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1 Per Pettersson is the author of the report as a whole, while Ninna Edgardh has contributed in the planning of the work, the collection of material and is the author of the section on the Family Centre in Gävle.
1. Abstract

The Swedish case study was conducted in the town of Gävle. It focused on two local welfare institutions, a public school with a high degree of immigrant pupils, and a family centre run by the local authority in cooperation with the Church of Sweden. The collected data consists of official documents, information from the internet, 43 individual interviews and some observation. Analysis show that conflicts of values between minority groups and the majority culture appear in a number of fields. But most of these value conflicts and tensions are handled by negotiations and compromises in a way which can provide good examples for other localities and local contexts. Most of our policy recommendations are generated by these good examples collected from the actual practice in Gävle.

2. Gävle and its population

The Swedish case study is carried out in Gävle, a residential town in the County of Gävleborg in the middle of Sweden. Gävle has 92,000 inhabitants. Nine percent are born in another country, compared with 13% percent in Sweden as a whole. In the 1980s Gävle started to increase with the arrival of refugees mainly from Iran and Latin America. During the 1990s they were followed by groups coming mainly from the Balkan countries. The last few years the arriving immigrants have predominantly come from Iraq and Burma (6,M). Today people born in at least 153 different countries are represented in Gävle. Fifteen nationalities are represented with more than 150 individuals (Table 1). The number of immigrants is increasing by approximately 200 per year (3,F).

Table 1: Total population in Gävle municipality and the 15 major nationalities listed by country of birth and sex (31st Dec. 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>46,763</td>
<td>45,621</td>
<td>92,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>42,321</td>
<td>41,361</td>
<td>83,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 When interviews are cited in the text, they are coded with an individual number for each interview followed by an indication of the interviewee’s sex (F= female, M=male). When there are two respondents in the same interview, they are distinguished with a number following the indication of their sex, e.g. (22,F,2). When the same part of the text refers to two different interviews, the references to the two interviews are separated by a semicolon, for example: (3,F; 6,M).
Welfare and Values in Europe:  
Transitions related to Religion, Minorities and Gender (WaVE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 Official national minorities

In Sweden there are five official ethnic minorities which benefit from certain rights. These “national minorities” are the Sami, Swedish Finns, Tornedalers, Roma and Jews (Edgardh Beckman 2006). Due to Swedish law there are no statistics on people based on ethnicity, so we don’t know how many of each group are in Gävle.

There is no Synagogue, Jewish congregation or organisation and no visible group of Tornedalers. According to the national Sami information centre there is no Sami group. Statistics on country of birth tell us that about 1,700 of the population in Gävle are born in Finland. But a number of these are immigrant ethnic Swedes born in Finland, not belonging to the Finnish culture. There is a group of Roma in Gävle, presumably around 100-200 individuals, most of Finnish origin. A few years ago there was a conflict between two large groups of Roma families with the result that one of these groups moved away from Gävle, which led to a reduction of Roma in Gävle (15,F; 26,M). The local authority has an especially employed “Roma-pedagogue” to handle contacts and provide social support to the Roma group (15,F).

2.2 Religious minorities in Gävle

As ethnicity, religious affiliation is also not available in the Official Statistics of Sweden (Personuppgiftslagen 1998, Rapport från statens kulturråd 2001, p. 4). Thus, statistics concerning religious belonging can only be provided by the churches and
communities themselves. According to the local authority’s register on organisations there are eight religious organisations, all of them Swedish Christian minority denominations. No religious immigrant association or congregation is included. But we found that at least three exist; the Catholic Church and two Muslim groups.

Muslims

There are two Muslim groups in Gävle. One is more linked to the Sunni tradition, while the other to the Shia tradition. The Sunni group is the major one, well organised and running a mosque called the Islamic Centre located in a former shop. According to their chairman there are approximately 3,000 people in Gävle of Muslim cultural origin. Most of those practicing their religion attend the prayers and activities at the Islamic Centre. Approximately 250 attend the Friday prayers (20,M). The Shia group is quite small and “invisible” with a mosque in the basement of a house. Internal conflicts within the Shia Muslim group have sometimes been reported by the local media. The police as well as journalists have tried without result to find out what the conflicts are about (7,M; 31,F).

There have also been signs of a conflict between the Sunni and the Shia groups. In May 2006 the Sunni imam at the Gävle Islamic Centre was attacked by two masked men who tried to kill him. He managed to escape but was wounded from a knife in his chest. In a newspaper interview he said that the conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims was behind the attack: “I have no proof but I feel quite sure” (Arbetarbladet, 5 October 2006). He said that “the conflict between the Sunni and Shia in Iraq is spreading among Muslims all over the world. There are Shia Muslim groups starting to be active even in Europe and in Sweden”, and adds, “in my private life I have no enemies” (Arbetarbladet, 5 October 2006).

Pentecostals

The Pentecostal congregation in Gävle has around 600 members, a Swedish main pastor, a Spanish speaking pastor and an evangelist of Finnish origin. Within the congregation there is a Spanish speaking group of about 30 persons from Latin America: Cuba, Panama, El Salvador, Peru and Chile. They arrange meetings 2-3 times a week. There is also an African
group of 20 people meeting once a week with people mainly from Burundi and Rwanda. There are also about 15 Finnish congregation members and a few others from the Middle East. The main pastor indicates that the congregation regards it as very important to work with issues promoting integration (34,M).

2.3 Public welfare provision for minorities

The local and regional authorities represent the Swedish welfare state at a local level and have responsibility for health care, care for children and the elderly, and all education up to university level. The welfare services provided are very extensive and financed mainly by taxes (for an overview of the national Swedish welfare system, the local welfare system in Gävle and the role of the Church of Sweden as an agent of welfare, see Pettersson, P. and T. Ekstrand and N. Edgardh Beckman 2004, and Edgardh Beckman, N. and T. Ekstrand and P. Pettersson 2006).

All people who are registered in Sweden have equal rights to public welfare provision. Minority groups have the same rights and formal access to public welfare as the majority. But one needs to be registered by having a permanent or temporary residence permit. Thereby many immigrants who have arrived recently and are waiting for a residence permit, or have been denied a permit and are in hiding, are outside the ordinary welfare system. They are provided with medical care only for emergency, but nothing more than that (1,M). Even parts of the Church of Sweden’s diaconal work have implemented the same general principles as the local authority for access to its services, thereby excluding some of the most needy from any assistance (2,M).

All Swedish local authorities are supposed to receive a number of immigrants and take responsibility of integrating them into the Swedish society with financial support from the state. Gävle has agreed to receive 160 per year. This figure is calculated according to population, housing capacity and other similar factors. The Gävle local authority has established an Immigrant Centre with a number of employees in order to coordinate its activities directed especially to recently arrived immigrants. The Centre is divided into different units. A “Receiving unit” is responsible for initial contact and arranging initial practical issues, such as housing, schooling for children, etc. The “Establishment unit”
handles all issues that have to do with employment and the labour market. There is also a special unit for Swedish education for adult immigrants, the “Swedish for Immigrants”. Another special unit handles therapeutic support to refugees with traumatic experiences, the “Gävle Refugee Trauma Centre”. There is also a special “Interpreter Service” available 24 hours a day. In order to inform immigrants on public welfare services available at large in Gävle, the Immigrant Centre has produced a brief but very informative publication in about 20 different languages which gives a good overview. In an effort to integrate immigrant knowledge and cultural competence into the local authority’s administration a number of immigrants have been employed in certain strategic positions in the local authority’s different fields of welfare activities (14,M).

2.4 Minority organisations, a tool for integration of values

As is the general practice in Sweden, Gävle local authority supports financially different kinds of voluntary organisations if they fulfil certain criteria. A special contact person is employed to support the forming and running of ethnic organisations. This is regarded as a support to their respective social and cultural life, but also as a way of integrating minority groups into Swedish society. Only organisations that adapt their structure to a given democratic order receive support. The local authority’s contact person is himself an immigrant and says that a major task for him is to educate the boards of ethnic organisations in democratic organisational principles and to make sure that these organisations live up to democratic principles of receiving financial support. He has constructed a special system to evaluate the organisations by giving them points based on the implementation of certain values, e.g. if they work actively for democratisation, if they practice and work for gender equality, and if they have special activities for children and young people. These values are thereby imposed into immigrant ethnic organisations.

There are 22 ethnic organisations (2006) in the local authority’s register of organisations. In principle all political or religious organisations are excluded from financial support. But the Gävle Islamic Youth Association is included because it mainly runs social youth activities (6,M). Ethnic organisations have a general welfare function in providing social contacts and a community. Many have also more specific social functions, e.g. strengthening mother tongues and providing social support and links to the home
country. Some organisations also arrange the distribution of support to relatives in need in their respective home country (3,F).

2.5 Unemployment, the major welfare issue for immigrants

According to several of our interviewees, unemployment is the major welfare issue among immigrants in Gävle (3,F; 6,M; 25,M). Due to the comprehensive public welfare system a basic standard of living is provided to those who are not part of the labour market, but to become integrated in society and to get a chance to improve conditions of living they need to have a job. In Sweden there has traditionally been a strong link between paid work and the social security system of the welfare state. Basic social needs are distributed to everyone at a minimum level, but most of social security is linked to individual income that comes from a position in the labour market (Salonen 1998). Our interviewees stress that unemployment is the major factor causing social segregation of immigrants and hindering the integration process.

The general rate of employment in Gävle is 75% among people in the age group of 20–64 (2004). In the parts of Gävle where most immigrants live the rate of employment is only around 50%. Two of these areas, called Nord and Nordost (North and Northeast), are according to a national survey listed among the most segregated areas in Sweden (Rapport 2006). Among Swedish residents living in these areas there is an over-representation of people who are unemployed with poor economic conditions, and added to this, they often suffer from drug addiction or have criminal backgrounds, etc (26,M).

In October 2006 there was an initiative to support the creation of relationships between unemployed immigrants and prospective employers. An “Exhibition of Plurality”, with the subtitle “Inspiration for Integration”, was arranged by the local and regional authorities in cooperation with associations, organisations and companies. The major aim was to provide immigrants with the possibility of getting a personal contact with organisations and employers in the Gävle region.

2.6 The majority church as an agent of welfare
The Church of Sweden has a dominant position in the religious life of Sweden at large, including in Gävle. Up to 82% of the population are members of the Church of Sweden (2003). About 75% of all newborn children are baptised in the Church of Sweden and approximately 90% of all deceased are buried in the Church of Sweden’s grounds. These figures are similar to the general Swedish situation. Like most parishes in the Church of Sweden, the parishes in Gävle have a relatively high number of employees, with approximately 200 persons employed on a long-term basis (2003). Two thirds of employees are women.

The Church of Sweden organises a wide range of activities and services provided to individuals, as well as, to organisations, e.g. schools, prisons and hospitals. Most people restrict their participation in church activities to life rites (baptism, confirmation, wedding, funeral) and occasional participation in worship. Around 10% of the population takes part in Christian liturgical services at least once a month.

2.7 Majority church relationships to minority groups

The Church of Sweden in Gävle has actively worked on establishing good relationships with minority ethnic and religious groups, stressing tolerance and freedom of religion. Staffan’s parish seems to have the most developed contacts with national minority groups as well as immigrant groups and has made a special commitment to provide services for the Finnish minority group (31,F). For several years good contacts and cooperation have developed with leading persons at the Islamic Centre and a few years ago a mixed youth group of Swedish and Muslim teenage girls was organised.

This cooperation with the Islamic Centre has been linked to a European project called “Dialogue Week”, a French initiative sponsored by EU promoting activities and friendship between Christians and Muslims all over Europe. Gävle was the first Swedish locality taking part in this project (31,F).
Two of the parishes organise meetings for Swedish and immigrant women and the Diaconal Council gives substantial financial support to a voluntary youth centre with a special aim in promoting social integration among immigrants (26,M).

3. Context and timeframe

Data was collected from May 2006 to September 2007. In September 2006 elections to national, regional and local parliaments took place. The Social Democrats lost the election at the national level and a new government with a conservative prime minister entered. Significant media attention before and after the election was given to “The Sweden Democrats”, a small right wing political party with the aim of stopping immigration as its major objective. This party strengthened its position being represented by one or two delegates in several local parliaments, including in Gävle.

Gävle has a long tradition of social democratic dominance, and the election did not change this, although the presence of the Sweden Democrats has caused some worry among the established parties and among the majority of the population. Our data collection took place before any possible effects could be noticed due to the political change in the national government. Apart from the elections we have not noted any other major changes or significant events at national or local level that took place during the period of the Swedish case study, which could have affected our data collection.

4. Methods and sources

Our choice of methods and sources is motivated by the special character of the Swedish comprehensive welfare system. We chose to take advantage of the possibilities given by the extensive organisation and transparency of the Swedish public authorities’ administration, using their statistical resources and open access. Since there are so many different minority groups present in Gävle we found it difficult to collect data on an individual level without doing this within an organisational frame in which our data would be representative for a larger group of minority individuals. Thus we started covering the minority situation at large in
Gävle, their general access to welfare services, special activities for minority groups and their own organisations. Informants in key positions providing an overview of the situation at large in Gävle have been used as the main sources of information. In line with the common guidelines in the WaVE project we gave special attention to the presence of the Roma ethnic minority and the Muslim and Pentecostal religious minorities in Gävle.

For our in depth fieldwork analysing values in practice we have chosen to focus on the major national and religious minorities present in Gävle and on two local welfare institutions. We decided to cover the major world religions: Islam, Catholicism, Buddhism and Hinduism (Table 2). According to the local authority’s statistics the major national groups representing each world religion in Gävle are: Iraqis among the Muslims, Thais among the Buddhists, Chileans among the Catholics, and Indians among the Hindus. Added to these four national (and religious) groups we chose to focus also on one of the five official “national minorities” in order to cover the aspect of belonging to a group which is being especially recognised by the authorities and by a law guaranteeing certain rights. Of the two national minority groups present in Gävle, Finnish and Roma, we choose the Roma. They are significant wherever they appear through their specific culture, visible especially in their dress, making their minority identity public. They also represent a minority religion in Sweden since many of them belong to Pentecostalism. The Finnish group is quite well integrated in the Swedish society and does not represent any specific religious profile outside the major Swedish Evangelical Lutheran affiliation.

Table 2: The choice of focus on five national/ethnic groups in Gävle covering five world religions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National/ethnic group</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>Many are Pentecostals</td>
<td>100-200</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When choosing welfare spaces we looked for a place, an issue or an activity broad enough to include interaction and encounters in between different minority groups as well as among people belonging to the majority population. Our choice was: a) a public school in an area of Gävle with a high degree of immigrants, and b) the recently established Family Centre run by the local authority in cooperation with the Church of Sweden.

Focusing on one specific school in Gävle meant concentrating on the people involved in that school, primarily pupils and the school personnel, and on the issues that are on the agenda in this school. According to a national state investigation this school is located in one of the most segregated housing areas in Sweden. The focus on the recently established Family Centre in Gävle has meant looking at the interaction between the Centre and the minority groups that come in contact with the centre. Issues which are brought up in these contexts automatically and directly also focus in a significant way on gender issues, as well as, on religious aspects.

The data we have gathered include written documents from local authorities and organisations, information available in the internet, individual interviews and some direct observation. At the websites of the two local newspapers, the Gävle Dagblad and Arbetarbladet, we have searched for published material on minorities, religion, Islam, immigrants etc., in the period from January 2006 to May 2007. We have also collected the regulations and annual reports of the ethnic and religious associations, which are included in the local authority’s register. Statistical material on the population has been provided by the local authority’s statistical office. From the information centre, “The Citizens’ Centre”, we have collected different printed materials. We have interviewed 43 individuals, including, 22 women and 21 men. From those, 15 interviewees have been born in countries other than Sweden. We have also made some participatory observation at the Family Centre.

During the interviews, we tried to get people to tell us about their own experiences and actual practices, e.g. what they have done in certain situations or what experiences they have from encounters between individuals belonging to minority groups and the Swedish welfare system. We have also tried to find what
Welfare needs individuals in minority groups have asked for themselves and how these needs have been met by the Swedish welfare system, or solved in other ways, or not solved at all. We are aware of the weakness in our choice of collecting data from officials as key informants of which most belong to the majority population. However, this was the best choice in order to reflect the Swedish local situation in Gävle.

5. Findings

5.1 Findings in the mapping of Gävle at large

We have not found any major tensions or permanent conflicts between majority and minority groups, or in between different minority groups. However, some discrimination of Roma people, a feeling among Muslims of being looked down at, and tensions in between some immigrants groups have emerged.

There is a wide spread and very old prejudice against the Roma group seeing all Roma individuals as potential thieves. This prejudice is a type of racism that exists in many European countries, not only in Sweden. The Roma people have a history in Sweden of being regarded as having less value than other human beings (15,F). Our informants state that they often are treated with disrespect and segregated from common social life by the Swedish majority population, as well as, by immigrant groups. A Roma woman living in Gävle indicated that she had never gone to a restaurant in Gävle because she knew that she would not be welcome. According to one story we were told, a restaurant owner said to a few Roma when they had just sat down at a table that they were not welcome and that they had to leave immediately. In this case the restaurant owner himself belonged to one of the recently immigrated minority groups (15,F).

One of our informants stated that sometimes a specific conflict of values can appear in between the strong Roma value of the family and the Swedish majority culture. Sometimes Roma pupils in public school suddenly disappear from their class for some time or even permanently (7,M). The reason for this is the Roma cultural tradition of keeping very tight bonds within the extended family of relatives. If they for example do not travel immediately
to a relative who is ill, e.g. in Finland, they are expelled from the community of relatives (7,M).

Similar negative attitudes to the Roma from the majority population are also experienced by many Muslims. When asked about minority group encounters with the Swedish welfare system, the chairman of the Islamic Centre stated that many immigrants perceive that they are looked down at and feel segregated when they are in contact with the authorities. He blames the media for providing mostly negative descriptions of Muslims, connecting them with criminal activities and stressing how different Muslims are as compared to the majority of the population (20,M).

In our general mapping we have also found some minor tensions between different groups of minorities. Some of the interviewees mentioned specifically that there are tensions between different immigrant families in some housing complexes. These tensions and minor conflicts often have to do with the usage of common spaces in blocks of houses, e.g. the washing machines. They are mostly related to the deprived situation of unemployment and are of a general human nature, which appears when people are unemployed, and are not due to tensions specifically related to the minority cultures as such. We have also previously mentioned that there are some tensions between the Sunni and Shia Muslim groups, as well as within the Shia group itself.

One of the interviews with a local authority representative at the Gävle immigration centre is significant as it indicates the way most interviewees in the Swedish case follow the Swedish tradition of keeping religion out of the public space and discourse. When asked about possible conflicts of values related to religion the local authority representative said that religion or values never come into the focus of her work and the only conflicts she has heard of concerns minor things that are solved at a local level in each case (3,F). But when continuing she mentioned an example when some pupils in an introductory course said that they couldn’t follow the lectures during Ramadan. Then, she said, “we got help from a man that he himself is a Muslim. He told the others that ‘you can eat in the evening when you come home’, no one is off during Ramadan” (3,F). So of course religion appears in different ways, she
added. This comment on the issue of Ramadan came after a while and was obviously not part of her daily agenda since she regards religiously related issues as minor and unproblematic. They are solved if they come up, which they mostly do not.

After having mentioned Ramadan she added that there are a lot of discussions on issues concerning family, children and equality between women and men in which different values play a major role. "We have a lot of these discussions in our introductory groups of immigrants. Such different views can e.g. appear when we are having a Christmas party with traditional Swedish dances around the Christmas tree and games like 'The little frogs'. Then there might be some girl that cannot take this Somali man by her hand." (3,F). Her comments concerning the role of religion and values among immigrating minority groups in Gävle were especially linked to the school context and the family context. Thereby this interview was one indicator pointing at school and the family centre as good welfare contexts for the study of conflicts and cohesion relating to values and religion in practice.

5.2 Findings at the school

The selected school has 290 pupils and consists of two pre-schools with children 5-6 years old and one school from years 1-9 with children 7-15 years old. About 80% of the children have a language other than Swedish as their mother tongue, which means that pupils with Swedish as their mother tongue are a minority in the school and some classes consist of only immigrant children. The largest groups of pupils are Kurdish, followed by Arabic speakers and Somalis, followed by different small groups of Thai, Burmese, Vietnamese, Africans, and others (16,M). This diversity of languages can in itself become segregating and create barriers among the different groups. The school has a double strategy in handling language diversity: 1) in order to support the development of mother tongue languages the school has a number of mother tongue teachers who regularly gather each language group for language training and support for pupils linked to the minority culture; 2) during the school lessons pupils have to speak Swedish and are not allowed to speak any other language. In the breaks during the school day they are free to speak other languages, but most pupils prefer to use Swedish even then.
The school has a reputation of having succeeded in handling the specific needs of immigrant pupils and managing value conflicts (5,F; 7,M; 20,M). Thus, we wanted to benefit from the knowledge and experiences of the school: in what areas do value conflicts arise in the school context? What practical solutions are especially crucial when these value conflicts become visible? How does the school system, as part of the Swedish welfare system, handle and solve these conflicts over values? Are there any conflicts over values that the school has not been able to solve yet?

We made a choice to focus mainly on the people in charge of the school as our main sources of information. We regard mother tongue teachers as minority group representatives, as they themselves belong to the respective minority group. Our interviews with mother tongue teachers also showed that in practice they act as advocates for minority group rights internally within the school. They also have a broad function of acting as cultural interpreters, helping and supporting the pupils to do their homework in different subjects in the school. One of the Swedish teachers stated: “We get a lot of help from our mother tongue teachers who work here, as bridges to the homes” (32,F). She mentioned especially their role in communicating the Swedish policy of gender equality saying, “when thinking about gender equality, in between boys and girls, an area in which we work a lot. It is a difficult area because the boys are often taught at home that they shall have the power, while the girls shall assist at home and do the cleaning” (32,F). She continued “as teachers we are supposed to transfer certain values to the pupils, but they have other values brought with them from home which are their truths. We touch upon this all the time” (32,F). One of the mother tongue teachers confirmed this saying that “I have a sort of responsibility also for the pupils’ development. The first part concerns educating the children in their mother tongue language….and the other part is to help the children with different subjects in school. To be a support”. He further explained that he even acts as a religious interpreter from the minority culture perspective, and even as a religious teacher :“I used to say to my pupils who are Muslims - most of them are Muslims, some are Christians also - this is what the Christians believe, but we believe like this, and like this, and like this. I think that is my responsibility to explain. Otherwise it will be problems at home”..... “Thus, it is important that the pupils
become aware of the differences between this culture and what our own culture says. We shall not lose our own culture, compensating it with other people’s culture. But we shall understand each other’s culture” (25,M).

We have conducted interviews with nine individuals at the school: a) two male headmasters; b) four teachers: a male mother tongue language teacher, a female mother tongue teacher, a female teacher in mathematics, natural sciences and language, and a female Swedish teacher; c) a female school nurse. In addition to these seven adults we also had a short interview with two immigrant male pupils of about 12-14 years of age. Five of the interviewees are immigrants: four Muslims and one Catholic.

According to the two headmasters the cultural mix at the school is generally working out smoothly and without any problematic conflicts. But they also stress that there are great cultural differences based in the different views, values and religion, which are clearly visible in the school’s daily life and this has to be managed. One headmaster stresses that the issues and questions raised by children from non-Swedish cultures are often very different from the questions normally raised by Swedish children in the way that religion plays a much more significant role among the immigrant children. “It can be religious questions, for example concerning Ramadan. The issues are very sensitive, for example in biology when discussing naked human beings that are posed. The children bring it up” (16,M). The headmaster mentioned that last week he had to handle a situation with a pupil who got very upset by another pupil’s view of God. The background was that a teacher during a lecture had used a metaphor consisting of a telephone call with God without thinking that this would be problematic. A Muslim pupil reacted strongly against this way of describing God. But another pupil who is Christian defended the teacher by saying that the teacher was speaking specifically about the Christian God, not about the Muslim God. The Christian pupil argued that the Muslim pupil should not comment on this since the teacher was not referring to the Muslim God. According to the headmaster this way of talking about religion, a subject that is so sensitive and emotionally charged, is totally different from an equivalent situation among Swedish pupils.
The significance of religion at the school due to its multicultural situation is further stressed in interviews with the mother tongue teachers. They mention several areas in which values linked to religious belonging makes a difference in practical issues at the school. But they also stress that even if a majority of the pupils and their parents come from other cultures, where religion plays a more significant role in society than in Sweden, their religious involvement varies a lot. Only a minority within each minority group practice their religion in a strict way. According to the interviewees the majority of immigrants are more or less liberal and for about half of them religion plays no significant role (27,F; 33,M).

Our interviewees mention a number of areas and situations in which value differences have been highlighted. Some value differences in between minority groups and the majority system have been easy to manage, while other differences have caused conflicts and called for negotiations. In many cases values linked to religion have caused discussion in a way that reveals tensions in between the cultures of different minority groups and the existing school curriculum, which is shaped by the Swedish majority culture. This majority culture is regarded by most Swedes as very secularised, but obviously many immigrants regard it as Christian and influenced by values that are different from the values that are integrated in their own religion. One Muslim representative said: “The culture in school has been to support the country’s religion, even if people in Sweden say that they are secularised and that there is freedom of religion. But I think that school books are imprinted by the old idea of people being Christian, even if this is not acknowledged.”(25,M).

Relationships between the sexes

A major area where there are differences in the views between Muslim pupils and the Swedish school system with its majority Christian background seems to be the issue of relationships between the sexes. An important difference for many immigrants is the Swedish practice of having mixed school classes with boys and girls within the same classroom. Parents and pupils from a Muslim background are used to schools with classes separated by sex.
The general practice of mixed classes has not been raised as a problematic issue at the school. But in the context of swim education there was a conflict in the spring 2006 over the values related to the Muslim tradition of the division of the sexes at the school. A few Muslim parents did not want their daughters to participate in swim education because it took place in a mixed group with both boys and girls. In Sweden swim education is part of the general obligatory school curriculum for all children. Upon the request of parents the headmaster decided to make an exception and permit the children not to participate. When this decision was published in the local media it was criticised as an exception that was prohibited by the school curriculum. Several articles in the local newspapers had headings such as: “The rules of the Imam direct the X-school”, “The word of the Imam is a fact at the X-school” and “Is it up to him to rule?” (Gävle Dagblad 11.05.2006; Arbetarbladet 12.05.2006; Gävle Dagblad 12.05.2006). In a few weeks the headmaster withdrew the agreement to exempt the Muslim girls from swim education. In a new agreement that was accepted by their parents, the school arranged a possibility for the girls to have separate swim education.

Another practical issue where special arrangements have been requested concerns showers in the context of sports activities. According to Muslim tradition, as expressed by parents and pupils, it is not allowed for an individual to show himself or herself naked to anyone else, not even to other individuals of the same sex. This has been solved by permitting Muslim pupils to shower with their underwear on, or to shower and change clothes individually when this is possible.

Apart from sports and swim education, the most often mentioned school subject in which divergent values appear is biology. Immigrant Muslim and some Christian pupils and their parents have reacted negatively when drawings or models have been showed completely naked human beings as part of the education on the human body or education on sexuality. Sometimes these reactions have been so strong that the teacher has had to use pictures of the human body without any genitals, a practice which has been accepted by the school (16,M). This is in conflict with the general Swedish majority values promoting an open attitude to sexuality as a natural part of
human life, and can also come in conflict with the curriculum according to which education on sexuality is obligatory.

Religious festivals and food

The school has tried in different ways to adapt the Swedish standard school curriculum to different cultural norms and the needs of minority groups. The previously mentioned cases of swim education and education in biology are two examples. Two other areas are religious festivals/holy days and school luncheons. The school has created an internal integrated calendar of the school year including all the festivals and holy days of the religions represented at the school. This is seen as a way to educate both the pupils and the teachers about the traditions present at the school and to pay equal respect to different religions. In practice this means that all the different Christian and Muslim holidays are noted in the school in an informative way, although not celebrated collectively. Thus, the school makes a general notice of the meaning of Ramadan, as well as of Christmas, for pupils of all religions. The school also allows pupils of different religions to be absent from school during their respective holy days, even if the school in its general planning follows the Swedish national calendar, which is rooted in the Christian tradition.

In all public Swedish schools for children between 6 to 18 years of age, free school luncheons are served to all pupils. Thereby, religious traditions and restrictions concerning food automatically become an issue in the Swedish school context. The wish for vegetarian food has existed for many years in the schools. But, along with the increasing immigration of Muslims, the need for special meat and dishes without pork has increased and become an issue on the agenda. Thus, today the school also serves “religious food” according to the needs of Muslims.

Visits and arrangements in Church buildings

Our study at the school has confirmed its image as a good benchmark concerning the development of strategies and policy in handling minority-majority value relationships. There is only one area in which the school is struggling presently. It
concerns occasions linked to the Swedish culture and tradition when common gatherings for the school takes place within a Christian framework.

The most frequently mentioned example of this problem is the celebration of the end of the school year (26,M; 33,M). In all Swedish schools the end of school year in the beginning of June is celebrated with a common gathering for the whole school with the singing of songs, a speech by the headmaster and often also by a priest. This celebration often takes place in a local church building. The basic aim of having large gatherings at important occasions is that all pupils within the school should be present and manifest unity and togetherness, and have a common experience. This makes it difficult to arrange special separate alternative solutions for certain individuals or groups, without losing the whole idea of having a common gathering.

After some discussion on the new multicultural situation during spring 2006, the end of school year celebration was for the first time, in June 2006, arranged outdoors in the city park and not in the church. At the time of the interviews it was still an open question how this issue would be handled in June 2007. The headmaster said that before the decision, the pupils would be invited to state their opinion by voting for the different alternatives (32,F; 33,M).

Another example of conflict is the celebration of the Santa Lucia day on December 13th when Christian songs are sung by choirs in almost all Swedish public contexts, such as in schools, hospitals, work places, public open spaces, etc. Most Swedes do not see this as a specifically Christian celebration, but more as a cultural tradition. But some of the Muslim pupils and teachers do not want to take part because they identify it as a religious tradition in which they do not want to participate (25,M).

Even study visits in churches have appeared problematic for some of the Muslim pupils, arguing that they cannot even enter a Christian church building. One of the teachers told this: “The classes 4-6 planned to make a study trip to Uppsala to visit Uppsala Cathedral and look inside to see all things. It is like a cultural treasure, a museum. But the immediate reaction was that we can’t enter a church, we are
Muslims” (32,F). The interviewed teachers and headmasters stress that they have to negotiate with the pupils, and sometimes also with parents, in order to find practical solutions when such conflicts of values are raised (16,M; 32,F; 33,M).

Swedish religious normality in change

The study at the school shows the typical character of Swedish cultural normality as seemingly non-religious, although it relies on a predominantly Christian heritage. According to Swedish religious normality religion is something private which should not be exposed in public settings. But the normally hidden face of the Swedish majority religion comes to the surface in certain occasions. In these occasions, like the celebration of the end of the school year or the celebration of the day of Santa Lucia, the religious expressions are taken for granted and seen as most natural in public settings. Thus, there is one Swedish religious normality under “normal” conditions and a different religious normality under certain “abnormal” conditions (cf. Bäckström & Edgardh Beckman & Pettersson 2004). This shift of “normality” takes place without reflection for most Swedish people, but it is not surprising that people coming from other cultural and religious settings observe and react to these two divergent ways of handling religion in the public sphere.

Our in depth study of the school shows that issues concerning certain needs of minority groups have become a major issue on the agenda along with the increasing arrival of Muslims in Gävle over the last ten years. Almost all areas where conflicts of values have appeared in the school have been related to differences in between the Swedish majority culture with its Christian roots and cultures in which Islamic cultural values are strongly integrated. The major change in the schools’ awareness of the significance of religious and cultural value differences took place a few years ago when the children of a conservative imam where pupils at the school. The imam, along with a few other Muslim parents, asked for negotiation meetings with the headmaster concerning the special religiously related needs of Muslim pupils. The result of these meetings was a special agreement named “Advice and guidelines for the Muslim pupils at X-school, 2005” (Råd och riktlinjer för Nynässkolans muslimska elever 2005). In this document seven areas of specific Muslim needs where described:
the fasting period/Ramadan, school vacation during religious festivals, food, showers/swimming/sports, school camps/study tours, Christian and traditional festivals at the school, Muslim prayer times. The guidelines of this document were used only for a short time since it was withdrawn in 2006 when the possibility to be exempted from swim education was criticised in the media. Headmasters, as well as the interviewed minority representatives, say that the principles of the guidelines are so integrated in the school today, that a formal document is not needed. But they see the meetings with the imam and the agreement as important steps in making all people at the school aware of the need for negotiations and compromises between minority group practices and the general practices of the school. The headmasters stress that they see these issues as practical issues that have to and can be solved. They are related to values, but they concern practices and have to be handled as practical issues (16,M; 25,M; 33,M).

5.3 Findings at the Family Centre

The Family Centre represents the Swedish welfare system reaching out to groups in special need of welfare provision, not least immigrant groups. The idea comes from the Swedish Parliament taking actions in order to promote public health in Sweden and specifically address psychological problems among children and young people (Handlingsplan för Familjecentral i Andersberg 2004). Family Centres are built according to the basic principles in the health care system, with universal and free health care for pregnant women and children and social care for families expecting a child. This service is complemented by the public pre-school and preventive individual and family care. The aim is to bring together knowledge and resources from different sectors of society in one centre in order to facilitate help towards families with small children. Sometimes agents other than the authorities are included. In Gävle the Church of Sweden has been involved in the establishment of the centre from the start in February 2005. The local parish contributes to the rent of the premises and two part-time workers, one deacon and one pre-school teacher.

The Family Centre is located in an area where social exposure is higher than in other parts of Gävle. Unemployment is approximately 12% and almost 15% of the
population is born in a country other than Sweden. Most of the residents live in rented apartments (Fakta om Andersberg 2006). The big grocery shops have moved to more profitable areas, the post office has closed and even the church has left the shopping centre. In order to counter the downward spiral the municipality has built a new and well frequented public library in the former shopping centre. The Family Centre can be found next-door. Baby carriages stand in a row at the entrance and as a visitor you have to look out not to fall over a toddler when you step inside. The atmosphere is welcoming and friendly.

Aim and methodology

Our research questions concerned the relationship between, on the one hand, the Centre, representing the Swedish majority culture with its thoroughly organised Swedish welfare system, and, on the other hand, the recent and different immigrant minority cultures. Which values permeate the work at the Family Centre and how are they related to Swedish majority culture? Are there value-related conflicts between the majority culture and different groups of new Swedes in the practice of the Family Centre? Around what issues is there cohesion? When there are conflicts, around which issues do they revolve? What role does religion play in the meeting between minority and majority culture? What does it mean for the majority church to be one of the initiators with employed personnel present? What role does gender play in this context?

The methodology selected implied that we would reach minority groups through the activities at the centre. During the study we discovered that the Centre had major problems reaching these groups, which meant a major methodological problem for our study. But time constraints did not permit a revised methodology, which meant that we had to limit our objective. Thus, the study primarily shows the logic of the majority culture. Values held by minority groups are only approached indirectly, through the ways in which they are perceived by the personnel at the centre and a few visitors, represent rather well integrated immigrant groups, as they could communicate in Swedish.
Conflicting values concerning welfare provision

The Family Centre is an example of how the Swedish welfare state, often summarised in the expression “the home of the people” (Sw: folkhemmet), tries to adapt to a new era, with new demands on cooperation and adaptation to more differentiated needs. It also exemplifies how difficult it is for the institutions, constructed during a period of uniformity in the late-modern industrial society, to transform in order to serve a new era.

The Family Centre seems to a large extent to function in accordance with the rules set by the ideology of the “home of the people”, imprinted by “social engineering” and an ambition to “put life in order”, to use an expression coined by the historian Yvonne Hirdman (1989). It is the homogenous Swedish welfare society that seeks to reach out with the ambition to help and support every citizen, but this appears to be somewhat complex in a new situation of cultural and religious diversity.

We experienced this in taking part as participant observers during one afternoon in the Centre, when the personnel prepared for the cooking-course that was going to be held during the evening. Swedish vegetables were piled up in the open kitchen in the middle of the Centre. A woman from Armenia, practicing at the Centre, prepared some buns made with carrots. The participants will learn how to make a leek soup and a gratin with root vegetables. All food was healthy, cheap and mostly vegetarian. Chicken replaced pork in sausages, as well as, in traditional food at Christian feast days, such as Christmas and Easter. The Swedish cultural tradition was used, but adapted to fit a more plural religious situation.

Still the couples who came are not as many as it was hoped for and they were mainly of Swedish origin. Surveys show that the majority of visitors at the centre are generally of Swedish origin. Furthermore, the percentage of immigrants has decreased from the first to the second year (Besökarenkät 2005 and 2006). Interviewed personnel say that they see a need among the immigrants that they have not yet understood how to meet. They argue that many immigrants have larger socio-psychological needs related to pregnancy, birth and early childhood than other groups.
Still they are reluctant to come to the activities arranged by the Family Centre. The Centre tries in a range of ways, from providing professional interpretation to arranging targeted group activities for immigrants, courses in cooking, meeting places for immigrant women, etc.

One of the personnel said to us “We do try, we try and try…” (22,F,1). Still the result seems always to be the same. The persons who are supposed to be in most need do not come. Somehow the will to help and the needs do not meet. This rift between ambition and practice can be interpreted as having to do with different value systems. The experience of failure seems closely connected to the very ambition, which in turn can be seen as an expression of dominant Swedish cultural values, directed more towards giving than towards listening to the voices of the newly arrived persons as citizens with both resources and needs. The ambition is for society to take a holistic responsibility in relation to the wellbeing of families, but expectations of this kind of care do not seem to exist among the immigrant groups. Many of the immigrants come from cultures where a similar responsibility is only taken by family, maybe extended family, friends and neighbours. Recent immigrants do not have access to these networks anymore, but this is what they seek in relation to family members in exile, a religious or language group, or more distant relatives living in Sweden. It might be that they do not even understand the ambition to provide social relations in an organised and tax-financed form through the Family Centre because it is so unexpected, especially coming from the authorities. One of the personnel told us about visitors from South Africa, who could not really believe what they saw in the Family Centre. She recalls how they kept on repeating the same question: ”Is it really free of charge?” (22,F,2).

Sometimes the ambitions of the Family Centre might even come into conflict with the survival strategies of immigrants to connect to their family and kin. Another representative of the personnel told us: “They are supposed to be at home and cater and cook and have everything ready, so they do not have time to come…to leave home.” (24,F). Conflict over culture is also seen in relation to breast-feeding. Swedish maternal care is very clear about the necessity of this, but also presupposes that it should stop after a year or so, in order for the mother to return to working life. This
means that immigrants making use of the social security system need to go back to work or to Swedish-classes after maternity leave, or they will stop receiving money. Several of the employees told us about the problems caused by this rule because the babies were not weaned and cried all day when they were placed in public day care.

In a recent study on families from Iran living in Sweden Hanna Wikström (2007) writes about how perceptions of normality and deviation have an influence, both on the majority population and on the Iranians themselves. One of Wikström’s interviewees, Shima, told us how at her work she struggles to transmit another, alternative image of normal immigrant life. In a telling quotation Shima said “They only listen to TV and read and see only this that is written. But they never ask…why do they never ask ‘how is it in your family?’” (Wikström 2007, 196f).

The ambition of the Family Centre is to reach out to the neediest groups. It is clear from the interviews that the staff experience at least a partial failure of this ambition. One possible reason may be that the logic of the welfare system at least to a certain degree still is conceptualised according to the old paternalistic idea of the homogenous “people’s home”, where the public authorities, as representatives of the head of the household, know in advance the needs of its members. As a result, Shima’s question “how is it in your family?”, is too seldom asked.

Role of religion

The most visible representatives of religion at the Family Centre are the church employees. Still it is not obvious to which degree the Church of Sweden represents religion. While no longer a state church, the Church of Sweden is still clearly associated with and seen as a resource in relation to the authorities. This tendency even seems to have increased during recent years, when the church after a long period of being more and more marginalised and reduced to a religious function in society, has re-established its public presence through different forms of cooperation with authorities and other organisations of the type exemplified by the Family Centre (Davie, Edgardh and Pettersson, forthcoming).
The presence of the church at the Centre is explicitly without any evangelising aim. The interviewed church employee underlined that the aim of her presence at the centre “is social, not Christian”. When asked what this means she said that when she is engaged in Christian work she speaks about faith, reads from the Bible or sings songs with Christian content with the children (22,F,1). To wear a cross or something similar at the Family Centre is however not a problem, neither is it a problem to organise cultural activities related to Christian holidays. At one point a Muslim school girl worked with staff from the Church at the Centre, as part of a school programme that encourages students to spend a few weeks at a place of work so that they can gain some understanding of what it is like to work. Although the parents were positive to this, the staff got the impression that they would have found it difficult for her to do the same in a place that was affiliated to a Muslim group different from their own (19,F).

Religion does not seem to be an issue of conflict at the Centre. A problem mentioned by someone in personnel is that the Centre does not have enough competence in existential issues. One example concerns a family from southwest Asia, having experienced several miscarriages and accusing themselves, feeling that this is God’s punishment. “I do not know if we are equipped to meet such questions” (19,F). The personnel in this case tried to normalise the situation by a medical approach, saying that the situation was not caused by them doing anything wrong. The religious and existential questions however remained unresolved.

To summarise it seems that the strategy from the part of the Centre is to let the Christian tradition in as a cultural and institutional resource, as long as it is not explicitly religious, but adhere to the idea of religiosity as something private. The parish has obviously approved of the same strategy.

Gender and free choice

The Family Centre is a highly gendered milieu, in so far as all of the employees, as well as most of the visitors are women. Men are of course welcome, but even in the allegedly gender-equal Sweden care for children is primarily a female responsibility.
Still the fact that Swedish men take part in care of the children is what our interviewees first mentioned when we asked what normally strikes their immigrant visitors. Different views on gender roles also seem to be what causes strongest feelings among the personnel at the Centre. One interviewee gave us an example of a type of argument she often finds herself having with mothers with partners from another culture. She argued with the woman because she seemed to accept things that from a Swedish perspective seem strikingly unequal. It may concern for example separated parents with children living with the mother, but with the father still telling her and the children what to. It is clear from her story that her overarching principle is ruled by the value of the free choice: “Yes, this thing with the veil, it is her choice. Like this: ‘Do you want to wear the veil?’ If she wants to, ok, but the fact is that he cannot decide for you if you are going to wear it or not. Does it feel right for you? ‘Well, I do not know, but if I do not, he says that...’ Yes, but if you go to yourself. Does it feel right for you to wear it?” (22,F,2)

The issue is obviously very sensitive. The pre-school teacher said that she has to hold herself back in these discussions because she becomes so upset. “Why do they permit it? How can they permit it? And they are not supposed to meet any other men, they are not allowed to date other guys, although they do not live together! And they buy it! You get so angry then.” (22,F,2)

Two dominant values seem to interact in the related argument from the employee of the Centre. The first is the value of gender equality, interpreted in terms of similarity. Similar rules are to be upheld for women and men, boys and girls. The second value is individual autonomy. This value has made its imprint on European modernity ever since the Enlightenment, but is not as self-evident in many of the countries from which immigrants come to Gävle. These cultures are often much more collectively oriented, starting with the group and relationships within the group, rather than with the autonomous individual. The invisible norms of the autonomous individual and the value of a free choice are discussed in a recent anthology about the Orient in Sweden, mostly starting from school situations. Ann Runfors (2006) observes in one of her essays how the ideals of the teachers are connected to individual choices, expressing a personal, reflexive standpoint, while what is not
chosen, decreed and hindering is perceived as negative. The free choice is perceived as so natural that it is taken as evident rather than as a standpoint. But, she observes, even free choice is set into a frame with certain limitations. Any choice is not accepted (Runfors 2006, p. 119).

In the case of the Family Centre it is obvious that a choice of a woman to let her (former) partner decide for her is not perceived as positive by the interviewed employee, irrespective of the motives. We can speculate that these motives may be related to dependence on the man and his relatives for the security, support and safety of the family. The Family Centre wants to offer an alternative security in an organised form. When this option is not exercised by a woman it is hard for the staff at the Family Centre to understand that such a decision can be an actual individual and free choice. Probably it is correct to say that the presuppositions involved in the choice are not conscious from the part of the woman. But neither are the presuppositions of the representative of the Centre. Her argumentation is instead a clear example of how dominant Swedish cultural values are taken for granted from the part of the welfare system.

The manager of the Family Centre indicated that it is difficult to get immigrant men involved in issues concerning their young children. The Swedish authorities have the view that both parents have the same responsibility for their children, even if in practice more women than men are involved in child care. This view is not self-evident among all immigrant groups. One example where this shows in practice is in the support groups for parents with small children organised at the Centre. These groups are open for men and women, but dominated by women. The cultural difference appears when women from ethnic minority groups bring their children to the meeting, not expecting the father to be able to take care of the child in their absence. This is something Swedish fathers attending these groups have reacted against, asking why the men cannot take care of their children (19,F).

6. Analysis: emergent values

6.1 Family
The most striking values that appear as significant when studying the interaction between minority groups and the majority culture are different values related to the family. Family related values are strong among the interviewed minorities. This has to do with cultural roots that stress the importance of the family. But also just being a minority group can in itself stress the values related to family and relatives, since the need of keeping up one’s own culture as a minority will focus on a close network. Thereby any group of people living in a minority situation in a foreign environment can be expected to rank family related values higher than they do when living in situation of being the majority.

Values of the individual’s individuation

Most immigrants coming to Sweden arrive from countries and cultures where the traditional role of the family is still functioning the same way as it was in Sweden 150 years ago. This means that individuals are socialised into strong bindings to family and relatives. In the Swedish modern society individuals are rather fostered to liberate themselves from the dependency of the family. The idea of individualisation as something good and a strong individual identity and individual autonomy apart from the family is implicit in most social settings in the Swedish culture of today. This was obvious in the study of the Family Centre and confirms previous results from international comparative surveys (Halman 2007).

Values of community building outside the family

Swedish informants in the school described the problem of immigrant children that tend to keep to their relatives and family during their free time after school, as not taking part in the majority’s leisure time activities and associations (30,F). This was regarded as part of the strong value of the family. The consequence is that children, as well as, parents miss many opportunities to interact with native Swedish people. Thereby the strong value of the family can sometimes contribute in a negative way to the cultural segregation in between immigrants and native Swedes.

Values of the “common society” in relation to family relationships
We mentioned previously that occasionally Roma pupils leave school without any notice in beforehand due to the high value of family relationships. In this case the strong collective value of family relationships comes in conflict with the Swedish majority’s strong collective value of the common public school.

Values of gender roles

Differences between minority and majority values concerning gender roles and differences in values of gender equality appear in many of the interviews. One example from the Family Centre is that in dominant Swedish culture men are supposed to be involved in taking care of children equally with women, an idea many immigrants do not agree with. Traditional gender roles concerning the division of labour between women and men are much stronger among most immigrant minorities as compared to the Swedish majority culture, in the sense that women are expected to be a home and take full responsibility of cooking as well as child care. The Swedish public welfare providers, such as the Family Centre or the school, take the principles of gender equality and the individual’s freedom of choice for granted. When women state that they accept that their husband takes all decisions and withdraw themselves from any power in the family, this is very difficult to accept for Swedish officials. Personnel at the Family Centre seem to struggle with the problem of how to distinguish between legitimate cultural differences and illegitimate oppression within the family.

Values and the practice of breast feeding

The importance of breast feeding is stressed in Swedish child care policy. But the Swedish norm expects it to last only one year. Interviews at the Family Centre showed that some people coming from other cultures are used to longer times of breast feeding which come in conflict with the Swedish norm.

6.2 Education

A number of significant values within the area of education have appeared in the Gävle case study, mostly in our study of the school.
Values on relationships between girls and boys

The general Muslim tradition in keeping boys and girls apart in separate different school classes comes into conflict with the Swedish general way of having mixed classes. Even if this does not cause a problem in everyday school work it is an underlying tension produced by different basic values in practice concerning the relationships between girls and boys. But in the context of sports activities and swimming education these different values between Christian and Muslim traditions concerning relationships between boys and girls come to the surface, especially when differences in values related to the body and sexuality are added. Thus, in activities where children have to wear fewer clothes, mixed groups are not accepted by the religiously more orthodox.

Values on the body and sexuality

In biology education different values concerning sexuality and the visibility of genitals come in conflict between the Muslim minority’s values and the values of the Swedish majority culture. In the context of sports education minority and majority values on the human body also come in conflict. According to Muslim tradition individuals shall not show themselves naked to any person at all, while the majority culture takes it for granted that this is no problem among persons of the same sex, e.g. when changing clothes or taking a shower.

Values on religion and religious freedom

Swedish religious normality over the last century has been characterised by stressing the freedom from religion in the public space as very important. This normality is now being challenged by immigrant minority groups stressing the freedom of religion and religious expressions in the public sphere. It was not until the arrival of larger groups of Muslim immigrants that a pupils’ individual religion has been regarded as an important issue in Sweden to be taken into account in the daily work of the schools. But Muslims have raised many different issues in the school agenda related to their values differing from the values of the majority culture. The way of handling the special needs and interests of
minority groups at the school can be seen as expressions of the majority culture’s official values of *tolerance* and *freedom of religion*. Special arrangements have been made e.g. in biology, sports, school luncheons and religious festivals. The special common calendar for religious festivals is also an illustration of these values.

### 6.3 Social care

*Different value systems of care in tension*

In the context of the Family Centre a tension between two different welfare systems came to the surface based on two *different value systems of care*. Immigrants with a strong value of the family as the basis in society expect the family network to fulfil the primary caring functions when different needs appear. The Swedish public welfare system on the other hand is based on an ambition to free the family network from all forms of obligations and is constructed to actively seek individuals in need and to take initiatives in order to care for them. *The public welfare system is highly valued* as having a caring duty. Therefore the employees at the Family Centre feel that they are not doing a good job if immigrants in need do not use their services. The immigrants, on the other hand, are used to the caring of family members and relatives in need within their own network. Public authorities can even be regarded with suspicion and felt as a possible threat to the integrity of the highly valued family.

*Values of solidarity*

The Gävle local authority organises many forms of support in order to assist with the settling and integration of immigrants. Even if Gävle has many other social problems related to native Swedish people that would require more resources, the local authority invests a great part of its own budget, as well as, state funds to support people that have escaped from war and oppression in order to give them a new start. They receive financial support, education in Swedish language and about Swedish society, support in keeping up with their mother tongue and help in the organisation of social and cultural activities in order to maintain their cultural identity. The values expressed in practice through these activities could best be described as *values of solidarity*. 
6.4 Employment

Values on having a job

The major welfare problem for immigrants in Gävle seems to be unemployment. Staying out of the labour market means living outside a major part of society. Having a job is highly valued in the Swedish majority culture, as well as, among minority groups. But among most immigrant groups employment among adult men seems to be of significantly higher importance than in the Swedish majority culture because it is closely related to their status and position within the family. When they find themselves being without a job immigrant men often get lost socially even within their own family. Their wives and children often take the lead in finding new roles in the new society, while the men gradually lose their traditional authority, which makes them feel very frustrated.

7. References and sources

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