the meeting point was the internet, and not other kinds of immigrant women? Because, different from women in other migration circumstances, these internet-migrating women do not have jobs, unlike like labour migrant women, so they became economically dependent.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Penninx, *op. cit.*, p.5.

Refugee women usually do not choose the country they go to, and they are mainly coming with other family members, and besides that, they get help from the state. The women in this study choose, or at least they are aware of, the country where they will go, but usually they move alone, or with small children; usually they do not get state support. Finally, as I mentioned before, they have not lived with or met the husband before.

In this context, I decided to study the process and consequences of marital and cultural assimilation of women involved in intercultural couples who met by internet. Generally, the situation for immigrants in intermarriages is complicated – they have to adapt to the norms and standards of the receiving society (linguistic, labour market, and social-civic); and at the same time to the husband or wife.<sup>9</sup>

In the study, we will focus on immigrant women, even though we know that it is critically important that the two actors in the assimilation process, immigrants and the receiving society, become connected by sound integration policy. That is why we will also mention the migration policies in Sweden and the criteria of the Migration Department for acceptance of these relationships, in order to protect the state from possible abuses and fraud of the welfare system, or to protect the new citizens from abuse.

The arriving citizens have integration needs and the receiving societies *have* to find places for them in all the spheres (legal rights, education, employment, criminal justice, health, living conditions, civic participation, etc.); besides that, they will assist them in the case of domestic violence, language needs, etc. Nowadays, for instance, Statistics Sweden Bureau reported that in the year 2002, 50.821 people arrived in Sweden, the majority of whom are coming under family reunification policies from countries like Denmark, Germany, Thailand, Russia or United States.<sup>10</sup>

This study will seek to better explain the profiles and assimilation stages of women who get involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting. The information gathered in this study will be significant for social and governmental institutions because it can be used as a resource for those who are interested, work or are involved in the subject.

It can be also helpful for those institutions that are developing integration programs geared towards the members of intercultural couples.

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<sup>9</sup> Donovan, op. cit., p.6

<sup>10</sup> *Swedish Statistic Bureau* (Statistiska Centralbyrån). [www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se).

We can also point out that there is a lot of research about intercultural couples, immigration and integration problems, but little literature about the process of emotions or love online (on the internet). There is a big gap in the research about intercultural couples meeting through the internet, especially that which is focused on the women coming to the new country (Sweden) and the problems of marital and societal assimilation (meaning their placement into the new relationship and into the new society at the same time by using a third language).

### **1.3 Research questions**

Thus, focusing mainly on Milton Gordon's assimilation perspective theory, which will be explained in chapter 2, and supporting it with other assimilation theories, this paper asks the following research questions:

1. Which are the stages of assimilation experienced by immigrating women involved in intercultural couples that met by the internet? How do these stages compare with what the literature states?
2. What are the resources used by these woman to integrate themselves into Swedish society? Is the husband an important resource used by these women to integrate themselves into Swedish society?
3. Do these women fully integrate (culturally, socially and labour-wise) into Swedish society after at least 3 years of living in Sweden? How this is affecting their marriages?

## Chapter II: Theoretical Part

Across time, relationships between peoples, cultures and countries have been documented. There are many ways that people relate to each other, and the most common one is through marriage.

Almost everyone has heard the sentence that proclaims *the family as the base of the society*, and in most of the societies in the world, the marriage is the knot that joins ones with others. The "marriage is traditionally conceived to be a legally recognized relationship, between an adult male and female, that carries certain rights and obligations."<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in this paper, when we talk about intercultural marriages, we refer to the agreement between two people of different cultures to live together. Intercultural marriage "has been defined as those in which the partners come from two separate cultures (countries of origin), which may or may not include interracial (from two different separate racial groups) relationships."<sup>12</sup>

Intercultural marriages in the past have been a resource used by societies to assure peace or to join kingdoms and power. Nowadays the migratory processes' relating to intercultural marriages does not have such deep and significant roots for entire peoples, but for the people who participate in them.

In the last century, intercultural marriages were mainly a product of labour/economic or social/political migration. People were moving from their native locations to new places that could bring them the possibility to improve their living conditions, or social security, as well as individuals trying to escape from political regimes.

We can mention, for instance, European Jewish people moving to America because of Nazism, Spanish people moving to Latin-American because of Franco's regime, Chilean people migrating to Europe because of the Pinochet dictatorial regime or Bolivian and Peruvian people escaping from guerrillas. We could also mention the labour migration of

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<sup>11</sup> Scott, John and Gordon Marshall. *A Dictionary of Sociology*. Oxford University Press 2005. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. University Dalarna. 15 March, 2007. <http://www.oxfordreference.com>

<sup>12</sup> Donovan, *op. cit.*, p.11.

Europeans and Latin-Americans to the USA or Africans and Asians migrating to Europe, all of them with the aim of "improving living conditions and job opportunities"<sup>13</sup>.

In any of these ways, the dynamics of intercultural marriages were almost the same: first, people came to the country, they tried to adapt themselves to the new lifestyle of the host society, and during the adjustment process they could meet a native from this new place and establish a relationship that could end in marriage.

Nowadays intercultural marriages are common phenomenon, which still follows that pattern, but thanks to new technologies in communication, the world has become a handkerchief, and now, for people from different cultures to meet and have a relationship it is not necessary that they be located in the same place.

Thanks to the internet, socialization dynamics have been changing in the last 15 years. The internet has started a revolution in the way that people make social relations. People from around the world are meeting everyday over the net, making friends, falling in love and furthermore, following this *dream of love* across the world, moving to new places where they never even imagined going. They are moving into very new environments, with people that they hardly know.

## **2.1 Internet: The Global Village**

The Internet is a tool created in 1969 by the department of Defence of the United States, called originally DAPARNET (Defence Advanced Research Project Network), and its aim was the research and development of communication protocols. This project was limited to commercial use for many years and it was only at the beginning of the 80's that it opened to particular companies and educational institutions.<sup>14</sup> Since then the development and popularity of this tool has become impressive.

According to Internet World Stats, in the beginning of the year 2007 around 1 173 109 925 people were connected to the net. All of them are hanging out, having fun, working, making business, studying, researching, making new friends or keeping in touch with the old ones, in this new place called cyberspace.

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<sup>13</sup> Neumayer, Eric. *Bogus Refugees? The Determinants of Asylum Migration to Western Europe*. International Studies Quarterly. 2005. 49 (3), p. 389.

<sup>14</sup> Acata, Elena. *Internet and Mass Media*. National University of Mexico. UNAM. 1998, p.14

### 2.1.1 Cyberspace

Cyberspace "is a psychological and social domain. It is not tangible and some of its dimensions, such as distance, and location are not measured by physical parameters, but by psychological content,"<sup>15</sup> furthermore, cyberspace "is a place where real people have actual interactions with other real people, while being able to shape, or even create, their own and other people's personalities".<sup>16</sup>

Cyberspace, therefore, has become the new town square in the global village. More importantly, because cyberspace is everywhere, citizenship is also universal, independent of time, place or accident of birth. As Jeremy Rifkin has argued, the new media technologies are not about products but about relationships; they build relationships between individuals, groups and nations at lightning speeds, and each new generation of equipment only tightens those bonds.<sup>17</sup>

By using a common language, people from different countries can communicate easily with each other, and share interests and points of view.

### 2.1.2 Cyberlove

Thousand of people meet everyday in cyberspace. Some of them come along by coincidence, other ones visit special homepages (*match sites*) where they can make friends and possibly, find that special one with whom they can share their lives.

By Internet, perhaps, we interact with more people than we do in the real life. With these new instruments for communicating computer to computer, known as chatting devices, like Messengers, ICQ's or Skype, just to mention some, we can talk with many people at one time, and because most of them are located physically and spatially distant from one another, this gives us the possibility to do what we cannot do in non-online-life. We are connected with more people, but at the same time, everyday we are lonelier.

The interactive revolution in online... relationships has promoted both greater social interaction and more solitary activities. In comparison with standard fantasies, online relationships involve more social activities with other people. However, in comparison with offline relationships, many... activities are performed while someone is all alone sitting in front of a computer.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ben-Ze'Ev, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Perry, Mark. *The New Minutemen: Civil Society, the Military and the Evolution Culture in the Age of Cyberspace*. Lebanese American University. 2004.

<sup>18</sup> Ben-Ze'Ev, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Moreover, possibly, to have new friends in the other side of the world can sound exiting, but what happens when these two friends are in continuous communication and with every chat, they discover that there are similarities between them?

Commonly, people tend to marry "endogamously within their age cohort, race, religion, social class, educational level, ethnicity, and geographical area (i.e., the propinquity argument). In addition to social attributes, it has also been suggested that people tend to marry those with whom they share individual characteristics such as height, weight, tastes, and psychological traits".<sup>19</sup>

Most couples marry within their own religious preference, race, and ethnicity, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status. According to the 2000 Census, only two percent of marriages are the result of exogamous marriages, that is, individuals who have married a person of another race or ethnicity,<sup>20</sup> but with this new communication device, we can expect that this amount of exogamous marriages increase.

However, now with the internet, not only has crossed the territorial or cultural boundaries, has also passed the social, linguistic, and religious borders. Two people who never could be in touch before they get along just because of sharing common interests. Moreover, the impression of having common characteristics, ideas, tastes or points of view, can wake up the fantasy of the cyber-relation participants, and make them imagine that the person who is in the other side of the screen can be the person with whom they could share their lives. In cyber-relationships "people fall in love with individuals who are almost strangers to them and about whom they know only what they glean from the written word"<sup>21</sup>, because, "on line communication is based on writing skills and verbal communication"<sup>22</sup>, and not other factors, like physical appearance, for instance.

When these two people start to develop feelings for each other that go over the friendship boundaries, we can start to talk about *love* that may or may not include physical/sexual attraction. This type of relation is called Cyberlove. Thus, we can say that Cyberlove is "a romantic relationship consisting mainly of computer-mediated communication. Despite the fact that the partner is physically remote and is to a certain extent anonymous, in one important aspect this relationship is similar to an offline

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<sup>19</sup> Bankston III, Carl L. & Jacques Henry. *Endogamy among Louisiana Cajuns: A Social Class Explanation*. University of Southwestern Louisiana. Social Forces, Vol. 77,1999.

<sup>20</sup> Chiung-fang Chang & Carol S. Walther. *Assimilation or Upward Mobility? The Intermarriage Patterns among Asian Immigrants*. Texas A&M University. 2003, p.19.

<sup>21</sup> Ben-Ze'Ev, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

relationship –the emotion of love is experienced as fully and intensely as in an offline relationship”.<sup>23</sup>

However, this process is not that easy as it sounds, when two people from two different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, located in different countries, meet through internet and decide to take their *love-relationship* to a *real* level outside the screens, societies and governments get involved.

When they decide to give reality a try by moving in together, there are two possibilities: one of them moves to the location of the other, or both of them move to a new neutral place. In this case, we will be studying the first possibility, particularly when a female is moving to a male partner’s country (Sweden).

### **2.1.3 The cultural stuff**

Thus, we understand that with this resolution a complicated process begins and, most of the time, the person who makes the move (in this case, the female) is not aware of that. Because, beyond the bureaucratic requirements of governments to accept the migration, other factors come into play. Arriving in a new country is not a piece of cake, this can cause crashes between the parts when the *cultural stuff* is so different, and this, unfortunately, can lead to the end of the fairy tale dream.

Barth, in the Introduction of *Ethnic groups and Boundaries*<sup>24</sup> defines the *cultural stuff* as the language, religion, customs and laws, tradition, material culture, and cuisine. Thus, we can cite language barriers, if the partners do not have the same mother tongue; cultural differences in values or political issues; sex role expectations; understanding of legal issues; all of these can lead to serious misunderstandings. We also have the instability that can result in the abandonment of family and friends; economic adjustments for both members of the couple, religious conflicts that are not discussed before deciding to marry or disagreements about the children’s education.

Consequently, we see that couples who meet through the Internet have to survive the cultural and marital adjustment processes at the same time.

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<sup>23</sup> Ben-Ze’Ev, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Barth, Frederik. *Ethnic Groups and Boundries*. Waveland Pr. Inc. 1998, p.15



## **2.2 The actors**

### **2.2.1 The newcomer**

The phenomenon that corresponds to the displacement of a person from a place of origin to another of destiny is called "migration". The reasons for this human mobilization are very diverse. It can be for natural reasons like catastrophes, climate, etc.; it can be for social reasons such as wars or political, religious or ethnic persecution; love or family reunification, as well as economic reasons, where the aim is to improve the standard of living or income.

As a result, we understand that the person performing this process is frequently called a newcomer or immigrant. The immigrants "often differ culturally and sometimes in... behaviour from persons born and raised in the country"<sup>25</sup>.

As described above, the subject of our study is the assimilation process of women who marry Swedish men and decide to change their place of residence to Sweden. We have to point out that there are other kinds of immigrants, like labour/economic or social/political immigrants (refugees) whose migratory conditions are radically different from the subjects of our study.

Consequently, our newcomer or immigrant will be the females who move voluntarily with the aim of establishing residence in a new society: Sweden. The profiles of the women in our study will be presented in the empirical part as result of the Demographic Questionnaire conducted in the interviews<sup>26</sup>. The profiles of the males married to the women in our study will be also pointed out in the empirical part.

### **2.2.2 Host Society**

Sweden is the third largest country in Western Europe and, the largest one of the Nordic countries by size and population, with a territory of 450,000 km<sup>2</sup>. According to the Statistical Yearbook of Sweden published in 2004, the total population was 8 940 788 citizens, but in the year 2007, the official web site of Sweden<sup>27</sup> indicates an actual population of 9 million inhabitants.

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<sup>25</sup> *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. Eleventh edition revised . Ed. Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson. Oxford University Press, 2006. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. University Dalarna. 23 October 2007  
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t23.e27784>

<sup>26</sup> [Note: See Appendix A]

<sup>27</sup> *Official web site of Sweden*: <http://www.sweden.se>

The official language is Swedish, but there are recognized minority languages like Sami (Lapp), Finnish, Meänkieli (Tornedalen Finnish), Yiddish, Romani Chib (a Gypsy language). Eighty percent of the population belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden. The life expectancy of the inhabitants is 79 years for men and 83 years for women.

Sweden, its institutions and the native group of Swedish people – who generally share a common culture and a “combination of three levels of relationships (economic, ideological, and political), which can have varying connections with each other... [By social systems and institutions] which may or may not be limited by national boundaries”<sup>28</sup> – will be considered the “host society” in this paper.

By culture, we mean “all that in human society which is socially rather than biologically transmitted, whereas the commonsense usage tends to point only to the arts. Culture is thus a general term for the symbolic and learned aspects of human society [surviving knowledge, traditions, language, belief, moral, customs, and law]... In cultural anthropology, analysis of culture may proceed at three levels: learned patterns of behaviour; aspects of culture that act below conscious levels (such as the deep level of grammar and syntax in language, of which a native language speaker is seldom aware); and patterns of thought and perception, which are also culturally determined.”<sup>29</sup>

We should mention one important actor which is the government. It represents the administrative institutions of the host society<sup>30</sup> by making laws and regulating the citizens’ respect for them; it issues permits, influences or regulates the environment, polices and provides services. As mentioned in the introduction, arriving citizens have integration needs, and the receiving societies, through their governments, have to find places for them in all the spheres of life (legal rights, education, employment, criminal justice, health, living conditions, civic participation, etc.). Furthermore, through governmental institutions immigrants will be assisted in the case of domestic violence, language needs, etc.

According to the Dictionary of the Social Sciences, government “is the agency that exercises political direction or control over a group of people—usually the state

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<sup>28</sup> Scott, *op. cit.*, on line reference from: 15 March 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> [Note: Swedish Statistic Bureau (Statistiska Centralbyrån); Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket); Integration Board (Integrationsverket); Labour office (Arbetsförmedlingen); etc.]

considered as a set of institutions. In other contexts, the term designates the political party currently in power, as distinct from the state as an enduring whole<sup>31</sup>.

## 2.3 Assimilation

Sociologists have identified a few major theories on how newly arrived immigrants integrate themselves into the receiving society. Over time, all new immigrants adopt some aspects of the receiving culture. Some of them have defined this process as "integration" and others use the term "assimilation".

Assimilation is a practice "also known as acculturation or integration, this is the integration of an immigrant, outsider, or subordinate group into the dominant, host community. Initially the migrant group is segregated from the host culture but then there is often a blurring of cultural lines, and the concept of assimilation does imply that the minority group eventually takes on the values of the host or charter group."<sup>32</sup>

A more radical definition of assimilation says that this is "the process by which an outsider, immigrant, or subordinate group becomes indistinguishably integrated into the dominant host society... Assimilation implied that the subordinate group actually came to accept and internalize the values and culture of the dominant group"<sup>33</sup>

Thus, according to the second definition, the immigrant will have to change her/his religion, customs, behaviour, and all its "cultural stuff" to be accepted by the receiving or host society and pass as one of its members. If we talk about an immigrant who comes from a different racial group than the dominant one in the host society, the assimilation may never be complete. The people may be able to adopt the comportment and achieve language skills, but they will never be able to change their skin colour, the shape of their facial features, or any other physical quality in order to look like the dominant group.

Subsequently we can talk about different categories of assimilation. There is a "distinction between behavioural assimilation (otherwise known as "acculturation") and structural or socioeconomic assimilation"<sup>34</sup>:

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<sup>31</sup> Calhoun, Craig. *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*. Oxford University Press 2002. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. University Dalarna. 4 October 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Mayhew, Susan. *A Dictionary of Geography*. Oxford University Press, 2004. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. University Dalarna. 17 September 2007

<sup>33</sup> Scott, op. cit., on line reference from: 15 March, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Le, C.N. 2007. "Assimilation & Ethnic Identity" *Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America*. October 4, 2007. <<http://www.asian-nation.org/assimilation.shtml>>

a) Behavioural assimilation is the absorption of the incoming group into the host community, as the newcomers absorb the culture and history of the character group.

Behavioural assimilation/acculturation occurs when a newcomer absorbs the cultural norms, values, beliefs, and behaviour patterns of the "host" society. This may also involve learning [the language]... and/or becoming a... citizen. Within this process, [immigrants] may choose to retain much of their traditional... culture, norms, and behaviours while still acquiring those of mainstream [of the host] society, or to discard his/her traditional forms of [traditional] culture entirely in favour of complete immersion and identification with mainstream [of the host] society.<sup>35</sup>

b) Structural or socioeconomic assimilation that is concerned with the way incomers are distributed throughout society, in occupational and social groupings.<sup>36</sup> Structural assimilation is social contact and interaction between the natives and the new comers.

[This type] of assimilation, refers to when [immigrants] enter and become integrated into the formal social, political, economic, and cultural institutions of the host country -- i.e., when they begin to participate as full members of ... [host] society. Alternatively, it can also refer to when they attain socioeconomic mobility and status (usually in the form of income, occupation, residential integration, etc.) equal to other members of mainstream [of the host] society.<sup>37</sup>

A more dispassionate perspective, developed by the sociologists Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess claims that "assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life."<sup>38</sup>

### **2.3.1 Why assimilation and not integration?**

As a general definition for integration, or social integration, we use "the process whereby a minority group, particularly an ethnic minority, adapts to the host society and where it is accorded equal rights with the rest of the community. Assimilation is integration such that the immigrants' culture is lost".<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Scott, *op. cit.*, on line reference from: 15 March, 2007

<sup>37</sup> Le, *op. cit.*, on line reference from: October 4, 2007

<sup>38</sup> Gordon, Milton M. *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins*. Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1964, p 62.

<sup>39</sup> Mayhew, *op. cit.*, on line reference from: 17 September 2007.

Other author states that "the concept of integration is an attempt to avoid the implications of the complete similarity with the host society's behavioural and cultural patterns; such a pattern is often associated with the concept of assimilation".<sup>40</sup>

The difference between assimilation and integration, then, is that assimilation consists of the elimination of all differences in cultural behaviour standards.

Comparing sociological approaches to the complex process of the incorporation of immigrants into the host society, we find definitional insufficiencies. Some phenomena are defined in terms of the more established concepts in migration sociology, such as integration and assimilation, but there is also a battery of terms used in a quite synonymous fashion which refers to similar phenomena such as "adaptation", "absorption", "accommodation", "acculturation", etc. As a sociological concept, integration appears to be a broad category that includes a variety of expressions and elements.

Integration is achieved when migrants become a working part of their adopted society, take on many of its attitudes and behaviour patterns, and participate freely in its activities, but at the same time remain a measure of their original culture identity and ethnicity. // Assimilation passes beyond this point and takes place when the migrants have merged themselves so fully with the inhabitants, have adopted new folkways, new culture and they are indistinguishable from the natives and have attained a social incivility.<sup>41</sup>

About this, we can conclude that integration and assimilation are, by general consensus, two terms that point at the process related to the adjustment of immigrants to the established social system in the host society the immigrant wants to enter and be accepted in.

Hence, in our perspective, the immigration process performed by women who move to Sweden will be called assimilation rather than integration.

As seen in the definitions mentioned above, the integration process mainly refers to a point when the immigrants integrate a part of their culture into the host society, which does not apply to our case.

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<sup>40</sup> Diaz, José Alberto. *Choosing Integration. A theoretical and Empirical Study of the Immigrant Integration in Sweden*. Uppsala University. 1993. p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12, 16

About integration cases, we can mention Latin American people in the United States, where the influence of this group on the culture of the host society is clearly perceived.<sup>42</sup> In this case, the massive migration of people to a country may be able to affect the host society's "cultural stuff".

However, in the case of particular individuals who move to a new country, which is the object of our study, it could be very difficult for the host society to be influenced by cultural patterns of the newcomers, and this is not what we are researching. Our study looks at how immigrants assimilate the new culture, and not the opposite. We are talking about single people who have decided to move to Sweden and try to assimilate to Swedish culture, to become a part of it.

Even if the assimilation concept can sound radical, as in the second definition, the truth is that if a person has decided to move to a new country, which will be their new home country, they will have to accept the established societal ideals and try to adopt them in order to become a part of society. They have freely decided to move to Sweden, marry one of the native residents, and, in consequence, modify their learned cultural patterns to the ones that dominate the new country of residence.

As social contact initiates interaction, assimilation is its final perfect product. The nature of the social contacts is decisive in the process. Assimilation naturally takes place most rapidly where contacts are primary, that is, where they are the most intimate and intense, as in the area of touch relationship, in the family circle and in intimate congenial groups. Secondary contacts facilitate accommodations, but do not greatly promote assimilation. The contacts here are external and too remote.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, when we refer to integration we just will be describing the qualities, resources and dispositions of the actors, but assimilation refers to the social process that brings immigrants into the host society.

### **2.3.2 Assimilation and intercultural marriage**

In this perspective, many authors and social scientists refer to intercultural marriage as one of the important stages for assimilation to succeed. They mention that

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<sup>42</sup> Davis, Mike. *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the Us City*. Verso 2000. U.S.A., p.17

<sup>43</sup> Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

"intermarriage is sometimes regarded as the final stage of assimilation among immigrant racial and ethnic minorities."<sup>44</sup>

An individual is assimilated when he is capable of entering the labour market, social positions and political, economic, and educational areas of the host society. If he cannot do these things, "he may simply remain acculturated, because even if he has learned the language, habits, and values of the standard or dominant culture",<sup>45</sup> and he has no use for these new items.

Milton Gordon (1964) formulated a series of assimilation stages through which an individual must pass in order to be completely assimilated.

These three stages are behavioural assimilation (acculturation), structural assimilation (social assimilation), and marital assimilation of the individuals of the minority society and individuals of the dominant society. Although this proposal has been criticized, it does indicate that there is a continuum through which individuals pass, beginning with acculturation and ending with complete assimilation.<sup>46</sup>

Although he listed acculturation as the first stage in the series, not all individuals get past this stage. It is not always possible to adopt the dominant culture's way of life completely, in order to assimilate.

Gordon's assimilation perspective suggests that marital assimilation is the final stage of assimilation. Focusing on European immigrants, Gordon argued that cultural assimilation included language acquisition and citizenship status. Furthermore becoming part of the host societies institutions, such as schools and the military are all indicators of structural assimilation. Once cultural and structural assimilation has occurred, marital assimilation, Gordon suggests, follows directly.<sup>47</sup>

Milton Gordon considers intercultural marriage an important mechanism of assimilation and he affirms that marital assimilation is a stage that assures the entering of the immigrant into the host society. "After stages of cultural assimilation resulting in the acquisition of the language, norms, and values of the host culture by immigrants,

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<sup>44</sup> Qian, Zhenchao & Daniel T. Lichter. *Measuring Marital Assimilation: Intermarriage among Natives and Immigrants*. Department of Sociology, Arizona State University and Department of Sociology, The Ohio State University. 2001, p. 291.

<sup>45</sup> Gordon, *op. cit.*, p.64.

<sup>46</sup> King, Gail & Meghan Wright. *Diffusionism and Acculturation. Anthropological Theories*. Department of Anthropology College of Arts and Sciences The University of Alabama. October 3, 2007. <http://www.as.ua.edu/ant/Faculty/murphy/diffusion.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> Chiung-fang Chang, *op. cit.*, p.19

intermarriage completes the structural assimilation of immigrants by allowing their entrance into the primary groups and institutions of the host society."<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, Gordon points out that "assimilation has not taken place, it is asserted, until the immigrant is able to function in the host community without encountering prejudiced attitudes or discriminatory behaviour,"<sup>49</sup> thus, intercultural marriage will be a central stage. It will mean that the newcomer can feel that he/she been fully accepted by natives, because the cultural and racial boundaries were crossed: "intermarriage, naturally promotes assimilation or the cross-fertilization of social heritages."<sup>50</sup>

## **2.4 The Assimilation Theory: Milton Gordon**

The theory and the stages of assimilation developed by Milton Gordon is a classic theory frequently recounted by the social scientists that devote themselves to the study of migratory processes and the adjustment of new individuals to the host societies.

In his premise, Gordon refers to the term assimilation as "the fusion of cultural heritages",<sup>51</sup> but in the case of intercultural marriage or intermarriage as he names it, he points out other term: amalgamation, "which denotes the biological mixture of originally distinct racial strains."<sup>52</sup> This second term will be excluded from our research since we are studying the assimilation process of women who are already married to natives and probably have passed the amalgamation stage by having children with them.

Consequently, we will be concentrating on the assimilation process, which will be the means and the resources that these women use to became a part of Swedish society.

In this regard, it is important to know Milton Gordon's assimilation concept, in an attempt to understand better his assimilation stages.

By "assimilation", Gordon means "the process whereby groups with different cultures come to have a common culture. This means, of course, not merely such items of the culture as dress, knives and forks, language, food, sports, and automobiles, which are relatively easy to appreciate and acquire, but also those less tangible items such as values, memories, sentiments, ideas, and attitudes".<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Bankston III, *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*



The assimilation process is divided into seven dimensions:

1. Cultural patterns (language, religion, food, values, beliefs etc.)
2. Structural (Large scale social interactions and structure among groups in institutions)
3. Marital (Large-scale intermarriage)
4. Identificational (Development of sense of peoplehood or ethnicity based exclusively on host society)
5. Attitude receptional (absence of prejudice – reach the point where they encounter no discriminatory behaviour)
6. Behavioural receptional (absence of discrimination – reach the point where they encounter no prejudiced attitudes)
7. Civic assimilation (absence of value and power conflict) <sup>54</sup>

These seven dimensions of assimilation do not correspond only to the stages that an immigrant has to fulfil to join the society. As we have mentioned before, there are two main actors in the process of assimilation: the newcomer (immigrant) and the host society, thus, the first three stages correspond to the newcomer, and the last four to the host society.

From this, we can say that “the seven variables of the assimilation process which we have isolated can be measured against the... ‘adaptation to the core society and culture’ goal.”<sup>55</sup>

## **2.5 Other important theories related to the assimilation process**

### **2.5.1 Identity theory**

The debate about identity in the sociological sense defines this concept as the human capacity which enables individuals to reflect on their nature and the social world through communication and language. Identification, here, is a process of naming, of placing ourselves in socially constructed categories, with language holding a central position in this process. <sup>56</sup>

According to identity theory, migration will most likely cause the newcomer to experiment with some changes in his original identity, because he has to behave in certain ways in the hope of fulfilling the host society’s requirements.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>56</sup> Scott, *op. cit.*, on line reference from: 15 March, 2007

Thus, identity theory, in both its major variants, has at its core three elements:

- 1) Personal quantitative characteristics, in the form of role-related skills, competence, performance, as well as other ordinal and cardinal characteristics such as honesty and wealth;
- 2) Personal qualitative characteristics, such as membership in groups or networks within which identity processes occur; and,
- 3) Primordial outcomes, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-verification, self-worth, and status.<sup>57</sup>

We can also talk about the two dimensions of identity: temporal and comparative: "I am not the same as I was then and - I am identical to my self - I am dependent upon comparisons with others for my own self-image"<sup>58</sup>. To these two dimensions, we can add the *location* one. Thus, we refer that, the person that we are now and here in respect to the others, even if it is still me, it is not same person that I was before and there, respect with other different group of people. In consequence the notion of identity is "ambiguous [because] refers simultaneously to uniqueness and sameness"<sup>59</sup>.

### **2.5.2 Language and stigma**

A very important factor that can affect the assimilation or adjustment process of immigrants is language and accent. These two issues can determine the incorporation of the new comer into the social, educational and/or labour environment and can determine its success.

The acquisition of the host society's language is an important key for the first step into the first integration stage formulated by Milton Gordon referred to above. Ferdinand de Saussure emphasized that language has been used to argue that all social and cultural meanings are produced within language or systems of representation more generally. "Language is necessarily social... it is an abstract thing and requires the human being for

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<sup>57</sup> Asghar Moghaddas, Ali; Amir Mohammad Amiri & Ali Rahimi. *The process of Adjustment/Acculturation of the first and second generation of migrants: The case of nomad Qashqaei Turks immigrants in Shiraz-Iran*. Department of Sociology, Population and Development, College of Social sciences, Shiraz University, Iran. EPS (European Population conference) Liverpool, UK. 2006, p.5.

<sup>58</sup> Petterson, Lars. *The construction of the Swedish "we"*. Dalarna, University. 2001, p. 145.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

its realisation".<sup>60</sup> In other words he means that the world around us, and our place in it, is given meaning—made meaningful—within representation. In an important sense, therefore, whom we are—our sense of identity—is shaped by the meanings attached to particular attributes, capacities, and forms of conduct.<sup>61</sup>

When immigrants have poor knowledge of the local language, they can be easily stigmatized.

Therefore, stigma theory becomes important. This theory, in a social sense, states that the "visible stigmas such as race, certain physical handicaps, accents, or severe malnourishment due to poverty cannot be hidden easily from others. Thus, for people with visible attributes, the stigma can provide the primary schema from which others make assumptions about the person."<sup>62</sup>

The characteristics that make immigrants different of the natives which are easily recognizable, such as physical differences or accents and language problems may influence the natives' first impressions, thoughts, feelings, and conduct towards the newcomers and awaken prejudices and erroneous judgements.

When the immigrants are aware of the social stigma or the "stereotype threat", according to Steele & Aronson (1995), their social performance will be affected by a reticent, introverted and passive attitude, which will delay and make more difficult their assimilation process, "widening the [immigrants-natives] gap"<sup>63</sup>.

Gordon recognized that racial taboos might inhibit intermarriage across racial lines.<sup>64</sup>

### **2.5.3 Orientation toward destination and length of stay**

Two other factors are important to mention and are crucial for the assimilation process. The first one is "orientation toward destination".

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<sup>60</sup> Saussure, Ferdinand. *Third Course of Lectures on General Linguistics (1910-1911)*. Pergamon Press, 1993. April 25, 2007.

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/saussure.htm>

<sup>61</sup> Scott, *op. cit.*, on line reference from: 15 March, 2007

<sup>62</sup> Asghar *op. cit.*, p.6.

<sup>63</sup> Steele, C.M. & Aronson, J. (1995). *Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69, pp. 797-811

<sup>64</sup> Bankston III, *op. cit.*

If assimilation is the goal, as soon as the newcomer arrives in the host society they should decide what they are going to do and which kind of relations they want to have. Consequently, there is a relationship between the orientation toward host culture and cultural adjustment. To decide which way are we going, we need first to know where our destination is.

The second factor is the length of stay in the host society. The more time the immigrant stays, the more he/she "increases interaction with the host people. As a result, migrants learn more, feel well-being, obtain more basic survival skills, get more used to local climate, make more friends, accept local lifestyle and food, etc."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Asghar, *op. cit.*, p.6.

# Chapter III: Methodological Part

## 3.1 Design

This study is designed to gather a basic understanding of the assimilation stages and the resources used by women who get involved in relationships based on internet meeting in their aim to become a part of Swedish society.

The research consists of the compilation of information about the area under discussion, based on library research (books, articles and/or documents specialized in the matter) and internet research.

The main problem that we face in library research is the unavailability of texts in English (we are studying the subject in Sweden and the majority of the literature is generated in the United States and the United Kingdom). It is important to point out that most of the governmental information generated by the Sweden institutions has an English version.

With regard to the internet we will try to base our research on official and scholarly documents published on the internet, but there are two risks: the first is that sometimes it is difficult to validate the origin of the document, and the second is that internet sites might become temporarily or permanently unavailable.

The paper will be a qualitative study, rather than quantitative which usually "focus attention on measurements and amounts (more and less, larger and smaller, often and seldom, similar and different) of the characteristics displayed by the people and events that the researcher studies"<sup>66</sup>.

There is no universal definition of qualitative research. In the literature of social science and applied professional fields, such terms as interpretive, naturalistic, constructivist, ethnographic, and fieldwork are variously employed to designate the broad collection of approaches that we call simply qualitative research.

Qualitative research methods were developed in the social sciences to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena. It is data that is usually not in the form of numbers.

Qualitative research is an inductive approach, and its goal is to gain a deeper understanding of a person's or group's experience. According to Ross (1999),

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<sup>66</sup> Thomas, R. Murray. *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodising Thesis and Dissertations*. Corwin Press. United States 2003, p.1

qualitative approaches to research are based on a "world view" which is holistic and has the following beliefs:

1. There is not a single reality.
2. Reality based upon perceptions that are different for each person and change over time.
3. What we know has meaning only within a given situation of context.<sup>67</sup>

Consequently, we can say that qualitative research is a type of scientific study that:

- seeks answers to a question
- systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question
- collects evidence
- produces findings that were not determined in advance
- produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study<sup>68</sup>

Qualitative research seeks to understand a "given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations."<sup>69</sup>

A suggested general definition of qualitative research is "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification"<sup>70</sup>. Where quantitative researchers seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations. Qualitative analysis results in a different type of knowledge than does quantitative inquiry.<sup>71</sup>

Qualitative research has alternative research methods and data collection methods. Examples of qualitative research methods are action research, case study, grounded theory, historical methods, and ethnography. Ethnography is the study of cultures in their natural settings (York, 1998)... A major focus is on the observation of similarities and differences in social behaviour across social situations (York, 1998).

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<sup>67</sup> Hunt, Cynthia A. *Qualitative and Quantitative Concepts in Proposal Writing: Similarities, Differences, and Controversy*. University of North Dakota, pp,26-30.

<sup>68</sup> *Qualitative Research Methods Overview*. Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide. Internet search: September 25, 2007.  
<http://www.fhi.org/NR/rdonlyres/etl7vogszehu5s4stpzb3tyqlpp7rojuv4waq37elpbyei3tgmc4ty6dunbccfzxtaj2rvbaubz4f/overview1.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Strauss, Anselm & Corbin, Juliet. *Basics of qualitative research. grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, California. Sage. 1990, p.17

<sup>71</sup> Hoepfl, Marie C. *Choosing Qualitative Research: A Primer for Technology Education Researchers*. Journal of Technology Education. Volume 9, Number 1.

Scientists have some criticisms of qualitative research. Gibbs (1991) believes that "the untrained observer or the practitioner whose day to day involvement in intervention hinders objective analysis may base conclusions on vivid recollection of unrepresentative events, may misinterpret what really happened and may care so deeply about clients that judgement is clouded." He assumes that social work practitioners are unable to think like a researcher and unable to realize their own biases. He seems to conclude that a practitioner is too subjective to evaluate their interventions.<sup>72</sup>

We will be using statistical information, but although this resource will be an important instrument for reaching the goal, it will not represent the principal source of information. Rather, this study will be based primarily on the analysis of interviews, observations, ethnographies and the analysis of previous studies on the matter.

Statistical data about immigration, labour market and integration programs will be obtained from the official statistical data published by the Swedish Statistic Bureau (Statistiska Centralbyrån)<sup>73</sup> and from the Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket)<sup>74</sup>. There are no registers from the official Integration Board (Integrationsverket)<sup>75</sup>, as this institution closed operations on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007, and even before that, it did not publish usable information about integration plans.

The problem with the needed official statistical is that it is not available or does not exist.

An interview with staff of the Swedish Embassy in México<sup>76</sup> will be also performed with a focus on immigration policies and criteria for validating the trueness of the relationships based in internet meeting.

The ethnographic study included in this paper consists of ten face-to-face interviews, having as informants the members of a given community. The compiled information consists of the dense and detailed description of respondents' attitudes obtained by means of long billiard interviews.

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<sup>72</sup> Hunt, *op. cit.*, p. 29

<sup>73</sup> *Statistics Sweden*: [http://www.scb.se/default\\_\\_\\_\\_2154.asp](http://www.scb.se/default____2154.asp)

<sup>74</sup> *Swedish Migration Board*: <http://www.migrationsverket.se/english.html>

<sup>75</sup> *Integration official board*: <http://www.integrationsverket.se/>

<sup>76</sup> *Swedish Embassy in México*: [http://www.swedenabroad.com/Start\\_\\_\\_\\_23595.aspx](http://www.swedenabroad.com/Start____23595.aspx)

### 3.1.1 The comparative Method

In the part where we will examine the migratory and integration policies of Sweden, we will present a broad comparison of the Swedish requirements and procedures, in the context of contemporary migration.

To realize the comparative analysis about Swedish policies, we have chosen Denmark, since both countries are social, cultural (Protestantism as a religion which actually do not play an important role for the inhabitants); political (Social-Democratic Welfare States); linguistically and territorially similar (natural resources, climate and the location- North part of Europe). Likewise, Denmark is known by the rigor of its migratory policies.

The general method used in the referred parts will be based in the comparative method "since social phenomena are invariably held in some way to be typical, representative, or unique, all of which imply appropriate comparison... sociological analysis is explicitly held to be comparative, this usually involves the study of particular social processes across nation-states".<sup>77</sup> Thus, we comprehend that the comparative methods it will be used in aims to better understand about the migratory and integration policies of Sweden.

About comparison, Elder<sup>78</sup> mentions that comparative cross-national methodology is an approach to knowing social reality through the examination for similarities and differences between data gathered from more than one nation and, Przeworski<sup>79</sup> refers that the key element of comparative research is not comparing but explaining. The general purpose of cross-national research is to understand which characteristics of the particular cultures, societies, economies or political systems affect patterns of behaviour within them.

Nevertheless, we are under the understanding that the comparative method has some limitations, "the danger of this approach is that context is ignored in the search for illustrations of allegedly universal propositions"<sup>80</sup>, in this case "Max Weber's comparative sociology offers a good example. Correspondingly, the problem here is that sociological explanation may be sacrificed on the altar of context, so that one arrives at the

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<sup>77</sup> Scott, op. cit., on line reference from: 13 November, 2007

<sup>78</sup> Elder, J.W. (1976) *Comparative cross-national methodology*. Annual Review of Sociology, 2:209-30.

<sup>79</sup> Przeworski, A. (1987) *Methods of cross-national research 1970-1983*, in M.Diekers, H. Wieler and A. Antal (eds) *Comparative Policy Research: Learning from experience*.

Aldershot: Gower and Berlin: WZB.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.



conclusion that cross-cultural or cross-national differences in particular social phenomena are entirely the result of historical contingency".<sup>81</sup>

## **3.2 Interviews**

One of the instruments for this research will be a survey consisting of a semi-structured interview, which will be answered by the females who are married to a Swedish native man. The husbands will not take part in the interview and it will be a condition that men will not be present during the interview in an attempt to avoid answers being influenced by the husband or the pressure of his presence.

The survey will examine three specific areas:

- Demographics. This section categorizes responses by respondents' age and ethnic affiliations.
- Questions aimed at understanding why women get involved in internet relationships and why they made up their mind to move to another country.
- Respondents' attitudes about experiencing:
  - o The migration process
  - o Cultural/social differences with their partners. Experience of intercultural marriage, with general questions that can guide the research to find out if the integration process has affected the marriage.
  - o Social/civic, cultural and labour problems experienced in the assimilation process.
  - o Resources used by these women in their assimilation process.
  - o Social and structural (labour) racism.

The interview will be not limited in time.

From the interviews will arise statistical information that will guide us to a conclusion to a profile of women who get involved in internet relationships and the assimilation stages and resources used to become part of the society.

### **3.2.1 Participants and Recruitment Process**

Toward the goal, research will be conducted in mixed marriages of Swedish citizens (male), and their foreign counterpart (female) who met by internet, and where the female has moved to Sweden to start a life together with her partner without previous cohabitation.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

Participants for this study were recruited using the snowball technique, people who know them and put me in contact with them.

It is important to point out that these women have their home residences in different towns and cities of Sweden, such as Falun, Mora, Stockholm, Malmö, Gothenburg, Linköping, Sundsvall and Gävle, which will allow us to have a national perspective of the phenomenon, and not focused in a specific region, where regional social conditions (unemployment, migration rate, attitude of natives to immigrants, etc.), could determine their process of assimilation.

The aims of the study were well explained to the participants and their anonymity is guaranteed thus we will identify them with an alphabetical denomination and country of origin as follows:

Respondent A: Spain

Respondent B: Mexico

Respondent C: Mexico

Respondent D: Ukraine

Respondent E: United States of America

Respondent F: Germany

Respondent G: Czech Republic

Respondent H: Guatemala

Respondent I: Russia

Respondent J: Bulgaria

The conditions required for participants in this research were:

- To have met their husband through any of the resources facilitated by the internet (chats, home pages, dating sites, pen pals, etc.).
- To be born in a country other than Sweden.
- To not have come from any of the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Denmark or Norway).
- To never have lived in Sweden before meeting their husband.
- To never have cohabitated with their husband before to moving to Sweden.
- To be legally married with Swedish citizen.
- To be heterosexual.
- To have been active in the labour market in their native countries before moving to Sweden.
- To have lived in Sweden at least for 3 years.

### 3.2.2 Data Analysis

The results of the surveys will be measured by a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) data collection approach, under the open coding method of analyzing research, which allow the researcher "to break down and examine data, and then compare and conceptualize it."<sup>82</sup>

A problem that we can have with face-to-face interviews is the respondents' attitude. The veracity of the answers can be affected because of the ideology, personality or the social appearance that the respondent tries to project.

In circumstances when the questions are uncomfortable for the respondents, they can orientate their answers in order to support a position or image to the interviewer. Sometimes personal questions "tend to be very off putting to respondents."<sup>83</sup>

Another problem involves what is known as acquiescence, where an individual who is unsure of his/her response has a tendency to agree with the question (Thurstone and Chave: 1929) offered the following advice to researchers on these two problems: All that we can do with an attitude scale is to measure the attitude expressed with the full realization that the subject may be consciously hiding his true attitude or that the social pressure of the situation made him really believe what he expresses ... All we can do is minimise as far as possible the conditions that prevent our subjects from telling the truth, or else to adjust our interpretation accordingly.

Other researchers studied these problems which were given the term Evaluation Apprehension (Silverman & Shulman, 1970; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Warshaw, Calantone & Joyce, 1986). Silverman and Schulman (1970) suggested that when evaluation apprehension was produced by the experimental setting, the subject tended to respond in a manner that enhanced their self-presentation irrespective of the perceptions concerning the experimenter's expectation. Warshaw et al. (1986) reported that "the finding suggests that self-presentation considerations might cloud self reports when socially desirable behaviour like blood donation is investigated".<sup>84</sup>

Other ways of presenting the data generated are through "quotable quotes", which are actual statements of the participants and are chosen because they clearly present a theme or an important point that we will emphasize.

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<sup>82</sup> Donovan, *op. cit.*, p.29.

<sup>83</sup> Oppenheim, A.N. *Questionnaire Design: Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*. Publisher: New York, Basic Books. 1992, p. 109.

<sup>84</sup> *The Measurement of Attitude*. University of West Sydney. Australia, on line reference from: September 22, 2007. <http://library.uws.edu.au/adt-NUWS/uploads/approved/adt-NUWS20070822.130357/public/04Chapter3.pdf>

### 3.3 Hypothesis

According to the classic assimilation stages formulated by Milton Gordon (1964)<sup>85</sup> marital assimilation is the final stage of assimilation that an individual must pass in order to be completely assimilated.<sup>86</sup>

As we read in the theoretical part, Gordon believes that intercultural marriage is an important mechanism of assimilation. We have pointed out his statement that marital assimilation is a stage that *assures* the entrance of the immigrant into the host society:

After stages of cultural assimilation resulting in the acquisition of the language, norms, and values of the host culture by immigrants, intermarriage completes the structural assimilation of immigrants by allowing their entrance into the primary groups and institutions of the host society.<sup>87</sup>

**Subsequently we can hypothesize that, within the incorporation process to the host society the women who get involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting do not experience severe inconveniences in their assimilation process at the lower assimilation stages (Cultural patterns and Structural).<sup>88</sup>**

Thus, we can interpret this to mean that those women who get involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting jump directly to the final stage of assimilation, because according to Milton Gordon's theory, the intercultural marriage actually represents the final stage of assimilation.

There is an assumption that such individuals would go through the assimilation process more easily, since via marriage they come into the primary groups and institutions. In consequence, this will mean that, the subjects of the study will need only to fulfil the acculturation process (acquisition of the language, norms, and values of the host culture), because in contrast to other immigrants<sup>89</sup>, the women in our study have close contact with the "cultural stuff" (language, religion, customs and laws, tradition, material culture, cuisine, etc.)<sup>90</sup> of the host society by cohabiting with a native citizen.

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<sup>85</sup> [Note: Look at Chapter 2 - Theoretical part.]

<sup>86</sup> King, *op. cit.*

<sup>87</sup> Bankston III, *op. cit.*

<sup>88</sup> [Note: See the assimilation stages. Theoretical part.]

<sup>89</sup> [Note: The immigrants, whose come under different conditions (labour/economical or social/political immigrants-refuges).]

<sup>90</sup> Barth, *op. cit.*, p.15

We have to point out the conjecture that the husband is an important *resource* for these women in the acculturation process, since he helps with the “cultural stuff”, and also he provides the spouse with social connections that can assure her access to the social and perhaps to the labour sphere as well.

### **3.4 Expected results**

The expected results are, according to the assimilation theories, that women who come to Sweden under the conditions described above, will be easily accepted by the host society. They will learn the language and the social codes quicker because they are married to a native member and because of the husband’s connections will possibly find a job sooner than other groups of immigrants.

We also expect that the women involved in relationships base on internet meeting are highly educated and, with a certain social status in home countries, because of the fact that they have access to the new communication technologies, they do know how to use them. Furthermore, as they do not come from a Scandinavian country or presumably did not have any contact with a Scandinavian language before to moving to Sweden, they should be able to speak at least two languages.

We have to mention also the importance of knowing and maintaining loving relations through the Internet, since generally, the idea of the person on the other side of the screen can change when the couple begins living together.

# Chapter IV: Empirical Part

"That day when I turned on the computer,  
I didn't imagine that my life was going to change forever".

Respondent A

## 4.1 Välkommen till Sverige (Welcome to Sweden)

### 4.1.1 Sweden

The Kingdom of Sweden is the largest country in the Scandinavian region<sup>91</sup> and it is conceived as modern country. The book *World Communication Codes*<sup>92</sup>, written by Michael Powell, sustains the belief that Swedish people consider themselves people with a strong feeling for equality and especially as a welcoming society with high degree of tolerance when it comes to immigration. Perhaps this is because Sweden itself has been a country with its own emigration history.

The Statistical Yearbook of Sweden published in 2004 says that until the middle of the last century, Sweden was an emigrating country; between 1850 and 1930, more than 1.5 million Swedes emigrated to the USA, a quantity that represented more than one third of the population, if we consider that at that time the total number of Swedes was 3.5 million. During the 60s, the situation changed and Sweden became an immigrant country.

Nowadays, Sweden has a population of just over 9 million citizens, according to the Statistiska Centralbyrån, the official Statistics bureau of Sweden. The *Sverige en Pocket guide*, a book published by the Swedish Migration department in 2001, reveals that 900,000 persons living in Sweden were born in foreign countries. This number represents the ten per cent of the total population. In tables 1 and 2, (below) we will find statistical information about Sweden with regard to population and migration issues. Thus, we can read in table number 1 the general status of the population in Sweden, which represents our host society, there we observe in detail the conditions of the migratory group residing in Sweden, and finally in table number 2 we have in detail the original places of the immigrants.

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<sup>91</sup> [Note: The Scandinavian area includes the three kingdoms of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.]

<sup>92</sup> Published in Swedish as: Powell, Michael. *Världens Koder: Resenärens guide till gränslös kommunikation*. Ordalaget. 2007. P.122. Sweden.

**Table 1: Total Population of Sweden<sup>93</sup>**

<b>Summary of Population Statistics</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Population on 31 Dec.</b>	9,113,257
Men	4,523,523
Women	4,589,734
Number of persons, 0-17 years	1,933,920
Persons aged 0-17 years in % of total population	21.2
Number of persons, 65 years and above	1,581,437
Persons aged 65 years and above in % of total population	17.3
<b>Household units</b> <sup>1</sup>	
Average number of residents per household	
<b>Foreign citizens</b>	491,996
Proportion of foreign citizens in %	5.4
<b>Foreign-born</b>	1,175,200
Proportion foreign-born in %	12.9
<b>Swedish-born with two foreign-born parents</b>	350,977
Proportion foreign background in % <sup>4</sup>	16.7
<b>Births</b>	105,913
Crude birth rate (per 1000)	11.6
Total fertility rate <sup>2</sup>	1.85
<b>Deaths</b>	91,177
Crude death rate (per 1000)	10.0
Life expectancy, men	78.7
Life expectancy, women	82.9
Infant mortality rate (per 1000)	2.80
<b>In-migration</b>	95,750
In-migrants per 1000 inhabitants	10.5
<b>Out-migration</b>	44,908
Out-migrants per 1000 inhabitants	4.9
<b>Population growth</b>	65,505
Population growth per 1000 inhabitants	7.2
<b>Marriages</b>	45,551
<b>Divorces</b>	20,295
<b>Registered partnership</b> <sup>3</sup>	660
<b>Deregistered partnership</b> <sup>3</sup>	201
<b>Granted Swedish citizenship</b>	51,239
<p>1. Source, up to and including 1990: Population &amp; Housing Census, 1 November. Source after 1990: The Swedish Income Distribution Survey, 31 December of the respective year.</p> <p>2. Since 2004, the total fertility rate (TFR) is calculated for individual years. Previously, the TFR was calculated for age groups of 5 years.</p> <p>3. Number of partners who registered/deregistered their partnership.</p> <p>4. Foreign background include foreign-born and swedish-born with two foreign-born parents.</p>	

<sup>93</sup> Statistics Sweden, on line reference from: October 19, 2007.

**Table 2: Number of Immigrants in Sweden 2006 (December 31<sup>st</sup>)** <sup>94</sup>

Country of origin	Number of immigrants
European	680501
Africa	61905
North America	26740
South/Central America	53638
Asia	297798
Oceania	3429
Stateless/others	4082
Total	1128093
As a percentage of total population	11.30%

These tables give us a clearer vision of two main issues: the characteristics of the population of Sweden and the characteristics of the migratory groups. Hereby we have a clearer panorama of the population groups to which our respondents belong.

During the 1960's, economic or "labour" migration dominates the inflow of immigrants to Sweden. This flow reached a peak in 1970 when almost 80 thousand people arrived. Two years later, labour migration from outside the Nordic countries essentially, was stopped (Svanberg and Tydén, 1998). Since then, there has been a shift from labour to refugee migration, and people have arrived from countries that experienced political upheavals. Accordingly, during the early period, the majority of immigrants migrated for economic reasons, whereas during the later period a majority of immigrants entered to Sweden on political grounds.<sup>95</sup>

Nowadays immigration in Sweden consists mainly of refugee migration (asylum seekers) and family relations – this means persons who arrive as family dependents and in accordance with laws regulating family reunification. This second group is the subject of our study. The ten women who participated in the interviews came to Sweden under the family reunification policies.

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<sup>94</sup> *Statistics Sweden*, on line reference from: October 19, 2007.

<sup>95</sup> Per-Anders Edin, Robert J. LaLonde and Olof Åslund. *Emigration of Immigrants and measures of immigrant assimilation: Evidence from Sweden*. Working Paper Series, 2000, p.4



#### 4.1.2 The Immigration Policies<sup>96</sup>

The Family Reunification Policy refers to persons who receive permanent or temporary residence in the country because they are related, in one way or another, to a person with citizenship of this country.

The Swedish authorities have determined that a person who wants to reside permanently in this country with a close relative who already lives in Sweden must have a residence permit. The person must apply for the permit in his/her country of domicile and the permit must be entered in the passport before his/her arrival in Sweden.

As of April 30, 2006, there are two sets of rules when it comes to a residence permit. One is granted a residence permit if the person is married, has a partnership or is cohabiting with someone who lives in Sweden. The application can be rejected if, for example, if it is based on incorrect information, if it is a bogus relationship, or if the couple do not intend to live together.

If the person has lived together with the husband, wife, partner or relative in his or her home country, the Migration Board will, as a rule, grant a permanent residence permit. If the persons **have not lived together before**, the Migration Board will, as a rule, grant a residence permit for two years – in some cases for a shorter period with a minimum of one year and the possibility to apply for an extension. If the immigrant is old enough to work, he/she will be granted a work permit automatically. After this period, if the couple is still living together, the immigrant will be granted with a permanent residence permit to live and work in Sweden.

In the case of citizens from European Union countries<sup>97</sup>, they must have a valid passport or an identity card stating their nationality. These persons and their family members are entitled to begin working immediately.

Just after entering the country, they have to contact the Migration Board to register themselves and provide a marriage certificate or proof of purchase of a residence (co-habitees); a civil registration certificate from the person's home country or a bank statement showing that the immigrant will be able to support his/herself financially in

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<sup>96</sup> [Note: All the information listed in this part were obtained from the *Swedish Migration Board*: <http://migrationsverket.se>]

<sup>97</sup> [Note: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.]

Sweden. Otherwise, the Swedish counterpart will be the one who has to prove that he/she has enough capital to support the partner during their stay in Sweden.

An important condition for the individual already living in Sweden is to be aware that he/she must support the spouse or cohabiting companion applying for a residence permit. It is not necessary to prove their earnings with documents, but he/she has to know that the spouse or cohabiting partner will not receive any kind of public financial assistance.

Thus, our respondents confirmed that the immigration process was not difficult at all. Respondent A and F coming from Spain and Germany, did not go through embassy interviews because both of them were citizens of European Union countries at the time of immigration. In both cases, they sent their application for registration by post to the Migration Board and the registration certificate was sent back to their address in Sweden. Both permits came to them within a month.

The rest of the respondents came under different conditions, because at the time that they entered Sweden, countries as Bulgaria or Czech Republic were not members of the EU, but respondents confirm that the immigration process was easy and rapid in all cases. They were interviewed at the Swedish embassies in their native countries and they gave almost the same answer in all the cases about how the process went.

Respondent C affirms:

After my husband and I decide that we were moving to Sweden, we asked for an interview at the Swedish Embassy in Mexico City and we got an appointment one week later. My husband was in Mexico, so we did the interview together. They asked us to bring evidence that our relationship was serious (pictures, letters, e-mails, etc.). At first they interviewed him and later me, they just ask us about personal stuff, like family members, hobbies, or how we met each other and how long we had been in contact before deciding to get married or living together. A couple of weeks later I was called by the embassy to get the permission stamp in my passport, they just told me that as soon as I arrived in Sweden I should contact the tax office to get a registration number.

An important issue pops out in this process. The question concerns how the Swedish government can prove the validity and seriousness of these kinds of relationships. The embassies are the first contact point between Swedish government and newcomers, and these institutions are the ones who first apply the immigration policies and criteria for validating the trueness of the relationships based in internet meeting. To this question, in

a short interview Ann-Louise Christiansson, first secretary of consular issues and administration of the Swedish embassy in Mexico, responds:

You have been living in Sweden for couple of years now, and you know how we Swedes are: we believe in the people. Therefore, we believe that if you ask the Swedish state for permission to move into our country, the reasons that you give are positively valid for us. We focus on the importance of your relationship, so if you said that you are in love with one of our citizens and your plan is to build a life together with him in Sweden, we will give you the facilities to do it. We cannot question if you are telling the truth or not. Unfortunately, we are not capable to check if you are lying, that it is not our duty. We do collect evidences that can prove to the Migration Board in Sweden that your relationship is serious, but it is in Sweden where the decision is made. We are just a bridge between the Migration Board in Sweden and the couples who ask for permission. Here, once again, this means we assemble the information, we fill out a formulary, collect proof and we send all that to the office in Sweden, and they later contact us telling us if the migration is possible or not.

As we read above there are a couple of requisites that need to be fulfilled, like to show evidence that the relationship is serious and the couple is aware that they won't get any state help. However, as we read, there is no proof of economic solvency required. As we mention in the theoretical part, as soon as the immigrant arrives in Sweden, even if they are not getting public financial assistance, other kinds of services will be provided by the state, such as health, education or perhaps legal help in case of domestic violence.

Here we can pause to make a quick comparison between Swedish immigration policies and Danish ones.

#### **4.1.2.1 Danish immigration policy - comparative perspective**

In the particular case of Denmark,<sup>98</sup> foreign nationals can obtain a residence permit in Denmark to reunite with their spouse or cohabiting partners, where the individual already resident in Denmark has to fulfil a number of specific requirements. These concern the conditions for his or her residence in Denmark, and his or her ability to support him- or herself, as well as the spouse/partner.

The marriage or registered partnership should be recognizable according to Danish law. In the case of Sweden, legal marriage it is not a requirement.

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<sup>98</sup> [Note: This information was obtained from the *Danish Migration Board*: <http://www.um.dk/en>]

The Danish authorities do not accept forced marriages and the partner must not have entered Denmark before with the aim to stay. Sweden laws do not mention anything about this.

Both spouses or registered partners must be over 24 years of age and must be living together at the same address in Denmark when the residence permit has been granted. This is unlike Sweden, where the permit is requested from the home country and there is no minimum age requirement for immigration.

The person residing in Denmark must have accommodation of reasonable size at his or her disposal. (There must be no more than 2 people living in each room, and the total residential area must be at least 20 square meters per person), and must provide documentation proving that he or she has an income that is sufficient to support the foreign spouse or registered partner, as well as an economic guarantee of 55,241 Danish crowns to cover any future public expenses to support the spouse/partner. This requirement can be cut down by half upon request, after the foreigner has passed his or her final Danish language test or provided evidence of having completed a Danish course of education.

The person residing in Denmark must not have received public financial assistance for a period of one year prior to submission of the application for the residence permit, nor during the time it may take the permit to be issued. For this purpose, public assistance is defined as any economic aid paid out under the terms of the Danish Integration Act or under the terms of the Act on an active social policy.

Finally, the person living in Denmark must not have been convicted of violent acts against a former spouse or companion for a period of 10 years prior to the decision. I should make an observation here. I do believe that this last requirement is remarkably important because somehow grants to the newcomer security, by anticipating problems of domestic violence. We should remember that the internet has fomented another mechanism in human relations, and the subjects of this study do not really know each other until they live together, and possibly some of them could have suffered some kind psychological problems or broken the law. In the case of Sweden, this is not a requisite for approving the immigration.

Furthermore, I believe this requirement should be used and extended to the coming spouse, with the aim of preventing domestic violence or criminality, and of course we can

direct this issue to the resources that the state has to provide to deal with issues resulting from violence, like legal help, medical care, housing, economical aid, etc.

We can draw attention to the fact that all respondents, except Respondent C, been reported attitude and behaviour changes in their counterparts that they did not expect before the marriage, which is quite normal in the marital adjustment process, but the majority (6 of 10) do not report going through serious problems.

Respondents B, F and J reported suffering a type of psychological domestic violence, and Respondent D testifies to having suffered psychological and physical violence, which put pressure on her to divorce and forced her to require state help with legal issues, housing and economic aid. The problems reported for these four women were grounded in economic issues, where the male reports that he is not able to meet the wife's and children's expenses himself.

As a conclusion in this part, we can observe that the Danish conditions to enter to the country and settle down are stricter than the Swedish ones, but some of them could grant a safer stay in the country for the newcomers. The Danish economic requirement as "proper housing facilities, which the resident spouse must have at his or her disposal; and financial independence of government aid, based on an assessment of the financial circumstances of the resident spouse"<sup>99</sup>, can make it difficult or even impossible for some couples to get together for economic reasons, but such resources can be vital in case of emergencies.

In the case of the rule that the partners must be 24 years old, we can also consider the need for a higher grade of maturity among the participants in intercultural relationships, especially the ones based on internet meeting.

#### **4.1.3 Conditions for naturalization<sup>100</sup>**

Below we list Sweden's requirements for citizenship. In the case of the subjects of our study, the citizenship procedure follows the application (naturalisation) policies:

The immigrant must be at least 18 years old, have a permanent residence permit, or, in the case of European Economic Area (EEA) citizens, a permanent right of residence. The newcomer must have been living in Sweden for at least five years, and must have a clean record in Sweden (good conduct requirement). When an immigrant applies for

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<sup>99</sup> Hedetoft, *op. cit.*, p.5

<sup>100</sup> [Note: Information obtained from the Swedish Migration Board.]

Swedish citizenship, the Migration Board collects information from the enforcement service (debts), the Social Insurance Office (maintenance/alimony debts), the National Police Board (crimes or suspected offences) and the Swedish Security Service (security checks).

The Migration Board is the body that considers applications for Swedish citizenship and takes decisions.

Sweden "does not require potential citizens to pass a language test"<sup>101</sup>, and there is no economic requirement with regard to incomes or housing. It is not necessary that the immigrant have full-time work or be self-sufficient, there are no limits on the use of the welfare benefits and competence in the language is not necessary.

Considering Denmark, the conditions for naturalization are similar to Sweden in the case of clean criminal record. However, the other conditions of naturalization in Denmark are stricter in comparison with Sweden. Sweden requires just 5 years of continuous residence while Denmark nine years. These conditions have been tightened even further in recent years; immigrants have to fulfil the criteria of full-time work, proper housing conditions, fluency in Danish, and economic self-sufficiency.<sup>102</sup>

## **4.2 Experiencing intercultural Marriage**

### **4.2.1 Who are they? (Profiles of the persons involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting)**

Before the interviews took place, the participants were asked to fill out a demographic survey to try to determine a general profile of the women and men in the study. In this part, we will synthesize the answers. The tables that show the exact recollected data can be found in the Appendix B.

**Female:** The women in our study are between 21 and 45 years old. The average age is between 31 and 35 years old. White European prevails over other ethnicities. All of them speak at least two languages and it is a most common phenomenon to find English as an instrument of communication between the couples.

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<sup>101</sup> Westin, Charles. *Sweden: Restrictive Immigration Policy and Multiculturalism*. <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=406>

<sup>102</sup> Hedetoft, *op. cit.*, p.6

Our respondents are highly skilled. All of them have started University education and four of them have a postgraduate degree. All of them were active in the labour market in their home countries and were economically self-sufficient. Respondents D and Respondent I affirm that their living conditions improved when they move to Sweden. 70% of our respondents have this relationship based on internet meeting as their first marriage.

**Male:** The men who get involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting are from 25 to over 45 years old, compared with the women, whose average age is positioned between 31 and 35. All of them speak English a second language. The majority have an undergraduate degree and work in the industrial sector. 70% of them are coming out of a failed marriage or cohabiting relationship.

#### **4.2.1.1 Ethnicity**

Here we can include the presumption that the "racial and ethnic makeup of the new immigrants represents a major barrier to social and marital assimilation, at least as it is traditionally conceived... racial minorities imply much different assimilation processes, [than immigrants with similar racial appearance] including different rates of interracial marriage... racial minorities experience racial discrimination." <sup>103</sup>

In this matter, the respondents affirmed that they have experienced social racism and/or discrimination, but with regard to their immigrant conditions, not grounded in racial issues. Thus, in table 3 we find the details of the ethnic background of the respondents.

It is important to note that all respondents took their husbands' last names with the aims of melting better into Swedish society, "if I have a Swedish last name, I will develop a Swedish identity, now I am in Sweden and I want to be a Swede", says Respondent D.

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<sup>103</sup> Qian, *op. cit.*, p.292

**Table 3. Ethnicity of the respondents**

FEMALE		Ethnicity of the respondents						
Respondent	White European	White American	Mediterranean / Hispanic	African / Caribbean	Asian	Arabic	Latin-American	Other
A: Spain			X					
B: Mexico							X	
C: Mexico							X	
D: Ukraine	X							
E: USA		X						
F: Germany	X							
G: Czech Republic	X							
H: Guatemala							X	
I: Russia	X							
J: Bulgaria	X							

**4.2.2 From the screen to the reality: Ten love stories**

Every love story has its own magic, even the ones that happen when the persons involved are not together. We refer to Cyberlove. In the following part, we will read the summarized stories of the answers provided by the respondents whose took part in the research, based on the information collected in the "warm up" part of the survey.

It is important to stress the fact that though this part refers to the beginning of a relationship, does not mean that these marriages were successful. From the ten interviewed, two of them have changed their residence from Sweden to their native lands (Respondent E and Respondent F). Respondent E moved back in the company of her husband, while Respondent F recently got divorced and custody of the children this August. Respondent D is in the process of divorce and Respondent G is temporarily separated from her husband and trying to define her marriage situation.

The following section is composed as an ethnography, where the significant parts for the analysis are underlined.

**Respondent A:**

I met my husband in a Yahoo chat, which does not exist anymore. At that time I was thinking of taking part in the Erasmus program and I found many interesting academic offers in Sweden, I was interested in knowing a bit more about the country and the people, so, I went into a chat room for Swedish. Everyone was talking in Swedish and I asked in English if someone wanted to talk with a Spanish girl. Amazingly, I got many



answers from men who had been in Spain and just wanted to talk about their experience in my country. Among the men who answered my chatting request, I met a nice guy who explained what I wanted to know about the school system and about nice interesting things to see and do in Sweden.

We exchanged e-mail and we continued talking and chatting for couple of months, we started to talk about our life visions and plans and I started to develop feelings for him. He came to Spain to visit a couple of times.

I did not get a place in the program I wanted, so it seemed that my interest for Sweden was over, but on the other hand, I found out that I was in love. My husband felt disappointed because I was not moving to Sweden and he asked me to give a chance to our relationship, we both were tired of just seeing each other from time to time. Thus, 6 months after we met, I quit my job and I moved to Sweden with him. We felt that we matched completely, and I felt incredibly good with him, he was kind and loving, so after 3 months of living together we got married in Sweden. We decided to stay in Sweden since he was happy and had a permanent job and a flat and I had nothing in Spain. I think I did not pick my husband's nationality directly, but somehow, it was me who started to look in Sweden, so maybe in my subconscious I did.

### **Respondent B:**

We met in a chat of a musical group that we both like. It was funny because I was on my way out when he appeared, we were arguing about how good the new song was. It was a *forum*<sup>104</sup> but we connected so much that we decided to go to a *private room*<sup>105</sup>, then we exchanged e-mail and we started to chat very often. We found that we connected in many ways and we fell in love, but the problem was the distance. We spoke on the telephone sometimes.

It became harder and harder to be away from each other, so after one and a half years, we planned to meet in real life. We were planning for him to go to Mexico and visit me, but as I was still living with my parents, so we thought that we would not have too much time and privacy to get to know each other so we decided that it was better for me to go to Denmark, where he was living at that time. He paid all the travel expenses. Then I was with him for three months and the feelings for each other were still the same, we felt that we could be together forever.

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<sup>104</sup> [Note: Forum refers to a cyberspace place where many people discuss a subject.]

<sup>105</sup> [Note: Private room refers to a cyberspace place where two persons can chat in private, when they are participating in a forum discussion.]

I came back to Mexico and waited for my visa for to move to Sweden and he moved to Malmo because one of the migration requirements to get a visa in Sweden was to live in the country. We could have applied for a Danish visa because he had the right but it was harder to get than a Swedish one. When I got the permission, I came back to Sweden and my parents came for visit, then we got married and I got pregnant almost immediately. I did not decide the nationality of my husband, that was just a coincidence.

### **Respondent C:**

I met my husband through a chat system called ICQ; there you could contact people from around the world. I was interested in meeting foreigners to practice my English. I met many people, my actual husband among them. We started to become closer and closer, and we discovered that we both were IT engineers and worked in the same kind of area; we both were divorced and had children. We chatted through ICQ everyday, almost all day around, because we worked with computers, so we were online almost all the time. I felt every day that I needed to have more contact with him and he expressed the same, so after work, he called me at home and it was terrible because of the time difference. He or I had to stay awake late in the night to talk. We really felt connected, and then we decided that he should come to Mexico and visit me. I did not want to introduce him to my children until I had a clue if this was going to last long. However, as soon as we met in the airport and had dinner we knew that it was going to be forever.

After his visit to my country, things became worse because we really felt that we needed to be together. I started to feel very anxious and I developed a permanent stomachache when I was not online. After a month, he invited me to Sweden and I spent two weeks here with him, thus we decided to get married. Then came the decision about where to live. His job was better than mine was and he had a house. I thought Sweden had better environment for my children and I moved here. All this happened in about 5 months. I did not decide the nationality of my husband. I think if I could have decided it, it would be from a country closer to my home country.

### **Respondent D:**

Well, I was divorced and I had a little daughter. Sweden always was popular for its welfare system and I knew that Swedish men were handsome and kind. I read once an article that said that Scandinavian men were the best husbands in the world, and I had a sister living in Norway and she was doing well so I decided to take a chance and I put a personal ad on a homepage where you can make friends or look for love. I had a few

answers, mostly German men, but I got one from this Swedish man who seemed to be kind.

We exchanged e-mails and pictures. We wrote every day for about a month, we never chatted. I am very bad in English and I needed time to write my letters and read his. After that time, he said that he wanted to meet me in real life so he planned a visit to Ukraine; I rented an apartment for a month in Kiev to meet, but we were together just two weeks. He seemed nice, but it was very hard to get to know him better, because I am not that good in English and he did not speak Russian or Ukrainian. Anyway, we liked each other, I think it was more physical attraction than anything else, so we decided to get married, and moving to Sweden was not a question, it was the only option. All this happened very fast, the first contact was around Christmas and in the spring, we were living together in Sweden. I definitely did choose the nationality of my husband. I had wanted to move to a country in the Scandinavian area for a long time.

### **Respondent E:**

We met in a forum about tourism in Holland. I was studying languages in France at that time, and in the meantime, I wanted to travel around Europe. My next stop was going to be Amsterdam and I wanted to know what the city had for fun. He was asking the kind of same questions as me and then we started to chat, coincidentally we were going to be in the city about the same time so we decided to meet there. We kept in touch and we often exchanged mails making plans about what we were going to do together in Amsterdam. At the last minute, I could not make it to Amsterdam, so he started to write mails to me about how much he missed me there. He invited me to Sweden but I could not come either.

I finished my program in France and I flew back to California. We kept contact by e-mail and occasionally by telephone, then he started to talk about to travel to LA. He came to the US and we spent one day together because I was working in north California. After that day, our contact became more frequent, we started to send e-mails and chat every day. He came again to California and stayed with me for two weeks, and then we realized that we had a lot in common and definitely, he was the man who I wanted to be with.

Crazily in that trip, we got married. At that time, I was working as a masseuse and did not make too much money; he had a permanent job in Sweden, besides that he had inherited a house from his grandmother so we decided to move to Sweden. As soon as I landed in Sweden, I found out that I was pregnant. No, I did not chose the nationality of my husband, but I think it was meant to be, because I remember that in primary school I

was in love with this Swedish-American boy and I thought that he was the love of my life.

### **Respondent F:**

At that time, I was divorced and I had my daughter. After the divorce, I was feeling very lonely because I lost many of my friends. A work colleague told me about a home page where I could meet new people. In the beginning, I was just looking around checking profiles of the other people. While checking I saw the profile of a man who was looking for friends because he was also newly divorced, and seemed that he felt like me. I sent him an e-mail and he answered couple of days later, and we started to exchange e-mail two or three times a week.

At the beginning we were just talking about the feelings and troubles after the divorce, later we started to talk about us, I knew he was Swedish but as we always communicated in German, I assumed that he was living in Germany. Two months later, I found out that he was in Sweden.

The e-mail stuff started to be more frequent and after one year of mailing we decided to meet in real life, it seemed that we had a lot in common. He came to Germany and then we went to have dinner, he was the most charming man I ever met, after that time, he started to visit me once a month, we talked by telephone and his e-mail became necessary in my life. The first thing I did at work every morning was to check my e-mail.

After 5 months, we decided to move in together. In Germany, I was a kindergarten teacher and he had a very good position as an engineer in Sweden, besides he had just bought a house from his uncle. We decided to move to Sweden. I was going to be busy with the house while I looked for a job but the first year I got pregnant and then we decided to get married. I did not choose to be with a Swedish man, but I was thankful that he was not from a country so far away from mine. I think if he were, I would never have moved in with him.

### **Respondent G:**

During all of high school, I had been very interested in the internet and its possibilities. I was so surprised that I could meet people all over the world and make friends. I started to look for homepages and contact people from different countries, like Canada, USA, Argentina, Jamaica, Australia, Norway, Germany, etc. I think I had more cyber-friends than real friends. I usually spent a lot of time sitting in front the computer. Moreover, I realized that I had a lot in common with different people, thus, I started to have cyber-

boyfriends all over the world, and I was keen on them. I really was thinking about them all day long, I was worried when they did not answer my e-mails or they were not on MSN.

Once I was very blue because I broke up with a Canadian boyfriend because he met some other girl and I was in a chat trying just to talk with someone, then I met this really nice Swedish man who had also just broken up with the girlfriend whom he was living with. We started to chat and we became best friends. Later I got another cyber-boyfriend and he got a cyber-girlfriend. However, we continued being like best friends.

We talked about our partners all the time, and how things were developing. He said that he was deep in love with this girl from France and he was planning to visit her. It was then when I realized that I was in love with him. I told him about my feelings, we both broke up with the other partners, and we started a relationship. As we had known each other for a long time (more than a year), we decided immediately to meet in real life. He came to visit me and we had the most incredible week together.

About two months later, I travelled to Sweden. He paid the travel expenses, immediately we decided that we were made for each other and after three weeks, we decided to get married in my country. While I came back to my country and I was waiting to fix my migration documents and move all my things to Sweden, we fought a couple of times and I felt bad. Once I got a half body paralysis because of the stress that maybe we were breaking up. For me to be married to him was like a security that he was going to be just with me, because we had this record of goofing around with lot of people, so that way I could feel that we were building something permanent. In the beginning, I felt happy with him and I was happy to be in Sweden as well. It was my first experience outside my country.

### **Respondent H:**

I am a paediatrician and my husband is a doctor. My husband had worked in Guatemala in an international volunteering medical organization, but we never met there. I encountered this organization because I wanted to do a voluntary program, they had the e-mails of some people who had done this job and you could contact them to know about their experiences. Among all the doctors that had been in the organization I decided to contact him because it seemed that he spoke Spanish and I was not very sure about my English skills, so this way we came into contact.

We were exchanging e-mails and from time to time, we chatted. We just talked about medical issues for about a year. However, when I finished my volunteering program, we became in close contact. We started to talk about us, and we started to discover that we had a lot in common. Once he said that he was very keen to travel to south Mexico and from there drive up to USA, and maybe it was time that we meet in real life.

That sounded nice to me, it was better for me to meet him in Mexico than in Guatemala, because my country and my town are so small so everyone knew me and I had a reputation to care about. I got a visa to visit Mexico and we met in a city by the border.

We travelled from Chiapas to Mexico City, and we had such a nice time. From Mexico City, I flew back to Guatemala and he continued his way to USA. When he came back to Sweden, we started to be more in contact by e-mail and telephone and we decided that we wanted to be together. He told me that there were many good opportunities for me in Sweden because many medical personnel were required. I travelled to Sweden for to visit and I liked it. When I came back to Guatemala, we missed each other a lot, so we decided to get married to cover social and governmental formalities, and then I moved to Sweden with him. I think by e-mail I learned a lot about him, and in the trip that we made together, we discovered that there was also chemistry between us. I never thought that I was going to marry someone outside my country, but I feel happy with him. I did not choose his nationality, it just happened.

### **Respondent I:**

Well there is not too much to say. I always have been interested in Sweden; I think it is a great country and I always knew that I was going to be married to a Swedish man.

When I was 16 years old, I started to study Swedish as my second language. I usually visited Swedish chats to meet people and practice the language. In one of the chats of a Swedish newspaper when I was about 20, I met my husband. We started to argue about some news the first time. Another day we met in the same chat, and that became frequent. After couple of meetings in this chat, we exchanged e-mail and we started to talk about different subjects. We found that we had a lot in common and besides that, we felt very attracted to each other. We decided to find out if the chemistry was the same in the real life so we decided that he was going to visit me. He came to my hometown, we spent a week together the first time, and we felt very good with each other so we decided that we wanted to try to move in together. He arranged for me to move to Sweden with him, and after all the migration requirements, I moved in with him. We had been living together two months and then we decided to get married, because that way it

was easy for me to get visas and permits. Now I am a Swedish citizen and I am so happy to be here.

### **Respondent J:**

I met my husband through an internet home page where people can make friends, I was studying at university in Germany and I was feeling very lonely, so I got in touch with some people who speak German. I got in touch with my husband and we exchanged mails and chatted the whole year when I was studying there. He flew to Germany to meet me and we fell in love. We were together about a week. After I finished school, I went back to Bulgaria and I told my dad that I met someone. He visited me for one week in Bulgaria, and my dad asked if we were going to get married, there we made up our minds and decided on a date. We continue to be in touch by e-mail and two months later, we got married in my country. His parents followed him, and this time they stayed at my parents' home. After the marriage, I moved to Sweden with my husband. It was the first time that I came to this country; I am not feeling very happy here. I am homesick, but I know that the wife always has to follow the husband.

As we read above, all respondents meet their husband through an internet device (Chats, homepages, forums, etc.) and most of them affirmed that their arrival in Sweden was a product of coincidence, with the exception of two respondents who had a special interest in the country. However, all respondents agreed that Sweden represented better option for settle down in comparison with their country of origin.

Some of the respondents maintained long-term internet-mediated communication with their husbands, other ones were in contact for shorter periods, before to deciding to meet in real life, but all of them did marry their husbands shortly after meeting in real life. Thus, all of the respondents had spent a short period of days with their husbands before to deciding get married or moving to Sweden. As they explained in the interviews, the visits where short (from two days to two weeks) and spaced once a month in some cases, this because the travel expenses and the free days that the visitor had to spend on the trip.

Respondents affirmed that they found commonalities with their husbands through internet communication, which at that time was enough to make the decision to move in with them or getting married. Here, we can remember the quote mentioned in the theoretical part: that in cyber-relationships "people fall in love with individuals who are

almost strangers to them and about whom they know only what they glean from the written word".<sup>106</sup>

**Table 4: General overview of respondents' attitudes**

<b>General overview of respondents' attitudes about meeting their husbands and making up their minds about deciding to get married or live together and moving to Sweden.</b>					
<b>Respondent</b>	Reason to enter into contact	Time until first meeting in real life	Time from Real Meeting until decision to marry or live together	Reason for marriage	Reasons for moving to Sweden
A: Spain	Academic interests in Sweden	2 months	3 months		Permanent job and house of husband in Sweden
B: Mexico	Common interest in music	One and a half year	3 months	Swedish visa	
C: Mexico	Practice English	<i>Appears to be 6 months</i>	2 weeks		Permanent job and house of husband in Sweden and better environment for children.
D: Ukraine	Searching for Swedish husband	1 month	2 weeks	Swedish visa	Wanted to move to Scandinavia
E: USA	Tourism in Holland	<i>Looks that it was 3 years</i>	2 weeks		Permanent job and house of husband in Sweden
F: Germany	Meeting new people	1 year	5 months	Pregnancy	Permanent job and house of husband in Sweden
G: Czech Republic	Meeting new people	1 year	3 months	Feeling of security	
H: Guatemala	Professional interests	1 year		Swedish visa	Good job opportunities for wife
I: Russia	Practice Swedish	<i>8 months</i>	1 week	Swedish visa	Wanted to move to Sweden
J: Bulgaria	Meeting new people	1 year	1 week	Family tradition	Family tradition (Wife follows husband)
- Note: The time written in italic style indicates an estimate based on the information in other parts of interview					

<sup>106</sup> Ben-Ze'Ev, *op. cit.*, p.7.



In one way or another, respondents claimed to experience intense feelings like anxiety, stress, nervous, happiness, depression, etc., and in cases like Respondent G, even experienced physical dysfunctions based on the stress of the cyber-relationship.

In consequence, we can validate the presumption presented in the section 1.2. *Cyberlove* of the Theoretical part, that states that in Cyberlove “despite the fact that the partner is physically remote and is to a certain extent anonymous, in one important aspect this relationship is similar to an offline relationship – the emotion of love is experienced as fully and intensely as in an offline relationship”.<sup>107</sup>

#### **4.2.3 Emotions online. Does the love story continue in real life?**

As we read in the theoretical part, online relationships have no boundaries between individuals who are able to use the internet, there is no territorial, cultural, linguistic, or religious border between the participants in Cyberlove. In addition, we also are aware of cyber-relationships are not based on external appearance but in supposed *mutual understanding or common interests*, which are not verified and only asserted by the person in the other side of the screen.

Almost all our respondents, except respondent C, affirmed that the impression that they had about their husbands in the beginning of the relationship changed, if not dramatically, then in one way or another. They recognize that the men they fell in love with in the first place was a man closer to the ideal that they created in their minds, based on the vague information that they got every day through e-mails and chats. The participants, male and women, just expressed and sometimes exaggerated their positive qualities and rarely mentioned defects.

As result, they had high expectations of the males, and their “fantasies and desires [were] not being fulfilled in their offline relationships”<sup>108</sup>. The idealized man did not correspond with the man they were living with.

We do also have to remember that online communication is based on writing and verbal skills, and in these cases, this quality was more important than physical attraction, because it was the one that awakened the interest and attraction between the participants. But is this “understanding” enough to maintain a marriage? The idea of having common characteristics, ideas, tastes or points of view woke up the fantasy of the cyber-relationship participants, and made them imagine that the person in the other side

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

of the screen was the one with whom they could share their lives. In cyber relationships, "people fall in love with individuals who are almost strangers to them and about whom they know only what they glean from the written word"<sup>109</sup>.

Here we can recapture two of three the dimensions of the identity theory mentioned in the theoretical part: the temporal and location ones. According to these, the participants in the online relationships are not the same in real life as in the cyber-world. Even if we refer to the same individuals, the personality that they projected online was under different circumstances than that which they experience in everyday life with their husbands and wives. Furthermore, participants just expressed what they wanted their counterpart to know about them.

Thus, our respondents reported that their husbands' identities changed with regard to the image that they had before they moved in together, and although they affirm that they themselves did not exhibit any change in behaviour or attitudes toward their counterparts, we guarantee that they did, because of the dimensions of the identity theory mentioned above.

Respondent J says:

We were too much in contact by internet and we really did not have the chance to meet enough in real life before getting married. In that short period everything was good and exiting, until the day when we landed in Sweden, then I realized that he had to go to work, and he was not able to be around me as he was before. I felt he was warmer online than in real life. I felt abandoned, I never got again an e-mail or a text message, now everything was about keeping the house clean, if I was learning Swedish or not, what we were going to eat, or so on. I felt that I was living with a complete stranger, so I decided that it was time for me to get to know my husband again. Now I have a little daughter, so I can focus on her and not think about our differences any more.

Respondent A affirms:

After the marriage I realized that my husband is a very negative person, I don't know if it's cultural or what, he can be very sweet and nice, but also he gets angry so quickly and he has no tolerance. The first months we fought a lot, and I just wanted moved back to Spain, it is horrible to say, but I was feeling very regretful about the decision I made. However, I know he loved me so much and at the end of the day, he was somehow the man I always wanted, or at least I thought so. Now, I have got to know him better, and we have some plans together. We still have no

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

children because I am still not sure if I want to stay in Sweden or move back home, sometimes I know I want him forever, sometimes I'm not so sure about that.

Respondent F expressed:

When I first met him I really thought that he was the most charming men in the world. Now I know I was wrong and I made a very stupid decision to get married to someone I hardly knew. I have to say that I have very nice memories of him, and especially, we have a daughter together, but I know how evil he can be. In the process of divorce, he accused me of mental instability, because he wanted to get custody of our daughter. When I heard that, I could not believe my ears, I just brought back the memory of our first date in Germany, and I realized that that man, who I was divorcing, was a complete stranger to me, he was not the man that I fell in love with through the internet.

On the other hand, Respondent B was the only participant who expressed that her husband and their relationship changed only in positive ways. She felt very loved and supported by her husband who represents the paternal image for her children, and she express that they have never had problems related to marital or cultural adjustment, they have never had a discussion, and consequently divorce has never been in her mind.

All the other respondents affirm that because of the marital and cultural adjustments, they had had thoughts about divorce in one way or another. Respondent D expressed that in her view, her husband just wanted to get married because he was over fifty years old and he wanted to be a father, besides that, he complains about the economic expense of having her and her previous child at home.

Respondent F declares that the problems that caused the divorce were also based on economic issues, her husband was very dissatisfied about the fact he was the main contributor to the family economy. In addition, the problems became deeper when she felt that she could not melt into in Swedish society and find a job that could satisfy her, so she wanted to move back to Germany. The husband disagreed and asked for the divorce and the custody of their common daughter. It is important to mention that in both cases, the male has been the one who requested the divorce.

#### 4. 2.4 Challenges of intercultural marriages based on internet meeting

We note here that the term is used to designate one factor or dimension in the meeting of [two persons]: cultural behaviour.

The changes may take place in the cultures of either one of the two or there may be a reciprocal influence whereby the cultures of both are modified.

Milton Gordon 1964

Another major issue is that the majority of our respondents did not immediately see their different cultures as presenting any specific challenges, but the opposite: they saw it as an exotic issue that could enrich their lives.

About this subject, we previously mentioned Fredrik Barth's concept from the *Introduction of Ethnic groups and Boundaries*, defined as *cultural stuff*.<sup>110</sup>

In this respect, our respondents (except Respondent D) expressed not having major problems with the communication (language barriers). In the beginning they used second languages (either English, German or Spanish) to express themselves; in some cases (Respondent D and Respondent I) the couple used Swedish almost from the beginning of the relationship.

None of them expressed any trouble with religious issues, even though all the husbands claimed Protestantism and some of the wives belonged to the Catholic or Russian Orthodox churches, for example. Respondents had no problems with their faith, none of them had the need to convert and they felt free to profess their own religion. This issue has not been a problem or cause for disagreement in the education of the children.

In matters related to customs, tradition, and cuisine, the respondents did not report major issues. All of them affirm that there were no big differences from their own traditions and they described themselves as keen to learn about Swedish ones. In the case of cuisine, all of the wives were in charge of food preparation in their household, and they did not claim any inconveniences about it.

Cultural differences in values or political issues were not expressed, but in the case of sex role expectations, the women in our study were very satisfied. All of them affirm that Swedish men are very helpful with domestic activities and deeply involved in parenthood.

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<sup>110</sup> Barth, *op. cit.*, p.15

The challenges that the respondents regularly spoke of were not essentially culturally associated, but ordinary challenges for marriage in general.

Respondent A mentions:

For example, I get very irritated when I have to wash the dishes because my husband spreads them all around the kitchen. He said that if we put them in a pile they will get broken and, I hate to be looking around for dishes. I want all of them in a pile on the sink, I know it is a nonsense example, but what I mean is that issues like that are not related to nationality, a Spanish man could do the same. It does not mean that Swedes likes to put the dishes in a line instead of a pile.

Finances were another factor often mentioned by respondents as playing a big role in the difficulties of adjusting to marriage. Nearly every respondent (except Respondent C and Respondent H) spoke about the difficulty of becoming economically independent of their husbands. They verbalized that at one moment or another, their husbands had complained about the economic pressure caused by the fact that they are totally economically responsible for the household.

Our respondents declare that they have felt anxiety and depression since they moved to Sweden. Respondent A says, "I feel that lost my aptitude to work and earn my own money. The work that I can does not correspond to my capacity, knowledge or experience. I have had problems with my husband about it, because I feel very guilty if I go to a shop and I buy a blouse or I sit in a café and buy myself a piece of cake and a cappuccino. I feel that I am living off gifts".

## **4.3 Experiencing the assimilation process - Milton Gordon's stages**

### **4.3.1 Behavioural assimilation**

In the section distinguished as 2.4. *Challenges of intercultural marriage based on internet meeting* we refer to the problems of the marital adjustment based on the cultural elements mentioned above by Fredrik Barth. Now we will mention these elements again, but in a different scenario. At this moment, we will relate the encounter of the *cultural stuff* (language, religion, food, values, etc.) of women participating in our study to the host society; that is, we will describe the cultural shock experienced by our respondents.

Ethnic minorities will, however, also have to accept more than this as part of the implied contract into which they enter into the host nation. They will have to accept that there is an official language and that they will have to use it in their dealing with the public authorities; they will have to recognize the criminal and civil law; they will have to recognize that existing national values will be taught within the educational

system; and, they may have to accept that there is an established religion which has special privileges.

Most ethnic minority members do accept some sort of contract of this kind. They see it as a part of the cost of living in a particular society of settlement which has to be set against the real gains which migration brings.<sup>111</sup>

Thus, we refer to behavioural assimilation, which as we mention in the theoretical part, refers to the absorption of the incoming group into the host community, as the newcomers absorb the culture and history of the dominant group. We stated that "behavioural assimilation occurs when a newcomer absorbs the cultural norms, values, beliefs, and behaviour patterns of the "host" society. This may also involve learning [the language]... and/or becoming a... citizen".<sup>112</sup>

Following this statement of Milton Gordon's, we can synthesize that "assimilation is the substitution of one nationality pattern for another. Ordinarily, the modifications must be made by the weaker or numerically inferior group", which is the case of the women in our research.<sup>113</sup>

#### **4.3.1.1 Citizenship**

One of the conditions for the participants in the study was to have resided in Sweden for at least three years. In this case, Respondent B, Respondent D, Respondent E and Respondent G have a Permanent Residence Permit (PUT=Permanent Uppehållstillstånd) to live and work in the country.

Respondents A and G have citizenship of an EU nation, and they expressed that even if they fulfilled the requirements they would not be interested in getting Swedish citizenship. The rest of the respondents have obtained Swedish citizenship. Nevertheless, they affirm that the living conditions did not change after getting this, and neither of them developed a "feeling of personhood" after becoming Swedish citizens.

It is important to mention that Sweden allows the citizens to have double citizenship, this mean that respondents do not have to renounce their nationality of origin to become a national of Sweden. However, there are some countries that do not allow their nationals to adopt a new citizenship.

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<sup>111</sup> Rex, John. *The Nature of Ethnicity in the Project of Migration*, in M. Guibernau and John Rex. (Eds.) *The Ethnicity Reader. Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*. Oxford: Polity Press. 1997, p. 281.

<sup>112</sup> Le, C.N. 2007. *op. cit.*

<sup>113</sup> Gordon, *op. cit.*, p 64.

Hence, we can mention the case of Respondent D who gave up Ukrainian citizenship in order to become a Swede, but her daughter from previous marriage did not fulfil the requirements to get Swedish citizenship, while the child conceived with her Swedish husband is a Swedish citizen. A similar case applies to Respondent F who holds a German citizenship as does her daughter from a previous marriage. The daughter conceived with her Swedish husband holds both nationalities. This variety of nationalities has represented a problem for both respondents. In the case of Respondent D, she mentioned that she had to ask for special permission from the Ukrainian government and the father of the older girl for to take her to Sweden. If she wants to visit Ukraine, she has to get permission and a visa for herself and her son. In the second case, respondent F expressed that after the divorce, she had big troubles taking her daughter to Germany.

#### **4.3.1.2 The Language**

In chapter two, we read about the importance of acquiring the host society's language as key for stepping into the host society, according to the first assimilation stage formulated by Milton Gordon.

In the case of Sweden, the state assures the immigrants the "right to 240 hours of free Swedish language instruction, through the SFI (Swedish for Immigrants)".<sup>114</sup> We have to note also that in Sweden education at all levels is free, so when the SFI courses are finished, immigrants with permanent residence permits can join the education system at any stage.

We have to point out that in some municipalities there is an Immigration Centre that orientates the immigrants to the education and opportunities, while some small municipalities, do not have this resource and the immigrants have to contact the Carrier Orientation Centre (Vägledningscentrum).

With regard to Swedish language education, immigrants can take part in the following courses:

**SFI** = Swedish for Immigrants (divided in four levels from A to D). It is the basic level of education of the language, and it is taught to persons that do not have previous knowledge of the language. Participants must be older than 16 years old. It can be completed in one year, but this depends on the immigrant's ability to learn.

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<sup>114</sup> Svensson, Charlote Rosen. *Culture Shock! Sweden*. Times Editions. Malaysia, 2003, p.85

**SAS** = Swedish as a second language (Which is divided in two levels: A and B). In some municipalities is referred to by numbers instead of letters, so it will be equivalent to SAS-1 and SAS-2. Each level lasts 6 months.

With these two levels of education, the state assures a basic understanding of the Swedish language. If the immigrant would like to join university studies, he/she has to complement his language education with the equivalent of upper secondary school courses, which are divided into three levels:

**Svenska = Sv** (Swedish) from A to C, in the case of immigrants this levels are named as **Svenska2 = Sv2**, A, B or C. The number 2 indicates that is Swedish as a second language. Each level lasts 6 months.

Lessons about culture, history and/or society are not included in the Swedish language courses.

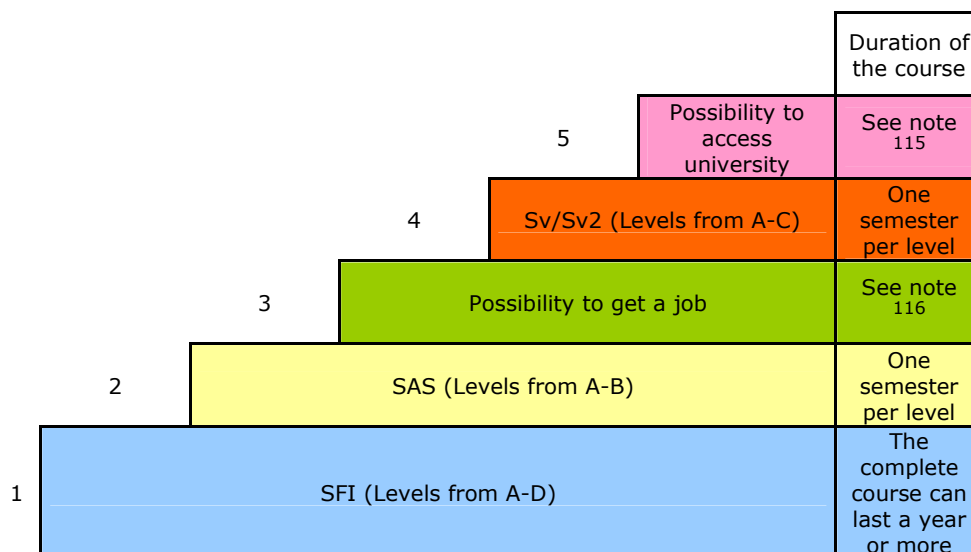
Before continuing, it is important to mention two facts. The first one is that all Swedish courses are evaluated through a National Examination System. The second one is the possibility that students are able to prove their knowledge in the language, which means if a student is familiar with the subject matter, it is not necessary to study for the duration of the course; rather, by passing the test, they can jump to the next level.

Thus, according to Torsten Moberg, career adviser for the Career Orientation Centre in Falun, the immigrants have to fulfil the following Swedish education levels to integrate into the labour market or continue to university. The table presented below was drawn by Torsten Moberg.

Our participants (except Respondent I) did not have contact with the Swedish language before moving to Sweden. It is important to mention that none of our respondents received information from the Swedish authorities (Migration or Integration Board) on how they could join the Swedish lessons. In all cases, the husband was the resource used to acquire data and instructions about how to register for the programme.



**Table 5. Stages of Swedish language**



In the following table we outline the Swedish language stages that respondents went through regarding Swedish language instruction.

**Table 6. Levels of Swedish language education attended by respondents**

Respondent	Level of Swedish Language Education									OTHER
	SFI A	SFI B	SFI C	SFI D	SAS 1	SAS 2	SV A	SV B	SV C	
A: Spain	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Articulation and/or intonation
B: Mexico	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
C: Mexico	X									
D: Ukraine	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Articulation and/or intonation
E: USA	X	X	X	X	X					
F: Germany	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
G: Czech Republic	X	X	X	X	X					
H: Guatemala										Particular Swedish lessons specialized in Medical Language for Work Purposes
I: Russia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Articulation and/or intonation
J: Bulgaria	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			Articulation and/or intonation

<sup>115</sup> [Note: The immigrant will be requested to demonstrate having completed Upper Secondary School and it may be necessary to fulfil additional requirements depending on the subject of study.]

<sup>116</sup> [Note: According with the Career Orientation Centre, companies require the completion of the basic level of Swedish education to hire personnel.]

About the encounter with the Swedish language, Respondent J narrates:

The language is so different from my mother tongue, it is similar to German and that is why I found it a bit familiar, but in general, I can say that I find it so difficult. I know I will never be able to speak it as the natives do and I feel the Swedish people have a lot prejudices about foreigners speaking their language, that's why I think it has been very difficult to find a job. I also must say that because of the language barrier, I have found it very hard to make friends or to communicate with other people; I feel I can read and write in Swedish but to talk goes very badly, I feel nervous even when I am going shopping. Well, as I know my limitations with the language I decided to have a child, and then I can get some welfare benefits because my maternity, so now to be a mother is like to have a job, I get paid for it.

At the subject, Respondent A says:

Ohh, I was so naïve when I first moved to Sweden, at the beginning I had the thought that I just needed a year or something for to learn the language and then could start to work, but it was nothing like that. I started the SFI and I finished in a year, I asked for my fist job and I been rejected because of the language, so I studied SAS A and B and then I tried again, it was the same thing. Therefore, I decided to finish all the levels in Swedish language. Now I feel that I will never be able to speak proper Swedish. I lost the capacity to believe that I will get my dream job in my study field, now I do something completely different. I teach Spanish part-time, I am not educated in this subject but it is a very popular subject and I am very thankful that my mother tongue is giving me at least the chance to go out couple of hours a week, otherwise I would be just sitting at home looking at the snow through the window.

We have the case of Respondent I who did start to learn the language in her homeland, and she says:

I thought it was going to be very easy for me. When I came to Sweden, I passed the tests for all the levels in SFI and SAS, then I asked for a job, but it is very hard to get rid of my mother tongue accent and I think that is what has made the process of assimilation difficult. I have many problems articulating the words and sometimes I am very slow at it so the people get tired talking to me. I studied Sv2 as well, because it was a requirement to go to university. I believe that my grammar is very good and I can read and write perfectly, but my problem is when I talk. I do not know what to do. I think the Swedish people have a lot prejudice against Russians.

In the case of Respondent I, we can consider the stigma theory, mentioned in part 4.2. *Language and Stigma* of the *Theoretical chapter*, that brought up the importance of the correct use of language and it accent as a crucial factor that can affect the assimilation

process of immigrants. These two issues can determine the incorporation of the newcomer into the social, educational and/or labour environment and can determine his/her success. We mentioned as well that when immigrants have poor knowledge of the local language they can be easily stigmatized.

Nevertheless, the exception that breaks the rule is given by Respondent C who affirms that for her knowledge of Swedish was never a requirement to get a job or socialize.

Another case that is worth mentioning is the one expressed by Respondent H:

Before I moved to Sweden with my husband I got a job offer from the Swedish government, they told me that the education in Swedish language was necessary for to work, but it counted into my labour contract. Thus, since I arrived in Sweden, I went to private Swedish lessons directed toward medical issues, the lessons were paid by the state and I got my salary paid while I attended them as well. I never went to an Adult Education School (Komvux), but I think the reason for my special case is that Sweden needs medical personnel, so I was very lucky that that was my situation.

Regarding language, in the theoretical part we also discussed the theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, which emphasized that all social and cultural meanings are produced within language or systems of representation more generally. "Language is necessarily social... it is an abstract thing and requires the human being for its realisation".<sup>117</sup>

Regarding to this fact our Respondent H expressed:

We could maybe learn the words, but the connotation of the things may not be the same. We do not have the same significance for them. An example can be the word *middag* that means dinner. This word originally expresses something that it has to be done in the middle of the day, but it is not. When we talk about dinner I always have the idea of eating my big meal around 14:00, as we do in Guate[mala] but in Sweden dinner is about 18:00, so finally the word symbolizes the same thing, but at the same time, does not.

In conclusion, Respondent H actually confirms Ferdinand de Saussure's statement about that the world around us, and our place in it, "is given meaning—made meaningful—within representation. In an important sense, therefore, whom we are—our sense of identity—is shaped by the meanings attached to particular attributes, capacities, and

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<sup>117</sup> Saussure, *op. cit.*

forms of conduct".<sup>118</sup>

Respondent D and Respondent I affirmed that their husbands have been an important resource for learning and practicing the Swedish language. In fact these two couples were the only ones who use Swedish as a common language at home, while all the other respondents stated that they continued using with their spouses the language that they used when they first met, or made mixes between languages. Thus, the husbands of the rest of respondents have not been a useful resource in the learning and development of their language skills.

Thus, we understand that to live with a native speaker is not a guarantee of the development of language skills. The respondents affirmed that to change from one language to another has represented a challenge. Communication in the relationship is often based in the language that they first used with the husband. For these respondents jumping to the last stage of assimilation did not facilitate the first stage where the language has to be acquired.

#### **4.3.1.3 Religion**

Sweden is a country with religious freedom, and respect for its inhabitants' beliefs has a relevant importance. In this country we can find individuals who practice almost all religions, but the official one is the Swedish Church that practises the Lutheran-Evangelist doctrine.

Until January 1, 2000, the Swedish church counted around 7,600,000 members, in a population of about 9 million<sup>119</sup>. We can also note that about 75 per cent of children born are baptized in the Swedish Church and through this event, citizens become members of the Swedish creed.<sup>120</sup>

However, even if "92 % of the Swedes are members of the Church of Sweden..., only 5 % are regular churchgoers"<sup>121</sup>.

The respondents in this study belong to the following creeds: the Catholic Church (four respondents), Russian Orthodox (three respondents), the Evangelist Church (one

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<sup>118</sup> Scott, op. cit., on line reference from: 15 March, 2007.

<sup>119</sup> *Satistics of Sweden*, op. cit., on line reference from: 19 October, 2007.

<sup>120</sup> Björck, Ingela Bulle Davidson. *Sverige en pocketguide*. Integrationsverket. Norrköping 2001, p. 190

<sup>121</sup> Svensson, op. cit., p.58.

respondent), the Lutheran Protestant Church (one respondent), and one respondent describes herself as Atheist.

In this regard, respondents stated that they didn't have religious inconveniences. None of them profess to be very active in their own religion, so it did not represent a problem in the children's education, or especially with regard to patterns of behaviour in society.

In one way or another the religions mentioned above belong to Christianity, which means that almost all creeds, religious patterns, celebrations and holidays are similar to the Swedish ones, except for the Russian Orthodox Church where the respondents mention that Christmas is celebrated January 6, because they still follow the Julian calendar.

Many of the morals of the Church of Sweden have been incorporated into the Swedish psyche. The Lutheran doctrine, adopted under Gustav Vasa, preaches submission to the powers that be – and Swedes today are still very obedient to authority. It also endorses diligence in one's duties, another common practice amongst Swedes today. Slacking off or shirking one's duties is seen as sinful, and while Swedes today might not use the word sinful, the belief holds sway in their minds. <sup>122</sup>

In consequence, even though religion has guided some norms of conduct in the Swedish society, the similarities among respondents' creeds and their practices have not represented a difficulty in the assimilation process. None of the respondents have converted to the Swedish Church, and therefore the church has not modified their values or conduct patterns in their aim to become part of the society. Further, the freedom of belief guaranteed in Sweden was a cause for respondents to suppose that they would be culturally accepted.

#### **4.3.1.4 Food**

Sweden was until quite recently a very poor country, and most people lived chiefly on herring and potatoes. When they feasted, however, the pig provided the most popular meats, in hams, bacon, sausages and pork. Although today Sweden eats many different types of food, most of the traditional holiday meals still include meet or fish. <sup>123</sup>

The Swedes usually eats a very small breakfast, which frequently consist in a cup of coffee and a slice of bread with butter, and a cheese. Around 11:00 am, they have lunch with consist of salad and a warm dish. Dinner is usually served around 18:00, and

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p.59.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p.99.

between meals or after these ones, they can enjoy a *fika*, which consists of a cup of coffee and a piece of cake or cookies.

About the culture around the food, ingredients and dishes, the answers of respondents were divided. Some of them expressed not having any problems and that they did not discover anything new, other expressed surprise and disappointment.

Respondent C said:

Swedish food was not totally new for me, but I learned more about it from my husband because he likes to cook, of course, there were a lot of dishes and ingredients that I had not seen before. Now I have learned to love and enjoy Swedish food, in fact, of course as we are in Sweden, we eat it frequently in the house; I rarely cook Mexican food, because the ingredients do not exist. About the eating schedules or the types of food, it is an adapting issue, though I miss the big breakfasts that in my culture are the most important food in the day and here they are not, but as I said, is just a habit issue.

Respondent A said:

I really had no problem about the times when they eat, in Spain we do it almost similarly, my problem was that when I wanted to drink a glass of wine before the food, as we used to do in my town, my husband accused me of being an alcoholic. About the dishes served, it was like new experience, I am not use to eat herring or the blood meal that they think is delicious and I just find disgusting, but I just avoid them. In the end the ingredients in the supermarket are almost the same, in Spain, we have a bit more variety, but it was not a big deal, I could prepare the food I was used to without any problem.

Respondent D stated:

Swedish food seems to me to be very simple, without flavour and especially without "creativity", it is rather a boring food, without any tradition or spices. It is rather a "poor" food. I do not like it. The good thing here is that I can find all the ingredients to prepare my own dishes and I do not need to suffer.

However, a very interesting answer about food was given by Respondent G when she said:

I think the big issue with the food in Sweden is not the dishes and the ingredients, or the schedules for eating, I think it is with the culture around the table. In my country, we eat for pleasure and this word includes factors as flavour and companions. Food for us is like a ritual, where everyone participates. Here I think food is something that just fulfils a need. Do I explain myself? I can explain it as an

equation, in Guate[mala] it is like: flavour + companion + nourishing; and in Sweden is nourishing + flavour + companion.

None of the respondents mentioned any problems with adapting to the Swedish kitchen, and all of them have been able to introduce their food customs to their households. Thus, the food culture has not represented an issue that obstructed the assimilation process, and in this case, husbands have been a useful resource for encountering values and customs at the table.

#### **4.3.1.5 Values and other “cultural stuff”**

When we discuss behavioural patterns of societies or cultures, we always find different points of view. We know that one of the restrictions in the social sciences is that even though authors attempt to be neutral in their investigations and presented results, the risk that the data can have a bias is always present. Thus, we admit that when we describe any society, culture or group of individuals, we will constantly find myths and realities. However, it is also true that a number of silent rules or behavioural attitudes performed by the members of the group can be easily perceived by in- and outsiders.

Thus, in this subsection, we will use the following statement to frame general Swedish behavioural patterns:

According to Baedeker’s guidebook, the Scandinavians “tend to be quiet as unassuming, patient themselves and offended by impatience in others. Their honesty, hospitality and helpfulness are proverbial”...Respectability and a quiet life are very important to most Swedes [and they]... often joke about this; as soon as you have acquire the trappings of respectability and being settled (a terrace house, two children, a dog and a red Volvo estate car) you are called a ‘Real Svensson’ and fit right in!

Swedes pride themselves on having a modern and liberal outlook on life. They like to work efficiently and take time off when the work is done. Punctuality is very important to them.

Honesty and reliability are important parts of speaking directly and being open about things, (except, of course private or emotional things). Because of their reserve and lack of open emotion, Swedes are often consider to be humourless and inhibited socially.

Swedes are smug, always believing that their way is better and therefore they are better. <sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., pp 37- 45

Peter Watcyn-Jones in his book *What next?*, summarizes the Swedish character as “punctual, honest, reliable, clean, shy, reserved, serious, industrious and finds it hard to laugh at himself”.<sup>125</sup>

The meeting of two cultures is always an exciting process. In this matter, the participants in this study described some situations where their customs differ from those of the host society.

Respondent A states:

I think the people in Sweden are very cold in their relationships, but I think it is because of the climate. I mean, in winter it is very cold and people use to go home and stay warm in there instead of being out chatting with the others. In that aspect it was a big shock for me because conversations with people are just performed when it is really necessary, and when it happens it is very short. In Spain we always talk to each other all the time, even about non-important things, just to have a conversation, but here... I feel that if I do not interact with them I will never be a part of the society. Swedish people are very nice when you know them, but it takes lot of time to cross the boundaries and that makes me feel like a bean in the rice. I am not sure I want to stay here all my life, because somehow I understand that I never will be accepted as a part of them.

Respondent B states:

I live in a place [Malmo] where there are many immigrants. So most people I know come from different countries. Culturally, it seems that there is a big gap between them and us, I mean, there is always this line that divide us. Maybe this diversity causes some kind of societal discrimination. Here in Malmo, many immigrants have a job, but usually they are part of their own small business, otherwise they would not be able to work. I think Swedish or Scandinavian people as a group, not individually, are very reserved, which can be understood as respectful. However, in my eyes, it feels that they want to demonstrate that we have not very much in common to share. I think they do not want to mix because somehow they feel superior.

Respondent C states:

Well many things are different from my culture. For example, I realize that if you sneeze in Sweden, no one says, “bless you” or something like that. No one cares, on the contrary. the strange thing is if someone says these words to you. Even more, if you say it to someone, that makes him or her see you as rather weird! So I think with this small example, we can see that they are not interested at all in each other. I do not know... my husband say that that is an old custom.

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p.46.



Respondent D and Respondent I have the same opinion regarding elderly people.

Respondent D affirms:

What it makes me very sad about the Swedish society is the fact that they are very lonely. When they grow old, they have the knowledge that they have to finish life alone in apartments or elderly houses because they usually do not want to disturb their families (children or grandchildren). I think that is very sad. In my culture, we used to take care of our old people. It is taken for granted that they will live with us and not finish their days lonely and sick.

Respondent E says:

Well my husband often tells me that I grew up under Hollywood culture and, maybe it is true. But the fact is that I hate that Swedish men do not behave as gentlemen, they do not open the door or pull out the chair. My husband says that I'm not disabled person, I can do it on my own. I mean that is true, but I miss romance and attention in my life. I think Swedish men take women for granted.

Respondent H states:

Well one of the things that I admire about Swedish people - that I do not have in my own culture - is the respect for the rules and the honesty. I mean, everyone does what they have to do, for example, the seat belts in cars, they know they have to use them and they do it. Swedes respect the queues in the banks and everywhere else, and the ticket system is very effective. Moreover, what about this new system in the supermarkets, when you pick up your own things and check them out yourself. In Guate[mala], this would never work. Unfortunately, we are too "clever" and would cheat the systems.

Those immigrants who have been successfully assimilated in the society are the ones who attempted to adopt the behavioural patterns of the host society, otherwise, "if they represent themselves as culturally different, they will be treated as inferior and denied equal rights."<sup>126</sup>

Until this point, we can observe that the respondents been discovering their differences, and experiencing the cultural stuff and values from the host society, but in general they have been adapting and follows the established rules in aims to be accepted. Besides that, they own cultural patterns were not so different form the ruling society and respondents been expressing non-significant differences, thus they just performed small changes that did not represent a challenge.

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<sup>126</sup> Rex, *op. cit.*, p. 270.

Additionally, respondents affirm that their husbands have been a very helpful resource for understanding the unwritten rules and laws, and especially, explaining why the society works in its way.

#### **4.3.2 Structural or socioeconomic assimilation**

Structural or socioeconomic assimilation refers to the way that immigrants are distributed throughout society, in occupational and social groupings.<sup>127</sup> Structural assimilation is social contact and interaction between the natives and the newcomers.

In the theoretical section, we indicated that the *Structural or socioeconomic assimilation* refers to the process where immigrants participate in “the formal social, political, economic, and cultural institutions of the host [society]”.<sup>128</sup>

We do have to remember that immigrants “are more likely to compare themselves favourably with their previous circumstances and with the disadvantaged circumstances of families and friends back home.”<sup>129</sup>

##### **4.3.2.1 Social interaction**

As we mentioned above, participants in the research have been living in Sweden for at least three years. Among them, only Respondent C has professed having a good net of social contacts. She declares:

I have many Swedish friends; in fact, here in Sweden I have more Swedish friends than Mexican or Latin ones. I got many of them because of my husband, - people that he used to know from before - and I have many friends from work and many others because they are my children’s friends’ parents. My children are very engaged in sports activities and there I have plenty of time to interact with other Swedes.

In her case, we asked about the language barrier, since she has never joined Swedish lessons, at that she responds:

Well, it has been no problem for me; I have been learning Swedish from my colleagues and especially from my children, and besides, most Swedish people speak English.

Other respondents like Respondent B, Respondent D, Respondent F and Respondent I affirmed that their social nets are limited. Their husbands have not provided them with social connections. The Swedish people that they know are people from institutions they

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<sup>127</sup> Scott, *op. cit.*, on line reference from: 15 March, 2007

<sup>128</sup> Le, C.N. *op. cit.*

<sup>129</sup> Qian, *op. cit.*, p.292

have been in contact with, like the professors of their children's schools, and they do not know any of them in private life, so they cannot count them as friends.

In contrast, these respondents remain in close contact with other persons coming from the same countries or countries with similar cultures or languages, in the aim of preserving their homelands' cultures. They also claimed to find better understanding in these groups that they could with Swedish natives.

Respondent I says:

I know they (Swedish people) do not like immigrants, so I really do not make the effort to make friends with them. I would rather have a nice time with my friends sharing common things, like food or celebrating some traditions, they understand how I feel and I do not need to make efforts to express myself, they do not make faces when I talk.

Neither Respondent A nor Respondent J has social connections provided by their husband. They expressed that their social contact with other Swedes is with relatives or short interactions with personnel in the institutions they visit. Through the internet and telephone they maintain contact with family and friends and they speak of the desire to move back to their home countries. Both believe that their period of residence in Sweden is temporary.

Respondent E who has already moved back to her home country (USA), affirmed in the interview that she felt that she was not able to melt into the society. After 3 years living in the country and a good knowledge of the Swedish language, she did not have social interactions among any other Swedish natives than her husband. Respondent E declares that the relationship with her in-laws was very bad and she could not find a reason to stay in the country, she did not belong to any group and she just had couple of not so close friends that she met in school while she was learning Swedish.

#### **4.3.2.2 Interaction among groups or institutions**

In the case of interaction among groups in institutions, Respondent A, Respondent C, Respondent H and Respondent I affirm that they belong an institution where they could come in contact with Swedish society. The first two actively participate in the labour market which allows them to socialize with Swedes, and because of their children's activities, they found other ways to be in contact with other natives.

Respondent A and Respondent I, have entered in the educational system: both of them enrolled in Swedish Universities, but in both cases, the respondents expressed that even

though they have joined these groups, there is still the presence of prejudice and stigma. The respondents attend lessons at a Swedish university where the 90 per cent of the scholars have a Swedish background.

Even though they belong to an institution, respondents report not having a close relationship with schoolmates. Respondent I affirms:

I cannot join the group, even if I am studying the same subject, there is still the prejudice that I am from Russia, I mentioned before. I have a very bad problem with the accent in the language, and moreover, I have the feeling that they believe that I'm stealing something, I mean, I feel that they think that I am using a place which should be for another Swede.

We have mentioned the stigma theory in the theoretical chapter, which states that the "visible stigmas such as race, certain physical handicaps, accents, or severe malnourishment due to poverty cannot be hidden easily from others. Thus, for people with visible attributes, the stigma can provide the primary schema from which others make assumptions about the person."<sup>130</sup>

Consequently we have confirmed this theory, because even though Respondent I has some physical characteristics of the dominant ethnic group (tall and blond), she has been stigmatized because of her accents, which is impeding her assimilation. In the case of Respondent A, in addition to the accent stigma, there are the physical differences which influence the natives' behaviour and awakened prejudices which have stopped her assimilation process in the groups where she participates.

Respondent B and Respondent G also participate in the educational system but on a lower level. Both of them are still in the Adult Education School (Komvux) with the goal of learning the language. In both cases, they state that attending this school can not be considered participation in the Swedish educational system, because none of them have real contact with Swedish nationals: "the only Swede I know at the school is the teacher, and I do not socialize with her", says Respondent G.

On the other hand, Respondent B, Respondent D, Respondent F and Respondent I, belong to groups and associations organized by persons with similar cultural backgrounds, where, as mentioned above, they meet in the aim of practicing their own traditions and passing them to their children. Practicing their home languages is rather important as well.

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<sup>130</sup> Asghar, *op. cit.*, p.6

In the case of Respondent H, she belongs to the Catholic Church in her municipality. She affirms:

In this group, I feel somehow like at home, many people who belong to the church are in the same immigrant condition as me. The problem is that I have no contact with Swedish people, most of the members are from other Catholic countries such as Poland, Spain, Italy, France or South America, the priest is from India, and I think we have two members from Sweden, but the really never stay to interact with us.

The rest of the participants stated that they do not belong to any kind of political, economic, or cultural institution, group or association in Sweden.

In the case of encounters with public and private institutions and procedures, as well as population registers, tax payment, banks, school registration, welfare benefits for children, etc., husbands have been a very useful resource. Respondents in general stated that their counterparts took care of these issues, thus they did not need to worry about them.

#### **4.3.2.3 Labour assimilation**

In the past, we indicated the importance of the participation of the newcomers in the labour market to complete the assimilation process.

Another condition for becoming a part of this study was that respondents were active participants in the labour market in their home countries before moving to Sweden. Thus, in Table 7 we can see the labour status of respondents before moving to Sweden.

As we saw above in the part, 2.3. *Who are they? (Profiles of the persons involved in intercultural marriage based on internet meeting)*, the females participating in the research are highly skilled. All of them started university and four of them have a postgraduate degree<sup>131</sup>. All of them were active in the labour market in their home countries and economically self-sufficient and all of them speak at least two languages.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> [Note: See table 4 at Appendix B, with details of level of education.]

<sup>132</sup> [Note: See the table 3 at Appendix B, with the details of spoken languages.]

**Table 7: Occupation in home country or previous country of residence**

FEMALE		Occupation in home country or previous country of residence							
Respondent	Unemployed	Student	Private sector	Business sector	Own Business	Academic / Educational sector	Medical sector	Governmental sector	Other
A: Spain			X						
B: Mexico				X					
C: Mexico			X						
D: Ukraine								X	
E: USA					X				
F: Germany						X			
G: Czech Republic				X					
H: Guatemala							X		
I: Russia			X						
J: Bulgaria							X		

- Private sector refers to the private companies whose offer goods or services. Employees in this sector mainly work in offices

- Business sector includes companies dedicated to commercial products. Employees in this sector mainly work in shops.

- Employees in the academic or educational sector mainly work in schools and universities as a teachers or researchers.

- Medical sector refers exclusively to medical personnel (doctors, nurses, etc.), this category includes veterinary services. If working in administration it is placed in private or governmental, depending on the character of the institution.

The education and experience of respondents is:

**Respondent A:** Psychologist and sociologist, 7 years of working experience in her subject.

**Respondent B:** Undergraduate in media. 3 years of working experience in marketing.

**Respondent C:** Computer engineer. 14 years of working experience in her subject.

**Respondent D:** Economist. 8 years of working experience in governmental sector.

**Respondent E:** French teacher. No experience in this sector, but experience in administration of own business as a massage therapist.

**Respondent F:** Pedagogue. 9 years of working experience in her subject, specialized for work with small children.

**Respondent G:** Undergraduate of psychology. No experience in this sector, but experience in office work.

**Respondent H:** Paediatrician. 8 years of working experience in her subject.

**Respondent I:** Economist. Not experience in this subject, but experience in office work.

**Respondent J:** Veterinarian. 4 years of working experience in her subject.

The labour situation of respondents in Sweden is revised in Table number 8.

**Table 8. Current occupation (In Sweden)**

FEMALE		Current occupation (In Sweden)								
Respondent	Unemployed	Student	Private sector	Business sector	Own Business	Academic / Educational sector	Medical sector	Governmental sector	Industry and factories	Other
A: Spain		X								
B: Mexico		X								
C: Mexico						X				
D: Ukraine	X									
E: USA	X									
F: Germany	X									
G: Czech Republic		X								
H: Guatemala							X			
I: Russia		X								
J: Bulgaria	X									

- Private sector refers to the private companies whose offer goods or services. Employees in this sector mainly work in office

- Business sector includes companies dedicated to commercial products. Employees in this sector mainly work in shops.

- Employees in the academic or educational sector mainly work in schools and universities as a teachers or researchers.

- Medical sector refers exclusively to medical personnel (doctors, nurses, etc.), this category includes veterinary services. If working in administration it is placed in private or governmental, depending on the character of the institution.

Thus, if we compare their past labour situation with the current one, we will appreciate that just two of the ten participants in the study, Respondent C and Respondent H, have integrated themselves into the labour market.

Respondent C stated:

I got a job a month after I came to Sweden, my husband is in charge of the IT and Help Desk department at the University and he helped me to get a permanent job there.

Respondent H said:

I was very lucky that Sweden has a big lack of medical services and because of that, it was very easy for me to get a job here, with many benefits. My husband helped me with contacts and I got a contract before I moved.

Respondent A affirmed that she participated in the labour market in Sweden on a very small scale, which for her does not count as a labour integration:

I work 4 hours a week as a Spanish teacher in the adult education school, but that is nothing. I mean, what I can do with 600 crowns a month; it is very ridiculous. I am not able to pay even the half of the rent. I have been looking for positions in other places, like secondary schools or other education systems, but the employers always argue that I do not have teacher qualifications and that is the reason because I cannot get a job. I cannot work in my area because I do not have the level of Swedish that my activities require, so I feel the labour market doors in Sweden are closed to me. I have been invited to work as a cleaner, but I am not so desperate yet.

Regarding this matter, Respondent D stated:

You are not going to believe me, but I have sent more than one hundred applications, and I have never been called for an interview. Last summer I signed up for a labour training program in the neighbouring municipality because mine doesn't have such a thing, and I got a placement at the office that supervises the working environment. I was travelling about one and half hours every day. There was a big possibility of getting a job and I was sure that I was going to get it because my marks in the training programme were very good, besides I felt that the colleagues liked me. At the end, the boss told me that I did not have the qualifications and the last thing I knew was that a Swedish girl got the position. I do not know if it was because of my immigrant background or because she was more capable.

Respondent G says about it:

I was looking for job, but I just found one as a mother tongue teacher for other German kids. I do not know how to teach German and my qualifications are different; besides, I had to drive around meeting kids in the schools all around my municipality. I think that kind of work has a very uncomfortable environment for the person who does it, beside you have no time to interact with other Swedes, you work like a gypsy and I did not want that.

Respondent J states:

I signed up at the Employment office, but they said that I had no possibility of working as a veterinarian because I needed the Swedish certification. They offered me a job as a cleaner, but I do not want to do that, so I decided it was better to have a baby, I can dedicate to her and get paid for that.

The general response of unemployed respondents - including the ones who are educating themselves - is that they believe that they have been discriminated against because of



their immigrant condition rather than ethnic background and the language stigma consequently. "Among educated members of the migrant communities themselves who fear that their labelling as 'ethnic' necessarily involves their assignment to inferiority".<sup>133</sup>

They have been offered positions, that do not require special education, that they are not willing to do. That is the reason why Respondent A and Respondent I started university studies, and Respondent J decided to have a child.

About this situation, respondents affirm that they feel insecure about asking for job positions again. Respondents do not feel skilled enough to fulfil the employers' requirements. "What is the point of asking for a job, if anyway I won't get it?", says Respondent B. Respondent J affirms, "I feel that I'm fighting for a position in the society and in the labour market that does not even exist. It is just a waste of time".

When immigrants are aware of the social stigma or the "stereotype threat", according to Steele & Aronson (1995), their social performance will be affected by a reticent, introverted and passive attitude, which will delay and make more difficult their assimilation process, "widening the [immigrants-natives] gap"<sup>134</sup>.

It is imperative to note that unemployed respondents are listed as active job searchers in the Employment Service Offices in their municipalities. About this fact, all of them expressed that being registered in this service has not helped them at all to get a position in the labour market. Moreover, as none of them had been a part of the labour market in Sweden before, they do not receive economic benefits for the unemployed.

To join the labour market is an important stage for assimilation into the host society. This increases the social nets, activates immigrant participation in the economy of the country, reinforces his/her confidence because he/she feels accepted, and the interaction with other native members facilitates the assimilation of values and "cultural stuff" of the host society. As we mention before, if immigrants has not use of this new items, they may stay acculturated, because even if they have studied the language, and learned habits, and values from one of the host society, they have no use for these new items.

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<sup>133</sup> Rex, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

<sup>134</sup> Steele, *op. cit.*, pp 797-811.

## 4.4 The Host Society

### 4.4.1 Receptional and Behavioural Attitude: Civic assimilation. Social and structural (labour) racism

Nevertheless, as we have seen, the assimilation process has two main actors, the newcomer and the host society. In the above sections we have discussed the assimilation process of immigrants, but on the other hand, it is also essential to consider the host society, in the knowledge that the amalgamation goes further than receiving immigrants in the country or teaching them the language. Integration (performed by the host society) or assimilation (performed by the newcomer) has become a very delicate issue.

The following part will be dedicated to presenting an overview of the receptional attitude of the Swedish society toward immigrants.

According to Milton Gordon's assimilation stages, the last four phases of assimilation relate to the host society. These include, in the first place, the development of a sense of peoplehood or ethnicity, and after this follows the receptional attitude (absence of prejudice – reaching the point where they encounter no discriminatory behaviour); the receptional behaviour (absence of discrimination – reaching the point where they encounter no prejudiced attitudes), and civic assimilation (absence of value or power conflict).<sup>135</sup>

Thus, when we talk about these stages we can interpret them to mean that the host society (native members and institutions) should see and treat all individuals living in the country in a similar way, without regard to their ethnic or social condition. In this respect, Swedish government "has declared that the work of combating racism and all types of discrimination in different areas is one of the most important social issues of all".

<sup>136</sup> Therefore, in February 2001 a National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Xenophobia, Homophobia and Discrimination was signed, in which they proclaim, "Domestic policy must also allow everyone in Sweden genuine opportunities to feel part of the social community and to have power over their own lives. The right of everyone to employment, education, housing and a fair distribution of social resources is thus of central importance".<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Gordon, *op. cit.*, p 70.

<sup>136</sup> Swedish Government. *A national action plan to combat racism, xenophobia, homophobia and discrimination*. The Government presents this written communication to Parliament. Stockholm, 7 February 2001. Published: Brussels : European Commission, July 2007 (European anti-discrimination law review), p, 4.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

Sweden hoists the flag of the multiculturalism, respect for minorities and their rights, and proclaims homogeneity and equality of opportunities for all the citizens<sup>138</sup>, but the truth is that the national identity is an obstacle to integration. Thus, we find that there are big differences between what is said and what is done.

Lars Petterson his article: *The Construction of the Swedish 'WE'*, mentions that Swedish national sentiment became stronger in the 60's, after the arrival of labour immigrants, and the "WE" and the "OTHERS" view became more evident after joining the EU.

Confirming this issue, Erling Bjurström of Linköping University, states:

Sweden turned into a multi-ethnic society in the 1960s. Since the growth of the multi-ethnic neighbourhoods... the differences between "Swedes" and "immigrants" has become taken for granted... The later was e.g. confirm in the 1990s when the Swedish minister of immigration proposed that immigrants should be renamed "new Swedes". In the same decade, cultural diversity and multiculturalism also became the Swedish official state ideology on questions concerning the labour market, ethnicity, youth and cultural policy. This was also accompanied by strong political measures against ethnic discrimination during the 1990s and the installation of an ombudsman with the assignment to look after the interests of ethnic minorities and take cases of ethnic discrimination to court.<sup>139</sup>

However, the truth is that Swedish society (real people in the streets, in working places, in schools) does not welcome the immigrant presence; cultural assimilation has been very difficult (more details are described later in the text and in table 9). "Two reactions which are to be expected in the receiving society are those of xenophobia and racism on the one hand and of assimilationism. The terms xenophobia and racism are most frequently too loosely used; as used here they refer to reactions to immigrant communities which involve demands for their expulsion, physical attacks, racial and cultural abuse and racial and ethnic discrimination which gives the immigrants fewer rights than those of full citizens."<sup>140</sup>

It is well known that "migrant minorities became the focus of suspicion and hostility in their countries of settlement",<sup>141</sup> and in developed societies as Sweden, the newcomers are seen as unnecessary expenses that working citizens have to pay for with their taxes: "we are working for those who are coming and getting everything free; is the general

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<sup>138</sup> Rex, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

<sup>139</sup> Bjurström, Erling. *Multiculturalism and Youth Culture: The construction of ethnic identity in youth styles*. Linköping University. Sweden.  
<http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/020/001/ecp072001.pdf>

<sup>140</sup> Rex, *op. cit.*, p.279.

<sup>141</sup> Rex, *op. cit.*, p.269.

thought. Consequently, negative stereotypes of immigrants have become common, they are routinely branded as 'welfare scroungers' or 'refugees of convenience' who unfairly take advantage of a system that was never intended for their benefit. Immigrants from the non-Western world, Muslims in particular, have become singled out as objects of disparagement, whereas [nationals] are far more open and welcoming toward immigrants from the EU and other Western countries."<sup>142</sup>

Ethnic discrimination in companies or any kind of institution is prohibited and penalized by the law, but the reality is that foreign nationals have difficulty getting jobs, which represents an important step in the assimilation process.

Even if the law punishes discrimination on ethnic grounds, Sweden overlooks her citizens' social racism, and we can even talk about structural racism in enterprises. There are still ghettos in the cities (Rinkeby in Stockholm – Rosengård in Malmö – Hammarkullen in Gothenburg) where immigrants are confined.

There are however, cracks in the ideology of multiculturalism pursued by the state. At the same time that it proclaims that authorities, social and cultural institutions should be multicultural, multi-ethnic neighbourhoods become more and more segregated from neighbourhoods almost exclusively inhabited by "Swedes". In this way, living in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood also tends to signal low social status, welfare dependency, and high rates of crime. And as a consequence differences in terms of ethnicity in the Swedish population tend to equal differences in terms of social class.<sup>143</sup>

The statistics of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO)<sup>144</sup> who is an independent government authority, reported 3,654 cases of discrimination in the last 5 years (discrimination means that one individual is treated less favourably on the grounds of ethnic origin, religion or other belief). See detail in Table 9.

This means that in a population of 1,128,093 individuals with a foreign background, according to the Swedish Statistics Bureau, 0.3 per cent have been discriminated against. The number cannot sound dramatic, but the DO estimates that only five to six

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<sup>142</sup> Hedetoft, *op. cit.*, p.10

<sup>143</sup> Bjurström, *op. cit.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO)* <http://www.do.se>

percent of those who suffer from discrimination actually take the step to file a complaint.

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**Table 9. Cases of discrimination grounded in ethnical issues (2001-2006).  
Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (DO)**

<b>Cases of discrimination grounded in ethnical issues (2001-2006)</b>	
<b>Category of Discrimination</b>	<b>Cases</b>
At the place of work	1591
On having requested employment	234
On having contracted housing	259
On having requested insurance	117
On having requested a credit	69
At a restaurant	213
On having requested social services	153
On having requested medical services	100
On having requested education	139
On basic human rights	231
On having requested products or services	301
Others	247

Dagens Nyheter, a national Swedish newspaper, published September 5, 2004 an article called: *Rebin? Nej, tack. Fredrik? Ja, välkommen!* (*Rebin? No, thanks. Fredrik? Yes, welcome!*), where they conducted an experiment. Four students with the same age, same gender and similar skills and language capabilities, call to ask for the same job. Two of them are Swedish nationals and the other two are immigrants or have an immigrant background. The conclusion was that the Swedish nationals were invited for the job, while the immigrants were told that the position was occupied as soon as they mentioned their last names, even if they did call first.

<sup>145</sup> Gruber, Barbara. *Sweden: Is the Country's Tolerant Image Just a Show?*. Deutsche Welle. Immigration. Published September 27, 2007. <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,2791387,00.html>

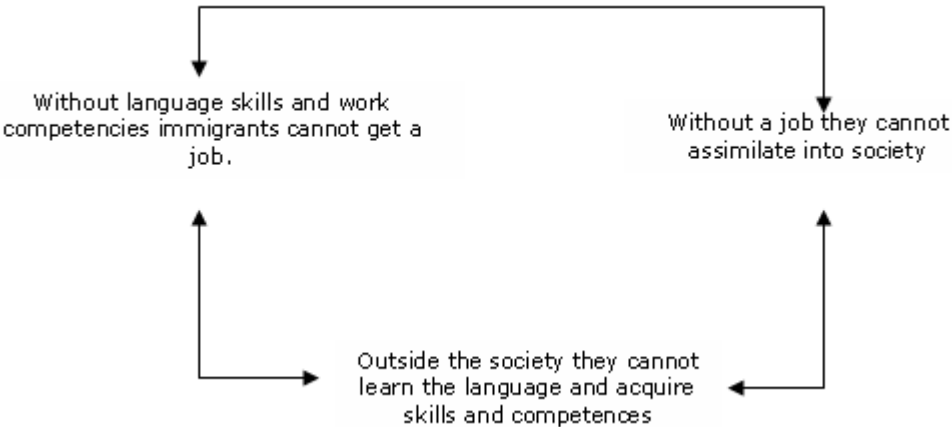
This article mentions that every fifth job position is closed to immigrants and it shows that the trade sector (restaurants, hotels, shops, etc.) is the one which discriminates most. Labour discrimination leads immigrants to become dependent on public financial assistance.

Another work entitled *Sweden: Is the Country's Tolerant Image Just a Show?*, published in a German journal by Barbara Gruber, points out that "many immigrants living in the country face racism on a daily basis... With foreign names and a different skin colour, immigrants can find it difficult to get work or rent an apartment, even if they have lived in the country for decades and speak fluent Swedish. Discrimination in the workplace is particularly problematic for Sweden's ethnic minorities and several studies have shown that people with "foreign-sounding" names are disadvantaged when applying for work."

<sup>146</sup>

Immigrants, with the aim of reducing discrimination in institutions, have used a technique: changing their names and adopting Swedish ones, hoping that this will make their life easier and perhaps prevent prejudices. Thus we have to remember that all of our respondents took their husbands' Swedish last names, in order to assimilate better. "Twenty percent of the 1,400 applications received by the Swedish Patent and Registration Office last year were from individuals with non-Swedish names... A study made by the Swedish trade union showed that immigrants who changed their name had higher incomes." <sup>147</sup>

The low level of tolerance for immigrants unleashes an endless cycle that pushes the immigrants far away from the "real society".



<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Gruber, *op. cit.*

The Swedish Statistics Bureau published that in the year 2002, reported that about 195, 000 immigrants participated in the labour market.<sup>148</sup> This number represents 17 per cent of the total immigrant population in the country at that time.

#### **4.4.2 Integration programs**

Even though we have seen that Denmark has stricter rules than Sweden allowing foreigners to enter the country, the Danish authorities have developed a program of integration for those who would successfully establish themselves in Denmark. The project is called *A New Chance for Everybody* and was signed by the government in 2005.

This integrating program is "the first of its kind in a Western country, the act assigned the main responsibility for integration to the municipalities [and] "activating" [them] (i.e., putting immigrants to socially useful but unpaid work outside the ordinary job market) and housing refugees, and regional governments for language instruction... In addition, the formal integration period was extended from 18 months to three years, during which refugees and immigrants over age 18 are expected to learn Danish; familiarize themselves with Danish history, culture and society; acquire skills and competences needed to find jobs; and generally participate in everyday life."<sup>149</sup>

If immigrants integrate themselves in the labour market, their situation will change and consequentially, the nation's perspective on immigrants will change as well.

In comparison, the Swedish government has not yet established a program to integrate immigrants into society. The Swedish Integration Bureau, was abolished on 1 July 2007. "In autumn 2006 the Board's activities will be examined to provide a basis for deciding which tasks should be transferred to other bodies and which should be wound down completely"<sup>150</sup>, thus its activities were pass to the municipalities or to the migration offices. In consequence, immigrants who come under the family reunification policies have to make it on their own.

There are current policy discussions about it, but discussing is far away from acting. For "quite a long time, the government has been concerned about unemployment levels among the foreign born as compared to natives of the country, higher levels of social-welfare dependency among people of migrant origin, segregation indices, dropping

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<sup>148</sup> *Statistical Yearbook of Sweden*. Orebro, 2004, p.272.

<sup>149</sup> Hedetoft. *Op. cit.*, p.9

<sup>150</sup> *Swedish Integration official board*: <http://www.integrationsverket.se/>

participation in local elections, school dropouts, crime rates, etc.”<sup>151</sup>

In this regard, Charles Westin from Stockholm University comments:

Sweden, like all countries in Western Europe, is facing an aging population and low birth rates. It is reasonable to believe that Sweden will have to rethink its immigration policy in the not-too-distant future and to accept low-skilled labour immigration from non-European countries. Members of the non-socialist opposition parties, who overall are more favourably inclined to labour migration, have criticized the government for encouraging the production of ideological discourse rather than seriously determining the facts, analyzing the problems, and developing feasible strategies to deal with the shortcomings.

In three Swedish communities: Stockholm, Malmo and Linköping, there is a program in which immigrants with an university background or qualified as high-skilled workers are invited to a specialized technical language course, but this should be extended to the entire country.

As we have seen, the internet is a useful device that allows not only computer-mediated communication; the internet is a window to the world and provides the tools to find any kind of information around the world. All of our respondents had access to the internet, but as they stated, none of them read or looked for related data on immigrants' situations in Sweden.

Respondents expressed feeling disappointment in their encounters with Swedish society, because they had bigger expectations, “I just knew what everyone said, that it was a wealthy country, clean, sometimes cold and everyone was blond. At that time, I was more eager about the relationship with my husband than about the living conditions. I was well-educated so took for granted that assimilation was a piece of cake”, says Respondent J. Respondent C shyly declares that she did not have any idea that Sweden was Sweden: “until I came to visit the first time, I thought that Sweden was Switzerland.”

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<sup>151</sup> Westin, *op. cit.*



# Chapter V: Conclusions

*"The past is a country from which we have all emigrated"*

*Hannerz, Ulf*

The findings of the present study reveal interesting results about the adjustment process of women who get involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting.

The classical theory of assimilation stated by Milton Gordon presents a series of stages that an immigrant should pass through in order to become assimilated, where intercultural marriage represents the final stage, which *assures* the access of the newcomer to the host society, allowing their entrance into primary groups and institutions.<sup>152</sup>

Our respondents jumped directly to the last stage presented by this classic theory, which in general *did not* mean that during their incorporation process to the host society they did not experience severe inconveniences in their assimilation process at the lower assimilation stages (Cultural patterns and Structural)<sup>153</sup>.

During the first stage: *Cultural Patterns*, respondents found the husband as a useful resource for assimilation in issues related to customs and values, where he guided them in the behavioural patterns of the Swedish Society. Respondents also expressed that in subjects related to religion, beliefs, traditions or food, they did not experience inconveniences because their own cultural patterns were similar to the host society's. However, regarding language acquisition, eight to ten respondents affirmed that their husband was not a valuable resource. Only Respondent D and Respondent I spoke Swedish at home.

At this stage, we learned the value of the language for assimilating into the host society; however, amazingly we found that the two respondents (Respondent C and Respondent H) who are active in the labour market did not require the acquisition of the language. In both cases, husbands were a valuable resource for finding a place in the labour market, and in addition, their professions are practiced in similar ways in Sweden and their native countries, and they could perform it in a third language: English.

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<sup>152</sup> Bankston III, *op. cit.*

<sup>153</sup> [Note: See the assimilation stages. Theoretical part.]

Thus, we found that in some cases acquisition of the host society language is important but not crucial in the assimilation process.

The second stage related to *Structural Assimilation* (Large-scale social interactions and structure among groups in institutions). Here we pointed out the conjecture that husbands are important *resources* since they provide their spouses with social connections that could assure their access to the social and perhaps to the labour sphere. As a result, we found out that this condition is not necessary. The majority of respondents affirmed that their husbands did not provide them with any connections, which is making their assimilation process difficult. This issue perhaps has to do with the general quiet character of Swedish population, and the high sense of equality, honesty and reliability that make nepotism a very negative matter. This assumption perhaps could work in a society unlike Sweden's.

In some cases (Respondent C and Respondent H), where husbands have been a very helpful resource for the structural assimilation, the stages differed from those where husbands did not provide the spouses with social connections. Moreover, all the cases differed in comparison with the assimilation proposed by the classical theories. In Table 10, we can distinguish the comparison of assimilation stages of each case.

Other main issue we can point out is the fact that husbands of the more integrated women are highly educated (see Appendix B). Consequently we may suppose it is an influential factor for assimilation, but not determinant.

In the part related to the encounter with the procedures of private and public institutions, the husbands of the respondents represented, as well, a very helpful resource, since they instructed them in the subject. Thus, women in our research did not experience any trouble in this area.

**Table 10. Comparison of assimilation stages for women who get involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting**

Stage	Classical Assimilation Stages (Milton Gordon)	Assimilation Stages of women who are participating in the labour market	Assimilation Stages of women who are not participating in the labour market (8 of 10)
<b>Newcomer</b>			
1	<b>Cultural patterns (language, religion, food, values, beliefs etc.)</b>	<b>Marital (Large-scale intermarriage)</b>	<b>Marital (Large-scale intermarriage)</b>
2	Structural (Large scale social interactions and structure among groups in institutions)	Structural (Large scale social interactions and structure among groups in institutions)	<b>Cultural patterns (language, religion, food, values, beliefs etc.)</b>
3	<b>Marital (Large-scale intermarriage)</b>	<b>Cultural patterns (language, religion, food, values, beliefs etc.)</b>	Structural (Large scale social interactions and structure among groups in institutions)
<b>Host society</b>			
4	Indentificational (Development of sense of peoplehood or ethnicity based exclusively on host society)		
5	Attitude receptional (absence of prejudice – reach the point where they encounter no discriminatory behaviour)		
6	Behavioural receptional (absence of discrimination – reach the point where they encounter no prejudiced attitudes)		
7	Civic assimilation (absence of value and power conflict)		

We expected that the women involved in relationships base on internet meeting were highly educated and with a certain social status in home countries, because of the fact that they have access to the new communication technologies they do know how to use them. Furthermore, as they do not come from a Scandinavian country or presumably did not have any contact with a Scandinavian language before moving to Sweden, they should be able to speak at least two languages. This statement was affirmative.

The women who come to Sweden under the conditions described in the research were multilingual and highly educated as we read in the empirical chapter, thus, we found that education capital did not assure success in the new society. It certainly helped in some cases, but it is not a sufficient condition for success.

Another topic important to mention is marital adjustment, where we found that women involved in intercultural marriages based on internet meeting had a doubly difficult assimilation process, since they had to adjust to a person who they know only through the internet and at the same time find their place in the new society. In this feature, we

found that focusing on the commonalities rather than on the differences, making agreements about which traditions they want to carry on as a couple and discussing their expectations in the areas of mealtimes, holidays, finances, sex, chores and roles, has given a positive atmosphere to the marriages. Couples have said that the first year of this type of marriage is the hardest.

This double adjustment process has provoked psychological conflicts for the respondents related with their capabilities and identity. Many of them have found themselves insecure or useless, because they were economically dependent. Three respondents (Respondent D, Respondent F and Respondent G) mention their economic dependence as the main reason for their separation or divorce because their husbands did not want to carry on paying for wives' and step-children's expenses.

Accordingly, we can conclude that after at least three years of living in Sweden the majority (8 of 10) of women in our research were not fully integrated (culturally, socially and labour-wise) into Swedish society. In addition, as we mentioned above the main key for assimilation was the participation on the labour market which, in the lack of participation, the economic dependency of the wives and problems in the marital relationship reside.

On the other hand, we also referred to the importance of knowing and maintaining loving relations through the Internet, since generally, the idea of the person on the other side of the screen can adjust or modify when the couple begins living together. In this feature, as we read in the theoretical part, Respondents confirmed (except respondent C) experiencing identity and behavioural changes of their husbands. The person that they started to live with, it was not the same one that they idealized thru the screen.

As we read, the host society has also an active role in the process of assimilation. Thus, our findings in this area reflected that ethnic identity, length of residence in the country or socio-economic class are not determining factors for assimilation in Swedish society. However, the presumption about "orientation toward destination" seemed to have an important role. For the kind of immigration that we have studied, it could be helpful if newcomers were informed first about opportunities in the country (all of them used the internet) and tried to find an activity to perform before moving. Making a plan about what they would do could have prevented sentiments of frustration or disappointment.

The postulated premise, which state easier acceptance of the women (coming to Sweden under conditions described above) by the host society, was incorrect. It is true that they

learned the social codes quicker, because they were married to a native member. However, in some cases the husbands were not a functional resource for acquire the language and as we read most of them did not have connections that could possibly help the spouses to find a job sooner than other groups of immigrants.

As we mentioned in the theoretical chapter, if assimilation is the goal, as soon as the newcomer arrives in the host society they should decide what they are going to do and which kind of relationships they want to have. Consequently, there is a relationship between the individual's orientation toward the host culture and their cultural adjustment.

Another important issue to mention is the fact that the Swedish Integration Board has disappeared and major projects for integration have been left in the hands of the municipalities or the Migration Board. Currently these institutions have no integration programs for immigrants, and the reality today is that there is a huge gap in the area where society and newcomers find common ground. The Swedish government needs to develop induction programmes for new immigrants aimed at taking advantage of the existing human resources in the country.

It is not easy to talk about assimilation and multiculturalism. The host society has to accept that in many cases immigrants are needed (in countries such as the Nordic ones where the fertility rate is low and they need more people to support the economy). Immigrants need to accept established cultural patterns, develop a national sentiment and sense of belonging in the receiving nation in order to become "real" Swedes. Newcomers need to be aware that people who do not adapt themselves to new situations usually do not succeed. That is evolution. Trying to live in the past is an error. Even women who jumped to the last stage of assimilation experienced severe inconveniences in Gordon's lower classical assimilation stages.

# Appendix A

## Interview Questionnaire

The purpose of this interview will be to establish the profile of the women who form intercultural marriages after meeting their spouse on the Internet. How have they have been experiencing the processes of **integration or assimilation** (social, labour and cultural) into new societies, and second, how have they been dealing with relationship adjustments (stressors resulting from their different cultural backgrounds)? It is important to mention that the interview will be applied just to the women. The husbands will not be participating in any form. **The interviews will be completely anonymous.**

### Interview questions

#### Demographic Questionnaire:

##### **Participating women**

1. Age:
2. Ethnicity:
3. Country of Birth:
4. Mother tongue:
5. Other languages spoken:
6. Highest level of education:
7. Occupation in home country or previous country of residence:
8. Time living in the new country:
9. Current occupation:
10. Number of marriages:
11. Duration:
12. Number of children from previous marriages or relationships:
13. Number of years in current marriage:
14. Number of children from current marriage:

##### **Husband's demographic questionnaire:**

1. Age:
2. Ethnicity:
3. Country of Birth:
4. Mother tongue:
5. Other languages spoken:
6. Highest level of education:
7. Occupation:

8. Number of marriages:
9. Duration:
10. Number of children from previous marriages or relationships:
11. Number of years in current marriage:
12. Number of children from current marriage:

### **Warm up**

1. How did you meet your husband?
2. Had you ever thought that you would marry someone outside of your culture?
3. How long had you been chatting before you decided to start a relationship?
4. Did you have previous online relationships?
5. Why didn't the other online relationships work out?
6. Why did you make the decision to meet in person?
7. Why did you make the decision to get married?
8. Did you choose the nationality of your husband?
9. How much information about your husband's country did you have before marrying him?
10. Can you tell me about the process of deciding to get married?

### **Experiencing of intercultural Marriage - Experiencing Stressors**

11. What is your common language?
12. Was the marriage a legal condition for you to be together with your husband?
13. Was the marriage a social condition for to be together with your husband?
14. How do your relatives see your marriage?
15. How do your in-laws see your marriage?
16. What are the issues about which you and your husband disagree? (Language, religion, customs and laws, tradition, material culture, and cuisine).
17. After this time, does the relationship fulfil your expectations? Yes/ No. Why?
18. Have you ever regretted about your decision to get married?
19. Have you ever considered divorce?
20. If you divorce, do you think you will stay in Sweden? Why?
21. Have you heard of immigrant women who have experienced some kind of psychological violence in the marriage? In which way?
22. Have you heard of immigrant women who have experienced some kind of physical violence in the marriage? In which way?
23. Which are the biggest challenges you have been experiencing as a couple?

24. What resources, meaning strengths, people, things that help you to cope, did you feel you had to draw on in hard times both individually and as a couple, through the different stages of your marriage?
25. Did you ever consider that there could be risks associated with getting married to a man that you hardly knew who was from a different culture?
26. Before getting married, did you consider the possibility that your marriage could fail, and in that case did you have a plan of what to do?
27. Did you ever wonder about the honesty of your internet relationships?
28. Do you think that in an internet relationship, personality and understanding are more important than physical attraction? If yes, Can you explain in which way or how did you experienced this?
29. What do you think about the general idea that only desperate people get involved in internet relationships?
30. What advice can you give to other women who are meeting men through the Internet and are thinking of getting married?

### **Social/Civic integration**

31. Why did you decide to move to Sweden instead of your husband moving to your home country?
32. Had you been in Sweden before meeting your husband? If yes, how did you like it?
33. Can you tell me about your first impressions of Sweden, when you moved here after your marriage? And how did you experienced the language, religion, customs and laws, tradition, material culture, and cuisine.
34. Did life in the new country fulfil your expectations? –give examples- Yes/ No. Why?
35. Was the migratory process (getting visa) easy for you?
36. Which were the requirements for you to get a visa to live and work in Sweden?
37. Do you hold Swedish citizenship?
38. Did you keep your original citizenship?
39. Did you change your last name after the marriage?
40. How has this helped you to integrate into Swedish society?
41. Do you speak Swedish?
42. How good?
43. Where did you learn it?
44. Have you been studying it in Sweden? If yes, for how long?
45. Is there any factor that has made your integration to Swedish society difficult?
46. Have you ever experienced any kind of racism or discrimination? In which way?



47. Do you have Swedish friends?
48. Do you have friends from your own country here in Sweden?
49. How often do you participate in social events with Swedish people?
50. How often do you participate in social events with people from your country?
51. Do you belong to some kind of group or association of people from your country?
52. Do you belong to some kind of group or association of where mostly Swedish people participate?
53. What you been doing to integrate into Swedish society?
54. Is it working?
55. How has your husband been helping you to integrate into Swedish society?
56. What do you miss most about your country?
57. Do you think that your situation in Sweden is good? Yes/No Why?
58. Do you feel that you been climbing in the social scale because you did move to Sweden?
59. How do feel about the society in general?
60. How is Swedish society different from the society in your home country?  
(Language, religion, customs and laws, tradition, material culture, and cuisine)
61. How would your life be at this stage if you went back to your country?

*In case, that Sweden does not fulfil your expectations:*

62. Have you ever considered moving back to your country?
63. How? Just you or bringing your husband with you?
64. Have you ever considered moving to a third country?
65. How? Just you or bringing your husband with you?

### **Cultural Integration**

66. Did you consider the cultural differences (language, religion, customs and laws, tradition, material culture, and cuisine) before deciding to get married?
67. Can you describe how you felt and what your life was like in your country?
68. Can you describe how you felt and what your life was like in Sweden?
69. Do you think that your personality (for example: have you become shyer, quiet, open minded, etc.) has changed since you came to Sweden?
70. Can you mention a couple of issues that caused cultural shock for you?
71. Have you and your husband had conflicts regarding the children's education? If yes, in which ways?
72. Do you think that intercultural couples who meet on the Internet have a more difficult integration process than other intercultural marriages?

## **Labour Integration**

73. Do you have a high school or university degree from your country? If yes, is it valid in Sweden?
74. Do you need to complete your education for Swedish system?
75. Have you been studying in Sweden something else besides the language? If yes, what?
76. Did you work in your country? If yes, which kind of job did you have there?
77. Which kinds of job are you able to do in Sweden?
78. How are the perspectives in the labour market for you?
79. Have you been searching for a job? If yes. Did you find one?
80. If not, what was the reason that the employer gave you for not getting it?
81. Have you been working in Sweden?

*If yes:*

82. What kind of job are you doing?
83. How do you feel about it?
84. How is your relationship with your Swedish colleagues?
85. Have you experienced any kind of discrimination at work? If yes, how?
86. Is your work similar to the work you did in your country?
87. Is your work related to the education you have? If not, do you think it is possible for you to get a position similar to the one that you had in your country?
88. What is stopping you from getting a similar job to the one you had in your country?
89. Is the salary similar to that of Swedish people doing the same kind of work?

*If not?*

90. How has your current labour situation affected your relationship?
91. Is it a problem for you or your husband for you to be economically dependent?  
How do you feel about it?
92. Did your husband help you to find a job? In which way?
93. Have you experienced structural discrimination? Can you describe how?
94. Which are the factors that are affecting your ability to get the kind of job that you had in your country?
95. Do you know about any governmental integration program in your community?

# Appendix B

## Interview Questionnaire: Demographic results.

The results showed in this appendix correspond to the demographic survey. The results are showing us the profiles of the women and men from the intercultural marriages whose meet their spouse on the Internet. Our sample consists in ten interviewees to intercultural couples where male is Swedish native and the wife is foreign citizen. We identify them with an alphabetical denomination and country of birth.

## Results of wives demographic questionnaire:

### 1. Age of the respondents:

<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>Age of the respondents</b>						
<b>Respondent</b>	Less than 20 years old	Between 21 and 25 years old	Between 26 and 30 years old	Between 31 and 35 years old	Between 36 and 40 years old	Between 41 and 45 years old	More than 45
A: Spain				<b>X</b>			
B: Mexico			<b>X</b>				
C: Mexico						<b>X</b>	
D: Ukraine			<b>X</b>				
E: USA				<b>X</b>			
F: Germany						<b>X</b>	
G: Czech Republic		<b>X</b>					
H: Guatemala				<b>X</b>			
I: Russia		<b>X</b>					
J: Bulgaria				<b>X</b>			

2. Spoken languages:

<b>FEMALE</b>		<b>Spoken Languages</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	Mother Tongue	Second Language	Third Language	Fourth Language	Fifth language or more	
A: Spain	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Italian</b>	<b>Swedish</b>		
B: Mexico	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Swedish</b>			
C: Mexico	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>Swedish</b>		
D: Ukraine	<b>Ukrainian</b>	<b>Russian</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Swedish</b>		
E: USA	<b>English</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>Swedish</b>			
F: Germany	<b>German</b>	<b>Swedish</b>				
G: Czech Republic	<b>Czech</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Swedish</b>			
H: Guatemala	<b>Spanish</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Swedish</b>			
I: Russia	<b>Russian</b>	<b>Swedish</b>				
J: Bulgaria	<b>Bulgarian</b>	<b>Russian</b>	<b>German</b>	<b>Swedish</b>		

3. Highest level of education:

<b>FEMALE</b>		<b>Scholar education</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	High school	Undergraduate	University Graduate	Master Graduate	PhD Graduate or more	
A: Spain				<b>X</b>		
B: Mexico		<b>X</b>				
C: Mexico			<b>X</b>			
D: Ukraine				<b>X</b>		
E: USA		<b>X</b>				
F: Germany		<b>X</b>				
G: Czech Republic		<b>X</b>				
H: Guatemala					<b>X</b>	
I: Russia		<b>X</b>				
J: Bulgaria				<b>X</b>		

4. Time of living in the new country:

<b>FEMALE</b>		<b>Time of living in Sweden</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	3 years or less	Between 3 and 4 years	Between 4 and 5 years	Between 5 and 6 years	More than 6 years	
A: Spain			X			
B: Mexico			X			
C: Mexico					X	
D: Ukraine			X			
E: USA				X		
F: Germany					X	
G: Czech Republic		X				
H: Guatemala			X			
I: Russia		X				
J: Bulgaria				X		

5. Number of marriages and duration of the previous marriage:

<b>FEMALE</b>		<b>Number of marriages and duration of the previous marriage or cohabiting relationships in years</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	1 year or less	Between 2 and 5 years	Between 5 and 8 years	Between 8 and 11 years	More than 11 years	
A: Spain						
B: Mexico						
C: Mexico					X	
D: Ukraine			X			
E: USA						
F: Germany			X			
G: Czech Republic						
H: Guatemala						
I: Russia						
J: Bulgaria						

- Every **X** represent a previous marriage

6. Number of children from previous marriages or relationships:

<b>FEMALE</b>		<b>Number of children from previous marriages or relationships</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	None	One	Two	Three	More than Three	
A: Spain	X					
B: Mexico	X					
C: Mexico			X			
D: Ukraine		X				
E: USA	X					
F: Germany		X				
G: Czech Republic	X					
H: Guatemala	X					
I: Russia	X					
J: Bulgaria	X					

7. Number of years in current marriage:

<b>FEMALE</b>		<b>Number of years in current marriage</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	3 years or less	Between 3 and 4 years	Between 4 and 5 years	Between 5 and 6 years	More than 6 years	
A: Spain		X				
B: Mexico			X			
C: Mexico					X	
D: Ukraine		X				
E: USA				X		
F: Germany				X		
G: Czech Republic		X				
H: Guatemala			X			
I: Russia		X				
J: Bulgaria			X			

8. Number of children from current marriage:

<b>FEMALE</b>		<b>Number of children from current marriage</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	None	One	Two	Three	More than Three	
A: Spain	X					
B: Mexico		X				
C: Mexico	X					
D: Ukraine		X				
E: USA			X			
F: Germany		X				
G: Czech Republic	X					
H: Guatemala			X			
I: Russia	X					
J: Bulgaria		X				

**Results of Husband's demographic questionnaire:**

9. Age of the respondents:

<b>MALE</b>		<b>Age of the respondents</b>						
<b>Respondent</b>	Less than 20 years old	Between 21 and 25 years old	Between 26 and 30 years old	Between 31 and 35 years old	Between 36 and 40 years old	Between 41 and 45 years old	More than 45	
A: Spain				X				
B: Mexico			X					
C: Mexico							X	
D: Ukraine							X	
E: USA				X				
F: Germany						X		
G: Czech Republic				X				
H: Guatemala				X				
I: Russia				X				
J: Bulgaria				X				

10. Ethnicity:

<b>MALE</b>		<b>Ethnicity of the respondents</b>						
<b>Respondent</b>	White European	White American	Mediterranean / Hispanic	African / Caribbean	Asian	Arabic	Latin-American	Other
A: Spain	X							
B: Mexico	X							
C: Mexico	X							
D: Ukraine	X							
E: USA	X							
F: Germany	X							
G: Czech Republic	X							
H: Guatemala	X							
I: Russia	X							
J: Bulgaria	X							

11. Spoken languages:

<b>MALE</b>		<b>Spoken Languages</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	Mother Tongue	Second Language	Third Language	Fourth Language	Fifth language or more	
A: Spain	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>German</b>	<b>Spanish</b>		
B: Mexico	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Norwegian</b>	<b>German</b>		
C: Mexico	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>				
D: Ukraine	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>				
E: USA	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>				
F: Germany	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>German</b>			
G: Czech Republic	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>				
H: Guatemala	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Spanish</b>			
I: Russia	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>				
J: Bulgaria	<b>Swedish</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>German</b>			



12. Highest level of education:

MALE		Scholar education				
Respondent	High school	Undergraduate	University Graduate	Master Graduate	PhD Graduate or more	
A: Spain		X				
B: Mexico	X					
C: Mexico			X			
D: Ukraine	X					
E: USA	X					
F: Germany				X		
G: Czech Republic	X					
H: Guatemala					X	
I: Russia		X				
J: Bulgaria		X				

13. Occupation:

MALE		Current occupation (In Sweden)								
Respondent	Unemployed	Student	Private sector	Business sector	Own Business	Academic / Educational sector	Medical sector	Governmental sector	Industry and factories	Other
A: Spain									X	
B: Mexico			X							
C: Mexico						X				
D: Ukraine									X	
E: USA									X	
F: Germany									X	
G: Czech Republic									X	
H: Guatemala							X			
I: Russia									X	
J: Bulgaria									X	

- Private sector refers to the private companies whose offer goods or services. Employees in this sector mainly work in office

- Business sector includes that companies who dedicate to commercialize products. Employees in this sector mainly work in shops.

- Employees in academic or educational sector mainly work in schools and universities as a teachers or researchers

- Medical sector refers exclusively to medical personal (doctor, nurses, etc.), this category includes veterinarian services. If working in administrative it will be place in private or governmental, depending of the character of the institution.

14. Number of marriages and duration of the previous marriage:

<b>MALE</b>		<b>Number of marriages and duration of the previous marriage or cohabiting relationships in years</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	1 year or less	Between 2 and 5 years	Between 5 and 8 years	Between 8 and 11 years	More than 11 years	
A: Spain						
B: Mexico	<b>X</b>					
C: Mexico					<b>X</b>	
D: Ukraine		<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>		
E: USA						
F: Germany		<b>X</b>				
G: Czech Republic		<b>X</b>				
H: Guatemala		<b>X</b>				
I: Russia		<b>X</b>				
J: Bulgaria						

- Every **X** represent a previous marriage

15. Number of children from previous marriages or relationships:

<b>MALE</b>		<b>Number of children from previous marriages or relationships</b>				
<b>Respondent</b>	None	One	Two	Three	More than Three	
A: Spain	<b>X</b>					
B: Mexico	<b>X</b>					
C: Mexico		<b>X</b>				
D: Ukraine	<b>X</b>					
E: USA	<b>X</b>					
F: Germany	<b>X</b>					
G: Czech Republic	<b>X</b>					
H: Guatemala	<b>X</b>					
I: Russia	<b>X</b>					
J: Bulgaria	<b>X</b>					

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