Breaking social and cultural borders - A study on immigrant social integration and intercultural appreciation in Gävle, Sweden.

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Abstract

Immigration has over the years been looked upon in many different ways: At times, as something positive, bringing in manpower and new influences, but at other times as something negative – something bringing problems along with it.

I have for a long time been interested in social interaction in general, and when it was time for me to write my thesis, I decided to narrow that phenomenon down and write about the social integration of immigrants. Along with that came mechanisms promoting it as well as intercultural appreciation, this because it quite simply felt very relevant to the initial subject.

The purpose of this thesis was to identify and discuss social integration for immigrants and the mechanisms promoting it, as well as to investigate intercultural appreciation in Gävle, Sweden. Two semi-structured focus-group interviews were conducted with both immigrants and native Swedes.

Analysis was guided by grounded theory.

It was found that both native and immigrant Swedes appreciate each other’s cultures, but also find parts of them disturbing. For example the immigrant participants found the Swedish literature very interesting, while the native Swedish participants were very appreciative and fascinated by all the different foods that have been introduced thanks to immigrants. However, the native Swedes found muslim traditions such as the burqha to be offensive, while the immigrants found the general Swedish attitude towards strangers to be just the same. The mechanisms promoting integration were often seen as insufficient by the immigrant participants, but those that did exist, for example SFI, was very much appreciated and seen as a very important source for getting help with the Swedish language, thus integrating oneself.

The study suggests more research on the subjects of both intercultural appreciation between “new” and “old” Swedes, as well as on the different mechanisms for social integration for immigrants, investigating its actual impact.
Key words: Integration, Immigration, Intercultural appreciation, Social Exclusion, Gävle, Sweden.

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1 Introduction

Be it due to the consequences of western capitalism, global warming or conflict - All countries have immigrants of some form. Migration and immigration in today's world can be seen as something constant – a phenomenon that occurs all over the world, all of the time (Nationmaster.com. Undated).

This fact stresses the importance of studying interethnic contact, since a good relationship between immigrants and natives of the host-country is something that can be proven to be extremely important (Martinovic et al, 2008).

Minority immigrant groups can through natives of the country get easier access to jobs as well as knowledge about the language. However, the most important reason is that interethnic contact helps decrease prejudice (Martinovic et al. 2008). I have therefore chosen to write about the mechanisms promoting integration of immigrants, and to deeper investigate the phenomenon of integration, which holds the key to interethnic contact (Martinovic et al. 2008).

I will also study the intercultural appreciation, that is, the attitudes Swedes have towards immigrant culture – and vice versa.

“Despite the initial celebration of equality and diversity in Sweden, [...] there is a growing tendency there to view refugees as a social and economic burden on the welfare system and to question whether they are, in fact, genuine refugees.” (Olwig, 2010, p. 184)

The integration of immigrants has for a long time been a hot topic in Sweden, discussed throughout the last 70 years. The discussions are, sadly, often coloured by prejudices against the immigrants. An example of such a prejudice can be that some Swedes believe that immigrants tend to commit more crimes than native Swedes (Brottsförebyggande Rådet, 2006).

Another fact making integration harder is that it is natural for people to be drawn to similar people (Martinovic et al, 2008). This meaning that many of the immigrants are drawn to areas in the new country where they can keep as much of their own culture as possible. However, this situation is not easily changed when the government sometimes, fully aware, manage to get the immigrants clustered in the same areas. This is very much hindering the process of integration when it has been proven that immigrants that live in ethnically mixed neighborhoods are much more likely to interact with people of the host country (Martinovic et al 2008).
Even after so many years, there is an almost elitist view upon society. This social exclusion is something that has to be dealt with. Sadly, it is not high up on the priority list. The profession that is social work has taken a long time to develop approaches necessary for a better tackling of social exclusion (Pierson, 2002). To quote Pierson: “[..]Compared with health services or education, social work has been slower to embrace both the concept and the new approaches that need to be adopted, such as working through broad partnerships, and developing anti-poverty strategies” (Pierson, 2002, p.1)

If an area is inhabited by a lot of immigrants, like for example Tensta and Rinkeby in Stockholm or Nordost and Öster in Gävle, this area may, to a lot of people of the host country, not be as attractive to live in as other areas with less immigrants. This is often because of prejudices such as the belief that immigrants are more likely to perform criminal acts such as stealing, or just because of a fear of the unknown. However, if a community consists of people of mixed ethnicity living in the same proximity, this, of course, encourages the groups to interact more than they otherwise would. This interethnic interaction creates an understanding of the other cultures, norms and traditions, which in turn leads to a more tolerant relationship (Ireland, 2008).

It has been proven that immigrants are more likely to be socially excluded in Sweden (Bask, 2008). This fact calls for further investigation so that measures can be taken to hinder it.

To encounter prejudices towards immigrants in today's society is next to inevitable, and this has been causing a growing frustration for me. These views are destructive, both for the “new” Swedes as well as for the “old” Swedes. I have therefore decided to try to find out what is holding back the integration of immigrants. My focus will be on the mechanisms for social integration as well as the intercultural appreciation between the “old” and “new” Swedes.
2 Aims

To identify and discuss social integration for immigrants and the mechanisms promoting it, as well as to investigate intercultural appreciation in Gävle, Sweden.

Research Questions

What are the immigrants perceptions on the mechanisms for social integration in Gävle, Sweden?

How do native Swedes feel about immigrant culture?

How do immigrants feel about the Swedish culture?

3 Relevant Concepts and Definitions

There are many concepts and definitions to acquaint oneself with when conducting research on, or quite simply just trying to understand the phenomenon that is integration.

3.1 Integration

The concept of integration itself could be conceptualized as “a complex process of transformation of the self, with capacity to transform oppressive settings into empowering contexts” (Ramirez et al, 2010, p. 86-87).

Transformation of the self, or at least parts of it, is of great importance when trying to integrate (Ramirez et al, 2010). However, this does not have to mean that you have to transform what actually defines you as a person, unless you are strongly connected to the culture of your previous country of residence, which of course is the case most of the times.

There we have a dilemma: To keep “the self” as you know, and always have known it or to transform the self to be adapted into the new societal norms. Ability to do this can often be decided by age, nature of previous culture such as attachment to religion and norms, or just quite simply the general attitude of the immigrant towards integration.

To quote Bhatia and Ram (2001) in the paper A Liberation Psychology Approach to Acculturative Integration of Migrant Populations: "The self is 'closely mediated, structured and organized through our participation in everyday socio-cultural practices and the social relations that are embedded within these practices’” (Ramirez et al, 2010, p. 87).
3.2 Culture & Cultural identity

A culture is a wide concept and can be anything from traditions, customs and the way you dress to food, music and sports. Religion is often a big part of a culture.

A culture can also be what defines a person, a people or a nation. Imagine giving this up in order to be accepted into a new social construct – a new culture. Certain traditions might be found as deviant by the people of the new culture, no one speaks your language and the people who are interested in where you actually come from, what was you in your previous culture, are few.

The fear of losing one's cultural identity can cause an individual to isolate himself. This, in turn, naturally creates a segregated society of isolated individuals with the same or similar culture. Again, a reason for me asking the question: “What holds back the process of integration?”

3.3 Social exclusion

In his book Tackling Social Exclusion, John Pierson brings up the fact that the concept of social exclusion is vague, a fact that is often discussed as something governments tend to like, this because it “downplays the reality of poverty and lets government off the hook of having to do anything about it” (Pierson, 2002, p.2).

Even though the concept of social exclusion originates from France, where it in the 70's was used to describe groups of people lacking employment and/or income while being cut off from society (Pierson, 2002), the concept is applicable in many countries despite their different structures.

Social exclusion can today be used to describe the situation of many immigrants - their lives in segregated societies. Therefore, when doing a study on social integration and intercultural appreciation, the concept of social exclusion becomes very relevant.

Social exclusion has three branches, or discourses if you may, originally uncovered by Ruth Levitas in 1998, but here brought up by Pierson (2002):

The redistributionist discourse (RED): Focuses on poverty and what socially creates it.

Holding this opinion would mean that you believe that the best way of dealing with inequality, poverty and social exclusion would be through “taxation, benefits and services” (Pierson, 2002, p.5).
The moral underclass discourse (MUD): Focusing on the attitudes of individuals and at times whole societies. People believing in this discourse would argue that people in poor communities are more likely to perform criminal acts. This discourse also argues that individuals exclude themselves, this “through behaviours such as drug addiction, crime addiction, crime and having children out of wedlock” (Pierson, 2002, p.6)

The social integrationist discourse (SID): This discourse focuses on the impact that work has on integration. It is basically saying that having a job is a channel for integration.

What is interesting with all of these discourses is that none mentions ethnicity, or culture for that matter, as a factor for social exclusion. Of course immigrants may be struck by poverty, lack of employment and may also be living in harsh areas, but is that the main cause of social exclusion in their situation? I hold a strong belief that all of these factors are drawn from the fact that there is a difference in culture. For example, if you do not speak the language it is hard to get a job. If you are not familiar with the norms of a country and its culture it is extremely hard to fit in.

Later on, however, Pierson provides us with a broader, more understandable definition of what social exclusion actually is, which in short describes social exclusion as a process that hinders individuals, families, groups or even whole neighborhoods from being able to participate in the society and everything that means. For example political debates, which in turn means minimizing one's political influence, or social gatherings where one may feel as if he is an accepted part of society. Pierson (2002) goes on to discuss how this process of social exclusion very often is a consequence of poverty, inter-related with discrimination, low education and living in neighborhoods which people have prejudices towards. The consequences of this is very much hindering integration and development.

3.4 Racism

Another relevant concept is the concept of racism. Racism can be a big reason why many immigrants are not integrated. To quote Pierson (2002, p.189): “Racism is a powerful component of exclusion”. Racism is defined as “a belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races” (Oxforddictionaries.com, 2011).

Racism can be passive, for example talking negatively about an ethnic minority around the dinner table, but also active, directly directed towards someone of a different race with the belief that one
self is of a superior one. An example of this may be shouting offensive things related to race towards an ethnic minority. Racism often takes the form of discrimination.

Many racists in Sweden are not what you call “openly racist”, but instead choose to only share their opinions within the comfort of their home. However, when for example voting, these racist views can have an impact just as serious as the views of the openly racist. The Swedish Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, SD), a political party followed by many racists, has been on the rise for some years now (Newsmill.com, 2010). In the last election they managed to get into the parliament. This goes to show that, despite seemingly growing acceptance of immigrants and their culture, there is also a counter-reaction growing stronger. I would believe that the fact that we now have a political party which opposes immigration in the parliament as a part of our government is quite frightening to many immigrants.

Racism was a key factor to why slaves were taken and oppressed as well as to why so many genocides were successfully carried out (Pierson, 2002, p.189). Nothing good can come of it. So, with the Swedish Democrats now a part of our government, my thoughts land on our social welfare system as well as immigration office. Could it be that there is a risk that immigrants and asylum-seekers are being discriminated due to their race?

Pierson brings forth an interesting opinion which is that “race” is nothing but a “bogus concept” from the nineteenth-century, “bound up with notions of identity, culture and ethnicity, religion and language” (Pierson, 2002, p.190). He goes on to say that it is nothing more than a socially constructed idea, without biological foundation (Pierson, 2002).

As said earlier, ethnic minorities are more likely than others to be living in poverty, be unemployed as well as suffer from social exclusion (Pierson, 2002, p.190).

Activation is crucial. According to Kavli (2009), when it comes to problems with entering the labor market, newly arrived immigrants are particularly illuminated.

Programs for activation are often paramount for immigrants not to be socially excluded.

3.5 SFI

Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) is a tuition program for adult immigrants (as from the age of 16) wanting to learn the Swedish language. To attend you must be a resident of a Swedish municipality. If the immigrants do not possess the ability to read, they have the ability to learn that as well.
4 Earlier Research

A lot of earlier research has been carried out on the subject of immigrant integration, but not as much on intercultural appreciation. In my opinion, these two concepts are strongly linked and it was therefore decided that they should be studied together. Below follows a short discussion and description of the earlier research used, sorted per publication.

Integration: Migrants and Refugees between Scandinavian Welfare Societies and Family Relations

This article provides a comparison between the attitudes towards as well as ways of handling immigrant integration in Sweden, Denmark and Norway. This study was found relevant because it allows for me to learn more about Sweden’s way of handling immigrant integration in contrast to its neighboring countries. Even though I am not making a comparison between countries, learning a bit about Denmark’s and Norway's approaches to immigrant integration creates a wider perspective of what is and can be done. It is easier to see what can be done better when you compare what you are doing with what someone else is doing. Combining this with the work of Kavli (If work is out of sight, 2008), I will be able to gain a wider perspective of the mechanisms and phenomena relatable to integration.

A Liberation Psychology Approach to Acculturative Integration of Migrant Populations

An article discussing the attitudes and preferences of immigrants as well as natives of the host-country. The attitudes held by immigrants towards acculturation can be of great importance when looking at integroup attitudes of dominant groups. This is very much relevant to my research when attempting to measure intercultural appreciation. The way an immigrant is perceived by the people in the host-country can very much depend on to what extent the immigrant has adapted. There is a tough choice between adapting to the new culture while relinquishing some of the old, or maintaining the culture in which you were raised but instead face problems with the new society. There are, according to this Garcia-Ramirez with co-writers (2010), four potential acculturation strategies:

Integration: A desire to be maintaining the previous culture but also to establish a good contact with the people in the host-country.
Assimilation: Letting go of previous culture in order to establish a better contact with the new culture.

Separation: A strong desire to keep their main culture, this without having to come in contact with members of the host-country.

Marginalisation: Refusing both cultural maintenance and contact with people of the new culture.

A Moving Experience - A phenomenological study of what it means to be an immigrant in Sweden
This study investigates the situation of immigrants in Sweden from a phenomenological perspective. The author mentions how the increasing popularity of parties who have a negative standpoint towards immigration is making integration harder all over Europe. This study helps the research by allowing me to gain wider as well as deeper knowledge about the immigrant’s situation in Sweden.

Immigration & Integration - Sweden, Netherlands and Denmark
This thesis, just like the first mentioned article is of comparative nature. It discusses the differences in immigration history, policies and what is being done to promote integration in Sweden, Netherlands and Denmark. The fact that it contains a good summary of the history of immigration in Sweden was one of the main reasons it was chosen. Knowing the history of a phenomenon is, in my opinion, extremely important when conducting any kind of research. Being familiar with the history allows for more comparisons. It will be used for gaining a deeper understanding of the situation.

Dynamics of Interethnic Contact: A Panel Study of Immigrants in the Netherlands
Interethnic contact could solve so many problems regarding immigrant integration. Interethnic contact reduces prejudice and strengthens links between people of different ethnicity. This is proven in this study. If we could create more neighborhoods with mixed ethnicities, so many problems could be overcome. If immigrants and the people of the host country would interact more, both sides would benefit from it.

Comparing Responses to Ethnic Segregation in Urban Europe
Segregation is a very much relatable to interethnic contact. An ethnic minority that does not experience interethnic contact may be seen as segregated. This study compares the phenomenon
that is segregation in different European countries. The focus is on urban segregation. This is relatable to my study because understanding segregation, especially in urban areas, will be very relevant to what this study attempts to investigate. Intercultural appreciation relies on interethnic contact, and interethnic contact is hard to experience in a segregated society. According to the author, Patrick Ireland (2008), there is a tendency for communities with a large number of ethnic minorities to be classed as ghettos or quite simply non-attractive areas for residence. He goes on to say something very relatable to this study:

“Such conditions can hinder human capital acquisition, hasten the spread of social problems and deviant values, weaken social networks, lead to the stigmatisation of neighborhoods and reduce opportunities and participation in the labour market, educational system and political and cultural life”

(Ireland, 2008, p.1335)

All these problems are part of a wall which must be torn down in order for interethnic contact to flourish, increasing intercultural appreciation.

A Longitudinal Approach to Social Exclusion in Sweden

In this thesis it is among other things found that immigrants are more likely to fall victim for welfare problems than native Swedes (Bask, 2008). The possibility of discrimination is also brought up: “[..] even though we control for several demographic variables, human capital indicators and socio-economic class, the odds for social exclusion are still greater for immigrants than for native Swedes. Some form of discrimination can therefore not be excluded.” (Bask, 2008, p.3).

Discrimination could very well be illuminated in the focus group discussions, and could be proven relevant to my study because it can be seen as an implication of a lack of intercultural appreciation. Bask's study also investigates social exclusion in Sweden over the years 1973-2003.

If work is out of sight. Activation and citizenship for new refugees

In order to better understand all phenomena relevant to the aim of my thesis, I have found earlier research on these phenomena done in more countries than just Sweden. This study was carried out in Norway and discusses, among other things, Norway’s Introductory Act. This act allowed for immigrants to take part in an individually tailored training programme. Learning more about this act I hope to be able to draw parallels to the role of the tuition-programme SFI (Swedish for Immigrants), and if not that, at least have a sense of what kind of policies that can be implemented.
The fact that this work's main focus is on the activation of immigrants, will also give me knowledge which can be proven fruitful for my own research.

Kultur och Integration - Kan Sveriges invandrare integreras i samhället tack vare Kulturen? / (Translation: Culture & Integration – Can the immigrants of Sweden be integrated into society with the help of culture?)

The intercultural appreciation in Sweden has to be promoted more than it is today. This report brings forth results which imply a growing appreciation of immigrant culture. One example is the popularity of singer/songwriter Laleh, which is of Iranian descent. Another is the growing popularity of musical branches such as Hip/hop and RnB, which has become somewhat of a main musical style for many young immigrants.

4.1 Personal reflections (and own learnings from being new in a country)

Integration through culture - Is this a way to integrate oneself? Being a musician myself I would argue that music as a matter of fact, is very much like a language – one that everyone can understand, and since one of the things that is to be investigated in this thesis is the impact of SFI, which provide immigrants with knowledge of the Swedish language, it is worth discussing.

I can honestly say that my favourite way of meeting new people is through playing music. Meeting other musicians or even people who are just listeners who have never touched an instrument – a connection can be made through music. This became even clearer to me after having done my practice in Mauritius. It was not just the fact that they spoke a completely different language on that beautiful little island state; I also had to face a huge cultural barrier. Had I not bought that guitar at a crazy small-town market, I would never have won all the fantastic friends which I am sure I will never forget. This because of that one evening when I was sitting on the beach playing guitar in the sunset, when two Mauritians came walking by, asking me if I knew any Sega songs. Sega was their folk-music and of course I did not know any Sega songs – I had never heard of it before!

But I did indeed want to learn how to play it, so I told them: "Sorry, I don't. But maybe you can play?”, and as it turned out one of them was actually quite the guitar player. Even though they did not speak English very well, we managed to communicate and ended up having a great evening – and I learned some sega riffs. Through these two new friends I made at least 20 others. Through these friends I learned how to speak their language Creole. I felt integrated and was called
"brother". I was invited for dinner every other night and was even to attend a wedding, had I not had problems with my visa.

So, through an openness towards their culture, attempting to learn and appreciate it, while at the same time gently presenting mine, a common ground was found. This common ground was made out of mutual respect. What I believe you can draw from this is if you are trying to integrate yourself, you should try to find the right channel.

A channel could be basically anything which will help you get integrated. A good example apart from my previous music-example is football. Football is a popular, if not the most popular sport in Sweden and the number of teams out there are endless. In football you do not need to speak the same language, it is all about the game. Through this one can develop relationships with other players and through them integrate themselves. But I also believe that that is where the problems arise.

From my own experience, I would dare to say that a large amount of the Swedish people, in general, are quite scared of new people. We are usually nice and well behaved towards them but we rarely want to build a friendship with them. Friends are usually made through other friends and a total stranger does not hold a big appeal, because we do not know who he is. A "friend of a friend" is usually someone who shares interests, opinions and culture with your main friend. This, I believe, gives a certain sense of security.

All in all, the point to be made here is that I believe that there are a lot of “alternative” channels for integration, as long as the will to integrate is there. The experiences described were also foundational for the choice of aims and research questions for the thesis.

5 Theories and Perspectives

As for theories, I wish to find out and generate my own theory about how the immigrants feel about the various mechanisms for social integration, for example SFI (Swedish for Immigrants). Therefore, I will be using grounded theory because it “focuses on the process of generating theory rather than a particular theoretical content” (Patton, 2002. p 125). However, I will be bearing in mind labelling theory considering the ethical aspects so that I may avoid offending anyone when conducting my research.
I will also be working on trying to understand the situation of the immigrants and the natives, this using phenomenology and anti-racist perspectives such as cultural pluralism.

“A crucial aspect of much discrimination is a history of studies that incorporated widely held assumptions of the inferiority of particular biological categories” (Payne, 2005, p. 272)

Cultural pluralism argues that all groups should be allowed to co-exist with the opportunity to maintain their own culture. This is something that I find very important as well as relevant to this study. However, cultural pluralism is only acceptable to a certain extent. It would for example be impossible to accept honour killings.

5.1 Grounded theory

To use data to generate a theory is the main concept of grounded theory. When using grounded theory, hypotheses are “systematically worked out in the relation to the data during the course of the research” (Glaser and Strauss in Patton, 2002, p. 125). The fact that grounded theory relies on the themes drawn from statements from the participants does not call for theoretical support. The point here is to objectively analyze the themes and sub-themes generated from the focus-group discussions and from this generate a hypothesis – your own theory (Barbour, 2007).

The focus on being objective is extremely important when investigating immigrant integration and intercultural appreciation. To let go of all prejudices and create an open mindset was crucial for conducting a professional, but even more importantly - an ethical research.

Focusing on using empirical data as the sole base of knowledge it is a matter of constant comparison between the data generated.

The aim was to identify and discuss social integration for immigrants and the mechanisms promoting it, along with investigating intercultural appreciation – without assumptions or prejudices. It was a matter of “starting from scratch”, and grounded theory enabled me as a researcher to take in as much information as possible without influencing the results. What was hindering the process of integration and what was promoting it? Of course, research has been done on this, but in my opinion not extensively enough - and not in Gävle. When one is treading into relatively uncharted water, grounded theory can be proven very useful, as well as when one is trying to gain a new perspective in a somewhat familiar situation (Stern, 1995). Strauss and Corbin makes a good example for understanding the implementation of grounded theory:

"If someone wanted to know whether one drug is more effective than another, then a double blind clinical trial would be more appropriate than grounded theory study. However, if someone wanted
to know what it was like to be a participant in a drug study, then he or she might sensibly engage in a grounded theory project or some other type of qualitative study.”

(Strauss, Corbin, 1995, p. 40)

Here a parallel can be drawn between participant in a drug study to being an immigrant by quite simply understanding that focus is on trying to understand the participants experiences and situation. One could say that an immigrant is a participant in the process of integration.

6 Methodology

A lot of thought was put into data-gathering, the interview-guide and the ethical considerations that would come with it. This because of that there was a possibility that some participants could find some of the statements or questions provocative. Grounded theory was chosen for the analysis due to its objective qualities.

6.1 Data-gathering

It was decided that the best approach for gathering data would be through the use of focus groups, where discussion would be encouraged by using the right questions. An interview-guide was created, but it is important to remember that even though research design is very important, it is even more important to at times allow for the discussion to sway into other areas, if these are found to be relevant of course. In the words of Barbour (2007, p. 112): “Research design is important, but it is what you make of the opportunities it affords that ultimately determines the quality of our focus-group research”.

Two focus group interviews were conducted. The language spoken was both Swedish and English, depending on the participants preference. A focus group “usually consists of six to ten subjects” (Kvale et al, 2009). However, it was very hard to find people willing to put aside time for this, and on top of that I faced problems with getting help from the staff at SFI, so I therefore planned and carried out the interviews as follows:

One focus-group contained 5 native Swedes, the other contained 5 immigrants Emphasis was put on trying to get as many different ethnicities and cultures as possible in the immigrant focus-group as well as as many different ages and areas as possible in the native focus-group. Emphasis was also put on finding people of both sexes, this in order to get a wide spectrum of views and thoughts as possible. Before commencing the focus-group discussions, it was made clear that the goal of the
discussions were not to reach a consensus, but to illuminate as many different views as possible (Kvale, 2009). This way more information could be drawn from the discussions.

The people for the immigrant study group was found at SFI (Swedish for Immigrants), this because it is a centre for immigrant students trying to learn the Swedish language, which is a key for integration. After having e-mailed all e-mail addresses listed on their website without success, I decided to phone them. This was also without success. I then decided to go there personally and try to find interview-subjects or at least someone who could help me find subjects. The first time I talked to a few students at SFI in the hallway, but they were too busy. I then, after knocking on a lot of doors, finally found a teacher who could not help me find subjects but directed me to the principal’s office. The principal was also busy, but agreed to schedule a 10-20 minute interview for another day. She gave me the tip that the students have their first break at 10.00, so I decided that I would come again the next day at that time to see if that could be proven more fruitful.

After having arrived at 10.00 the following day I talked to a couple of students who did not possess the English or Swedish language-capability to be part of a focus group. I later found one teacher who after having listened to my explanation of my thesis, agreed to help me. She had a class later that day which involved practicing speaking Swedish, and said that my focus-group discussions would be perfect for that class.

So, later that day I went to her class where I introduced myself as well as my thesis for the students. They all agreed to participate in the focus-group discussions.

The teacher found me a group-room where we all sat down. I made clear that they would be anonymous and asked if it was acceptable if I recorded the interview. Everyone said yes and, even though I knew where everyone was from, I asked them to state their country of origin, as well as for how long they had resided in Sweden, this to have it on tape.

The focus-group contained 5 persons:

One older man from Chechnya, who had been in Sweden for 3 years.
One middle-aged woman from Morocco, who had been in Sweden for 4 years.
One younger man from Somalia, who had been in Sweden for 3 years.
One middle-aged man from Eritrea, who had been in Sweden for 3,5 years.
One middle-aged man from Somalia who had been in Sweden for 3 years.

Throughout the whole interview I tried to make the participants talk and discuss as much as
possible, this by for example nodding agreeably. If someone said something that I found interesting for my thesis I wrote it down instantly and asked them to develop their answer. In general, the interview guide was followed. The session was recorded and notes were taken.

The five persons for the Swedish focus-group was found by simply walking the streets of Gävle, asking people if they were interested in participating in a focus-group discussion regarding immigrant integration. More time than expected was spent on this, but persistence was proven to be the key to success. I later telephoned the people who had agreed to participate in the focus-group discussion and asked them to meet me at a place in the park, to which I would bring blankets, coffee and snacks. The people who participated were:

One middle-aged man living in the city centre, Gävle
One middle-aged man living at Söder, Gävle
One man in his twenties living at Öster, Gävle
One man in his twenties living in the city centre, Gävle.
One older woman living at Söder, Gävle.

All of the people interviewed were of Swedish descent.

Conducting this focus-group discussion, more emphasis was put on keeping it relaxed and not too structured. The interview-guide was of course used but it was more allowed to talk widely about perceptions on immigrant culture, integration and perceptions of immigrants in general.

The session was recorded, however the sound ended up being of low quality due to wind blowing past the microphone. This was not of serious character, but quite annoying whilst listening to it. Notes were taken throughout the session.

6.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethics are very important to keep in mind when conducting research and especially when conducting interviews. What was strived for in order to avoid making the subjects feel labelled or offended was to introduce myself and tell a little bit about why I wanted to write about the integration of immigrants. I talked about my practice in Mauritius and how the Mauritian hospitality
got me thinking twice about the attitude of many native Swedes. I also talked about the fact that my father was from Finland and how big parts of my family had to deal with the problems of integration, especially in the 60's and 70's. This, I believe gave us a common ground.

Apart from this I tried to make all of the participants relax. I was not dressed in a fancy way and I tried to have a relaxed posture. Occasionally I made jokes, which later on, I was not the only one to do. I knew from personal experience that bringing a bit of humour into a discussion regarding a serious topic tend to relax the participants of the discussion, thus causing them to be more open with their opinions and experiences. I had also found confirmation of my “comedy-theory”: “Participants, as well as researchers, are aware of the potential of comedy to illuminate complex social processes […]” (Barbour, 2007, p. 120). When talking about “Swedes”, I made sure to say “native Swedes”, “old Swedes” or “Swedes born in Sweden” and when talking about immigrants I made sure to say “new Swedes” or other less charged words, of course having explained what I meant by this. At times this sounded a bit funny, but I believe that it was important in order to make them feel more comfortable. If they had experienced discomfort, it would have affected the results of the interview.

6.3 Limitations

“There are obvious advantages to holding focus groups in participants' native languages. Even where they are also fluent in English, using their mother-tongue can encourage more spontaneous and open discussion” (Barbour, 2007, p. 99)

A huge limitation was proven to be the fact that only one of the immigrant interview-subjects spoke English. This meant that I had to rewrite and translate the whole interview-guide into Swedish. This took time, especially because of the importance of making sure that the questions still held the same meaning. Despite this, I, at times, found some questions to not hold the quality of the original ones that were written in English. What I then did was that I explained around the questions. This worked well.

The interview-subjects were all from stage two or three of the three SFI knowledge-levels. This meant that they spoke and understood Swedish to a certain extent, but at times had trouble understanding the questions asked, especially if uttered to fast.
This, of course, meant that also I at times had trouble understanding them. I then simply asked them to repeat themselves. I also made clear at the beginning of the focus-group discussion that if someone had trouble understanding me they could just simply ask me to repeat myself. I said that I knew I that I talked really fast, even though I had not earlier reflected on that. The point was simply to make them feel more comfortable if they would have wanted me to repeat myself.

Limitations during the native Swedish focus-group discussion were not many. All participants spoke good English, but since the immigrant focus-group interview had been conducted in Swedish it was decided to do the same with the Swedish focus-group, which was also their preference.

6.4 The interview guide

“The advantage of an interview guide is that it makes sure that the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation” (Patton, 2002, p. 343)

An interview guide was used for all of the focus-group interviews, this in order to “ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed” (Patton, 2002, p. 343).

According to Patton (2002), an interview guide shall contain rules for the researcher to follow. Instead of asking questions concerning different subject areas, you divide the questions into themes.

It would for example be very foolish of me to jump back and forth from asking about their perceptions of SFI to something completely different. It is important to finish discussing a topic before moving on the next one, otherwise confusion may occur.

Patton goes on to state that an interview guide is extremely important, especially when conducting focus group interviews, this quite simply because it “keeps the interactions focused while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge” (Patton, 2002, p. 344).

The interview-guide was developed by using guidelines, hints and tips from literature. Inspiration was taken from earlier research as well as from my own thoughts, but also by trying to think hypothetically about how the focus-group interviews would go about and what could be done to keep them as fruitful as possible.

The interview guide can be found in the appendix.
6.5 On reliability and validity

*Reliability*, the trustworthiness of the research, was assured by making sure the participants really wanted to participate, and wanted to do so for the right reasons – that they wanted to share their opinion, getting their voice heard. It is very doubtful that a person would participate in something he was not interested in of his own free will. All participants were interested in my research and had a lot of experiences and thoughts which they were delighted to share. Further reliability was assured by getting the participants to relax and feel secure. When conducting the immigrant focus-group discussion, after having asked how long they had resided in Sweden, I complemented them all on their good Swedish knowledge, hopefully making them more confident, affecting them in such a way that they would speak more. I dressed casual and at times encouraged a humoristic way of looking at things. This, I believe helped the participants illuminate experiences and thoughts of a more serious character due to the fact that they then could “wrap” the message in a joke, making it a less sharp message.

*Validity*, “the strength and soundness of a statement” (Kvale, 2009 p. 327), was assured by following the interview-guide. To investigate what I set out to investigate was of course critical to a valid research. Without the interview-guide, the structure of the focus-group discussions would have been a lot more chaotic and perhaps close to uncontrollable - Especially because they were in fact discussions. However, I believe that it was important not to follow the interview-guide too strictly. Such a feat would have restricted the participants and made them less involved, but of course participants were not allowed to stray into discussing topics completely irrelevant.

6.6 Analysis

Analysis was guided by grounded theory supported by phenomenology. Phenomenology was important when trying to understand the situations of the participants. The recordings of the interviews were listened to several times, while searching for similarities and common themes between the cases.

There are many different ways to which you can approach the problem of coding of the data gathered, and while there are no right or wrongs, the way you choose to approach the coding will of course affect the results (Barbour, 2007). The approach chosen for this thesis was quite simply, as said above, listening to the interviews over and over, complementing the already written notes that had been taken down during the focus-group interview with relevant quotes, thoughts and words and from that transcription draw broad themes. With these broad themes in front of me I listened to
the interviews a few times more and generated sub-themes. Once the sub-themes were generated, an analysis was carried out.

7 Results

All the participants in the immigrant focus-group as well as the native Swedish focus-group were all keen to discuss immigration, integration and all things that come with these concepts.

This was not expected, but was a positive surprise. The focus-group discussions were first transcribed the classical way. After this, the quotes, statements and discussions that were relevant were illuminated and transferred to another document. From this document themes and sub-themes were collected.

7.1 Immigrant Focus-group Findings

In the immigrant focus-group a lot was said about the attitudes of the native Swedes. Everyone had had racist experiences, but everyone had also had positive experiences.

A woman from Morocco had had trouble finding the address of her new apartment when she first got to Gävle, but got help from a native Swedish man on the bus that even followed her all the way to the door. Another example was given by the man from Chechnya who had trouble finding his train back to Gävle at the Stockholm central station. He asked a native Swedish man for help, who walked with him all the way to where the train was. Another example was when he had been flying with his son to a city in the north of Sweden. His son had trouble with the cabin-pressure so he asked the cabin-crew if something could be done. The cabin-crew went into the cockpit to inform the pilot, who lowered the altitude of which they were flying, thus regulating the pressure. “I was shocked and very positively surprised!” the man said.

All participants in the focus-group agreed on the fact that it feels as if many native Swedes have some form of “barrier” towards other people - “especially immigrants”. They were also united in believing that native Swedes who have been travelling are less likely to put up those barriers, and instead welcome new contacts regardless of ethnicity. This due to an understanding and respect gained from visiting other cultures. It was also discussed if native Swedes living in larger cities, especially Malmö and Stockholm, where there are more immigrants, also are less likely to be dismissive towards immigrants.
Institutional racism was something that continuously came back into the discussion. Three of the immigrants had gone to Arbetsförmedlingen to get help with finding work, but experienced that they favoured native Swedes. The man from Chechnya, Europe explained how it felt as if they gave him the “bad offers”. One offer was to work in the forest-industry 117 Swedish mil from Gävle. This was not possible for him. He later got another offer to work at a steel factory in Hudiksvall, but he then felt that just like the previous offer he would have to commute a distance way to long for him.

He also felt a bit offended, mentioning that he had earlier worked for UNICEF as well as a history teacher. To then make a sudden change in career made him feel uneasy, but it was something he accepted and knew that he might have to do, saying: “The last thing you want to do is to sit at home all day”. Everyone laughed and agreed.

The Moroccan woman and one of the Somali men agreed with the fact that it was really hard to get good work-practice placements.

Overall they all felt as if the key to integration was getting a job, but to get a job they had to have Swedish language skills. These language skills can be acquired at SFI, but of course it takes time. The participants felt a certain discomfort with this fact. They all wanted to work, but were hindered due to a low level of Swedish language skills.

SFI was highly appreciated by all of the participants. To quote the woman from Morocco: “SFI is very important because knowing the language is very important for integration”. However, she made a comparison with the SFI in Stockholm, which apart from the SFI in Gävle helped their students acquire a placement for work-practice. This was something she was very disappointed with at the SFI in Gävle. The others filled in with how they would like help to write a Curriculum Vitae and also expressed a certain irritation because they felt that, even though the mechanisms for integration exists, they are “not running on full power”, saying that it feels as if they are not provided with the right resources.

The discussion later turned into quite a bitter one when the young Somali man made a rhetorical question: “Why would you accept immigrants if you cannot handle them? No jobs, no practice...”. This was noted to stir up a lot of emotion within the group. I then, being the moderator asked the question: “It seems as if you all understand each other quite well. Is that true?”. They all nodded and the Chechnyan man went on to say that even though they come from different cultures, they all know how it feels to be a part of a minority group. “There exists an understanding between minorities” the Chechnyan continued. I then asked if they believe that that is why there are segregated societies. To this they answered “Yes, to some extent”, but wanted to stress the impact of
the government. They experienced it as if the government was the main reason to why immigrants and minorities were segregated. The Chechnyan man said: “So did Hitler, you know?”. All of the participants agreed on that segregation is one of the main problems when trying to integrate.

All participants wanted to be as integrated as possible, but felt that the fact that they wanted to maintain their own culture made it harder. The cultural differences that often exist between native Swedes and immigrants was another huge problem. Although every single participant expressed an appreciation of Swedish culture, they felt that their culture was what defined them.

All participants appreciated Swedish culture and tried their best to embrace it. “Sometimes the music is a bit hard to understand. They sing so fast”, said one of the Somali men. He went on to say “But there are a lot of good books, then you can take your time to understand”.

Even though the goal was not to reach a consensus, but rather to create a discussion, the group often reached this. They all seemed to have experienced similar things.

The theme-coded immigrant focus-group discussion can be found in the appendix.

7.2 Swedish Focus-group Findings

The native Swedish focus-group had a lot to say on almost all topics brought up for discussion. They started off by saying that it “feels a bit weird discussing immigrant integration”. The reason for this was that “you are sometimes seen as a racist just for mentioning something negative about immigrants or immigration”. None of the participants defined themselves as racist, but they all had criticism on how immigration was handled and how some immigrants behaved themselves. All participants shared the opinion that the Swedish society should not be adapted for the sake of the immigrants, but instead the immigrants should be adapted for the sake of the Swedish society. One participant said: ”If I would move to another country I would do whatever I could to adapt”.

Immigrants who did not adapt to the Swedish society or accepted its culture were found to be extremely irritating and provoked a lot of negative feelings. Every single one of the participants made a comment on this, all with angry tones in speech. I, being the moderator, later turned the discussion towards what could be done to prevent this from happening. It was then said that segregation has to be stopped.

“Maybe if immigrants were not clustered into the same place more would integrate themselves with the native Swedish people and therefore adapt”. All participants agreed. They felt that this is not only a task for the immigrants, but also for the government. It was said that many immigrants who
want to be integrated may still be placed in a segregated society by the government when coming here. One man in the group commented: “If you spread out the immigrants they have to integrate”.

The discussion later went back to the irritation and the fact the Swedish Democrats were successful in the election was brought up. It was said that this could be because of the irritation that exists towards immigrants and that there are “many racists who are not openly racist but express their opinion when voting”.

When discussing immigrant culture, the first thing that came up was the veils, for many known as “burqhas”. No one in the group seemed to like this tradition. It was seen as something oppressive against women, and was not found to be suited for example pre-school teachers or basically people working with people.

However, there was still a certain respect expressed towards immigrants right to culture, but when breaking the Swedish norms it was found to be harder to accept. Other aspects of immigrant culture were also found annoying. One man gave the example of a large group of Muslim immigrants celebrating Ramadan, and when doing this they were for some reason standing in front of a fire station, blocking it. Unaware of this or not he said, it was very aggravating. Another example was of a muslim boy who in school got to leave in the middle of a class in order to pray.

When asked to bring up positive things about immigration and immigrant culture, many examples such as “good food!”, “cultural widening” and “cool music” were brought up. All participants appreciated a lot in immigrant culture and from this I went on to ask if they had any interethnic contact. They were not really familiar with the concept but after explaining it to them they said “Aha, of course...” and went on to discuss it. Most of them said that they have immigrant friends when they think about it, but that they “had not really thought about it before”. All of these friends were however second generation immigrants who spoke fluent Swedish and were well adapted to the Swedish society.

Finally, it was said how sad it is that immigrants who in their original country were doctors or teachers, after coming to Sweden often work as janitors or similar professions.

The theme-coded native Swedish Focus-group discussion can be found in the appendix.
8 Discussion & Analysis

The purpose of this study was to investigate the social integration of immigrants and the mechanisms promoting it, as well as to investigate intercultural appreciation in Gävle. Doing focus-group discussions with both native Swedes and immigrants helped gain a wider view of what could be promoting and hindering social integration.

8.1 Segregation

The fact that both immigrants and native Swedes brought up segregation as one of the biggest problems hindering integration and that both parties also felt that the Swedish government played a big role in this, could and should be a wake-up call for everyone – especially for the Swedish government. The study Comparing Responses to Ethnic Segregation in Urban Europe by Ireland (2008) actually brings forward the fact that policy-makers in Europe in general, do not look upon segregation as a problem in desperate need to be dealt with:

"This study, in fact, demonstrates that national and local European policy-makers have not at all worried about ethnic segregation to equal degrees and that their attitudes have not always been proportionate to its extent" (Ireland, 2008, p.1334)

One example of this is Rotterdam’s policy, which made sure that no one with less than a certain amount of income (mostly ethnic minorities), would be able to register as a resident of the city (Ireland, 2008).

As said by one of the participants in the Swedish focus-group discussion, segregated communities can easily be transformed into ghettos. This is harmful for both the native Swedes and the minorities. This statement is also backed up by Ireland, saying that "neighborhoods with a preponderance of migrant-origin minorities, it follows, may signify dangerous isolation from society at large, a concentration of social ills and potential ghettos (Ireland, 2008, p. 1335).

8.2 Intercultural appreciation

Judging by the results of this research, there is in general no evasion of integration from neither of the parties. Those of the native Swedish people who are opposing minority integration are in fact a minority themselves.
However, it is impossible to deny that there is a lot of irritation when discussing immigrant culture and integration with native Swedes. This irritation is, however, sprung from cultural clashes and not thoughts that immigrant should be of a lesser race or value. The fact is that cultural clashes are completely natural and are hard to avoid. A simple example can be two football-supporters who root for different teams watching a game in a pub. The two can have wild discussions about which team is the best and so on. Sometimes there can even be fighting, this not because of race but because of a slight difference in culture. Important to know though is that the ones fighting are only but a handful of say a hundred supporters, who all sit there enjoying each other’s company while watching the game.

Regarding the native Swedes perceptions and appreciation of immigrant culture, it was found that all participants in the Swedish focus-group discussion had several things that they appreciated in immigrant culture. Be it the food, such as Falafel, Kebab, Pizza or Sushi. Be it certain branches of art such as music, or be it sports such as Jujutsu, Judo or Thai-boxing.

These are all positive things according to all of the native Swedish participants of the study and probably most Swedes, but there are also many things that Swedes seem to dislike in immigrant culture. They seem to especially be traditions of religion such as the Burqa or loud, open celebrations of holidays such as Ramadan. The participants expressed a desire to not be annoyed by these traditions, but quite simply find it hard due to the cultural differences.

One important thought brought up by participants in the Swedish focus-group was that, as an immigrant, maintaining too much of your own culture can cause a lot of disturbance and irritation among the people of the host-country.

The example of a boy in school getting his own room as well as being allowed to leave class whenever he wanted to in order to pray, was something that was found especially annoying by the participants, this because immigrant culture had been allowed to somewhat change Swedish norms. In this case the norm saying that you should not leave the classroom during class. Upon this was the fact that the boy was allowed to occupy a room originally meant for something else. However, this leads us to questions such as: "How much of the immigrant culture can and should be accepted?" and on the contrary: "Does one not have the right to practice religion?". These are questions all depending on the situation, but is it possible to reach some form of consensus?

Regarding how immigrants perceive and to what extent they appreciate Swedish culture, it was clear that there was a lot that the immigrant participants appreciated. Even though they at times found some words or sentences very hard to understand, they enjoyed Swedish books, TV-shows and music on a regular basis. The participants of the immigrant focus-group were very clear with
the fact they all wanted to be integrated, but also with the fact that they felt hindered by cultural differences, institutional racism and most importantly – not speaking the language well enough.

Many obstacles stand before immigrants in terms of finding work. There is clearly a need for the labor market to become more aware of this fact and strive towards a higher level of immigrant participation (Kavli et al, 2011)

8.3 Inter-ethnic contact

What was not spoken of to the extent that I had imagined it to, was the importance of interethnic contact. I was very interested in this, especially after having read the article Dynamics of Interethnic Contact by Martinovic et al (2008). In that article it is stated that people who one chooses to interact with are decided by the principle of homophily. This basically means that people blend mostly with similar people because they are simply more secure around similar people. An example of this being people of culture x feeling more secure around other people of culture x, rather than people of culture y. To bring this thought further and relate it even more to this research would be to say that this, in this case, could be because of the fact that if you mostly socialize with similar people, the cultural differences are not as big.

8.4 On mechanisms

Regarding SFI and other mechanisms, all participants in the immigrant focus-group stressed the impact it had had on their lives. Without being able to speak Swedish they were all sure that they would have a lot more problems integrating themselves. An interesting question asked by Hultengren (2010) is how can one, new to a country, comprehend its culture not speaking the language of that country?

Further, SFI was spoken of almost as paramount aid for integration. However, all participants also agreed on the fact that a lot could be done differently, one thing being getting more help with work-practice. It was brought up by one participant of the immigrant focus-group that SFI in Stockholm provides help for getting this, which caused a lot of reactions among the other participants, asking “why not SFI in Gävle?”.

Regarding Arbetsförmedlingen, one man was offered a job in the forest-industry 117 Swedish mil from Gävle. This would force him to commute great distances, which would mean problems for him and his family. This man had previously worked for UNICEF as well as a history teacher, and was now asked to work in the forest-industry 117 Swedish mil away.
The majority of the participants of the immigrant focus-group were also disappointed with how they were treated at Arbetsförmedlingen, the Swedish job-centre. They all felt as if they were seen as being of lesser value compared to the native Swedes. This is a very serious issue which should call for further investigation, especially because of the fact that the majority of the participants expressed themselves about work as being something very significant for integration. It was spoken of, along with language skills, almost as being “the key to integration”.

9 Conclusion

Through this research it was found that native Swedes do appreciate immigrant culture, but also find some aspects of it disturbing. The native Swedish participants were united in the belief that if one is to be integrated well, one must, in fact, let go of parts of the previous culture. Adaptation was by the native Swedes seen as the key to social integration, while for the immigrant participants it was more a question of acquiring language-skills and work.

The immigrant participant attitudes towards Swedish culture were in short that they all appreciated it, but found some of it hard to understand because of not having enough language-skills.

Mutual respect is something that should be sought for in all societies and should exist between all people regardless of sex, race, culture or sexual orientation. Through mutual respect a lot of problems can be overcome, be it cultural clashes or be it social barriers.

However, without knowledge about ones culture it can be harder to understand for example why one acts in a certain way. I would argue that respect many times comes from an understanding, which in turn comes from knowledge. Therefore, after having investigated the attitudes of both native and immigrant Swedes, I would like to recommend an increase in teachings about other cultures in the Swedish schools.

9.1 Looking back on the research process

Looking back on the research process, it feels as if it was conducted in the best way possible. However, there is always room for improvement. For example, more focus-groups would have given an even broader perspective. But everything has its limitations, as did my research. The use of grounded theory was proven to be a good choice, allowing me to stay open to whatever themes being generated.

I was very excited about the fact that those who took part did so with great excitement and curiosity. It seemed as if they all enjoyed discussing the topic.
9.2 Implications

There is, on my part, an experienced need for more research on integration, interethnic contact and intercultural appreciation in Sweden. Somewhere in that mix of concepts lies the answer to how to successfully combat racism, social exclusion and prejudice. This study suggests more research on the subject of intercultural appreciation and its impact on social integration of immigrants.

Regarding policies and practice of social work, there is certainly a lot more to be done. Social work-projects with focus on the social integration of immigrants are needed to a much greater extent. Working with inspiring immigrants to dare taking the steps towards becoming an active part in society could be proven very beneficial for all parties. This could be a question of confidence, since many of the immigrant participants in this study described their language-skills as hindering, particularly when it came to acquiring work. And if their bad language-skills are keeping them from getting work, imagine how it could keep them from making new native acquaintances.

However, it could also be a question of fear or will, meaning that there could be a need for more actions which “force” the immigrants into situations where they have contact with natives, thus finding more channels to integrate oneself. Overall, this is indeed a complex question.

Information about immigrant culture, for example Islam, could create a greater understanding among the native Swedes. However, one of the biggest problems regarding immigrant integration and cultural appreciation was segregation. It could therefore be suggested that policies should be structured in order to face this problem, since there seems to be a clear parallel here.

One theory which arises and which can be confirmed, at least to some extent, is that in order for an immigrant to integrate oneself, he needs to find the right channels. Be it a job, meaning a stabile income, new acquaintances and hopefully friends as well as a greater chance of being “accepted” by the society. Or be it a friendship with a native, who introduces the person to new people, thus extending his social network, greatly increasing his chances of finding work and increasing his language-skills. One could hypothesize that these channels are all interconnected in such a way that a friend may lead to a job and vice versa. These are only basic examples, there are many more channels to be discussed.

Social integration is not something that will just happen on its own. I believe that society needs to put both more time and effort in order to make way for it, campaigns in media promoting social integration for example. Here a great deal of responsibility lies with the government, since they have the power of implementing policies as well as influencing us through these various campaigns.
Nonetheless, the real responsibility lies with us – the people. Because, let us face it: our general attitudes towards strangers and their culture could be of a lot more open character.
10 Appendix 1

10.1 Immigrant Focus Groups

Immigrants thoughts on Swedish culture

What do you think about the native Swedish culture?

- Swedish hospitality?
- The Swedish language?
- The Swedish culture (music, literature, tv)?

- Do you listen to Swedish radio?
- Do you watch Swedish television programs?
- Do you read the Swedish newspapers?
  - In your opinion, what defines/characterizes Swedish culture?

Immigrants intercultural appreciation

- What, if anything, do you appreciate in Swedish culture? Motivate your answer.
- What, if anything, bothers you in Swedish culture? Motivate your answer.

Immigrants thoughts on Swedish attitudes

How do you think native Swedes perceive your.

- Culture?
- Attitudes towards integrating yourselves?
- How would you describe native Swedes attitude towards new people?

Immigrants thoughts on language

- Do you feel that it is important to learn the Swedish language? Motivate your answer.
– Are you trying to learn the Swedish language

- How?
  – Do you find the Swedish language hard to learn?

SFI & Other mechanisms

– Since starting SFI, do you feel more integrated? / Have you noticed any changes in your situation since starting SFI?

- Do you feel that there is enough help to get integrated for immigrants in Sweden?
  – What would you like for the Swedish government to help you with?
  – How would you describe the role of SFI? Motivate your answer.
  – Do you know any other mechanisms especially for immigrants in the Gävle-area?
  - Have you ever experienced any institutional racism? (Felt denied of government services due to your race)

The process of integration

In your opinion, does the cultural difference hold back the process of social integration? Motivate your answer.

Social life

– Please, describe your social life.

- Activities

- With whom

- Why (motivation for activity and person/s in that activity)
  – Do you have any interethnic and/or intercultural contact in your social life?

Final question: How would you feel if you had to abandon your culture?
10.2 Swedish Native Focus Group

Native Swedes thoughts on immigrant culture

- What is your opinion on immigrant culture?
  
  – What, if anything, do you appreciate in immigrant culture?
  
  – What, if anything, bothers you in immigrant culture?
  
  – What defines immigrant culture?

The process of integration

- In your opinion, does the cultural difference hold back the process of social integration? Motivate your answer.

Social life

- Please, describe your social life.

- Activities

- With whom

- Why (motivation for activity and person/s in that activity)
  
  – Do you have any interethnic and/or intercultural contact in your social life?

Final question: How would you feel if you had to abandon your culture?
11 Appendix 2

11.1 Immigrant FGD

Attitudes

On native Swedish attitudes
Cold and dismissive vs Warm and welcoming
Scared?
Travelling people more open to new contacts?
Swedes in larger cities more open?
Barriers against all or just against immigrants?
Institutional racism?
Racism North vs South of Sweden
Alcohol + Racism?

On Immigrant attitudes
Minorities understand each other?
Appreciates Swedish culture

Culture
Maintaining own culture vs Integration

Interethnic contact
Larger cities better?
Segregation vs Integration
Job = Interethnic contact = Integration?
Respect and equality vs Fear and not knowing

Racism
Some institutions such as Arbetsförmedlingen and Social Services favour native Swedes?
Credibility: Native vs Immigrant
Racists travel less?
Racist due to lack of *interethnic contact*?

**SFI & Mechanisms**

Work and practice to far away?
Important for integration
Language = Integration?

**Experienced need for**

Help writing CV
Work and/or work-practice
Resources within mechanisms
Improvement within mechanisms
A consensus between native and immigrant Swedes.
Why receive immigrants when you can't handle them? (Jobs etc)

**11.2 Native Swedish FGD**

**Swedish attitude**

Adapting immigrant vs Not adapting immigrant = Welcome vs Not welcome
Hard to adapt Swedish society for culture. Should be the other way around
A lot of irritation in today's Sweden (Ex: Swedish Democrats)
A fear of discussing "immigrants" and "integration".
Discussing = Racist?
If native Swede "y" moves to country "x", "y" adapts to "x".

**Immigrant attitude**

Some hold on to their culture too much

**Culture**

Good things such as interesting cultural happenings, food, music and sports vs Cultural clashes (ex of Ramadan-celebration blocking fire station)
Cultural acceptance to a certain extent (ex of person in school with his own room for prayer, allowed to exit class whenever he wanted to)  
Do not like veils, maybe ok to a certain extent but not for staff at for ex a preschool. Oppressive. Annoying at times

**Interethnic contact**  
Important  
Segregation vs Integration  
Many second generation immigrant friends. "don't even think about it"

**SFI & Mechanisms**  
Refugee-camps ghettos?  
Doctor over there – Janitor over here?

**Racism**  
Increasing due to irritation?  
Impact of the Swedish Democrats?

**Experienced need for**  
Less segregation  
"Spread out the immigrants so that they have to integrate"
12 References


