IS CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT NEEDED FOR INTEGRATION?

A STUDY OF IMMIGRANT PERCEPTIONS IN SWEDEN

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Raed K. Kamil
Abstract

Sweden is one of the European countries that became a main destination for the immigrants and refugees from different countries and from different cultural backgrounds especially from the developing world.

While there seems to be a consensus in the literature that cultural adjustment is needed to integrate immigrants in the host culture, so far, it is not clear how the immigrants in Sweden perceive that need, and how willing and how welcomed they are to adjust to the Swedish culture. Therefore, it becomes necessary to shed light on the debate of the need of cultural adjustment and the major theories in this debate like the assimilation theory and Harrison’s theory, which arguing that immigrants need to culturally adjust to be able to fit in and to integrate in the host culture.

In this sense, the study aims to shed a different light on this debate through the immigrant’s perspective and how they perceive the need for cultural adjustment to integrate in the Swedish culture, and how willing as well as how welcomed they are to adjust to the host culture. A qualitative study was carried out using 18 semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data in the study, while the scope of this study was limited only to Växjö city which makes it difficult to generalize the results of this study.

The findings have revealed that the sample of immigrants in this study have perceived the need for a socio-economic adjustment rather than a cultural one and they feel willing and welcomed by the Swedish culture to make such adjustment as it is crucial and necessary for them to improve the quality of life as well as for social inclusion to be integrated and not excluded or marginalized.

The author suggests further research in this topic by conducting similar research but on a wider scope and with deeper interviews that include a larger number of immigrants to further explore how they perceive the need to adjust to the Swedish society.

Key words: culture, adjustment, integration, assimilation, immigrants.
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Acronyms/Abbreviations

**IOM** - International Organization for Migration

**OECD** - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

**EU** - European Union
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

As globalization is advancing throughout the world in terms of economic, social, and political aspects, a rapid flow of people across national borders seems to be one of the major results of such globalization. A part of this phenomenon is the significant increase of the migrant populations worldwide that has set demands and challenges on the importance of closer interaction and collaboration among people as well as organizations from different cultural backgrounds around the globe.

The globalization wave made Western societies as major destinations for the immigrants and refugees from different parts of the World but more specifically from the developing world which make these societies to become more socially diverse and culturally heterogeneous. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has estimated the number of international immigrants to Europe in 2010 by 72.1 million, which represents the highest number of immigrants comparing to the number of immigrants in other World regions in the same year which was estimated by 213.9 million (IOM, 2010).

Sweden, as one of these European countries, has become a main destination for the immigrants and refugees from different countries and from different cultural backgrounds especially from the developing World. Since the 1980s the number of immigrants in Sweden has significantly increased because of the liberal policy that encourages diversity and multiculturalism towards immigrants (IOM, 2011: 50). In 2010, the estimated number of the foreign-born population in Sweden according to the Organization of the Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) was 1.575 million, comparing to the total population of Sweden in the same year which was estimated by 9.378 million (OECD, 2013).

The diverse nature of the Swedish society has raised important challenges of how to manage such cultural diversity and maintaining social cohesion in the society. Such diversity requires an adjustment policy that can smoothly integrate immigrants to the host culture and make them be part of the development process and avoiding any cultural conflict or social exclusion (IOM, 2011: 50).

The immigrant policies have varied to a great deal in both the EU level where the Hague and the Stockholm programs have identified the integration policy for immigrants as a high priority policy, as well as on the national level where several EU member states have introduced obligatory adjustment programs for immigrants such as “citizenship test” or another requirements for acquisition of citizenship and voting (IOM, 2011: 49). These policies seem to be restrictive, conditioned and limited
in the provision of equal rights to immigrants in some countries, to more permissive and comprehensive in granting equal rights to immigrants in other countries (Bourhis et al, 1997; Geddes, 2003 in Schlueter et al, 2013: 670-671).

The Denmark and Netherlands for example, have adopted assimilation as another line of adjustment policy of immigrants, which is unlike integration that encourages cultural diversity, but it predicts according to Gordon (1964 in Wildsmith et al, 2003: 565) that immigrants take over the demographic and cultural characteristics of natives over time. Sweden, on the contrary, have adopted the policy of integration that aims to promote cultural diversity through the socio-economic inclusion of immigrants and without giving up one’s own cultural values and norms within a society based on the principles of diversity (IOM, 2011: 49). The Swedish integration policy comes with clear objectives as noted by the Regeringskansliet (2002 in IOM, 2011: 49), namely to ensure equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background.

The concept of integration as such is usually refer to the type of adjustment process through which the immigrants adjust to the host culture as well as sustaining their original cultural identity as noted by Berry (1997, in Rubin, et al, 2011: 499). The concept of integration in itself is multidimensional and includes as noted by Schneider and Crul (2010: 1145) structural aspects which are directly related to the society and include the access to education and labor market. Hence, the integration of immigrants could encompass the rights of all these aspects (IOM, 2011: 49). Moreover, the immigrant’s career in the labor market and the access level to employment as well as the educational career can show how far immigrants are adjusted to the society (IOM, 2011: 49). In this sense, the adjustment process and according to Black, (1988 in Peltokorpi, 2008: 1589) is a process of uncertainty reduction and change where immigrants start to feel more familiar with the new culture and begin to harmonize with it. This process could have positive effects on the immigrants’ life conditions and could give them more space for social maneuver and participation in social life.

The Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands have the highest adjustment rates in Europe in terms of equal access to the socio-economic aspects as well as the equal access to citizenship right through the acquisition of citizenship , whereas, Germany, Switzerland and Austria have considerably lower rates (Koopmans, 2010: 3). Furthermore, political rights to vote and to stand for election are more accessible for immigrants in countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands (ibid: 4). According to Koopmans (2010: 4) Sweden provides the greatest degree of legal privileges to immigrants followed by Belgium and Netherlands.

Immigrants’ cultural values and norms that seen to be different from those of the host culture, represent the core issue in this process of how immigrants from different cultural backgrounds
perceive the needs to adjust to the host culture to the extent they can be part of the social and economic development process of the country (Yamazaki, 2010: 83).

Some scholars like Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington (2000: 62) maintain that cultural values and norms have profound influence on how immigrants adjust to the host culture and this may explain why some immigrant groups are very successful to adjust wherever they immigrate and their economic and social achievements can exceed those of the majority in that country, like the Chinese in Indonesia, Malaysians in Thailand or the Sikh in the UK. According to Harrison and Huntington (2000: 55) some cultures have different capacity to adjust as well as different capacity to promote cultural values and norms that are apt to adjustment and prone to evolve. However, others find it difficult to adjust to the host culture because of some cultural values and norms that stand in the way of adjustment process and in turn they will suffer more of being not adjusted and in turn not integrated and out of the social-economic development process in the host culture.

1.2 Research problem and relevance of the study

While theories of cultural integration such as assimilation theory point out that globalization leads to adjustment and that immigrants gradually assimilate and adjust to the cultural values of the host society, theories of multiculturalism or polarization suggest that distinctive cultural values and traditions are deep-rooted and persist for many years or even decades, and that it is unlikely that the immigrants abandon their values and cultural roots to adjust to the new culture; hence, it could be very hard to accommodate with the new host culture (Holton, 2000: 141).

Harrison and Huntington (2000: 64) argues that cultural values represent a crucial factor in shaping and modeling the destines of nations as well as a crucial factor in social development and that people of some cultures tend to be more prone to adjustment and to progress than others, and their achievements on the economic and social level are booming and can be seen wherever they immigrate as the case of the British in US and Canada or the Chinese in Malaysia or the Koreans. Furthermore, Harrison and Huntington (2000: 63) and Manguelle (1990 in Harrison & Huntington, 2000: 75-76) argue that only cultures with a capacity to change, to adjust and to progress such as the Confucian cultures represented by Asian countries such as China, Singapore, Vietnam, Korea and Japan that share common known characteristics, while others which have no capacity to change need to adopt and to embrace values that can evolve and have a capacity to change. According to the aforementioned argument, societies with certain cultural values that are in favor to change such as the European cultures, the Koreans or the Japanese tend to be more prone to human progress and to adjustment than those which holding cultural values that are resistant and not in favor to change.
This line of thinking also maintains that immigrants tend to promote and to develop certain cultural values that are apt to change and are prone to the economic and social development to fully adjust to the host culture. In other words, immigrants need to adjust some of their cultural values which are not fitting in the host culture and to carry out a cultural revolution in all life aspects as the adjustment process should encompass the socio-economic aspects as well, hence; it is necessary that the change contains all these aspects.

Since culture in its nature is a broad and multidimensional concept, understanding cultural differences is helping individuals to interpret people’s different behaviors and attitudes (Hofstede, 1994 in Silverthorne, 2005:24). Moreover, culture is a very important factor in shaping and modeling the relationship between people, and the way they approach each other is depending on each culture characteristics (Cingöz-Ulu Banu and Lalonde, 2007: 444). This means that culture may affect the way that solutions are offered to problems and how decisions are made. As stated by Silverthorne (2005: 154) “cultural differences need to be considered, especially in cross-cultural communication’’. Furthermore, and according to Cohen (1997: 469-481) being aware of cultural differences and its influence on conflict outcome help to bridge the gap between conflict sides as well as to reach better outcomes. Droisy and Gaudron (2003: 157) also noted that “interpersonal conflicts give an opportunity to learn living together and to accept differences”.

This study aims to stand on the real need for cultural adjustment and more specifically if the immigrants themselves perceive the need to culturally adjust to the host culture. Hence, I have searched and have not found any theory contemplating that cultural adjustment is not important for immigrants to integrate in the host culture. In this sense, it became necessary to shed light on the debate of the need for cultural adjustment and the major theories in this debate like the assimilation theory and Harrison’s theory to know how the immigrants in this study perceive that need and how willing and welcomed to adjust to the Swedish culture.

The research contributes to the debate on the importance need of cultural adjustment in integration, from a different perspective: the immigrant perspective. The results may shed a different light on the current ongoing efforts to sharpen integration thinking around pushing towards cultural adjustment. If the immigrants in this study turn out to feel the need and feel welcomed to adjust then there is less conflict potential. However, if they do not, then there is possibly a stronger potential for increased social conflict and lack of social cohesion. Moreover, the findings will contribute to policy making by standing on the immigrant’s need to adjust to the Swedish culture and to develop further strategies that could smoothen the immigrant’s integration process as well as drawing a clear picture on how cultural differences may influence and shape the relationship among people across cultures.
1.3 Research purpose

The purpose of this study is to shed a different light on the debate of the need of cultural adjustment for integration through the immigrant’s perspective and how they perceive the need for cultural adjustment to integrate in the host culture, and how willing and welcomed they are to adjust to the Swedish culture.

While there seems to be a consensus in the literature that cultural adjustment is needed to fully integrate immigrants into the host culture, the need for a bottom up approach by looking at cultural adjustment from another perspective: the immigrants’ perspective seems to be essential and important to stand on the perceived need for such adjustment.

1.4 Research questions:

1. Why and to what extent does the sample of immigrants in this study perceive the need to adjust to the Swedish society?
2. Do they feel they are allowed and welcomed to adjust?
3. How far are they willing to adjust to the Swedish culture? Why or why not?
4. What observable patterns could be seen concerning gender, educational level, age, country of origin, and length of stay in Sweden that may have an effect on the immigrant’s adjustment to the host culture?

1.5 Conceptual and theoretical framework

The need for conceptualizing is important in this study, because culture and integration are multidimensional and encompass several definitions and meanings. In this sense, it is necessary to know what meaning could integration and culture encompass as well as shed light on the major theories in this field, assimilation theory and Harrison’s theory to know what effect could culture have on integration. Moreover, we can use the conceptual framework and the theoretical framework in analyzing the findings and to answer the research questions. In this regard the chapter will include the definitions of culture, integration, assimilation theory and Harrison’s theory of culture and development.

1.6 Methodology

Based on the purpose of this study, a qualitative field methodology is employed to stand on the immigrant’s need to culturally adjust to the host culture. The primary data for this study are collected from 18 semi-structured interviews. The scope of the study are covering five places in Växjö city where immigrants from different cultural backgrounds and non immigrants are socially interacting on
daily bases and in different life issues and have personal experience of what is look like to live with
different cultural values and traditions. Furthermore, secondary sources such as articles and books
which are used to the topic of this study have been collected to get broader insight and understanding
about the research topic and methods utilized in these studies.

1.7 Limitations and delimitation

The scope of this study is limited to Växjö city including Medborgarekontoret in Araby, the
community house in the Samarkand area, the University in Växjö, Dalbo community center and
Kommvux as the main fields for collecting the data which limits the author’s possibility to generalize
the results of this research but provides at least an initial stepping stone for further research.
Furthermore, all the interviews are subjective and therefore, the information simply has to be handled
with more care. Also, this is a relatively small sample of immigrants and it is hard to generalize from a
small sample

Besides that, the cultural values and traditions in Sweden might not be the same and differ among
people living in the north and those living in the south and between poor and rich. Moreover, some
cities could have received a certain amount of immigrants with certain cultural background which
might be similar to these in Sweden and the cultural gap could be very narrow. It is also worthwhile to
mention that although the author himself is from an immigrant background and that could be also a
limitation; however, this study could probably not have been done otherwise.

1.8 Ethical consideration

As the study is dealing with a sensitive issue like the cultural values and traditions of people from
different backgrounds; therefore, it would be ethical to address the right of anonymity of the
participants as well as the right to interrupt and or not to answering the questions. The author should
also address the confidentiality in dealing with the information provided by the participants and the
care taken in keeping their integrity.

Besides that, when conducting the interviews the author has an ethical responsibility to inform the
participants about the purpose of the study and how the author would use their answers in this study.

1.9 Disposition

The thesis has the following disposition:

Chapter two contains the conceptual and theoretical research framework that the author will use
when analyzing the findings. In chapter three the author describes the research method used in this
thesis, data collection and the validity and reliability of the research. Chapter four is presenting the findings from the interviews. In chapter five the findings are analyzed using the conceptual and theoretical framework. In chapter six the author draw conclusion of the findings from the analysis and make suggestion for further research.
2. Conceptual and Theoretical Research Framework

The chapter includes in its first part the conceptualization of the definition of culture and the definition of integration, while the second part refers to the theoretical debate presented by the theory of assimilation and Harrison’s theory.

The integration of immigrants is a complex and multidimensional process that needs to be considered by both the immigrants and the host culture. The author is aiming to study how the immigrants themselves perceive the need to cultural adjustment to integrate in the host culture. Most of the literature maintains that cultural adjustment is needed to fully integrate in the host culture. Hence, I have searched and have not found any theory contemplating that cultural adjustment is not important for integration.

The conceptual framework is consisting of two main concepts in this study, culture and integration which are used to look into the answers given by the respondents which may encompass different meanings and expressions that may refer to any dimension of integration. Moreover, forming a conceptual and theoretical research framework consisting of culture as an important factor in theories of integration like the theory of assimilation is necessary to know to what extent is cultural adjustment needed for integration. Furthermore, to meet the purpose of the study as well as to answer the research questions, this framework will be employed in an analytical way to look through the data which are collected during the field study and trying to find similar patterns that are related to the research questions and then put them together to find correlated themes according to the conceptual and theoretical framework used in this study to answer the research questions and to fulfill the purpose of the study.

In addition to the conceptual framework utilized in the study, a theoretical framework is also employed to shed light on the debate of the importance of cultural adjustment and the major theories in this debate like the assimilation theory and Harrison’s theory to help us to know how the immigrants in Sweden perceive the need of cultural adjustment to integrate in the Swedish culture and how willing and welcomed they are to conduct any adjustment to integrate in the host culture.
2.1 Conceptualization

2.1.1 Definition of Culture

Although culture per se is not the main focus in this study but understanding the other dimensions of culture such as the socio-economic dimension and what meaning could culture encompass is necessary to answer the research questions.

According to Hofstede, (1994 in Silverthorne, 2005:24) understanding cultural differences helping individuals to interpret people’s different behaviors and to communicate with each other. Moreover, culture is a very important factor in shaping and modeling the relationship between people and the way they approach each other is depending on cultures’ characteristics (Cingöz-Ulu Banu and Lalonde, 2007: 444). This means that culture may affect the solutions offered to problems and how decisions are made. As stated by Silverthorne (2005: 154) “cultural differences need to be considered, especially in cross-cultural communication”. Furthermore, and according to Cohen (1997: 469-481) being aware of cultural differences and its influence on the conflict outcome help to bridge the gap between conflict sides as well as to reach better outcomes. Droisy and Gaudron (2003: 157) also noted that “interpersonal conflicts give an opportunity to learn living together and to accept differences”.

Culture has been approached differently by theorists of social sciences, anthropologists, psychologists, etc. but culture can be seen in the work of Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952 in Silverthorne, 2005: 33) who stated that “culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action”. Geert Hofstede (1984 in Silverthorne, 2005: 34) has defined culture as “Collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values.”

In Kroeber and Kluckhohn definition, culture consist of human achievements which could include socio-economic dimension rather than values only; while, Hofstede maintains in his definition that culture represents a human thinking of a group of people that distinguish them from others and that culture represents a group of values independently from the socio-economic dimension. These definitions state clearly that culture could encompass a socio-economic dimension besides the cultural values and that culture shapes the way people interact with others and the meanings they attach to other’s behavior.
Other scholars such as Edgar Schein (1985 in Silverthorne, 2005: 26-27) define culture according to three levels: the behaviors and artifacts, beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions or values. Each of these levels measured according to how apparent or visible it to people in a culture ordering them from the easiest to see to the hardest or difficult to see.

The social aspect of culture seems to be also interwoven with the economic aspect and that culture could represent a fundamental aspect in nation’s economic performance and the impact of culture on the economic performance has been studied by different scholars and through different fields such as the relationship between culture and business management or the effect of culture on the European union integration or the impact of culture on sustainability (Kirkman et al, 2006; Park et al, 2007; Zivko and Zver, 2006 in Chambers & Hamer, 2012: 550). Understanding the socio-economic aspect of culture could give this study another dimension that explains the meanings culture encompasses and the other dimensions behind cultural integration.

2.1.2 Definition of Integration

The rapid flow of people across borders represents one of the obvious development results of globalization that makes the European societies more diverse and heterogeneous. Maintaining social cohesion through the integration policies represent a challenge and became a priority for the countries receiving immigrants and especially in Europe.

The term integration as such is usually used to refer to the way immigrants adjust to the host culture as well as sustaining their original cultural identity as noted by Berry (1997, in Rubin, et al, 2011: 499). However, the term integration could encompass two different meanings that differ according to the map of debate where in the US for example the concept refers to assimilation which implies that immigrants or their offspring can become culturally similar with the host culture through acquiring and absorbing the norms and values that are prevailing in that culture gradually and through generations without focusing on the economic or social success. On the other hand, the European perspective adopts the concept of integration to note that immigrants should take part in both responsibilities and rights of the host culture while maintaining their own original norms and beliefs (Kymlicka and Bashir, 2008 in Norris and Inglehart, 2012: 229). In other words, it refers to the economic and social inclusion while encouraging diversity and cultural heterogeneity (Schneider and Crul, 2010:1144).

Furthermore, the aim of integration policies differs from one country to another. While some policies tend to reduce the socio-economic inequalities between immigrants and natives through promoting equal access to labor market and education as in Sweden and Belgium, other policies
emphasis the degree of legal equalities among immigrants and natives and the access to equal rights with minimum preconditions as in Norway and Switzerland (Koopmans, 2010: 4).

The Swedish integration policy as noted by the Regeringskansliet (2002 in IOM, 2011: 49) aims to ensure equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background as well as building a diverse society based on mutual respect and tolerance, in which everyone can take an active and responsible part, irrespective of background.

2.2 Theoretical Debate

2.2.1 Cultural Assimilation Theory

Assimilation theory has been developed by scholars as a response to the early waves of immigrants to the US in the early twentieth century to understand how integration of ethnic groups occurs (Alba & Nee, 1997; Stephen & Bean, 1992 in Wildsmeth et al, 2003: 564-565). The evidence for this theory has been derived primarily from the experiences of immigrants’ ethnic groups descending mainly from European origins that immigrated to the US in the early twenty century. The theory suggests that immigrants steadily assimilate with other ethnic groups in the host culture to the extent that the first generation is expected to be very distinctive while the second one will be less and so on. Finally, the last generation is expected to culturally assimilate through the full adoption of the mainstream norms, cultural values and language prevailed in the host culture (Wildsmeth et al, 2003: 565).

It is useful to highlight that assimilation process is different from that of integration in the way that that immigrants required to absorb the cultural values and customs of the host culture while losing some features of their own culture. On the other hand, the integration process encourages diversity and the acceptance of other cultures and that immigrants are expected to accept the cultural values of the host culture without adopting them or giving up their own (Berry, 1997, in Rubin, et al, 2011: 499).

Nevertheless, the adequacy of assimilation theory was debated to explain the contemporary tendencies of immigrants whose achievements were visible and who are ethnically diverse and mainly descending from Asia and Latin America. The new theoretical paradigm looks at the assimilation into the American society from two different perspectives. The first perspective is looking at assimilation through the socio-cultural status and features of marriages that are common for the majority of natives, while the second perspective looks at the immigrants as a racial and ethnic minority perspective which may impede their full assimilation in the US (Xie and Greenman, 2011: 966).
The assimilation theory asserts that the American society is not socially equal and segmented and that immigrants can have different alternative ways to assimilate in the society. Immigrants may assimilate with the American middle class and to acquire better socio-economic status, or assimilate to the urban underclass which will negatively affect their offspring. However, some immigrants may intentionally choose to maintain their cultural values and norms, but also to maintain an economic integration and in this case they have selected the type of assimilation process by themselves (Xie and Greenman, 2011: 967). In general, the theory is seen by many scholars as a helpful tool to understand how the integration of ethnic groups takes place.

2.2.2 Lawrence Harrison’s Theory on Culture and Development

Harrison argues that culture could have a profound impact on people’s life and could change and shape the future of nations. Harrison argues that only cultures with certain capacity to change can adjust and can achieve success on the socio-economic level as a result, whereas; cultures that are resistant to change will not adjust and therefore, they need to update some aspects of their cultural values to catch up with the development process. Moreover, cultures that are in favor to change such as the European cultures or the Confucian cultures tend to do better than these which are resistant and not in favor to change (Harrison & Huntington, 2000: 62).

Other scholars such as Manguelle (1990 in Harrison & Huntington, 2000: 66-67) argue that some cultures like the African cultures have difficult to adjust to certain values in some cultures such as the Western cultures and therefore, have difficult to integrate with or to progress neither socially nor economically. This could be one of the reasons that such cultures are still having difficult to follow human progress after several decades of different aid programs. Harrison and Huntington (2000: 64) maintain also that in order for such nations to develop and to integrate with other nations they need to look critically to their cultural values and norms to adjust and reform all the cultural aspects that are not in line with human progress and may stand in the way of social integration.

According to Harrison’s assumption, cultural adjustment is perceived to be important for societies and individuals to achieve integrations and development. According to Black, (1988 in Peltokorpi, 2008: 1589) cultural adjustment is a process of uncertainty reduction and change where immigrants start to feel more familiar with the new culture and begin to harmonize with it. Scholars have often linked cultural adjustment problems to communication, social integration, work, language, skills, and gender (Black 1988; Napier and Taylor 1995 in Peltokorpi 2008: 1589). In this sense, and according to Black (1988 in Okpara and Kabongo, 2011: 24) the process of cultural adjustment refers to the degree where the immigrant perceives the psychological comfort and familiarity to live and work in a new culture.
Furthermore, and according to Black (1988 in Okpara and Kabongo, 2011: 24) there are three facets of cultural adjustment: (a) work adjustment, which includes supervision, performance and responsibility; (b) relational or social adjustment, which refer to the interaction with the members of the host culture; (c) general or socio-cultural adjustment, which refer to the life condition in the host culture. Moreover, these three facets encompass individual, organizational, and contextual factors as well (ibid).

Culture has been an important topic in literature of economic growth and local development as in Weber’s (1905) economics of religion or in the literature of other scholars such as (Kirkman et al., 2006; Mauro, 1995; Throsby, 2001, in Tubadji, 2012: 691). Hence, such literature don’t refer to the perceived need of cultural adjustment for development, except the debate raised by Harrison and Huntington (2000) and Manguelle (1990 ) which has drawn its evidence from the historical narrative of some economics in Asia and Latin America.

To know how willing and how welcomed are the immigrants in Sweden to conduct any cultural adjustment and if they perceive the need for cultural adjustment according to Harrison’s assumption, a bottom-up approach looking at the debate from the immigrant’s perspective to stand on the real need for cultural adjustment and the major theories in this debate like the assimilation theory and Harrison’s theory.
3. Methodology

This chapter illustrates the research design and the methods used in conducting the study as well as in collecting the data.

3.1 Method

A qualitative field study is employed in this study to meet the purpose of the study and to answer the research questions through standing on the respondent’s personal experience as immigrants in Sweden. The qualitative research is often employed to understand the meanings that individuals or a group of people attach to a social phenomenon or human problem. Moreover, a qualitative study is mostly used when the researcher wants to carry out a research that can’t be measured in numbers, but instead achieving that through words to understand a certain social phenomenon (Creswell, 2009: 3, 4).

The scope of the study is covering five places in Växjö city where immigrants from different cultural backgrounds and non immigrants are socially interacting on daily bases and in different life issues and have personal experience of what is look like to live in a society with different cultures and different values and traditions.

The study is following a bottom-up approach looking at integration from the immigrant’s personal experience and the way they perceive the need to adjust to the host culture. Therefore, the major data for this study will be extracted from a primary source and will be collected through semi structured interviews that are based on themed open-ended questions based on the purpose of this study.

Articles, books and case studies are for secondary data and have collected to review the previous studies in this debate and to get broader insight in the research topic.

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Interviews

The semi-structured interviews are a useful method especially when participants can’t be directly observed as well as it allows the researcher to maintain control over the line of questioning (Creswell, 2009: 179). The semi-structured interviews will also give us more deep information and understanding as well as adding more credibility to the findings. However, this method could have its cons, like it provides indirect information through the view of the participant; furthermore, the researcher’s presence may bias responses, but that could be avoided with more care and attention from the author (Creswell, 2009: 179).
In this regard, the samples for the interviews are chosen in Växjö city at five different places: the Komvux which is a school for adult immigrants, the Medborgarekontoret [citizen’s office (author’s translation)] in Araby where immigrants can get information and practical help in applying for the Swedish citizenship, Dalbo community center which is a meeting and shopping center for Swedes and non-Swedes people are also another sites for finding the samples for interviews, the community house in Samarkand which is a teaching and training center for adult immigrants and the University in Växjö where many Swedes and non-Swedes background students are taking different types of courses and it easy to meet them there. According to Creswell (2009: 175) “Qualitative researcher tends to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study”.

Creswell (2008: 178) noted that in qualitative research the data material such as participants or sites are purposefully selected by the researcher to better understand the problem and the research questions. These places are chosen by the author because immigrants from different cultural background who are living in Sweden for while can be easily met and talked to, as well as to avoid bias in selecting the sample through asking people to volunteer for the interview directly in the place.

The interviews are done in different places according to each participant’s conditions and request the matter that has been fully understood and appreciated by the author. Furthermore, all the interviews are done in quite places a way from any kind of disturbance that may affect the quality of the interview or disturb the interviewee. Moreover, the author has make it very clear in informing the participants before the interview starts that they have the right to stop the interview whenever they want and not to answer the question which they feel not comfortable with.

The interviews are conducted in Swedish and English as the main interview languages, however; Arabic could also be used if the author recognized the needs for it since there are a lot of Arab and non-Arabs who can speaks Arabic living in Växjö. The author is responsible for the authenticity of the Arabic text and its translation as the author’s mother tongue is Arabic and has several years of work experience as English-Swedish-Arabic translator.

The interviews are conducted between the periods from 29/4/2013 to 16/5/2013 and are recorded on a laptop recorder device as well as a mobile device recorder as a backup in case of any electronic or electrical fail during the interview. All the participants have given their consent to use the recording device during the interviews.

The selection process of the participants are depending on the fact that the immigrants should have permanent residency permit in Sweden and have been living in Sweden for a certain period not least than one year. The author approached people directly at the sites and asked them if they are
willing to be interviewed after asking them if they have permanent resident permit in Sweden and for how long they have been living in the country. The participants should also be different in terms of educational backgrounds, ages, gender and country of origin, which can give a wide coherent view on the subject and can also help us to analyze the data later on as well as to answer the research questions. The number of immigrants who gave their consent to participate in the study is 18 out of total 25 who have been asked to be interviewed in the chosen sites and who have filled out the selection requirements. 7 of the participants are women and 11 are men. The interviewees’ ages are between 22-60 years old and they are coming from 11 countries and as the following: Bosnia, Germany, Iraq, Somalia, Romania, Hungry, Brazil, Eritria, Lebanon, Iran and Afghanistan. The interviewees have different educational and social backgrounds like medical doctors, academics, nurses, working class, social workers, businessmen, and students.

The respondents have volunteered to the interview from five different places and as follows: 2 persons from Medborgarekontoret in Växjö, 4 persons from Linnaeus University, 4 persons from Samarkand training center, 4 persons from Dalbo center and 4 from Komvux.

3.2.2 Secondary Sources

Articles and books which are related to the topic of this study are for secondary data and have collected from reliable academic resources to understand the topic from different angles and to get broader insight and understanding about the research topic.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

According to Creswell (2009: 190) validity means that the researcher checks for accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. According to Joppe, 2000 in Golafshani (2003: 598) “validity means whether the research truly measures what it intends to measure or how truthful the research results are”. Reliability on the other hand means “The extent to which results are consistent over time and if the results of the study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable” (ibid). The author has employed the semi-structured interview method which could give a coherent justification for the themes (Creswell, 2009: 191). The author utilized the semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions along the line with secondary source of data such as articles and books of reliable sources to ensure the validity as well as to double check the data.

To give more validity for the study, the author has shed light on the bias factor that might be brought to the study unintentionally either by the author or by the immigrants’ perceptions concerning integration. Moreover, all the interviews are in nature subjective and that the information simply has to
be handled with more care. Also, this is a relatively small sample and it is hard to generalize from a small sample. Furthermore and according to Creswell (2009: 192), a good qualitative research is the one that contains comments by the author of how the interpretation of the findings has shaped by their background.

Reliability on the other hand means that the author ensures that the transcription process of the data as well as the coding is consistent and there is no discrepancy between them. Creswell (2009:190) stated that the reliability of the study indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects. Therefore, the reliability can be achieved when

To ensure the reliability of the study, the author is very careful in transcribing the data especially when the data is not in English and in other languages such as Swedish or Arabic, then the author has to monitor and double check the consistency of both the transcribing and the coding to avoid any drifting in the process. Furthermore, the participants are asked to give their consent on using quotations and using their names if needed to give more reliability for the findings. Besides that the participants are different in terms of educational backgrounds, ages, class and origin which can give more reliability, coherence and wide perspective view on the subject rather than depending on one spectrum of immigrants. Furthermore, gender equality in terms of participant’s selection is also utilized in this study as much as possible to give more reliability to the findings as well.
4. Presentation of the Findings

The chapter is divided into two parts, the first part starts by shedding light on the way the respondents have perceived the Swedish culture and integration in Sweden and what kind of meaning they have attached to these two concepts. The second part however, looks into the answers given by the respondents on how they perceive the need to adjust to the Swedish culture.

4.1 Immigrant’s perception on Culture and Integration

4.1.1 The Swedish culture

Looking into the answers given by the participants in this study help us to shed light on the perceived characteristics of the Swedish culture and how these characteristics could affect the adjustment process of the immigrants into this culture. The answers could help us in answering the second and third question later on in the analysis part.

The participants have perceived the Swedish culture as an open to other cultures that based on collaboration, sense of help, neutrality and respect of others. For instance, an interviewee who came from Iraq 5 years ago and working now as a medical doctor in Växjö city commented on the Swedish culture by saying:

“...it is an open culture that accepts differences with respect”.

Another interviewee who came from Germany and has been living in Sweden for about 5 years has described his experience in Sweden in the following manner:

“...friendly culture based on equality and openness”.

Other participants have described the Swedish culture through different characteristics that could be observable or less observable that give a clear picture on the nature of the Swedish society toward foreign cultures such as “The Swedish culture is very open, tolerant, democratic, tolerance towards other cultures, like to help others, peaceful nature and explicit”.

Some other participants have also perceived the Swedish culture with its acceptance to foreigners and their traditions as well as its acceptance towards foreign cultures and their values and norms.

“... Swedes have already shown a great acceptance to people from other cultures and their traditions as well as their food where you can by Chinese food or Arabic food now in any city in Sweden”. (interviewee from Bosnia who have been living in Sweden for about twenty years).
Another participant who has newly immigrated to Sweden from Egypt but he is originally German, has described the Swedish culture as diverse and multicultural:

“... my feeling is that the Swedish culture is very open and diverse in the way that is tolerant and people are living in their own culture in Sweden and I don’t think there is a big difference between the big cities and the small ones”.

One more perceived characteristic that almost all the participants have appreciated much in the Swedish culture is the obedience by law and the respect of Swedes to rules, norms and system in general. An interviewee who is a mother to three children and came originally from Hungary sex years ago has described literally this phenomenon when she said:

“...the Swedes appreciate if you stand in line and wait quietly, drive as you should, don’t do something different, to put groceries with upright barcode scanning ...etc”

“...the life is too much organized in Sweden” (interviewee from Brazil who came to Sweden for 3 years ago and working as project manager).

“I appreciate the type of system in Sweden, the education system, the law, to take care of others, the nice attitudes, future thinking, ...” (An interviewee from Romania).

“The democracy, the right to decide, right to express opinion, law obedient, respect for the ones private life is very much appreciated in Sweden, while at one lives for himself, loneliness, individualism is not too much appreciated in Sweden” (An interviewee from Eretria).

“I like the respect for human being, the respect of law and the system in the Swedish culture. It gives a special social importance to women” (An interviewee from Iraq who working as medical doctor).

To sum up the most perceived characteristics of the Swedish culture and according to the participants themselves, I can say that the Swedish culture is an open culture that is based on acceptance, tolerance as well as a systematic and organized culture.

4.1.2 Integration

In this part the author will look into how the respondents themselves have perceived integration according to their experience as immigrants in Sweden, to know how they perceive the need to adjust in Sweden and then the need to integration.

The respondents have perceived integration as participation in socio-economic life which is vital for living in harmony in the Swedish society and also vital for future life.
“Integration means living in peace and harmony in a new culture. It also means freedom and that language is the key to this culture. Integration means also respect & cooperation and respect others’ religions & faiths. Everything is positive regarding integration. It means a future for work, for living, for family to live in harmony & happiness if you are planning to stay for a long time in the Sweden” (an interviewee from Iraq who has been living in Sweden for more than 28 years).

“...It is a future for me and my family in order to be happy and feel worthy and not insulted” (a 22 years old man interviewee from Romania who has grown up in Sweden).

“I think integration means participating in the development of the society, to influence the political, economic and social development and not to be excluded in the society. It also means to know ones rights & responsibilities”. (An interviewee from Eritrea who have been living in Sweden for more than twenty five years).

The interviewees have also pointed out that integration means improving the life quality and having right to get access to labor market, education, economic and social resources in the Swedish society.

“ It is a positive thing to feel integrated because it improves the quality of life” (An interviewee who came from Somalia for more than ten years ago and studying now in university).

“I think integration means participating in the development of the society, to influence the political, economic and social development” (An interviewee from Eritrea).

“It means to settle up, to know the system, to work, to go to school and to learn language” (An interviewee from Germany who has been living in Sweden for about one year).

“Integration means for me access to education, work, friends, culture, traditions, norms, language is also important for integration” (An interviewee from Afghanistan who is student and has been living in Sweden for about 5 years)

“For me, integration purpose is to have better economic status.” (an interviewee who came from Iran twenty years ago and is employed now by Växjö municipality).

Moreover, the interviewees have perceived integration as a mutual acceptance as well as adjustment and respect to others’ traditions, norms and values as well as the openness to change on both personal and social level.

“Not to feel different and then feel embarrassed. It means equal rights to work and not to feel strange in society, to be accepted, to know the language, to accept and respecting others as they accept you
and to be open to change on personal and family level. It means also for me participation in social activities which I think it is very important to integration” (a mother and medical doctor interviewee from Iraq who has been living in Sweden for about 5 years).

“...integration means also respect & cooperation and respect to other’s religions & faiths but at the end, everything is positive regarding integration” (interviewee from Lebanon who has been living in Sweden for about 15 years and working as car mechanic).

“Integration is vital and you need to adapt to rules and norms to live in the Swedish society.” (An interviewee from Germany)

“Integration means to know how the Swedish society works and to know the language and to be participative. Get access to job market and to be accepted by others” (An interviewee from Hungary)

“It means to assimilate in certain aspects and keep things from one’s own culture to be harmonic for individual and society and to be also a respected citizen” (interviewee from Brazil).

Standing in queue and waiting quietly without shouting or showing annoyance is one of these prevailing rules and norms in the Swedish society as described by one of the participants who came from Hungary and who found this system is more relieving and convincing for her life and for her family “...the respect for system, to stand quite in queue and to follow driving rules and laws...”.

According to these views, one can note that the interviewees have perceived integration more as adjustment in terms of socio-economic dimension like improving the economic and social quality of life, access to work and education, openness to others and social diversity.

4.2 Cultural Adjustment

In this part the author will look into the answers given by the interviewees on how the respondents have perceived the need to carry out any possible cultural adjustment and how willing they are to carry out such adjustment.

The respondents believe that adjustment in terms of learning the Swedish language and getting to know the Swedish work ethics are necessary for them to improve their life quality on the economic and social level by easy getting access to job market and expanding their social net.

Through answering the following interview question: “How willing are you to adjust to the Swedish culture? Why or Why not?” the respondents have shown their willingness to adjust to the Swedish culture and the reason behind such willingness.
“I am willing to adjust because I don't want to be foreigner in Sweden as long as I have decided to live here, in addition it helps me in getting access to labor market and social activities as well as social life” (An interviewee from Germany).

“Of course, I am very much willing to adjust because I found freedom & human rights in Sweden. It is important to adjust otherwise you will be excluded and will not get access to jobs and life will be hard. It is necessary for social connection. It is necessary to conduct updating and evaluating for some norms and values”. (An interviewee from Afghanistan who is student).

“Although we speak Arabic at home because we are Iraqis and the Swedish is there all the time in school, work, friends and even on TV, but we are to great extent willing to adjust because it is also important to live and work in Sweden.” (Interviewee from Iraq who working as a nurse and has been living in Sweden for about 6 years).

“ Yes, I would very much to adjust to the Swedish culture to get better living standards, better life and to raise my children in very good way” (An interviewee from Hungary).

Furthermore, the participants have pointed out that adjustment in terms of accepting some norms and values is necessary for them to make life easier and to be accepted in the Swedish society; otherwise, they will be socially excluded.

“I like to adjust if it avails for my benefit and not with force. It makes life easy to handle in order not to be excluded. It is very important to adapt to the Swedish norms and values like the fika [coffee time] or celebrating the midsummer, otherwise; life will not be easy to manage, or you get completely outside” (An interviewee from Eritrea).

“ I am willing to adjust to know the religious values and believes like the Saint Lucia’s day or påsk [Easter] or eating canellbullar [Cinnamon buns]makes the day to day life easier for the individual” (An interviewee from Somalia who is a housewife and has been living in Sweden for about 11 years).

“Most of the immigrants are willing to adjust or at least willing to respect the Swedish culture. Adjustment makes the day to day life easier for the individual. With integration unlike assimilation one does not need to give up his or her own culture but rather combine both when and where compatible” (An interviewee from Somalia).

“ Learning the Swedish habits, language, norms and values such the social importance of midsummer occasion, fika [coffee time] or Saint Lucia’s day give you better possibilities for stable life and not to be isolated and unaccepted in the society. At the end I am willing to adjust”; “To adjust to the Swedish
traditions & norms are necessary to fit in the Swedish society. Adjusting to the Swedish work ethics is also very important to get access to labor market.” (An interviewee from Romania).

“Respecting the time for example is very important in the Swedish society and you have to respect the time in Sweden as well, which is not the case in my country or in most other Arab countries while here everything is connected with time like the doctor’s appointment, job, buses, and so forth. I have to adjust to these aforementioned issues” (An interviewee from Lebanon).

One of the interviewees has referred to an interesting aspect in which he thinks that Swedes are used to take things very easy and in very relaxed manner without stress which is very much necessary for personal health and that immigrants should adjust to these norms.

“It is very much necessary to adjust if the immigrant intends to stay in Sweden for a long time feeling relaxed, quiet and not stressed is very necessary for personal health in terms of psychology, stress, social connection, social inclusion” (An interviewee from Iraq who came to Sweden twenty eight years ago).

It is worthy to say that all the respondents without exception have shown willingness to adjust to the Swedish culture and it seems like there is a consensus in the answers regarding the need to adjustment due to the outcomes that such adjustment bring to their lives as immigrants on the socio-economic level. Moreover, such outcomes could have wider effects to include their families and the society they live in.

4.2.1 Observable Patterns

The interviewees have raised some issues during the interviews that could have an effect on the adjustment process to the host culture from their point of view. These issues or patterns are: the age of immigrant, country of origin, religion, level of education, finally the length of stay.

A- Pattern of age: according to the perception of some respondents, the age could have an effect on the adjustment process where usually young immigrants find it easy to adjust because of the effect that the school and the school mates have on the young immigrant. Besides that, the participation in various activities which are usually available to young people could also have a direct effect to quicken the adjustment process of the young immigrants to the host culture.

“...but it depends on the immigrant’s age, if he/she come to Sweden in young age then it is easy to adjust through the school and school mates and the adjustment will be more quickly than those who came in older ages” (the interviewee from Lebanon).
“...young people have easy to adjust and to integrate through easy access to education...” (the interviewee from Romania).

B- Pattern of Country of origin: For example, some countries share similar or at least close cultural values and norms which could be seen by the immigrant as mutual values and not different from these of the immigrant’s own culture and that could in turn have an effect on the immigrant’s adjustment process to the host culture.

“Some countries are better than others in integration because of close traditions and norms” (the interviewee from Romania).

“...integration depends on where the immigrant has come from, a big difference is between those coming from the European countries where they have many common norms and traditions with the Swedish culture than those coming from Asia and Africa” (the interviewee from Somalia).

C- Pattern of religion: According to the respondents, religion could have an effect on how easy and possible the adjustment process could be. For example, it is easy for Christian immigrants to adjust to the Swedish culture due to the common and similar religious beliefs and norms prevailed in the Swedish culture, while Muslims find it difficult and complicated to adjust to Christian cultures due to issues related to food, clothes and so on.

“...Christian people are easiest for them to integrate than Muslims because of big religious differences, also those coming from European countries are much easier to integrate than Middle Eastern people due to some common norms ” (the interviewee from Iraq).

“...I have my religion and my cultural background visible to people and on my head because I am wearing Hijab [veil] and which makes difference when I work or drive because people look to me all the time as different” (female interviewee from Iraq who works as medical doctor).

D- Pattern of length of stay: Some respondents think that if immigrant is intending to settle up in the host culture for the rest of his/her life and not intending to move back to own origin then he/she may start an adjustment process that includes all the life aspects to be part of the host culture.

“...cultural adjustment is necessary for immigrants who intending to stay for a long time as well as it is necessary for personal health, psychology, stress, getting work, social connection, and social inclusion” (the interviewee from Iraq who came to Sweden 28 years ago).
“...if it is voluntary migration or not that will make difference because some immigrants think all the time of traveling back to their home countries and they think integration is not of that importance for them” (the interviewee from Germany who came to Sweden 5 years ago).

E- Pattern of level of education: According to the respondents, the level of education plays role in how easy and quick the adjustment process to the host culture can be. The respondents think that immigrants with good level of education have more chances to work or to continue their education in the host culture and may find it easy to access to social life and expand their social net and to adjust to the host culture than those who are not educated.

“...people with good education are easy to integrate than others because they have better chances to work and to study” (the interviewee from Lebanon).

“The adjustment depends on the educational level of individuals because the education is the key to work and then to integration” (the interviewee from Iraq who is working as medical doctor).
5. Analysis

This chapter is analyzing the findings using the conceptual and theoretical framework.

5.1. Interviewee’s reflection upon the Swedish culture

To be able to answer the second research question, the author has to look deeply into the meanings that the respondents have given to the concept of culture to know how the general characteristics of the Swedish culture might impede or facilitate the adjustment process of immigrants to the Swedish culture. However, culture per se is not the main focus in this study but understanding what meaning could culture encompass is necessary to answer the research questions.

The participants have perceived the Swedish culture as an open culture that accepts differences and diversity and based on acceptance and inclusion of immigrants “...an open culture that accept differences with respect”. Accepting immigrants who belong to different cultures and holding different norms and values from these existed in the host culture is per se a healthy sign in the society because it encourages social acceptance and inclusion and minimizing social differences between immigrants and natives as well as it encourages norms of tolerance and diversity based on inclusion in the host culture “The Swedish culture is very open, tolerant, democratic, tolerance towards other cultures, like to help others, peaceful nature and explicit”.

The immigrants themselves also have expressed that the Swedish culture is apt to diversity and inclusive for immigrants and open towards them to the degree they feel welcomed as an equal part in the Swedish society and not excluded as foreigners as one of the interviewees has referred “...friendly culture based on equality and openness”.

Moreover, perceiving the Swedish culture by the participants as an organized and developed culture that based on respect of rules and obedience by laws as well as the respect of individual rights gives also another dimension for the concept of culture as a democratic and has respect for human beings. The respondents have shown the need of living in an organized culture based on system and rules like the Swedish culture for their daily life and for their future generation because they feel that their rights are preserved by the law. Besides that, the willingness to live in such culture could be one of the reasons behind their migration to Sweden because a culture with such system characteristics are either missing or have been misused in their own cultures; thus, they feel the importance to adjust to such organized culture as well as adjusting to its norms and values as long as they feel respected and equally treated on the base of law and order.
Looking to the meanings that the participants have given to the Swedish culture as an open, diverse, organized and accepting differences may facilitating the adjustment process of immigrants and not impeding it, which in turn could welcome the immigrants to adjust to this culture because they feel accepted and included rather than excluded and marginalized.

5.2 Participant’s perception on integration

Through the findings one can note that the concept of integration covers three main aspects: economic, social, and educational and each one of these aspects encompasses a meaning that represents an important dimension in integration. Understanding the dimensions behind these aspects could help the reader to know how necessary for immigrants to adjust to the Swedish culture. Moreover, understanding these dimensions would help to answering the third research question and part of the first one because the meaning behind each dimension represents a link between all these dimensions and the theoretical debate of cultural adjustment.

The economic aspect refers to the degree by which immigrants could improve their life quality as well as getting better life conditions through the access to available economic resources in the society like the job market and business opportunities as one respondent said “It is a positive thing to feel integrated because it improves the quality of life”; “For me, integration purpose is to have better economic status.”. According to Schneider and Crul (2010: 1145) integration could encompass a structural aspect that is directly related to society in terms of access to job market as well as education. The structural aspect here is not only important and related to the society, but also represents a vital dimension for a society that ensures equal opportunities for all in terms of easy access to job market, business opportunities and financial resources equally with the natives as one of the respondents noted “I think integration means participating in the development of the society as well as to influence the political, economic and social development”. The immigrants themselves and through the findings have expressed the importance of the economic aspect in integration as it represents a gate for social interaction with the Swedish society.

When immigrants have access to the economic aspect and when the financial resources are ensured and become available for immigrants in the society, it may help to expand the immigrant’s social network and their social maneuver by partaking in the different social and economic activities. This social partaking could be influential and productive in the society as well as in the political, economic, and social development in the society.

The economic dimension is to great extent nested and interacted with the social aspect that is compatible and in line with the national integration policy in Sweden which aims to ensure equal
rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background (Regeringskansliet, 2002 in IOM, 2011: 49).

The social aspect represents a complementary dimension together with the economic aspect which according to the findings refers to the societal dimension of living in harmony and peace with other segments in the society through mutual acceptance and respect for others’ values and norms as one of respondents noted “Integration means also respect & cooperation and respect others’ religions & faiths. Everything is positive regarding integration. It means a future for work, for living, for family to live in harmony & happiness if you are planning to stay for a long time in the Sweden”. In other words the social dimension promotes inclusion and acceptance and a base for a society that based on principles of diversity and integration and not on exclusion and marginalizing.

Due to the socio-economic outcomes of integration as well as the prevailed values in the Swedish culture that promote diversity, acceptance and inclusion, all the participants and without exception have shown willingness and motivation to integrate into the Swedish society as noted by one of the respondents “Of course I am very much willing to adjust because I found freedom & human rights in Sweden. It is important to adjust otherwise you will be excluded and will not get access to jobs and that life will be hard. It is necessary for social connection. It is necessary to conduct updating and evaluating for some norms and values”. Moreover, the equal rights and opportunities for all regardless of ethnic or cultural background represents another dimension that has a profound motivation aspect for the immigrants to integrate because they feel included in the society and can enjoy the benefits and value of integration.

It is worthy to say that the participant’s willingness to integration has encouraged by the Swedish integration policy which is unlike the assimilation and aims to build a society based on diversity, mutual respect and tolerance and promoting the socio-economic inclusion and independence of immigrants rather than exclusion and marginalizing (IOM, 2011: 49).

According to the participants themselves, the right of access to education system is an encouraging aspect for social integration because it can increase the immigrants’ opportunities to labor market as well as opening different doors to enjoying the economic resources available in the society and giving them the chance for more social interaction “It means to settle up, to know the system, to work, to go to school and to learn language”; “Integration means for me access to education, work, friends, culture, traditions, norms, language is also important for integration”. The right to access school system and to learn the language as well as to complete education in universities can have an important implication on the immigrant’s sense of inclusion in the society. It can also help the immigrants to expand their social network by getting access to different social activities in society that
promoting sense of belonging and inclusion as well as introducing their cultures to the society which could facilitate their inclusion and acceptance by the host culture.

The right to equal access to education has been guaranteed by the Swedish integration policy that has ensured equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all regardless of ethnic or cultural background (Regeringskansliet, 2002 in IOM, 2011: 49). The aim of this policy and according to Koopmans (2010: 4) is to reduce the socio-economic inequalities between immigrants and natives through ensuring equal access to labor market and education.

The immigrants perceive the need to adjust to the Swedish society through the perceived need for these three interwoven aspects that represent vital dimensions for integration. In a broader aspect, looking at the European meaning of integration introduced earlier in this paper (p.15) one can notice that the meaning encompasses economic and social dimensions and promoting of diversity (Schneider and Crul, 2010:1144) which is very much similar to how the participants themselves have perceived the need for adjustment and what the Swedish national policy of integration is also aiming for.

5.3 Immigrant’s Perception on Cultural Assimilation

Although the theory of cultural assimilation suggests that the immigrant’s assimilation process is taking place automatically and steadily over the cultural, economic, and the demographic characteristics of the host culture and over generations (Wildsmeth et al, 2003: 565), the adjustment process that the respondent have carried out differs a great deal from the assimilation process that the theory suggests, because the immigrants to Sweden have kept their own cultural values and norms while making some necessary update that seems to be vital for social and economic interaction such as learning the Swedish language or following the Swedish system, rules and laws (See findings 4.1.2: 25-26). According to Xie and Greenman (2011: 967) such updating considered as a selective type of adjustment because immigrants intentionally maintain their cultural values and norms while integrating on the economic level.

According to the findings, the participants in this study have undertaken an immediate and time efficient adjustment process and has started already with the arrival of the first generation of immigrants who realized the need for socio-economic adjustment to the Swedish society to improve the quality and conditions of their lives and seems to be necessary to live in harmony and peace with other segments in the Swedish society.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants have described their adjustment to the Swedish society as necessary for their professional and social life success and this may in turn debate the adequacy of the assimilation theory to explain such phenomenon and to answer the research question.
5.4 Lawrence Harrison’s Theory on Culture and Development

Culture is an important concept in Harrison’s theory that all the debate is linked to it and hence, needs to be looked deeply to understand the need for cultural adjustment. According to my findings, immigrants have perceived the Swedish culture as an open culture that accepts differences and diversity (See findings, 4.1.1; 4.2: 25-28). For this reason, the respondents have perceived the need to adjust to some extent in the host culture and more specifically to the socio-economic aspect than the cultural aspect in order to fit in the host culture.

Looking back to how the respondents perceived integration, one can note that the participants have carried out a multi dimensional adjustment process on the economic, social, and educational level. This adjustment process started by carrying out a social adjustment by adjusting to the values of openness and acceptance of differences as well as respecting diversity as an over arching social umbrella in the Swedish society. The need for such adjustment seems to be vital for integration according to the respondents because it represents suitable way to be accepted and to live in harmony and inclusion and not to be excluded and marginalized in a society based on principles of diversity as in the Swedish culture “... my feeling is that the Swedish culture is very open and diverse in the way that is tolerant and that people are living in their own culture in Sweden and I don’t think there is a big difference between the big cities and the small ones”; “ learning the Swedish habits, language, norms and values such the social importance of midsummer occasion, fika [coffee time] or Saint Lucia’s day give you better possibilities for stable life and not to be isolated and unaccepted in the society. At the end, I am willing to adjust”.

Moreover, Adjusting to the Swedish system and abiding by its general rules and norms is another important adjustment process that the immigrants have undertaken by replacing their home norms and values that are not fitting in the Swedish society with these prevailing ones in the Swedish society. Perceiving the Swedish culture as developed and organized culture that based on respecting the system and law as noted by the respondents seems to be one of the reasons for such adjustment “The democracy, the right to decide, right to express opinion, law obedient, respect for the ones private life is very much appreciated in Sweden, while at one lives for himself, loneliness, individualism is not too much appreciated in Sweden”. “ Respecting the time for example is very important in the Swedish society and you have to respect the time in Sweden as well which is not the case in my country or in most other Arab countries while here everything is connected with time like the doctor’s appointment, job, buses, and so forth. I have to adjust to these aforementioned issues”; “Of course I am very much willing to adjust because I found freedom & human rights in Sweden. It is important to adjust otherwise you will be excluded and will not get access to jobs and that life will be hard. It is necessary
for social connection. It is necessary to conduct updating and evaluating for some norms and values”. Standing in queue and waiting quietly without shouting or showing annoyance is one of these prevailing norms in the Swedish culture as described by one of the participants who came from Hungary and who found such norm is more relieving and convincing for her life and for her family “...the respect for system, to stand quite in queue and to follow driving rules and laws...”. To undertake such adjustment by the immigrants on the personal level as well as the family level seen to be necessary and important for their social inclusion and acceptance. It could be also necessary for them to do such adjustment as part of practicing their rights and responsibilities equally with other citizens in the society.

On the other hand, the adjustment on the economic level is linked with the integration on the social level because achieving social integration in terms of inclusion and acceptance in the society is the gateway towards labor market and business opportunities as noted by the respondents. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants have been well integrated in their work environment through adjusting to the Swedish working style and working ethics which seen to be necessary for them to enter the Swedish labor market and getting jobs. Examples for such adjustments are like respecting the working hours with high sense of responsibility, the sense of performing the job in the best way, and cooperating with other colleagues in the work “To adjust to the Swedish traditions & norms is necessary to fit in the Swedish society. Adjusting to the Swedish work ethics is also very important to get access to labor market.”; “...you need to adapt to rules and norms to live in the Swedish society.”.

On the educational level, one of the major adjustments which all the participants have made with no exception is learning the Swedish language which is a crucial factor in communication and integration for immigrants in the Swedish society. The Swedish language represents an important and vital need for immigrants for their social interaction and for entering the Swedish labor market as well as to complete their education. Scholars have often linked adjustment problems to communication, social integration, language, skills, and gender (Black 1988; Napier and Taylor 1995 in Peltokorpi 2008: 1589). Learning the Swedish language seen to be a necessity for the immigrants to enter the Swedish society and the labor market, nevertheless; the immigrants have kept their own home languages and they use it to communicate with their countrymen and their own families because they think it is part of their identity as stated by one of the participants who came from Iraq who said “...we speak Arabic at home because we are Iraqis and the Swedish is there all the time in school, work, friends and even on TV”.

According to Black (1988 in Okpara and Kabongo, 2011: 24) the process of cultural adjustment refers to the degree where the immigrant perceives the psychological comfort and familiarity to live
and work in a new culture. Through the findings one can note that the immigrants were willing to carry out an adjustment process on some of their values and norms that are linked mostly to the socio-economic aspect and not to the cultural one to the extent they can improve their quality of life and follow the development process in the society and not to be excluded or to be marginalized.

Furthermore, and according to Black (1988 in Okpara and Kabongo, 2011: 24) cultural adjustment could include three facets: (a) work adjustment, which includes supervision, performance and responsibility; (b) relational or social adjustment, which refer to the interaction with the members of the host culture; (c) general or socio-cultural adjustment, which refer to the life condition in the host culture. The cultural adjustment that the immigrants have done is also multidimensional and has touched their economic, social and educational life and was necessary and vital for their future to reduce uncertainty and to feel comfortable and certain.

To sum up and clearly answer the first research question, the respondents have perceived the socio-economic need to adjust to the Swedish culture as a crucial and necessary to fit in the society and to be part of the Swedish system. Such adjustment seems also important for them to practicing their rights and responsibilities towards the society and to feel included and not marginalized.

My findings have also shown that the respondents are willing to adjust and to fit in the Swedish society to the extent they can live in harmony and feel familiar with the host culture. They are also willing to adjust to be part of the ongoing development process in the Swedish society and to be accepted and not to be excluded or to be different.

5.5 The Observable Patterns

According to the interviewees, there are several factors or patterns that may affect the adjustment process of the immigrants to integrate in the host culture. These patterns are seen by the immigrants as important because each one of these patterns may affect the immigrant’s adjustment to integration in certain way. The age for instance, may have an effect on how easy and quick the immigrant integrate into society. When the immigrant come to Sweden in young ages they may find it easy to adjust to the Swedish culture and to interact socially with the society through the school, sport, school mates and other social activities for youth and young people which play enormous role in the adjustment process “…but it depends on the immigrant’s age, if he/she come to Sweden in young age then it is easy to adjust through the school and school mates and the adjustment will be more quickly than those who came in older ages”.

According to the immigrants, the country of origin also plays a role in immigrant’s adjustment process because some countries are sharing similar cultural values and norms and no profound cultural
differences could be seen between them. For this reason, the immigrants of some countries to Sweden may experience no profound difference with their country of origin and the host culture “...integration depends on where the immigrant has come from, a big difference is between those coming from the European countries where they have many common norms and traditions with the Swedish culture than those coming from Asia and Africa”.

Religion is another issue according to the immigrants that may also has a noticeable impact on the adjustment process of the immigrant to the host culture. According to a female respondent, Muslim immigrants may face some difficulties to adjust to the Swedish culture due to different issues such as clothes as a Muslim female respondent described her experience with the scarf (Hijab) she wears that makes her looks different and recognized in the society”...I have my religion and my cultural background visible to people and on my head because I am wearing Hijab [scarf] and which makes difference when I work or drive because people look to me all the time as different”.

The level of education could affect also the adjustment process of immigrants to the society. According to my respondents people with good level of education may find it easy and quickly to adjust to the host culture than those who are not educated because education might be the key to enter the Swedish labor market or to continue ones education in the university and then to meet people and to learn about the host cultures’ norms and traditions “...people with good education are easy to integrate than others because they have better chances to work and to study”.

The last pattern according to the respondent’s point of view is the length of stay. According to the immigrants, the length of stay could also affect the way immigrants adjust to the host culture because those who are voluntary immigrated to Sweden and willing to stay for the rest of their life will find it necessary for them to adjust to get access to work and to interact in the society. On the other hand those who are not intending to settle up and planning to travel back to their home country someday will find it less important for them to adjust to the host culture “...if it is voluntary migration or not that will make difference because some immigrants think all the time of traveling back to their home countries and they think integration is not of that importance for them”.

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6. Conclusion

Following a bottom-up approach looking at integration from the immigrant’s perspective and their personal experience in Sweden and the way they perceive the need to adjust to the Swedish culture. The findings have shown that the immigrants in this study perceive the socio-economic need for adjustment rather than the cultural one to integrate in the Swedish culture, which seems to be necessary and crucial for them to improve the quality of life and to be included and feel accepted in the host culture. Furthermore, the immigrants feel willing and welcomed to adjust because they perceive the values of diversity, openness and inclusion that are prevailed in the Swedish culture and that allowing them to adjust smoothly to the host culture.

The study also reveals that the socio-economic adjustment is necessary for them to take part in the political, social, and economic progress in the society and not to be marginalized or excluded. Moreover, the immigrants have mentioned some patterns such as the country of origin, religion, education and length of stay in the host culture which according to them could have an effect on how smooth and quick the adjustment process of immigrants to the host culture could be.

The findings of this study can help the policy makers to develop further strategies of immigrant integration that encourage immigrant’s adjustment process to the Swedish culture as well as drawing a clear picture for future policies that should take the immigrant’s socio-economic need into consideration to smoothen their integration in the host culture.

The research contributes also to the debate on the need of cultural adjustment in integration, but from a different perspective: the immigrant perspective. The results may shed a different light on the current ongoing efforts to sharpen the integration thinking around pushing towards adjustment process in the host culture. The recent uprisings for example in immigrant populated areas around Sweden have raised many question marks as well as challenges on the importance and the need to review and to look deeply in the current integration policy in Sweden and to take into consideration the need for adjustment from the immigrant’s perspective. Such need is flowing from a social-economic perspective that represents a crucial factor in the integration process.

The immigrants in this study turned out to be willing to adjust and to integrate because they see the need for that, which means there is less conflict potential and more cohesion society. Otherwise, there is possibly a stronger potential for increased social conflict and lack of social cohesion. According to my small sample of immigrants, the perceived need for adjustment seems to be necessary for immigrants to live in harmony and to avoid any cultural conflicts that may arise between
immigrants and the host culture due to cultural differences as well as to improve the quality of their life through getting access to labor market.

The limited scope of this study has in turn limited the possibility to generalize the results of this research while providing an initial stepping stone for further research. This implies that further research can help to better understanding the immigrant’s need for adjustment to integrate in the Swedish society. This could be done through conducting similar research but on wider scope in Sweden. The author suggests deeper interviews including a large number of respondents to further increase the understanding of how the immigrants themselves perceive the need of socio-economic adjustment to integrate in the host culture.
**List of References**


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Appendix 1: Interview questions

Interview questions

Name:

Age:

Title:

Country of origin (where you come from):

Gender: Man / Woman / others

Consent to use real name in the final paper: Yes / No

Consent to use quotes in the final paper: Yes / No

1. What does it mean for you to be integrated in the Swedish society?

2. What change will occur in your life if you are integrated?

3. What would cultural adjustment mean for you? What would you have to do? How would you have to act? Which skills would you have to learn? What would you have to give up?

4. What do you appreciate in the Swedish culture and what not? And the same for your own culture.

5. How willing are you to adjust to the Swedish culture? Why or why not?

6. How do you perceive cultural adjustment? Why?