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- *Master thesis* -

Cultural differences in interethnic marriages

A case study in Aalborg

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Master in Culture, Communication and Globalisation Stream Specialisation
Migration and Ethnic Relations
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1. Introduction

The cultural landscape has been changing significantly in Europe, as an effect of migration. In January 2017, the number of immigrants and their descendants in Denmark was 741.572, coming from over 200 countries, which means 12.9% of the population (Statistics Denmark, 2017). This diversity of nationalities opens a door for marriages between people with different ethnic background, which will be called in this study *interethnic marriages*.

The discourse revolving around the Muslim minority in Denmark has been predominantly harsh in the political scene and in the media[1], where Islam has been portrayed as the religion which changes the face of Denmark. Arguments like social cohesion and difficult integration were used, which made me wonder if these arguments do, in reality, affect people involved in an interethnic marriage. Therefore, in this study, I will look at married couples in which one of the spouses is of Muslim background, and the other one is Danish. I will not focus on gender or sexual orientation, but the assumption is that all couples who will be interviewed are heterosexual couples.

The terms *Muslim* and *Danish* do not define the same thing; one refers to religion whereas the other term refers to nationality. I chose to use these terms, regardless of their meaning, as they are used in the colloquial language, but also because the pool of nationalities which have Islamic religion is large, and I do not have a preconceived idea of what nationalities the Muslim spouses should have. The public debate is directed towards the religion, not the nationality of the migrants. In the case of the Danish spouse, I considered it is safer to call them 'Danes', and not protestants, as I am interested in the spouses who were born and raised in Denmark. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the term Danishness will refer to a person who was born and raised in Denmark.

The methods to collect data about the subject is going to be through the use of open-ended, semi-structured interviews, conducted with each couple. The method of gathering

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[1] Lindekilde, Lasse (2014). *The Mainstreaming of Far-Right Discourse in Denmark.* Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 12:4, 363-382

the respondents will the snowball method, asking each couple for further reference to other interethnic couples that they might know. The framework within which this research is going to unfold is the institution of marriage. Considering that the empirical data is gathered through interviews with married couples, it is important to keep in mind that the theories that will be discussed further are set up in this context.

The aim of the study is to find out what challenges emerge from an interethnic marriage, what role do cultural differences play in the everyday life, how the spouses are treating these differences, and what are the main factors that influence their marriage and their interaction. Therefore, the research question of this study is:

Which role does cultural identity and cultural differences play in interethnic marriages?
To what extent do other factors influence the quality of an interethnic marriage?

I will use theories of identity and belonging within the marriage, in the context where the two partners have different cultural background. The issue of identity will be discussed by using Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory, and the concepts of *representation* and *cultural codes*. Furthermore, in order to understand the dynamics of the marriages, I will use Nira Yuval-Davis' theory of belonging, through which I will analyze the sense of belonging of the partners to the marriage, and to the society, through exploring the meaning of Danish citizenship for the Muslim spouses. The hope for this research is to understand what challenges an interethnic marital couple face when one of the spouses may be regarded as a negative influence in the society where he/she is working to build a life. I am interested to see how much the anti-Muslim debate in Denmark influences their private life and how they manage to keep the balance in the marriage, when there are so many elements, internal and external, to adjust to.

2.Theoretical framework

2.1. Marriage

It has proven to be difficult to establish exact theories regarding marriage. However, there have been many studies and researches concerning married couples, even as early as the 1930s. In the longitudinal *Aberdeen Marriage and Re-marriage Study 1930-1982* published by D. Clark in 2004, questions like courtship, wedding or honeymoon were raised, but also financial issues, perceptions about the reasons why the marriage would potentially fall apart, or preferences for the upbringing of the children. However, this study conducted on 49 couples did not deliver a theory regarding any of these topics. The reason is, in my point of view, the unexpected and spontaneous trait of the human being, even more in a situation where the focus is put on the interaction between two or more persons.

Later on, the studies encompassed topics like marital satisfaction, stability and quality. After an article published by Stan J. Knapp and Thomas B. Holman in 2010 regarding the need to theorise about the quality in marriages[2], Jason S. Carroll joined them for an article in 2011, when they expressed the need for more explicit and rigorous assumptions to strengthen the current conceptual and methodological approaches to the study of marriage (Carroll, Knapp, Holman, 2010). However, they argue that '*what are sometimes called theories of marriage are often little more than "empirical generalizations" and do not fit the commonly accepted definitions of theory in terms of scope or level of abstraction*'(Carroll, Knapp, Holman, 2010). Observations without understanding and explanation are not consistent enough as to establish a theory.

In Bradbury, Fincham and Beach (2000), *Research on the Nature and Determinants of Marital Satisfaction: A Decade in Review,* the authors highlight two sets of contexts within which the marriages exist, develop and influence the stability and the satisfactory state:

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[2] Knapp J. Stan & Holman B. Thomas (2010). *Introducing a Special Issue: On the Need to Theorize Marital Quality.* Journal of Family Theory & Review (December 2010): 221–226

microcontexts and macrocontexts. The microcontexts refer to elements which come from within the family, like children, stress, cultural background of the spouses. In opposition to these, or as a complement, the macrocontexts refer to '*social conditions and institutions that can affect individual mates and their marriages*'(Bradbury, Fincham, Beach, 2000). More specifically, the authors develop here the idea of extra marital relationships, in what contexts they are likely to develop, and how they disrupt the wellbeing of the family. I will add here, as I believe it is rather relevant for the purpose of the study, the media. The anti-Muslim discourse in Denmark is strong both on the political scene, and on a lower, individual level, which is why I believe it is worth considering that media might be an element which affects the stability and satisfaction of the partners within the marriage. In this research, both categories of contexts play an important role, as the aim of the research is to study how the anti-Muslim discourse on a macro level (media, politics, public debates) reflect on the micro-level, in the privacy of the couples. Concluding on the basis of these two contexts, one might observe how scholars focus on behavior and interaction within the marriage, on the reasons why couples are distressed, and on different elements which might lead to divorce or breakup; they put in balance the dichotomy of success and failure in the marriage.

In studying marriages, these contexts are relevant, but do not fulfill the need for theories. Karney and Bradbury point out the elements which should be encompassed in a theory of marriage, in order for it to be accurate. First, a good theory should '*encompass a full range of possible predictors of marital outcome and should provide links between different levels of analysis*' (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). This means taking into account influential elements on both micro- and macrolevel. Then, the theory should specify and explain mechanisms of change, what produces them and how a potential failure of the marriage could be predicted. A third component of a good theory should be the ability to explain the variety of outcomes over time. This means that the reason why a change has happened is not enough for a complete theory, but what could give more strength to a good theory is explaining what are the possible outcomes at different stages of the marriage, why sometimes a marriage declines, and then improves in quality. Karney and Bradbury reviewed four of the most relevant theories regarding marriage,

and, as it can be seen in the table below, none of them meet the three requirements for a good theory of marriage.

Evaluation of Theoretical Perspectives on Marriage

Criterion	Social exchange theory	Behavioral theory	Attachment theory	Crisis theory
Links micro- and macro-variables?	*Yes.* Barriers may be macro level, e.g., social norms; attractions may be micro level, e.g., interaction.	*No.* Focuses on interaction between spouses but ignores broader context of marriage.	*Somewhat.* Focuses on links between childhood socialization and adult relationships.	*Yes.* Links external life events to adaptation within marriage.
Specifies mechanisms for change?	*No.* Acknowledges that couples may change over time but offers no speculation about how this occurs.	*Yes.* Each interaction affects global evaluations of the marriage, which then influence subsequent interactions.	*No.* Acknowledges that relationship needs may change but does not explain how this occurs.	*Somewhat.* Acknowledges that resources and adaptation change over time in response to life events.
Accounts for within- and between-couple variation in outcome?	*Somewhat.* Does not address within-couple variation but addresses how some couples may be unhappy but stable whereas others may be happy but unstable.	*Somewhat.* Accounts for within-couple variation in one direction only. Does not address differences in marital duration between couples.	*No.* Does not address how styles may change over time or why different couples with the same styles may be more or less successful.	*Yes.* Couples with inadequate coping resources will dissolve when crises occur but may endure until then.
Theoretical sources	Levinger, 1965; Lewis & Spanier, 1979; Nye & Berardo, 1973	Gottman, 1979; Jacobson & Margolin, 1979; Margolin, 1983	Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988	Burr, 1982; Hill, 1949; McCubbin & Patterson, 1982

Table 1: Benjamin R. Karney & Thomas N. Bradbury (1995). Evaluation of theoretical perspectives on marriage, p. 8.

Sociologist George Caspar Homans is best known for his contribution to the study of social behavior in small groups. His most influential works are *The Human Group* (1950) and *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms* (1961; rev. 1974). He was a professor at Harvard University and visiting teacher at several universities in the United Kingdom. In 1958 he published a paper in the American Journal of Sociology, *Social Behavior as Exchange*[3], which encompasses the characteristics of two of the theories mentioned in the table above, *Social exchange theory* and *Behavioral theory*. This means that, looking at the table, a combination of these two theories will answer YES to all three criteria: it will link micro- and macro- variables, it will specify mechanisms for change and it will account for within- and between- couple

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[3] George C. Homans (1958). *Social behavior as exchange.* In American Journal of Psychology, Vol 63, no. 6, (May 1958), pp 597-606

variation in outcome. I chose to use this theory because I believe it is relevant in the study of the Danish-Muslim married couples, and I believe it might offer a good insight on the interaction within the marriage in the context of the negative debate which concerns one of the spouses. Further on, the next section will explain how these three criteria are encompassed in the theory of social behavior as exchange, in the case of this research.

The theory of social behavior as exchange

Homans' studies are limited to small groups, meaning two or three persons, which is why I consider this can be applied to the study of marriages. Interaction between persons is, as Homans defines it, and exchange of goods, be it material or not (Homans, 1958). This exchange is most of the times so normal and obvious in the daily life of people, that it was neglected by social scientists. Homans noticed it as being a transaction of some sort and used a study on pigeons as starting point for his theory. The experiment, conducted by psychologist and philosopher B.F.Skinner, showed how pigeons acted in the cage, when they realised they were receiving food as a consequence of a certain behavior, at a certain point in time. Skinner concluded that the more food they were receiving, the less they were asking for it, or even lost interest, and the less frequently they received food, the more they would perform their 'rituals' which were expected to activate the machine which provided the food, that they perceived as a reward.

When analyzing human behavior, Homans notices how one person behaves according to the reinforced behavior of the other. The exchanged goods are the rewards granted for a certain behavior, but the stress is put on the amount of stimulations, rather than on the amount of rewards. The more stimulation one receives, the less they will emit the behavior reinforced by it, as it loses value. Therefore, one can also notice that in the case of a married couple, the spouses adjust their behavior towards their partner as to receive the reward. This behavior is based on the previous experiences, may they be conscious or not, and the reward can be personal satisfaction, gratitude from the spouse, or any positive feeling. However, the interaction presupposes that both parts have to contribute to the relation, which means that one must also give some of their time, emotional support, availability, financial resources or other resources. These are the costs in the

interaction. Even though there is a risk to turn the theory too much into a mathematical function, the best description of it would be Profit=Reward-Cost (Homans, 1958). This equation is what determines the quality of the marriage. If the profit is negative for any of the two spouses, it is a sign that the couple is distressed and the marriage might end up in divorce. If, however, the profit is positive for both spouses, it is considered a successful marriage.

Edward J. Lawler takes this theory a step further, introducing the element of emotion to it. His theory is not to be considered a critique, but rather an addition to the social exchange theory. The affect theory was conceptualised in the article *An affect theory of social exchange* in 2001.[4] He states the need to take into consideration emotions as well, as the simple social exchange theory might suggest that people are objective and rational in 'calculating' their benefits in a relationship. Lawler thinks it is more than that, and subjectivity is included in the interaction. Emotions vary in form and intensity and have the ability to affect the costs and rewards implied in the interaction (Lawler, 2001) I believe this addition is pertinent, as emotions are an important element which explains the unpredictability and spontaneity in the human trait. Lawler argues that '*emotions or feelings from exchange influence how actors perceive and feel about their shared activity, their relation, and/or their common group affiliations*' (Lawler, 2001, p. 322). Within a marriage where elements from the outside threaten to affect the well functioning of the relationship, it is important to look at the emotional factor as well. The interaction between a Danish and a Muslim spouse might be affected by the anti-Muslim supporters, which means that one of the two members might find that the costs they are paying are higher than the reward they are receiving, and so, the Profit is negative. However, if this input from the macro level does not cause the failure of the marriage, then one must consider the explanation that emotions play an important role in keeping the couple together.

In the analysis, I aim to investigate to what degree the spouses are affected by the negative macrocontexts and how this influences the interactions between them. An important part of the analysis will be to study what challenges they face when creating a positive balance between the costs they are investing and the rewards they are receiving in their marriage, in the context of anti-Muslim discourse.

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[4] Lawler J. Edward (2001). *An Affect Theory of Social Exchange.* The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 107, No. 2. (Sep., 2001), pp. 321-352

I believe that in order to feel affected by racism or xenophobia, one has to identify him/herself with the particular group which is being targeted. Therefore, the issue of identification will be further discussed by using Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity.

2.2. Cultural identity

Stuart Hall was a Jamaican-born cultural theorist and sociologist, who moved to the United Kingdom for studies and later became professor, and director at Birmingham University. His main interest was multiculturalism, and for the purpose of this research the most relevant work is his contribution to *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*[5], published in 1997 together with other scholars. In the Introduction and Chapter 1: The Work of Representation, Hall writes about the issue of identity, which will be further unfolded.

The topic of identity is rather difficult to be explained and concluded in exact, accurate terms. Identity is an ongoing process, even more in a globalised world where everyone reshapes their identity with every person they meet, every new experience they earn, or event which leaves a mark in their life (Hall, 2009). Identity comes in close connection with belonging, as cultural identity, which will be approached in this chapter, emerges from our 'belonging' to a certain ethnicity, race, language, religion and of course, culture (Hall *et al.*, 1995). I will use the concept of identity in trying to determine how the spouses identify themselves with their cultural background, and also with the current environment they live in.

Hall stressed language as being an important element in the shaping of one's cultural identity, and without insisting too much on it, I will determine in the analysis whether language is playing a big role in the couples in this research, or if it has ever been an issue. I choose to not stress this aspect very much because my assumption is that the Muslim spouses speak Danish very well, as they have lived in Denmark for several years. In any case, when selecting and getting in contact with the couples, I aimed for interviewing couples who do not have a language barrier in their communication.

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[5] Stuart Hall (2009). *Representation. Cultural representation and Signifying Practices*. SAGE and The Open University: London

Culture is defined by Hall as a complex of *shared meanings*, and the cultural identity is based on concepts of meaning, language and representation. There are two systems of representation pointed out here which are creating meaning (Hall *et al.*, 1997): one refers to the mental representations of things, and the other to the language. In order for communication, and interaction for that matter, to function efficiently, Hall claims that all communicative practices have to use the same standard norm when they refer to something.. This means that both parties have to understand the same representation when one of them talks about a thing, a concept, and idea or a feeling (Hall *et al.*, 1997). If the interpretation of the meaning is the same, that means that the two persons communicating have the same conceptual map, and therefore they share the same culture. Of course, meaning, as well as identity, is a changing process and it depends on the culture within which it is exchanged. The interactions between the married couples are, in consequence, influenced by meanings and their representations, as they represent the microcontexts pointed out in Bradbury, Fincham and Beach (2000).

Taken in a different context, language is relevant when we think about the necessity for the two spouses to speak the same language. However, the language does not refer to Danish, for example, but to the ability to send and receive a message which will be interpreted in the same way, and that ensures a good communication. In order for the interpretation to be the same, both parties need to share the same 'cultural codes', as Hall defines them. This means that the message will be interpreted the same way that the sender intended it, and it is possible because of sharing a common culture.

I believe this aspect will be challenging in the study, as the concept of 'culture' can take up several definitions. Therefore, I assume that the cultural codes will coincide, and the interaction within the marriage is lead by a common system of representation, even though there is a difference in the cultural background. The assumption is that in a marriage, both parties contribute to an exchange of costs and rewards, which, as a whole, serves as a frame for creating a common culture for the two spouses only. This would mean that, according to Hall's theory, this common culture of the couple assures a good communication, because the same cultural codes are being traded.

This theory is relevant for the study because I am interested in finding out how the couples deal with the cultural differences between them. Using Hall's theory, I assume that cultural identity does not create conflict in the marital relationship, and it is rather adjusted to a common ground, creating a culture of their own, which could explain why the relationship works. And in a society where one of the spouses is constantly receiving negative inputs from external sources, it is rather relevant to observe how both parts have to deal with this issue, and how strongly these inputs interfere in their daily life.

2.3. Belonging and politics of belonging

The concept of identity is tightly connected to belonging. Nira Yuval-Davis, Professor at the University of East London, has shown great interest in the study of belonging. In an article published in 2006, she is differentiating between belonging and politics of belonging. '*Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling 'home' '* (Yuval-Davis 2006, p. 197). When this is politicised because of contemporary issues, nationalism, citizenship, it becomes politics of belonging: '*Belonging tends to be naturalized, and becomes articulated and politicized only when it is threatened in some way.'* (Yuval-Davis 2006, p. 197) The politics of belonging is a socially constructed theoretical framework, while the simple notion of belonging is something intimate, personal, a feeling of attachment.

Yuval-Davis reminds that many psychologists have defined belonging as the need to be part of the group, and have a convenient position in this group: '*much of the literature of social psychology has been dedicated to studying individuals' need to conform to the groups they belong to out of fear of exclusion, and the ways individuals' interpersonal relationships are deeply affected by their membership or lack of membership in particular groups, as well as their positions in these groups*' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 198). In social sciences nowadays, the belonging '*has moved from the civil societies of nations and states into reconstructed defensive identity communities*' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 198). In this study, I aim to approach the topic of belonging from both perspectives, nation-wise and also identity-wise. Therefore, the feeling of belonging, and the politics of belonging associated with the spouses in this study will be visible on both micro- and macro level.

The study of belonging encompasses three levels, in Yuval-Davis' view: Social Locations, Identification and Emotional Attachment, and Ethical and Political values. These are all relevant for this study, in the sense that they can help analyze what sense of belonging the Muslim spouses have acquired, therefore I will go through the three levels as presented by Nira Yuval-Davis.

Social Locations

By social locations, Yuval-Davis refers to categories to which a person belongs to, and defines the position of that person along an axis of power, for example race, age, class, religion, sexual orientation, etc. There are multiple axes of difference which intersect, in order to define who a person is at a moment in time. One may identify themselves with only one category of the social locations, for example with that of being a woman, but in fact they do belong to several ones, as the locations mentioned above must also be taken into account. These social locations constitute each other, and cannot be analyzed separately; a young woman living in the countryside would have a different sense of belonging than an old woman living in the city. (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 200).

Identification and Emotional Attachment

Identities are narratives that people tell, in order to express who they are. They refer not only to belonging to a certain group, but also to individual attributes, attitudes, vocations, and can be collective or individual. These narratives can change in time, and, as Yuval-Davis explains, '*They can relate to the past, to a myth of origin; they can be aimed at explaining the present and, probably above all, they function as a projection of a future trajectory*' (Yuval-Davis 2006, p. 202). The constructions of belonging, however, are not only cognitive, but they also '*reflect emotional investments and desire for attachments*' (Yuval-Davis 2006, p. 202) and are in continuous transition process between '*being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong. [...] Emotions shift in different times and situations and are more or less reflective*' (Yuval-Davis 2006, p. 202). Emotions become heightened and more central for a person when they feel threatened or unsafe, Yuval-Davis points out. In the interviews, this point will be reflected in the

way the Muslim spouses speak about themselves and their perception and attitude towards the negativity surrounding one of the groups they belong to, meaning the axis of religion and culture.

Ethical and Political Values

Belonging comprises social locations and identification, but equally important are the boundaries; when and where location and identity boundaries should be drawn. The Muslim spouses in this study will reflect to which extent they feel attachment to the social locations they are part of, and reflect on their feeling of belonging since they have moved to Denmark, and more specifically since being married to a Danish citizen. By taking into account boundaries and ethics, the feeling of belonging becomes politicized and shifts towards politics of belonging. The politics of belonging are relevant for this study, as the element which potentially causes distress in the marriage is the political discourse against the immigrants, more specifically against Muslims, complemented by the public opinion.

Politics of Belonging

I will continue with emphasizing the importance of the politics of belonging for this study. Yuval-Davis explains that Benedict Anderson (2006, p. 6) defined nations as 'imagined communities'. The reason is that the members of a nation, not matter how small that is, will never be able to meet all its members, but they all know they are part of the same community. There is a coordinated, simultaneous phenomenon of social construction of these communities, which in fact encompasses both previous and following generations. The 'imagined communities' separate the world population into 'us' and 'them', and this separation refers to the decision of each individual to stay 'in' or 'out' of a certain community; it creates boundaries between the nations. It also created the environment for political competition, where all the nations try to promote their own politics of constructing the nation and its boundaries (Yuval-Davis 2006, p. 205). Without going too far, I will apply this concept to a lower level, micro-context, relating it to the marriage and the society which surrounds it.

Even though it is not the central focus of my study, citizenship is an element of great importance in the politics of belonging. The notion of citizenship has specific meanings for each

ideology; '*in liberal theory, citizenship is basically constructed as a reciprocal relationship of rights and responsibilities between individuals and the state. In republican theories, the political community mediates between the individual citizen and the state, and loyalty to that political community, the nation, and its preservation and promotion are the primary duties of the citizen. [...] Communitarian theories of citizenship [...] see citizens [...] as its products, as organic parts of that community.*' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 206). A study conducted by Marieke Slootman and Jan Willem Duyvendak in 2016 explores the Dutch politics of belonging and the Moroccan and Turkish minorities' sense of belonging. The study is based on interviews with second generation Moroccan and Turkish Muslims, who have the Dutch citizenship. The authors aim to present the fact that the Dutch government is conducting a policy to reinforce emotive connection, attachment and loyalty towards the Netherlands, which comes into contradiction, and even provokes, a feeling of distance from the Dutch culture, as these minorities perceive that they are being treated like 'the others' (Slootman & Duyvendak, 2016). Even though the majority have stated that they feel like The Netherlands is their home, the feeling of belonging is being ironically challenged by the same policies which are supposed to consolidate a feeling of belonging. This study is an example of the fact that citizenship does not necessarily involve an emotional attachment to the society where one lives, and this is an aspect that I have proposed myself to explore through the interviews.

I considered 'belonging' to be too restrictive, because of its personal approach, but the 'politics of belonging' too distant from the topic of this study. However, I found it important to bring it into my discussion because of its tight connection to identity. In the analysis I aim to apply the notion of belonging in order to gain an insight on the way the spouses feel the belonging to the marriage and to the society they live in. Both Stuart Hall and Nira Yuval-Davis are bringing value to the theoretical framework with their contribution to the concepts of identity and belonging.

3. Literature review

When I started investigating what has been written in the field that I was interested in, I discovered that it is difficult to find research which encompasses the theme of marriage, anti-Muslim discourse and the concepts of identity and belonging simultaneously. However, there are two relevant studies which I have used as inspiration, as each of them provided an insight on a particular part of my research. I will present each of the studies below, stressing the reason why I considered them important for my research, as well as a personal critique where I see it necessary.

3.1. Martin Dribe and Christer Lundh, *Cultural dissimilarity and intermarriage. A longitudinal study of immigrants in Sweden 1990-2005.*

This article was published in January 2011 in the International Migration Review by Christer Lundh and Martin Dribe. The research they have made is a longitudinal one, where they studied partner selection, more specifically the likelihood of marriage between immigrants and natives, in 138 immigrant groups in Sweden, between 1990 and 2005. They analyzed the influence of values, religion and language in the choice of the immigrant, assuming that the greater the discrepancy between the immigrant and the native from these points of view, the less likely it is for them to marry. Also, they assumed that the smaller the geographical distance between the origin countries of the potential partners, the more likely it would be for them to marry. This finding is based on the evidence that closer countries share more cultural traits than distant ones. What is unique in this study, compared to other ones, is the fact that they follow the whole process of partner selection, what influences it, the marriage, the married life and death.

The literature preceding this longitudinal research focuses on endogamous marriages, where the spouses share the same cultural traits, as they find it more appropriate and easy to marry someone from their own cultural background. Lundh and Dribe have stressed that in order to marry a native, both the immigrant and the native must acknowledge the desire to marry

outside their own group. In order for a marriage like this to work, both partners must handle the barriers which come up, and accept the cultural differences. Sometimes, compromise is needed. I found this idea inspiring for the theoretical framework of my research, therefore I wanted to stress that compromise is an important feature of the theory of social behavior as exchange.

Lundh and Dribe have obtained the data from Statistics Sweden and selected the subjects according to age, date of arrival to Sweden, and marital status (not married at the time of arrival). The indicators are measured at the level of the country of origin, not on individual level; the 138 immigrant groups represent 138 different countries, so the researchers have measured religion by the dominant religion of their origin country. The same estimation was done about the language. But these traits might not characterize all immigrants, as they might belong to non-majority religions in their countries of origin, or even speak a different language or dialect, rather than the official language. Therefore I believe that the conclusions of the study are not precise enough. Partner selection encompasses many variables, and emotions are also implied, which is not possible to highlight in a quantitative research like Dribe and Lundh's. In terms of language, the authors state that '*not being able to communicate with natives in their mother tongue decreases the pool of potential marriage candidates*' (Dribe and Lundh, 2011, p. 9). I argue that speaking the mother tongue of the native spouse is not an influential element, if both spouses can make comfortable use of the English language. Moreover, in the case of interethnic couples with high education, like the couples in my study, it is arguably common to use English for everyday communication.

Security and survival are shown to be impacting the choice of partners among the immigrant groups in Sweden. I argue that this is not a criterion that can be generalised, as in the case of high educated immigrants with stable jobs, who live in a welfare state like Denmark, or Sweden for that matter, security should not represent an issue. However, I aim to explore the topic of security in the society through the interviews. Stating generalised remarks and conclusions is done throughout the whole study, and I argue that such statistics as used in this study are not a solid base for generalising. Therefore, my qualitative interviews have the scope to get a deeper insight into the personal experiences of the couåples who take part in my study.

An important aspect of Dribe and Lundh's study is assimilation; they stress that there are three factors which intermarriage depends on, and are tightly connected to assimilation: first, the time spent by the immigrant in the new country; the longer they had lived there, the higher the chance to marry a native. The second factor refers to education, which influences the intermarriage in a positive way, as it promotes values like tolerance and creates incentives for multiculturalism. The third factor refers to the structure of the 'marriage market'; the number of natives is higher than the one of the immigrant's ethnicity. Unless there is a strong segregation, this means that an immigrant has a higher chance to marry a native. I argue that these three factors are plausible, and I aim to analyse to what degree they relate to the the interethnic married couples of my study.

The culture in Sweden is close to the one in Denmark, which is the reason why I took this research as example and inspiration. The results of this study are reflecting the assumptions of the two researchers, meaning that the culturally closer nations have a higher likelihood to intermarry, whereas the more culturally distant nations have a lower likelihood to intermarry. More specifically, '*[...] immigrants from Muslim origins are about seven times more likely to marry endogamously than immigrants from Protestant countries, and have a 70 percent lower risk of marrying a native. [...] Muslim immigrants are the least likely to marry a native among both men and women*' (Dribe and Lundh, 2011, p. 16).

In my research, the married couples are a sample of the least likely type of partner selection, according to Dribe and Lundh: there is contrast between the societies from which they originate (the Danish is a secular society, while the Muslim partner comes from a more traditional society), between the language and alphabet, food habits, or even clothing habits. Therefore, they do not only have the challenge to overcome these barriers, and adjust to each other's culture, but they also have to deal with negative discourse which is increasing in the Danish media and in the popular opinion. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, exchange, negotiation and adjustment is expected to be part of the marriage, even more so in an interethnic marriage. In my research I aim to analyze what other challenges come up from the

macrocontexts in a marriage which is defying the pattern identified in the study made by Martin Dribe and Christer Lundh in Sweden.

3.2. Bryndl E. Hohmann-Marriott and Paul Amato, *Relationship Quality in Interethnic Marriages and Cohabitations*

This study published in 2008 in *Social Forces* analyzes the quality of interethnic marriages, conflicts and subjective assessments of the relationship's (in)stability in married and cohabiting couples in the United States. The empirical data has been taken from the *National Survey of Families and Households* and the *Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study,* therefore I found this research reliable, as it compares data from two different sources. The interethnic couples included in this study are mainly Hispanic-white, black-Hispanic, black-white. The researchers aim to observe if there are differences in the marital quality between interethnic couples and same-ethnic couples, they aim to explain these differences, and they also aim to observe if there is a difference between married couples and cohabiting couples.

An important aspect, which is in fact mentioned in the research by Martin Dribe and Christer Lundh as well, is the effect that these marriages produce in the society. Same-ethnic marriages lead to segregation and stronger boundaries between the immigrant groups and natives, while interethnic marriages create conditions for a better integration of the immigrant partner and so the boundaries become weaker. If tensions come up in the interethnic relationship, this is an indicator which suggests that boundaries are becoming stronger and the cultural differences are problematic, leading to an unhappy or unstable relationship. There is no direct evidence that interethnic relationships are poorer in quality; however, the divorce rate is higher than in same-ethnic marriages, so the researchers consider this statistic to be a strong evidence of instability. The high divorce rate, or the reason for disputes, may be caused by several potential challenges that interethnic couples might face; the researchers have put together five of them:

- complex relationship histories. The research is showing that there is a higher chance for interethnic couples to divorce, remarry, and divorce again.

- low socioeconomic status. In the US, minorities have a lower income than whites, suggests the research, so the assumption is that interethnic couples' income is lower than native same-ethnic couples', but minority same-ethnic couples have the lowest average income.

- relationship heterogamy. This challenge refers to the fact that once the ethnicity boundary was broken, it is much easier to break other boundaries as well, like age, religion, education. Based on this premise, the researchers found that interethnic couples are more likely to tolerate difference, compared to same-ethnic couples.

- differences between partners in attitudes and values. The researchers assume that the partners work on these differences to the point where they create their own reality (or culture, as I already mentioned in the theoretical framework), with shared meanings of concepts and notions. Only after they reach this point can one acknowledge the marital quality.

- lack of social support. Due to lack of tolerance in the US, spouses might face the challenge of not receiving support from their family, which is likely to create tensions. The assumption in this case is that same-ethnic couples receive more social support than interethnic ones.

The researchers have concluded that '*our analyses suggest that all of these factors - with the exception of socioeconomic resources - play a role in reducing relationship quality among interethnic couples*' (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008, p. 848). This research has served as inspiration for my research, as I also aim to investigate the effect that the public discourse has in the marriage, and how it might reflect on the quality of the marriage. Anti-Muslim discourse is not taken into account in this research from the US, but the challenges pointed out are part of the macrocontexts, where I have placed the anti-Muslim discourse as well, in the theoretical

framework. The researchers have concluded that all these assumed challenges are legitimate and were validated by surveys. Therefore I aim to find out if the couples in my research, in Denmark, are affected by these challenges as well and how they deal with them.

The researchers have made a distinction between married couples and cohabiting couples, but noticed that there is not a big difference between the two types of union in what concerns the behaviors, attitudes or beliefs of the partners.

I believe that Hohmann-Marriott and Amato's study lacks subjectivity, as well as Dribe and Lundh's. Cultural aspects are important, sometimes even definitory, but in this particular study the personal insight, subjectivity and emotions are factors that cannot be measured by use of statistics, and do not always reflect the culture of the spouse or partner. Therefore, I aim to contribute with my research to this lack of 'emotional evidence', and through the case study, to investigate how couples behave in their marriages and how they perceive their status in the marriage. According to these two researches that I reviewed, there are rather many elements which can be perceived as working against rather that in favor of interethnic marriage. By these elements I refer to the micro- and macrocontexts that I developed in the theoretical framework chapter, therefore my research will focus on how couples overcome challenges and negative inputs.

4. Methodological considerations

The aim of this section is to motivate my choices for the methods and design, highlighting the challenges and limitations of the research process. I will present how I gathered the empirical data for this study and reflect upon my own choices, pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of each of them. Finally, I will present the structure of the analysis, in order to have an overview of it beforehand.

4.1. Qualitative approach

For the purpose of achieving a deeper understanding of the interactions within the marriages, I believe the most appropriate and valuable approach for the study would be a qualitative one. I am interested in finding out how the couples are affected by the anti-Muslim discourse in their daily life, and what challenges they face in the construction of their identity within the marriage and the society, as well as in the creation of their own common culture, which would ease the interaction between them. These topics would be very superficially tackled if I used a questionnaire, or any other quantifiable method. Open ended, semi-structured interviews would add the most value to the research. In this case, I will lead the discussion in order to reach the points of most interest for this study, and at the same time leaving room for the couples to add or discuss whatever topics or situations they consider relevant. Through the qualitative interviews, I will get an insight into their personal experiences and feelings, and I aim to present the findings objectively, as they see it through their own filters. I base this choice on Steinar Kvale's suggestion to discuss with people, in order to find out more about them: '*If you want to know how people understand their world and lives, why not talk with them? Conversation is a basic mode of human interaction. Human beings talk with each other; they interact, pose questions, and answer questions. Through conversations, we get to know other people, learn about their experiences, feelings, attitudes, and the world they live in.*' (Kvale, 2009, p. xvii)

In order to gain an extensive perspective over the interactions between the spouses, I will use the theory of social behavior as exchange. The objective of using this theory is to find out if the couples in this study behave in the marriage as George Homans theorized it in his work *Social Behavior as Exchange* (1958). This theoretical framework will be completed by Stuart Hall's Cultural Identity theory and Nira Yuval-Davis' Belonging theory, which have the aim to provide an insight about what challenges the Muslim spouse faces when being married to a Danish spouse, living in Denmark, in the context of the anti-Muslim discourse. These theories will represent the starting point in the research, which will serve as base for the qualitative interviews, therefore, this study will be a deductive one. However, even if I do not attempt to

create new theories with my study, I mention that the semi-structured interview was intended to leave freedom for the interviewees. This brings a hint of inductive reasoning, but the scope was to gain as much information as possible, in regards to the theories that I used, rather than to create new theories.

4.2. Philosophy of Science: Social Constructionism

As the concepts of cultural identity and belonging are central in the theoretical framework, I consider it is important to notice the relevance of social constructionism in this study. As Bryman mentions, social constructionism is challenging the idea that culture is a fixed notion (Bryman, 2012, p. 33). Social constructionism encompasses the idea that social phenomena are in constant change, and the actors are subject to external influences. Therefore, the identity, as well as the culture that both spouses have created within their marriage, is in a constant change and reevaluation, because of external factors. In the case of this study, these external factors could be the experience of negative discourse directed towards one of the spouses, or even both, the interaction with outsiders and even with the other spouse. All these elements contribute to the shaping and reshaping of the identity of the spouses, and consequently, to the behavior and interaction in the marriage. Therefore, they created their own reality, but one must not ignore that it is not a fixed process, which starts at a point in time and finishes at another point. It is a never ending dynamic process, which produces change for each individual, and for the couple as a whole.

Vivien Burr, Professor of Critical Psychology at the University of Huddersfield, has taken an interest in social constructionism, and she specifies that there is not one definition of social constructionism which could encompass the complexity of if. However, there are some characteristics that she has stressed to be more important: first, she argues that one must be critical and suspicious of the reality of the world, as opposed to positivism and empiricism. In social constructionism one has to assume that there are variables that one cannot perceive by observation only. Then, the way of perceiving the world is culturally specific. In the case of this study, I aim to see how the interaction in the marriage is challenged by cultural differences between the two spouses. These differences create the common culture that I have already

mentioned, which leads to the third point, referring to the fact that our common understanding of the world is not naturally given, but constructed, negotiated by society (Burr, 2003).

I believe that several characteristics of the social constructionism are relevant in this study. It can be argued that in a married couple, where there are cultural differences, compromise is necessary. Therefore, the personal habits and behavior of the spouses must be negotiated and adjusted so that they create a valuable interaction. Through the daily interaction, they develop a personal culture of their marriage. This topic will be further discussed in the theoretical framework chapter. In this common culture, they create their own reality, which is affected by external, but also internal factors, as mentioned before. What I want to see in this research is how this common culture is being shaped, how identity and belonging are being constructed through the interaction with the spouse, and the outside world, and how the anti-Muslim discourse and policies may be a defining element in the interaction and behavior of the spouses. These processes and phenomena are very complex, so I aim to obtain a deeper perspective through the interviews, and I hope that the findings will exceed the expectations that the theoretical framework offers.

4.3. Case study: replication design

This qualitative research will be designed as a case study. According to the table below that Robert Yin designed in his book *Case Study Research. Design and Methods (2009),* a case study answers to *how?* and *why?* questions, focuses on contemporary events, and the researcher does not control these behavioral events. More specifically, in this research, my point of interest is to see *how* the marriage is affected by external factors, and *how* identity and belonging are being constructed in the context of interaction within an interethnic marriage. I plan to do this by interviewing the couples, where the interviews will be semi-structured and open ended, in order to leave room for them to express as much as they feel. My role will be to guide the interview in order to receive the information needed for the purpose of the research, but I will not control the events in their marriage. Also, the topics that I will tackle are current, contemporary ones:

anti-Muslim discourse in Denmark, brought to a micro-level, in the marriage of an interethnic couple. Therefore, the research I am conducting fits in the characteristics of a case study.

METHOD	(1) Form of Research Question	(2) Requires Control of Behavioral Events?	(3) Focuses on Contemporary Events?
Experiment	how? why?	yes	yes
Survey	who? what? where? how many? how much?	no	yes
Archival Analysis	who? what? where? how many? how much?	no	yes/no
History	how? why?	no	no
Case Study	how? why?	no	yes

Table 2. Relevant Situations for Different Research Methods. In Robert K. Yin (2009). Case Study Research. Design and Methods. Fourth Edition. SAGE Inc.: USA, page 8.

In a nutshell, Robert Yin explains that '*The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result.*'(Yin, 2009, p. 17)

Contrary to how other scholars tackle case studies, Yin categorizes them into two variations: single- and multiple-case studies. I chose to do a multiple-case study, in which I will cover several cases, regularly 2-3, and then draw a single set of cross-case conclusions. I believe that two or three cases would bring diversity to the analysis, but at the same time it might be challenging to draw a conclusion which would be representative for the whole research. Even though some scholars, in some fields, categorise multiple-case studies as different methodology from single-case studies (and they are named *comparative*), Yin considers that they belong to the same methodological framework. The advantage of the multiple-case study is that the evidence is considered more compelling and the overall study more robust. However, a case study requires

more time and resources. Also, there are some case studies which only work with the study of one case, like the rare case, the critical case, the revelatory case (Yin, 2009).

In order to avoid the confusion with the comparative case study, Robert Yin suggests using the *replication design*. Replication means that after interviewing one case, the researcher must pay attention to the findings which resulted, and then at the second or third interview the researcher is pressing priority to replicate these findings (Yin, 2009). I plan to follow the replication design in the interviews that I will take, as I consider that it is the most efficient way to reach to a relevant conclusion. I am interested in seeing how the married couples perceive external inputs, rather than comparing the cases. Multiple-case studies must not be confused with sampling either. My objective is not to select couples from a pool, and expect the findings to represent the whole pool of subjects, nor will I back up the findings with statistics. The married couples in this research have been recommended by acquaintances and asked if they would like to join, and also if they can recommend someone as well. According to Yin, each case must be selected according to two purposes that the researcher chooses: either to predict similar result (*literal replication*), or to contrast results, but for anticipatable reasons (*theoretical replication*) (Yin, 2009). As there are not many couples willing to take part in the research, I do not have the privilege to be able to select the couples according to a purpose. But I consider it will be interesting as well to conduct the research with couples that I do not know what to expect from.

There are also critiques of the case study. One critique is that, because of lack of clear definitory rules, the researcher might be influenced in the research path by biased views, or the interview questions might be biased. Another critique is that one cannot generalise from one case. Yin argues that a case study is meant to contribute to generalising a certain theory, and not a whole population. Another argument against case studies is that they take too long, and provide too much material. To this, Yin warns that case studies should not be confused with ethnographies. A fourth critique refers to the fact that case studies cannot address the issue of cause-effect relation in the research (Yin, 2009). I consider these critiques not to be as strong as the advantages of using case studies, however I will try to pay attention to these critiques in order to conduct a valid, reliable research.

4.4. The structure of the analysis

The analysis will have a two-fold structure. The first part part will be dedicated to analyzing how the theories are reflected in the conducted interviews with the married couples Annette and Said, and Laura and Ahmad. For this purpose, I have followed Steinar Kvale's methods of analysis focusing on meaning: coding, condensation, interpretation (Kvale, 2011). I have read the transcriptions of the interviews, and identified several predominant themes, which will be further on interpreted through the lenses of the theories chosen for this study, and where necessary, the long explanations and descriptions will be condensed into a relevant phrase. Therefore, the first part of the analysis will consist of a *bricolage* (Kvale, 2011), which gives me the freedom to combine these three modes of analysis categorised by Kvale. I will do this in order to avoid any limitations in what concerns the method of analysis, so the content of the analysis will be more comprehensive.

The second part of the analysis will tackle the relationship between the literature review chapter and my study. The quantitative research conducted by Bryndl E. Hohmann-Marriott and Paul Amato, *Relationship Quality in Interethnic Marriages and Cohabitations,* identified five potential challenges which might cause conflict or even explain the high divorce rate in interethnic couples in the United States of America. They have concluded that these assumptions are valid in the case of the quantitative study in the US. I will take each point and analyze if, and how, they are visible in the interviews that I conducted with the interethnic couples.

For both parts of the analysis, the process of choosing what parts of the interviews to use was based on a coding, that I performed manually. While reading the interviews, I selected the paragraphs which contained valuable information and assigned them relevant keywords. Afterwards, I created a file where I categorized these paragraphs and merged the similar keywords, so that in the end there were 7 themes, each of them containing several quotes from the interviews. In the case of the second part of the analysis, while reading again the interviews, I selected only the paragraphs which relate to the five assumptions that I chose to analyse from the *Relationship Quality in Interethnic Marriages and Cohabitations* study by Hohmann-Marriott

and Amato. Further on, in the Analysis chapter, I aimed to approach each of these 7 themes, respectively 5 assumptions, through the lenses of the interviews. Therefore, the first part is interview-driven, where the analysis initiates in what has been talked about in the interviews, whereas the second part initiates in the literature about quality in the marriage.

4.5. Empirical data

When I decided that the empirical data that this study is going to be based on, are interviews, I knew it was going to be challenging to find people who are willing and available to open up and talk to me, a stranger, about their private life. Therefore, I had considered to interview the spouses separately, so they would not feel the pressure to say only pleasant things, being in the presence of their spouse. However, when I contacted them, they preferred to come to the interview together, because they were busy, and I realised that in this way, I also have the chance to observe the interaction between them. Moreover, I believe there would not be many things that they hide from their spouses, but talk freely about to a stranger.

The first step in reaching out to interviewees was to ask my friends and acquaintances. After being refused by a few couples, I have managed to meet with Annette and Said. They have been introduced to me by a friend. Said is a Muslim coming from Egypt, he has lived in Denmark for 7 Years and currently he owns a small company. Annette is Danish, originally from Aarhus and she is a doctor. They have been together for about two years at the moment of the interview. The interview took place in a room booked at the Main Library in Aalborg, on the 1st of July 2017 over a cup of coffee. The interview lasted around one hour, and both of them were very open and seemed to enjoy talking about cultural differences in particular. After the interview has ended, Annette said that the topic was interesting and has challenged them to think about certain aspects of their relationship which have become so common and natural, that they are not aware of them any more.

The same friend who recommended them to me, has also directed me to Ahmad, whom I contacted via Facebook. We met shortly at a dance event in the city center, and scheduled the interview, as he was confident that his wife Laura would accept as well. Ahmad is coming from

Pakistan, has been living in Denmark for 13 years, and he is Chief Engineer in a big company. Laura, his wife, is a Danish girl, of Polish descendance, who is also a doctor. The interview took place at their apartment, on 13.07.2017 evening, as they preferred doing it at their home rather than in the library, because they were tired after work. The atmosphere was relaxed and the interview ended with a small reflection off record about identity, and how challenging it was for Laura to live under Polish culture requirements in a Danish environment.

Even though I was pleased to have conducted two interviews, I continued searching for interethnic married couples, but I was refused. In order to widen the search, I decided to look for interethnic cohabiting couples as well, as there is a rather high rate of cohabiting couples in Denmark (321.748 'other couples' registered in 2016, while 934.186 are married couples)[6]. Moreover, Hohmann-Marriott and Amato have concluded in their study that there is no difference between married and cohabiting couples in what concerns their behavior and reasons of dispute (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). This strategy was unsuccessful, therefore the empirical data of this study consists of two interviews.

5. Analysis

5.1. Part one: Perspectives of the interethnic couples

As stated in the Methodology chapter, the analysis will have a two-fold structure. I will start with the 7 main themes that the couples talked more about in the interviews, and analyse them through the perspective of the theories that I chose. In the second part, I will analyse the interviews through the perspective of the 5 findings of the study conducted by Bryndl E. Hohmann-Marriott and Paul Amato, *Relationship Quality in Interethnic Marriages and Cohabitations,* regarding challenges that interethnic couples might face. However, first I will

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[6] Statistics Danmark: *Households, Families and Children.* Retrieved from
http://www.statbank.dk/fam55N , on 17.12.2017

focus on the main topics discussed during the interviews. The semi-structured interview consisted of questions which had the purpose to lead the discussion towards topics that relate to the theoretical background of this study, but at the same time, the interviewees also had the chance to develop their ideas freely, as the interview format allowed for more open discussions also. Therefore, considering the way the discussion was directed, and the topics that were predominantly approached by the couples, I have identified the following themes:

1.	Predominant culture and cultural identity
2.	Religion and its role
3.	Influenced by the partner
4.	Other influential factors: media and people
5.	What causes misunderstandings?
6.	The possibility of culturally closer partner
7.	Belonging and Citizenship

The order that the themes are positioned in the analysis does not reflect the order that they were approached in the interviews. However, I considered this order to be elucidating in understanding the cultural challenges and processes that are happening in the marriages of the couples that have been interviewed. The first two themes have the role to introduce the couples and their interethnic lifestyle. The third and fourth themes approach the role of internal and external elements which have an impact in their marriage. The fifth theme is about the challenges that emerge from the cultural differences, whereas in the sixth theme the couples talk about how a same-ethnic marriage would be like for each of them. The seventh and last theme analysed in this study refers to the sense of belonging of the Muslim spouses and to what role the citizenship plays in this.

5.1.1. Predominant culture and cultural identity

Language is an important element in shaping one's cultural identity, highlights Stuart Hall (Hall *et al.,* 1997). In what concerns this aspect, the couples that were interviewed for this study speak English at home, given the fact that they were born in different countries and cultures: the Danish female spouses were born and raised in Denmark, while one of the Muslim spouses comes from Egypt (Said) and the other one from Pakistan (Ahmad). Contrary to my expectations stated in the *Cultural identity* section, the Muslim spouses do not speak Danish fluently, on a daily basis, and are more comfortable with speaking English: *'I don't speak Danish fluently, although I've been here so long, and although I have Danish citizenship as well, but I do not speak Danish fluently. So we basically use English for our communication.'* (Ahmad, Appendix 2). This may be caused by their jobs in multinational environments, but also by the ease of speaking English. I have noticed that they all speak very good English and there isn't any barrier in their communication, concerning language. In the case of Annette and Said, she is very interested in learning Arabic, and she is also challenging Said to speak Danish:

> '*Annette: Mainly English.*
> *Said: Yeah, mainly English.*
> *Annette: But then we practice also Danish.*
> *Said: Some Danish, yes.*
> *Annette: A little more and more. And then a little bit Arabic. For me, for my fun.'*
> (Annette and Said, Appendix 1)

This way, I could notice that the habit of speaking mostly English is an element contributing to the creation of a culture of their own.

When asked about what culture is more prominent in their family, I noticed an attempt from their side to stress that there is a mix of cultures, there is adjustment from both sides, and there is also a separation, a well-defined set of cultural traits that are specific for each of them, individually. *'last month was Ramadan, that's the fasting month for Muslims, so I was fasting the whole month, Annette was not'* (Said, Appendix 1). This common culture that they have created, consciously or unconsciously, is mostly visible when they talk about food, cooking, and holidays. For example, Said explains: *'I think one other aspect is the food. For me, that's the easiest place*

to see that we are actually mixing up, because our food habits are basically different. [...] I cook food, but I'm not into vegetables much, and she cooks, but it's the Danish food style and I'm with the Arabic food style, so now we are actually making a lot of mix. She was never used to eat rice. [...] Now she eats a lot of rice because I'm used to it. [...] I would say, it's not very typical Egyptian or very typical Danish. It's more improvising food.' (Said, Appendix 1). In what concerns holidays, Annette explains that they celebrate the holidays from both cultures, and even though they do not feel attachment to the other's holiday yet, they participate in the celebrations, and she believes that in time they will feel more or less an equal level of excitement for the holidays pertaining to both cultures. '*You're not as invested in it as if you were born with it, that's a fact'*, concludes Said. (Said, Appendix 1)

On the other hand, Ahmad sees this phenomenon of common, shared culture from a different point of view. He explains that both him and Laura are very relaxed and open-minded in their daily life and do not stick to rigid norms and traditions, but they rather try to find ways to discover each other's world. Laura approves by explaining: '*I think in order to have this kind of relationship, you have to be somehow not… sticking to these routines and expectations in a culture, like I mean, for me I think it works because I am curious about other cultures and how it can work otherwise. [...] But I don't feel like I am compromising anything of myself, just that I let other things, I invite other things in my life as well, than my own.'* (Laura, Appendix 2).

I argue that the aspects they have mentioned are part of adjustment to each other, and form the basis of the microcontexts in which their relationship is being built on. However, the cultural identity is not something that easily disappears, and Said even clarified that '*we are married, but we still have separate identities [...] That's why we have two TVs at home.'* (Said, Appendix 1). Their separate identities that Said mentioned can also be identified in relation to religion, as will be discussed next.

5.1.2. Religion and its role

A sensitive topic which might raise ethical issues is religion. However, I dared to approach the topic when I realized the couples were open to talking about it, and this gave me the confidence to ask them. What I noticed is that Ahmad and Said were more aware of the importance of religion in their daily life. Said fasts and prays, while Ahmad has experienced a change in the last few years: '*I am a Muslim and I was brought up as a Muslim, I practice it as well. Of course, I am probably not the most practicing man you can find around but I do believe in it. From the... what you call it, from the belief side I would say that I am really Muslim, but on the other side, like praying 5 times a day and all that, I am not that regular in it. I have never been to a mosque in Denmark, but I do pray at home, sometimes when I feel like it.*' (Ahmad, Appendix 2) He adds that his motivation to fast during Ramadan has decreased when the holiday was during summer, because of the long summer days, and also because the habit is not present any more in his household, like it was in Pakistan.

However, he does not see this decrease in motivation as an effect of the Danish environment and lifestyle, but rather points out that it is the effect of the lack of incentives that he was used to in Pakistan, like having shorter days, or all the family being involved. I believe, even though Ahmad did not say it, that as a migrant with a different religion than the majority, one will certainly be influenced. In this case, not having Muslim family close diminished Ahmad's determination in praying, fasting, and going to a mosque. The fact that Laura is not practicing very much, shows that Ahmad's cultural identity has been affected by the partner and by the society that he nowadays lives in. Identity is an ongoing process (Hall, 2009), therefore I argue that the shift in Ahmad's religious practices can be explained by the process of identity creation, shaped by the interaction with Laura, but also by the society and the social groups that he is part of. As it will be shown later in the analysis, Ahmad is changing his cultural codes and is gradually approaching a Danish system of shared meanings and representations.

Laura has been brought up in the Catholic religion, as per her Polish upbringing, but stopped being involved in the activities at church in her teen years. Annette's perception is more reserved: '*I'm very Danish religious, so I have it my heart that I do believe, [...] it's not very*

active, very expressive. So it's more about the values we live from. [...] but if I were asked, I would say that I do believe, but it's not something that is very present in my everyday life. (Annette, Appendix 1). In this case, even though Annette does not have religious habits, Said was very clear and categorical about the fact that he is dedicated to his Muslim upbringing, compared to Ahmad. The following section will show more clearly how the partners are being influenced by each other, and what is the importance of this in the daily life of the married couples.

5.1.3. Influenced by the partner

In the interview guide, I addressed a question regarding how the spouses felt they have been influenced by the presence of their partner. This question had the purpose to emphasize the role of social constructionism in creating identity. According to Vivien Burr, our common understanding of the world is not naturally given, but constructed, negotiated by society (Burr, 2003), and I would add, in the first place, by the spouse. Annette notices that she has become more spontaneous in her decision making, which comes in contradiction with the Danish style of having everything scheduled: '*I think your partner will affect you, also your way of living, because you are faced with another way of doing things*' (Annette, Appendix 1). Laura points out that it is rather normal to be influenced by the partner in the everyday life, no matter if the couple is interethnic or not: '*there are some small things that I have in my life now, so I have to adjust to that, but I just think that people anyway have to adjust to new things, although no matter that partners are from different culture or not, there are just other things they have to adjust to.*' (Laura, Appendix 2). With this statement, Laura challenges the findings of Martin Dribe and Christer Lundh in their quantitative longitudinal study *Cultural dissimilarity and intermarriage* (2011), regarding the unlikelihood of a successful interethnic marriage. They state that in order for a marriage made up of culturally distant spouses to work, both partners must handle the barriers which may come up, accept the cultural differences and compromise.

According to Laura, however, these challenges are not specific for interethnic couples only, but she rather described them as a normal process which emerges when people live together. The same thing is pointed out by Ahmad, who explains that sometimes people feel less

of themselves when they have to give in, to compromise in a relationship, but that one must take it as it is, otherwise *'then of course you will end up in a problem'* (Ahmad, Appendix 2). I assume the problem might refer to identity and how it receives stimuli to constantly reshape (through interaction), but in order to feel good about himself, about who he is in the relationship, he must acknowledge the need to compromise.

I argue that highlighting how the spouses are influenced by each other is important when it comes to cultural identity. According to Stuart Hall *et al.* (1997), culture is defined as a complex of shared meanings, which can only be interpreted in the same way, if the two spouses share the same cultural codes. Naturally, having such distant cultural backgrounds, the spouses in this study have different cultural codes. However, I argue that through interaction, the cultural distance between the two spouses decreases, and they learn each other's cultural codes. This adjustment helps at improving communication and, as it will be shown later in the analysis, a certain exchange is being established. Apart from being influenced by each other, society and the acquaintances also play a role in shaping the cultural identity of the spouses and of their marriage, and this will be approached in the following section.

5.1.4. Other influential factors: media and people

The challenge that I encountered while interviewing Annette and Said, and Laura and Ahmad, was the fact that they seemed not to feel directly affected by the negative discourse directed against Muslim minorities in Denmark, which represented the initial central point of my problem formulation. In fact, both couples realized that the challenge they were facing was to respond to other people's questions and behaviors, who in turn had misconceptions caused by the media. Annette realized that there is a lot of prejudice when she tells people that her husband is Muslim, she was disappointed to say that *'then you can just see it in their faces that they are thinking many things'* (Annette, Appendix 1). Laura has encountered the same problem, '*it's just that maybe people are very focused on… they don't want to adjust to maybe Islam because uuuuh there is this media thing. But actually people do adjust anyway'* (Laura, Appendix 2). Laura

found that it is better to share her good experiences with people, and this way convince them to question the media all the time, and rather try to understand the culture that the Muslims come from.

Ahmad and Said themselves said that they have not encountered any negativity or xenophobia since they have moved to Denmark. After graduating, Ahmad was offered a job as an engineer in a big company, therefore his argument is that the highly educated people whom he has been interacting with, would not display a negative behavior: *'it's highly unlikely that you will come across something like that in that environment'* (Ahmad, Appendix 2). Said did not recall encountering any situation like this either, but he supposes it is because he is being presented as the husband of a Danish girl, so he feels safe: *'It works to have a partner from the other side, it makes you feel more comfortable and more confident about it.'* (Said, Appendix 1). However, both of them pointed out that there are situations when they are being treated differently. This happens most frequently when it comes to food and dinner parties when, as Annette tells, a special dish is being prepared for the person who does not eat pork: *'you sometimes don't feel so nice, that it's actually something special for you that has been made. Like if everyone is served pork, and then there is a special dish'* (Annette, Appendix 1). Both Annette and Said agreed that this has nothing to do with hate or discrimination, but rather with the clumsiness of people who, despite trying to behave well and be inclusive with their Muslim guest, end up blundering. Said argues that this kind of special treatment might upset other Muslim people, if they don't realize that it's not driven by hate, but by ignorance, and can contribute to harshening the ongoing debate about Muslim minorities in Denmark. But he is trying to be polite and answer the curious questions, which is also the strategy that Laura adopts: *'You just make a problem for yourself by making it a problem, because it doesn't have to [be a problem]'* (Laura, Appendix 2). Said's pacifist attitude does not reflect on Ahmad as well, who feels annoyed when he is being challenged with conversations which are directed against his religion and beliefs: *'people don't like to be confronted. If they decide to confront it, either they want annoy you, or they actually want to learn something or whatever reason, then they confront it very deep'* (Ahmad, Appendix 2).

The social conditions surrounding the couples are macro elements which influence the marriage, according to Bradbury, Fincham and Beach (2000). I would add to these elements the media and people, as most of the negative discourse about Muslims is exposed by these. The type of interaction based on exchange, as Homans theorized it, presupposes that a spouse behaves in a manner as to receive a reward, which may consist of time, emotional support, availability and other resources (Homans, 1958). If one of the spouses is affected by macro elements like the ones analyzed in this section, this may increase stress and disturbance, diminishing their resources. Consequently, their partner may also invest fewer resources in their relationship, which can cause a conflict. Therefore, I argue that the element of emotion approached by Edward Lawler (2011) plays the role of keeping the couple together despite negative stimuli. It also shows that if emotions were not involved, then Homan's equation for the quality of marriage (Profit=Reward-Cost) would be unequal. This means that the Danish spouse would not have a profit in the relationship, if the Muslim spouse was affected by hate speech and discrimination.

In this section, I attempted to show that the theory of social behavior as exchange is incomplete without the element of emotion in it, and the lack of emotion would cause imbalance in the relationship, or even end the marriage. However, during the interview, I also raised the question of what are the reasons why they have arguments, and if these are caused by cultural differences.

5.1.5. What causes misunderstandings?

As mentioned earlier, Stuart Hall claims that different cultural codes can cause conflicts between two individuals, as the same things or events might have different meanings for each of them (Hall *at al.,* 1997). In order to find out how the cultural codes work for the couples that I interviewed, I addressed the question whether there have been moments when a misunderstanding was clearly caused by a cultural difference, or a misperception caused by a cultural aspect. Annette recalled the beginning of their relationship, when she was used to

display affection in public, but was disappointed that Said was not doing the same: *'when you are in a public space, you are very neutral to each other. And that, for me, in the beginning, it was very hard, I felt like… I couldn't help feeling like it was a rejection.'* (Annette, Appendix 2). Said clarifies that in his culture, showing affection in public is not seen well, and he still has problems adapting to the Western style, so they still had not solved this problem at the moment of the interview. Laura and Ahmad could not come up with a specific situation, but Laura explains clearly that these type of misunderstandings get solved by talking about them, and realising at some point that their perception of the situation was different: *'but what we do usually when we have some disagreements, that's what I actually really like, is just we talk and talk and talk, and then we talk again, until we actually reach the root of the problem. And sometimes it can be that it's because we have basically viewed on something differently and then we figure that out and then we are like 'ah, ok!'* (Laura, Appendix 2). During the interview, Laura and Ahmad also talked about the fact that many of their arguments emerge because of him being lazy, but most of them are caused by debates concerning other people's actions, their behaviors, and the fact that their opinions about it differ. Not being able to exemplify, she only said that '*I think it's definitely from personality. Like I'm so tired that you're so lazy (laughing)'* (Laura, Appendix 2).

Another example is that she complains about his lack of expressiveness, of excitement for activities or experiences they share. Both couples explain that the arguments are caused by personality traits and not by culture. However, I argue that personality, like identity, is being shaped by interaction with people and experiences. Therefore, the laziness and lack of expressiveness might be personality traits that have been shaped in time by Ahmad's hometown, family, childhood experiences and so on, especially because in a Muslim family the men do not contribute to common tasks in the house. Said is also blaming misunderstandings and fights on personality, in the most cases. He and Annette have talked about a situation when he was angry because his landlord was trying to trick him into not returning the deposit, while Annette was calmly trying to see the problem from the landlord's perspective as well. Said does not see his anger to be caused by his cultural background in this situation, even though later he points out that *'in Egypt for example, that's something you usually see in the people in the street, they are*

always angry anyway, so you're used to it, you can also be angry back there' (Said, Appendix 1). According to Hall, this conflict between Annette and Said was caused by different perceptions of the same thing; the same thing had different meanings for each of them, because she could not understand why a thing like this could cause so much anger. According to Hall, '*all communicative practices have to use the same standard norm when they refer to something*' (Hall *et al.,* 1997). Otherwise, the process of communication does not work smoothly, and misunderstandings may come up because of cultural differences.

These personality characteristics of Ahmad and Said can be found in any person belonging to any cultural backgrounds, I argue, but in this case they are placed in contrast with the calmness of their Danish wives, which is why they might seem like emerging from their Muslim background. I wanted to explore this aspect because in Dribe and Lundh's quantitative study, they reached the conclusion that when it comes to partner selection, the greater the cultural discrepancy, the less likely it is for a native Swedish person to marry an immigrant. I aimed to find out if in a culturally similar country it is the case as well. Although this study did not research partner selection, I wanted to find out if the hindrances stated in Dribe and Lundh's study (values, religion, language) could also be identified as creating conflict in the interethnic marriages of the couples that I interviewed. Further on, based on this same premise from Dribe and Lundh's study, I wanted to explore what would mean for the four spouses to have a partner with the same cultural background.

5.1.6. The possibility of culturally closer partner

This section emerged as the result of wanting to explore the role of emotions, but also as the result of wanting to find out how the four spouses in my study view the idea of partner selection based on convenience and practical reasons, as stated in Dribe and Lundh's study in Sweden: same ethnicity, same religion and same language. Therefore I have asked them if they had ever considered being with someone belonging to their own culture, and the answers were unanimous. Annette briefly mentioned that if she were with a Danish guy, she would continue

living after Danish organized customs. Said, however, has thought about this aspect more, before having met Annette. He realized that in order to be better integrated, he needed to be with a Danish girl, but in the end, he did not make a choice between two options. He met Annette and valued her as a person: *'I was not that planned in picking my partner, I'm not like ok, I find this odds better, so I try in this direction. So for me it's like if I find somebody nice, I'll be with that person, the nationality was not a big criteria.'* (Said, Appendix 1)

Ahmad had not considered picking a Pakistani girl either, he was open to any cultures, as long as the person is nice. Moreover, he finds it exciting to be married to someone with a different cultural background, as it can bring more challenges: *'everyone says that if you are from different culture and religion, you will screw it up. So for me, I always believed that it's possible to do, people need to be a little bit different than normality or averageness of their [unintelligible] and stuff. But it is possible to do, and I think it is very exciting as well if you can do it.'* (Ahmad, Appendix 2). He even considers that a marriage with a Pakistani girl would be boring because of the superficial interests that they, in his opinion, have, and that he prefers a woman who has a career and can have intellectual discussions with. Laura has the same view and she adds that the conflicts are present in any marriage, but being in a marriage with someone whose roots are so far away from her own, can challenge her to view the world, and herself in a different way, that maybe she was not used to, growing up in Western culture. (Laura, Appendix 2)

These statements indicate that even though there might be some advantages in selecting a partner with whom one has common roots, values, religion, language, it does not involve lack of conflict and arguments. They will exist, but might be caused by other factors. Moreover, even though Dribe and Lundh have researched that people will look for someone closer to them from a cultural point of view, the spouses in my study have shown that emotions and feelings play the most important role, and the marriage will succeed, if there is good communication, adjustment and compromise.

5.1.7. Belonging and Citizenship

When talking about migrants, an issue which may be challenging is the feeling of belonging in the country and society where they are currently living. Ahmad and Said moved to Denmark 13, respectively 7 years before the moment of the interview, therefore I was interested to find out to what extent they felt that they acquired a sense of belonging to the Danish society and if owning the Danish citizenship has contributed in some way to this. Nira Yuval-Davis sees the nations as separating the world into *us* and *them* and setting boundaries which determine individuals to choose where to position themselves (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Citizenship is, considering all ideologies' definitions, a relationship between an individual and a nation, which happens on mutual agreement, and is *'comprising full and legitimate belonging'* (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.206). However, Yuval-Davis later indicates that belonging is not always a direct consequence of citizenship, and this is an aspect that I aimed to investigate through my interviews.

Said has been in Denmark for 7 years and he currently owns a small company, but does not own the Danish citizenship. As he stated himself, *'I never thought about the Danish citizenship, but slowly I've been here long enough in Denmark, I got the PD3[7], I'm working in Denmark, so for me it's just very simple to make the decision, because I just have to submit the application at some point. [...] It wasn't a target for me at any step, but sometimes maybe it becomes something that 'oh, maybe I can do this'. So it can make things maybe easier.'* (Said, Appendix 1). He fulfills the requirements but has never thought of applying for citizenship, other than for practical reasons, as it might make things work easier. In what concerns his feeling of attachment, Said feels like Egypt is where his home is: *'[Denmark]'s more home than any other country, except for Egypt'* (Said, Appendix 1). However, he also says that having a Danish partner helps him feel comfortable and safe in the society, because he already has the status of husband for a Danish person, not only a Muslim immigrant in the struggle to integrate. This

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[7] Prøve i Dansk 3, the exam which concludes module 5 of the Danish language course:
https://www.studieskolen.dk/en/Dansk-for-udlaendinge/exams/danish-3-exam

indicates that, even if he does not have the citizenship yet, Said considers being married to Annette as being a safety net, while Ahmad has a different point of view.

Ahmad, on the other hand, has acquired the Danish citizenship in 2016, and when asked if this has contributed to his feeling more attachment for Denmark, he answered *'I think I feel a bit more embarrassed about not knowing Danish now [...] so I think that kind of concerns me a little more than anything else, but as I said, I don't think having a passport has made me feel more Danish'* (Ahmad, Appendix 2). The point of view of Said and Ahmad indicates that, in accordance with the Dutch study conducted by Marieke Slootman and Jan Willem Duyvendak, citizenship is a convenient document to hold for practical reasons, and for safety, as Ahmad explains: *'it's not that I feel more Danish because of that. I mean that it's purely practical reason which makes me feel a little bit better about having a passport. But it's not like the passport has created an additional Danishness.[...] But I like Denmark a lot and that is probably because of the people I have met. I think I met some really nice people who are Danes, so I think that's my relationship or feeling for Denmark. That comes, it doesn't originate in the passport or citizenship. But I think I feel better about it for practical reasons, that I cannot just be asked out of nowhere to leave or something like that. [...] But my feelings are there even before I was citizen of Denmark, I like this place and I like the people I have met'.* (Ahmad, Appendix 2)

Ahmad's sense of attachment to Denmark originates in the people he has met and not in his civil status as a Danish citizen. What is more, his sense of belonging is shared, or arguably split, between Pakistan and Denmark. In 13 years he has adapted to the Danish lifestyle, but has been an outsider at the same time. His home country, Pakistan, has developed in a way that Ahmad believes it would be difficult for him to adjust to the social life: *'Because society has evolved [in Pakistan] and I have not been in that society, so I didn't learn those skills, I have not lived there anymore, you know, just like an old guy in a teenager place, you know? [...] So you don't fit basically. And on the other hand, you've spent some time here, which I have, but because I am not that deeply immersed in that society, then I also don't know this pretty well, so basically, at some point of time I also feel that I don't belong anywhere now. [...]* (Ahmad, Appendix 2). He

continues by explaining that even when he will be retired in Denmark, he will still not feel like a Danish person, despite the years that will have passed.

What is important to point out in the case of Ahmad and Laura, is that Laura is also finding herself in a similar situation. She was brought up in the Danish society under strict Polish culture and Catholic religion, which probably eased her ability to relate to what Ahmad is experiencing. She describes her sense of belonging as a topic that bothered her in her younger years, because she could not determine her identity. However, she realized the importance of embracing both her cultural backgrounds: '*You cannot put a person who has had two cultures in his life and make him choose one of them. So in the end I figured out that the question is wrong. You just have to take whatever you like from both sides. Then you're just your own*' (Laura, Appendix 2). Laura was introduced to me as the Danish wife of Ahmad and her cultural background and identity struggles were revealed during the interview. Laura later confessed that *'what is good is that you meet other people with this background of not belonging anywhere because you can somehow feel in group with these people'* (Laura, Appendix 2), which may indicate that this common ground is playing a role in their marriage, in the sense that they relate to each other and, despite coming from different cultures, they share some cultural codes, which might assure a good interaction. This relates to Hall's point that the shared meanings ease the communication processes (Hall *et al.,* 1997)

With these main topics that were discussed during the interview, I aimed to analyze how the theoretical framework of this study applies to the marriages of the two couples that I interviewed. In the following part of the analysis, I attempt to analyse the interviews that I conducted through the perspective of the studies that served as literature review. More specifically, in the study *Relationship Quality in Interethnic Marriages and Cohabitations* conducted in the United States by Brandyl E. Hohmann-Marriott and Paul Amato, the authors have identified 5 potential challenges that interethnic marriages might face, and which could affect the quality of their marriage. They have found these to be valid in their quantitative study in the US, therefore I wanted to analyse if my two qualitative interviews will show the same

findings. Next, I will unfold these findings and analyse how they relate to the experiences of Annette and Said, and Laura and Ahmad.

5.1. Part two: Interethnic marriage quality: quantitative vs. qualitative methods

In this second part of the analysis I aim to highlight the relevance of the literature about the quality of interethnic marriages. The study *Relationship Quality in Interethnic Marriages and Cohabitations*, conducted by Bryndl E. Hohmann-Marriott and Paul Amato in the United States of America, had its focus on black, white and Hispanic groups that inter-marry. By studying these marriages through census and statistics, the researchers identified five reasons which may lead to a high divorce rate among the interethnic couples:

1.	Complex relationship histories
2.	Low socioeconomic status.
3.	Relationship heterogamy
4.	Differences between partners in attitudes and values.
5.	Lack of social support

The couples in my study have not been married for a long time, therefore the topic of divorce was not approached. However, I was interested in analyzing these reasons, as they may represent challenges in the marriages of te couples in my study as well. Further on, I will take each of the challenges identified by Hohmann-Marriott and Amato, and explore them through my interviews.

5.2.1. Complex relationship histories.

The first finding in Hohmann-Marriott & Amato's study is that interethnic couples have a higher chance to divorce, remarry and divorce again, which shows instability and lack of commitment. In the case of the interethnic couples that I interviewed, this aspect was not possible to explore. At the moment of the interviews, Ahmad and Laura had been married for less than 1 year, while Annette and Said had only been married in the Islamic religion, the official wedding being planned for autumn 2017, therefore I believe approaching the topic of divorce, or earlier relationships, would have been rather inappropriate. However, both Ahmad and Said confessed that their families have tried to match them with Muslim girls, but the relationships did not work. This indicates that, unlike Dribe and Lundh's findings in Sweden, similar ethnicity and religion do not assure success in a relationship. Moreover, an analysis of this kind would require a longitudinal study, which in this case was not possible because of the limited amount of time.

5.2.2. Low socioeconomic status.

In the United States, Hohmann-Marriott and Amato have shown that minorities have a lower income than whites, which is why interethnic couples will have a lower income than same-ethnic couples. This argument is used to indicate that interethnic couples may argue more because of financial problems. In the case of the couples in this study, socio-economic status does not represent a problem. Laura and Annette are medical students, already working in hospitals in Aarhus, and, as mentioned before, Ahmad and Said also have good careers. Said owns a small company and Ahmad is Chief Engineer in a famous wind-power company. Therefore, this second point is not relevant in this study, as all four interviewees have a good socioeconomic status, therefore a lower chance to have arguments caused by financial reasons.

5.2.3. Relationship heterogamy.

The study from the United States finds that interethnic couples are more tolerant towards difference, and once the ethnicity barrier is broken, all the other differences like age, religion, and education can more easily be tolerated. In the couples that I interviewed, the spouses have

high education and good jobs, as mentioned before, therefore this has not been a boundary to break, nor did age represent an issue. Ethnicity and religion were taken together, as the main criteria that the spouses had to fulfill, was that one of them should be of Islamic religion, whereas the other one should have Danish ethnicity. In the following section, tolerance towards each other will be analysed, based on what the couples said in the interviews.

Throughout the whole interview, Said and Annette had a very open attitude towards me and the study that I was conducting, but also towards each other. Said explained that his choice of life partner was not based on ethnicity or religion, but on feelings, and throughout the analysis so far, both of them showed that they respect each other's cultures and are interested in sharing their cultural habits. This perspective was expressed by Ahmad as well, and the most relevant situation about how the spouses embrace each other's culture is through food and cooking. Laura and Ahmad do not have pork meat in their home ('*it's just because to not have it in the mixed kitchen with other stuff, it's not so nice for him',* explains Laura), so she cooks Pakistani food out of curiosity, as it is not something she was used to, but also because it is settled that he does not cook, because of laziness and lack of experience and interest: '*I prefer food from home, so it's not like I started to cook and didn't do it before, because [now] I have to. It's how Ahmad puts it, it's because I like food from home, no matter what, and since he is not interested in it, so of course when you're not interested in something, you tend not to do it (laughing)'* (Laura, Appendix 2). Even though in Denmark many dishes are based on pork, the lack of it is not seen by Laura as a cultural hindrance, as she sees it like a food restriction and there is only need for adjustment from her side: '*from any kind of food restrictions people have, this is like the smallest one, because I would still prefer to have beef than pork, so it's good that you're not Hindu, and then vegetarian, and vegan, that would be much more complicated.'* (Laura, Appendix 2)

Annette and Said are both involved in cooking, and as it was pointed out in the section *Predominant culture and cultural identity,* they are preparing dishes which fulfill the taste of both of them, and Said appreciates her for that: '*From day 1 I noticed that, she is very accomodating, she tries to make me feel comfortable. That's very good about her. That's one of the things why my family likes her a lot.'* (Said, Appendix 1)

The topic of tolerance was also discussed from the perspective of the Muslim spouses. As migrants, tolerance from their side for the new society they live in, plays a significant role. Annette appreciates the fact that Said takes it as a natural thing that sometimes Annette and her family enjoy a glass of wine and eat pork, and even if he has restrictions, he does not condemn them for drinking in his presence. Annette perceives that through his approach, he shows tolerance for the Danish lifestyle, so the people in their circle respond with the same respect and tolerance: '*[...] if you would be like looking bad on the people who are drinking at a party, or if you are looking bad at me eating pork or something like that [...] I think that also makes it very natural and just doesn't become a big thing [...] that you can be with people who are doing these things that in your religion you cannot do*' (Annette, Appendix 1). To sum up, Said adds: '*Yeah, it's all about giving people the space and freedom*'.

Ahmad's view about tolerance in his marriage is explained in several moments during the interview, but I considered that one idea in particular is more relevant, and I chose to condense it. He explains that people have a pre-established set of rules, beliefs or preferences, that they find difficult to give up on, even though they are not based on very strong arguments. This is what leads to intolerance, according to his point of view, and he suggests that people should realize that by renouncing to some of these principles they have, that does not mean that they lose something. In any case, he is also clinging to some norms:'*So for me also there is a set of things which I know that that's my limit, I cannot compromise on those things.*' (Ahmad, Appendix 2).

Getting used to another person's lifestyle can be a challenge, as Laura pointed out earlier, no matter their cultural background. That is why, the spouses expressed that there are situations in their marriages where they have to acknowledge and accept the differences between them. Some of these differences may originate in the cultural background, and some of them are perceived by the couples as personality differences. When the arguments in the marriage originate in personality traits, like it happens in any same-ethnic marriages, it can be argued that the ethnicity and religion barrier does not exist anymore, as it had already been removed. Therefore, tolerance for the partners, in the case of the couples that I interviewed, does not mean

tolerance for the other one's religion, or culture, but rather for a *different* way of doing things, as Laura stressed several times, and as it will be shown next.

5.2.4. Differences between partners in attitudes and values.

Regarding differences between partners in attitudes and values, the researchers found that the differences are becoming integrated into the couple's everyday life, and contribute to creating a new, and unique, reality in their marriage, or a common culture, as I referred to this concept in my study. This idea is best reflected in Ahmad's statement, when asked about belonging and his connection to his culture: *'the more people you meet, from different cultures, society, and all that, your affiliation starts to become more value based rather than geography based'* (Ahmad, Appendix 2). This indicates that the more one travels and opens up to new cultures and experiences, the more important it becomes to interact with people who bring meaning and value, which does not necessarily come from the same culture. As Laura mentioned, in the modern world, as migration and traveling is more accessible, people become more open-minded and curious about other cultures: '*And we also care less about tradition, than people did before, maybe. So we don't care that he has other traditions and other religion, we just care about some more basic values*' (Laura, Appendix 2). Having this view in common, it is arguably one thing that is keeping the two together, despite the personality problems which they claim causes arguments, like it happens in same-ethnic marriages as well.

Difference in attitudes and values can more prominently be seen in the parents of the couples. While Annette and Laura's parents needed some time to get used to the idea of receiving a Muslim in the family, the parents of Ahmad and Said expressed relief and excitement about the marriage. Said said it was because he was becoming old and his parents were waiting for him to find somebody, so they took it as a relief when Said met and married Annette. It might have been that same for Ahmad, as he has the same age as Said. In addition, as Ahmad explained before, his mother decided that he should not marry a Pakistani girl, because he could not keep up with her drama. It can also be argued that, when a person lives in a foreign country for a long time, the

expectation is that they will find someone native to marry. Therefore, the Muslim parents might have realized that their efforts to match them with Muslim girls would not have good results.

Annette and Laura are younger, still studying to become doctors, which could be a reason why their parents would think that they have plenty of time to find someone from their own culture. Being born and raised in the same country, statistically it is expected that they will marry someone from that country. If that does not happen, the interethnic marriage is considered a 'deviation' from normal, an exception to the rule, which sometimes needs time for adjustment. Young people, as Laura observed, are more open-minded, tolerant, but older generations who have not been exposed to a certain culture, would need more time to accept and adjust. The parents play an important role, as Hohmann-Marriott and Amato's study shows, and their implication and role will be stressed in the following section as well.

5.2.5. Lack of social support

The couples were asked about how their parents received the idea that they were going to marry, in order to analyse how this point reflects in the marriages of this study. In the United States, the tolerance level is rather low, according to Hohmann-Marriott and Amato, and it can cause tensions in the marriage of an interethnic couple. Even though a generalisation is not possible on the basis of my study, the couples Annette and Said, and Ahmad and Laura did not experience negative attitudes from family and friends. However, this did not happen naturally.

Annette's parents had concerns about how they would adjust in their future married life, but Annette suggests that there was no negativity towards Said and his culture: '*Of course, sometimes, in the beginning my parents were always supporting, from the first time I told them about Said, and they knew I was serious, but of course sometimes they also had some questions, what will this be like, and what about this and that. As they got to know him, all these questions just went away. They just got to know him and they like him*' (Annette, Appendix 1). Regarding acceptance in the circle of friends, Said said that he only spends time with people he feels comfortable with, and Annette's friends make him feel safe, from a social point of view. As for his parents, they were hoping to see him married soon*: 'I was 33 or 34 when we met. So until*

that age I was single, and my family was like: is something happening? Anybody, anywhere?[...] So once this happened, they were very glad, yes, fantastic! [...] I didn't have such a good reception in Egypt, for me it was like 'Hi, go inside' (quick tonality) .. 'helloooo Annette' (sweet tonality)' (Said, Appendix 1).

In the marriage of Ahmad and Laura, the situation was similar. Laura's parents had not known any Muslims before Ahmad, and they had an opinion based on the media (which Laura suggests was negative), but as they interacted more with him, they started to like him, and by the time of the wedding there were no more issues: *'In the beginning they were a little worried about me, but they just got Ahmad to know very slowly and I think then they realized that he's just a normal person, so nothing is going to happen'* (Laura, Appendix 2). Ahmad's parents also had little knowledge about Europe, and he says that when he moved to Denmark, his parents would have rejected a marriage to a European girl. *'I think if I would have gotten married with a Dane or Polish person 13 years ago when I came to Denmark, I think it would have been a problem because my parents were not exposed to this at all. [...] they will say 'Don't come home' or something like that, but they would be a lot more concerned and worried. But now they are not, they are actually very big fan of her'* (Ahmad, Appendix 2) They accepted this idea as a consequence of them traveling to Denmark several times, and getting acquainted to the people and lifestyle. But both Said and Ahmad say that their parents like their wives because they are good persons and respectful towards their culture. This indicates that subjectivity cannot be avoided, and the element of emotions plays its role in here as well.

Having two cases of marriages with plenty of support from friends and family, this study cannot conclude on whether tensions are affecting the couples or not, but was able to indicate that there are cases where an interethnic marriage finds a way to work and thrive, taking the cultural differences as fun challenges, rather than disruptive elements.

6. Conclusion

The initial question of this study was intended to be connected to the role of media in the interethnic marriages. I was interested in finding out if, and to what extent, media and negative public opinion was affecting the couples in their everyday life. While being in the process of interviewing the two couples, I realised that they have not been directly affected, nor have they experienced xenophobia. Therefore, the focus of this study shifted, and developed as a research of cultural differences and the challenges which emerge in a interethnic marriage. Nonetheless, I believe that there are couples which feel the effect of the negativity in the public debate, but as I did not find this in my case study, I will not attempt to generalise that interethnic marriages are affected by it.

This finding was satisfactory from a personal point of view, however, the root of my wandering did not disappear. I wanted to explore the dynamics in the marriages of the couples, the interactions between them, and more importantly, how do the cultural differences reflect on their daily life. By using the theory of social behavior as exchange developed by George C. Homans, I found that consciously or not, the spouses engage in a process of exchange which leads to improving the quality of their marriages. Tolerance for each other's culture is a relevant example of this process, as there is profit on both sides; they have the freedom to practice their cultural and religious customs, but also to engage in their partner's practices. All four spouses see this as rather an interesting aspect of their marriage, which has not created conflict; on the contrary, they are curious and excited to experience their partner's culture. It is important to mention that undoubtedly, emotions play an important role in the interethnic marriages. The spouses, especially Ahmad and Said, in this case-study, do not calculate what benefits they would get from being married to their partners, but prioritize emotion and values in their relationship. They acknowledge that there are benefits to being married to a Dane, but that did not influence their decision to marry Laura, respectively Annette. The fact that they have been living in Denmark for a long time before they met their Danish spouses, I believe is a sign that

their scope was not to marry quickly, in order to live a 'secure' life, but wait until they find the right person.

As it happens in any other marriages, I assumed that the couples in my study also have arguments, and if media proved not to be influential, I aimed to find out what causes arguments and misunderstandings in their marriages, and if they have a root in the spouses' cultural background. The main reason for arguments that they stressed was their personalities, which I argue that can be shaped by their cultural background. Therefore, looking and Stuart Hall's concept of *representation*, I found that the way the spouses give meaning to things or events, is different, and that is what causes the conflict. They all seemed eager to solve the misunderstandings by talking about the problem, and get to the root of what was the cause of it. Drawing a conclusion on how cultural codes work for the spouses, I can say that they are not strict about them. Even though naturally an interethnic couple might perceive the same event with a different connotation, the couples in my study have shown that by communication, their views can be expanded, and when embracing the other one's culture as well, the result can bring harmony and understanding in their marriage.

Even though media's effects have been ruled out from the reasons why there might be tensions in the marriage, both couples noticed that other people's perception is being affected by the anti-Muslim discourse in the media. They are treating this subject with patience, trying to remove the prejudice, which shows again that communication is the tool to bring positive results.

Regardless if the tensions are caused by cultural traits or not, it is clear from the interviews that they find a way to settle the conflict, they are willing to adjust. They see adjustment as something that happens in any relationship and is the key for a successful marriage. Laura stressed that *'we also care less about tradition, than people did before, maybe. So we don't care that he has other traditions and other religion, we just care about some more basic values.'* (Laura, Appendix 2) This indicates that she believe younger generations are more open, more used to interaction with different ethnic groups, therefore they do not perceive the challenges as hindrances which could intervene in their marriage. At the same time, I noticed that each of them maintain their cultural identity, but because social constructionism means that

culture is in continuous change, they embrace the macro- and microelements that influence their marriage, and create a new identity, both individually, and as a couple.

Being an important constituent of a culture, religion plays an important role in this study. It was not approached deeply, as I perceived it as a sensitive matter, but I gave the spouses the chance to speak about their religious views as deeply as they considered. However, the conclusion that I can draw concerning religion is that, even though the Muslim spouses value it more, it is not a central point in their life. In order to marry, none of the spouses converted to the other one's religion, but there is respect and tolerance for it. This might open up the question of religion's meaning in people's lives in the future. I found that, apart from tolerance for the spouse's religious views and practices, religion is losing power in people's lives, as a consequence of interethnic marriage, and tolerance for the partner. However, I believe on a long term it might create confusion for the future generations, who will be brought up in a multicultural society where the meaning of religious values is diminishing. Nonetheless, as Laura and Ahmad perceive, moral values might weigh more, regardless of the religion one was raised in.

The two quantitative studies that I referred to, regarding relationship quality in interethnic marriages and the prospect of immigrants marrying natives, drew the conclusion that naturally, an interethnic marriage is not likely to be successful. My case study is showing that the reasons for marriage failure stated by the researchers Bryndl Homann-Marriott and Paul Amato, do not apply generally. A quantitative study based on registers and statistics cannot conclude on such matter which involve emotions to a rather big extent. On thing which should also be taken into consideration is that the study was made in the United States of America, where the historical background for Hispanics and blacks might make a significant difference to my study in Denmark. Nevertheless, I believe in order to explore quality in a relationship, interviewing the partners is the most relevant method. Based on the discussion with the spouses, I can conclude that the quality of their marriage is not influenced by macroelements as much as by microelements, emerging from within their relationship. The couples have the support of their

families and friends, negative discourse has not affected them, they all have a good career prospect, which shows that external factors are not likely to bring conflicts into their relationship.

A valuable input that this case study is bringing, is connected to citizenship and belonging. The literature surrounding the politics of belonging stress the importance of citizenship as a tool to enhance the attachment to the country where the immigrant has settled, or vice-versa, the attachment might be the driver of the desire to acquire the citizenship of the host-country. In any case, several ideologies define citizenship as a relationship, as a commitment to the state. Ahmad has lived in Denmark for 13 years at the moment of the interview, and has obtained the Danish citizenship the year before. However, he said that he did not apply for the Danish citizenship out of attachment to Denmark, and out of a feeling that he belongs there. Even more, he does not see any connection between his feeling of belonging and the passport he uses when traveling. He has a Danish passport from practical, and for social security reasons, and added that he thinks even when he is old, and still living in Denmark, he will feel like an outsider. Said was considering applying for the Danish citizenship at the moment of the interview, stating practical reasons, as well as Ahmad. Their feeling of belonging originates in the people who surround them in Denmark, rather than in the citizenship. Even though I cannot attempt to generalise based on Ahmad's and Said's views and feelings, I believe this finding shows that the purpose and the use of citizenship does not, as a rule, originate in attachment to the society or to a nation.

Regarding the methodology used for this study, I believe that interviewing the couples brought valuable insight, and offered the chance for observation as well. A rather small attempt of an ethnography, the observations during the interview helped to get acquainted more to the couples. I noticed that Said and Annette were very relaxed and excited to respond to the interview, and as I mentioned before, it challenged them to reflect upon their marriage the way they have not done it before. Ahmad and Laura were also very engaged in the conversation, however I noticed their temper was more reserved. The two couples know each other, therefore I acknowledge the fact that Ahmad and Laura, being the second ones to be interviewed, have been advised about the nature of the interview and the topics that were going to be approached. I did

not sense that they were concealing something on purpose, but I believe they were more prepared for the interview than Annette and Said.

Therefore, I believe the study would have had a better outcome if the couples did not know each other, and if there would have been more couples willing to participate. However, a higher number of interviews would have required a tedious job in transcribing and analysing them, considering that the interviews would have remained open-ended. Sticking too much to the theories during the interview would mean a risk to miss relevant information. An example of a prompt subject was Laura's comparison of the marriage to a Muslim, in contrast with marriage to a vegetarian. The keyword 'adjustment' came up several times and I think it brings value to the study as a whole, and it was not a topic that I had specifically prepared in the interview guide. Therefore, even though I followed the guide more or less, there is not a single, structured set of questions that I used for both couples.

The findings that emerged through this methodology have the purpose to contribute to the literature revolving around the quality of interethnic marriages. I addition, this study has explored the dynamics in the marriages of the two interethnic couples, and showed that the cultural differences between them do not play a crucial role in the everyday interactions.

7. Appendices

7.2. Appendix 1: Interview Anette and Said

Interviewer: M.
Wife: Anette (A)
Husband: Said (S)

M: Thank you for agreeing to have this interview. As I said, your names will be hidden, and with your permission I am going to record it, in order to be able to transcribe it easily.

S: Yes.

M: So the first question would be, are you married?

S: Yes.

A: Ok, we are married in Islamic religion.

S: Yeah, in my religion we are married, according to my religion. We have made a ceremony but in our religion but it's not registered. So we didn't register it. We did it… more or less personally I would say.

A: Yes.

S: With some friends and that's all.

A: Yes, but according to your country we are married.

S: Yeah yeah, but we're missing the registration.

A: But we have no registration. But also now, we are going to do that, in August we are gonna be civilly married.

M: Did you marry here? (in Denmark)

A: We did it actually here, we did it here, yes.

M: Ok, that is interesting, because you are coming from Egypt, right?

S: Yes.

M: And what do you do for a living?

A: I am a doctor.

S: And I am an engineer and I work independently.

M: Oh yeah?

S: Yes, I have a small, tiny company of myself.

M: Ok, and what language do you speak at home? Among yourselves?

A: Mainly English.

S: Yeah, mainly English.

A: But then we practice also Danish.

S: Some Danish, yes.

A: A little more and more. And then a little bit Arabic. For me, for my fun.

S: Very little bit, for the fun.

A: For the fun.

S: So she wants to improvise with Danish, and Arabic, so she sounds more [unintelligible]

A: Yeah. But it's mostly English.

M: That's nice of you. So you said that you are married in your country, Said, does that mean that you are keeping more your cultural traditions? Or is there a main culture that you have in your family, at home?

A: Among us?

M: Yes.

A: That's a difficult question.

S: We do keep things, for example last month was Ramadan, that's the fasting month for Muslims, so I was fasting the whole month, Annette was not, so we, most of the time, we had different eating times. So one of us has to… If we are eating together, because she works also a lot, so sometimes she comes late, so if she comes on time, we kind of have to customize our food time, so we can eat at the same time together. But that's just an example.

A: So you have definitely kept… a lot of your traditions, but also having some…

S: Yeah, some of it.

A: … some Danish as well. I mean at home we cook for that is the mix, I would say, it's not very typical Egyptian of very typical Danish.

S: It's more improvising food.

A: Yeah. (Laughing)

S: With basic stuff.

A: And we watch some TV, we watch American shows, sometimes he watches football.

S: Yeah. And sometimes we watch….

A: Danish TV!

S: Danish TV…

A: Yeah.

S: We definitely have… I mean we are married, but we still have separate identities, when we are not mixing, so she watches her Danish stuff, and I try to understand, and of course I have other stuff and she tries to understand. But we still have… yes. That's why we have two TVs at home.

A: Yeah, but we actually rarely use them at the same time.

S: Yes.

M: But can you say that since you moved in together you created some sort of a common culture that you adjusted to both of your cultures?

A: I would say yes.

S: Yes.

A: For example what I have learned from being Danish, that we are very planned, and you schedule everything, and in his friends' group it's more spontaneous, and you just say that 'I am

in Baresso, do you want to come?' and then… so that's something we have taken in, we go out more just spontaneously. I don't think I would have done that if I was with a Danish man. But I like it now, and I think we also take the Danish a little bit, like… ok, now I want to go home to be able to actually cook something, because we wanted to cook food tonight, for example. But then we mix it with going out, spontaneously, but also with a little practical element in it.

S: I think one other aspect is the food. For me, that's the easiest place to see that we are actually mixing up, because our food habits are basically different. I mean, when we started dating… I'm not sure… I cook food, but I'm not into vegetables much, and she cooks, but it's the Danish food style and I'm with the Arabic food style, so now we are actually making a lot of mix. She was never used to eat rice.

A: No…

S: Now she eats a lot of rice because I'm used to it.

A: I eat a lot of rice! But now I like it.

S: Now we mix

A: And we add vegetables to it.

S: Yeah, exactly. I think we invented a dish that fits for both of us. It has vegetables, it has rice, it has a nice taste..

A: Sauce for me.

S: It has a lot of sauce, because she likes a lot of sauce.

A: Yes. But I think the way of meeting friends is also kind of a mix.

S: Yes.

M: So, Annette, do you think you have changed a lot since you've been together?

A: Yes, of course, I think your partner will affect you, also your way of living, because you are faced with another way of doing things. So it starts with… something that I wouldn't do, just because I didn't think of it, it's like… oh, I can actually go out now, spontaneously, out, even if I didn't think I would go out. So for me it's been a nice way just to do it. And then sometimes I would just say that ok, tonight I don't go out spontaneously, I just want to be home.

M: Was there any situation where this cultural differences created such a big misunderstanding, that you realised that ok, now we are different, now we are talking different languages?

A: Ok, (looking at Said) can I say the one with the public affection?

S: Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah, that's one thing.

A: Ok, in the beginning, when we were just together, and love and all, for me it was very much like… I wanted to hold his hand, and maybe sometimes kiss, when we were walking down the street, not like [too much], but just a little bit, and Said is not used to that at all. That when you are in a public space, you are very neutral to each other. And that, for me, in the beginning, it was very hard, I felt like… I couldn't help feeling like it was a rejection. So I was sad. But then I had to learn that it was only about the cultural habits, and he doesn't want to… you know, be inappropriate in the street. But for me it just felt like.. 'Why doesn't he want to kiss me?'

S: (laughing)

M: Has it changed?

A: Yes, I would say it has changed.

S: Not too much, but it did.

A: Not too much, but actually with the holding hands, you are….

S: Yeah, holding hands was never a problem.

A: It was!

S: No…

A: It was, even back then.

S: No, no…. No…

A: It was…

S: (laughing) Now you see, you wanted to see? Now you see. (I think he was referring to the interaction between them)

M: If you want, we can just drop it.

S: No, it's ok, it's ok.

A: In the beginning, you also wanted us to not go holding hands.

S: No, I was… It was only about.. Just, we go back to the beginning. (laughing)

A: No, it's fine.

M: Ok, but I understand what you mean.

S: Well I come from a culture where it's less… public affection is not really seen as a good thing. It's not shown in public, people are very neutral and don't show the affection in public. And that's why I'm still used to that. I find it still something foreign to me, to show affection in public. I feel wrong.

M: Ok.

S: So that's why I don't show it.

M: But how long ago did you come to Denmark?

S: To Denmark 7 years ago.

M: And for how long have you been together?

A: Two and a half years.

S: Two and a half, yeah. But I was in Germany four years before I came to Denmark, so it counts overall, when I left my culture was about 11 years ago. So it's quite a long time.

M: Ok. Now I have some questions about the media and this anti-Muslim discourse that they are stressing a lot. Now, have you had some negative events in your marriage, caused by the anti-Muslim discourse, on TV, or by the people?

A: Well, sometimes it can also be hard to discuss it. Sometimes, because we come from the different sides. Not that I am a Muslim hater, but you will see the things in the media, you will feel it in a different way than I will.

S: Yeah yeah, of course.

A: So that can be… like having different perspectives. Although I don't agree with the negativeness, but I cannot always fully relate of course, to what it is you are feeling. But I don't know what negative….

S: I don't remember specifically.

A: I think I have, of course, when you tell some people that your husband is Muslim and they will… Then you can feel that there is a lot of prejudice that are created by the media, that are already there. They think like 'Ok… so he must be…'. Then you can just see it in their faces that they are thinking many things. But as soon as they meet Said, then it's gone. So I think that the people who have met him, they are… they don't have any negativity.

S: I don't remember having a situation… within our circle.

A: Yeah.

S: Within our circle I don't remember anything that was offending to me, no.

A: No.

S: Not something that can be put under Muslim hating, or something. No. But there have been cultural differences things, but apart from that it was all neutral. It was nothing at all. It was just cultural thing, no intention of showing hate or anything. It was normal. I took it as normal as it is, I don't want to exaggerate and show that something is wrong.

A: Of course, yeah, but it's just something with the food, it will always be a thing that if we go somewhere, and then Said doesn't eat pork and then it's about always discreetly wanting to hear if it's pork. Then the people will say 'Ah but we will make something special for you' . But that's … you sometimes, if I can say this, you sometimes don't feel so nice, that it's actually something special for you that has been made. Like if everyone is served pork, and then there is a special dish.

S: Yeah, it's still very… it's about culture.

A: But it's no one's fault, it's not about hating.

S: It's not about hating Muslims.

A: No, it's just one of the challenges, what can you say? It's just one of those things that come, it's no one's fault, it is just from being in different cultures. But then people think that they are actually doing the best. Ok, they want to have a meal with pork, so they have a meal with pork, and then they make a special plate for the Muslim guy.

S: Yes, some people can feel the hate just because they are different. Or they are feeling they are different. They are sitting among the group that is… For example, everybody is eating pork and then you give them another dish that doesn't have pork, or it has been made specially for them, they feel the discrimination at that point. Which is not a discrimination, it's actually.. They were trying to comfort them, but they can still grasp it in a different way. They still don't like being a minority. When you are a minority, you are a minority, and that's one thing. And being hated for being a minority is another thing.

M: So you didn't feel the hate, did you?

A: No.

S: No, I don't remember anything that in our circle I ever had… yeah… a feeling that I was hated or being treated… maybe treated differently of course, especially when it comes to food or drinks, I was always being treated differently because I have restrictions, that belongs to me and nobody has to take the consequence of that but me, but being discriminated based on hate, or based on somebody doesn't like me… no, I haven't.

A: Not based on you being Muslim, no.

S: No.

M: So that's just the people, the majority, adjusting to you.

S: Yeah, that makes you feel the fact that you are a minority and some people just feel uncomfortable just thinking they are a minority. Nothing else. There is no hate actually happening but it just makes you feel not comfortable.

A: But it also depends on how much you are investing in it. Because for example you remember [a friend], she had this question about 'Do you eat salad in Egypt?'

S: Yeah, some people ask stupid question.

A: Sometimes people ask questions.

S: I find it silly rather than hatred.

A: They see it like 'Oh he's a Muslim'. I mean sometimes you can feel that 'He's a Muslim, uh, this is a special type', so they ask many questions. Do they do this? Watch TV at home?

S: Yeah, it makes you feel like you are a show, people want to put.

A: Yeah, and then it depends how you take it, you're very cool about it and just answer 'yeah, yeah, I also watch TV'.

S: Some people are not cool about it, I know that. So the people don't like being in a gathering where they are a minority.

A: But it depends also on the general atmosphere, because I think you have maybe always felt safe when we are in these situations, so like… then it's also nice that you just write it off and you just answer the stupid question.

M: Why do you say that he felt safe? In what sense?

A: That… that you know… that can always be funny (laughing), but that you know that me and my friends…

S: I am always with people that I feel comfortable.

A: That you are accepted.

S: I don't think that I ever felt unsafe because I was always…. It's not about being confident, but I know what I can do, I know what I can eat, I know how I act, that these are my rules and it's fine being in a group that doesn't follow all of it. And as long as they show consideration, then I can still have my own zone and I'm ok with that. That's fine with me, I don't feel really unconfident of unsafe. It works to have a partner from the other side, it makes you feel more comfortable and more confident about it.

A: Yes, but I think, I wanted to say that you are also good at making it… I was thinking, I don't know, I haven't seen actually many doing it, but if you would be like looking bad on the people

who are drinking at a party, or if you are looking bad at me eating pork or something like that, then that's what makes it easy, it makes it more easy going, and makes less a thing. Because for example, we were home, at Christmas eve, with my parents, and then my parents are having a glass of red wine, and you know that they are not drunk, they are not doing silly things, and bad things, so it's fine, I think that also makes it very natural and just doesn't become a big thing.

S: Yeah. it's all about giving people the space and freedom.

A: … that you can be with people who are doing this things that in your religion you cannot do.

M: Tolerance.

A: Yes!

M: Ok, so Annette you were saying earlier at some point that all these things with a Danish guy, they would be different. But have you, Said, ever thought that it would be easier for you to find yourself an Egyptian Muslim girl?

S: Pff… I didn't think of it that way. I mean… Definitely before I was thinking what are my odds, or what could be better for me. I … I didn't find, I actually thought that maybe having an Egyptian girl here would be less comforting for me than having a Danish girl here. I mean if we talk before I met Annette, because maybe having a Danish girl here would make me actually feel more comfortable, more integrated into the society, than having an Egyptian girl. Instead of only me being different, it would be me and my couple being different, so we have to handle a whole, it's a whole family in this case.

M: Yeah.

S: But, to be honest as well, it's not like I was choosing between one girl which is Danish and one girl which is Egyptian. It was all thoughts in my brain. But when I met Annette, we had worked out, so there was no … it was not about picking an option, I was not that planned in picking my partner, I'm not like ok, I find this odds better, so I try in this direction. So for me it's like if I find somebody nice, I'll be with that person, the nationality was not a big criteria.

M: But I guess that happens when you leave your own country and go into the foreign countries and then there is a higher chance that you would find someone from there.

S: Yeah exactly. You have like one million Danish girls and a hundred Egyptian girls, what are the odds?

M: And what about religion? Do you practice it?

S: I do. Yeah, I fast, and I pray, yeah I do.

M: And what about you, Annette?

A: I'm very Danish religious, so I have it my heart that I do believe, but of course, the Danish religion, you have met it, it's not very active, very expressive. So it's more about the values we live from. And then in the high times, let's say Christmas, Easter and these things, we celebrate. But of course it's not so present in the everyday life.

M: Yeah, it's more about gathering with the family, rather than thinking about the Bible.

A: Yeah yeah, but if I were asked, I would say that I do believe, but it's not something that is very present in my everyday life. So, in that way.

M: Ok, and what about your families? What do they think about your marriage?

S: They are happy.

A: Yes, they are very tolerant (laughing).

S: And she has met my family couple of times and I met her family a lot, they both seem very happy and they are going along very well. I don't feel there is any issues.

A: I think they are very open minded families. Of course, sometimes, in the beginning my parents were always supporting, from the first time I told them about Said, and they knew I was serious, but of course sometimes they also had some questions, what will this be like, and what about this and that. As they got to know him, all these questions just went away. They just got to know him and they like him. And we've been back also celebrating the holidays and I was at Eid, and you know, celebrating the way you can, when you were not born with it the same way that the nation, but you are part of it.

S: Yes, you try your best to celebrate, or to join the others, the events.

A: But you're part of it, you join the celebrations and… at least for me, when you were back home in Christmas, it's also very nice that we join in, it's a special way, because it's not the same feeling, you're not grown with that, maybe in the future after some years it will also be… more and more you will have this feeling 'ah now it's December, and I will have 'oh now it's the Ramadan' (laughing).

S: (laughing) Oh no, I don't think you look forward for that! (laughing) It doesn't matter how many years pass!

A: I will look forward for the cookies! (laughing)

S: And that's all (laughing)

A: But of course, we don't have the same… we don't have the same, like… from childhood in it, but we do take part of each other's celebration.

S: You're not as invested in it as if you were born with it, that's a fact.

A: It's a fact, yes.

S: It doesn't matter how much you try to make it look more beautiful, and you love your partner so much that share all… but you try [unintelligible].

A: But I think it goes vice-versa, I think it's very much the same.

S: Yeah, she's a very accomodating person, I have to say that. From day 1 I noticed that, she is very accomodating, she tries to make me feel comfortable. That's very good about her. That's one of the things why my family likes her a lot.

M: Is your family in Egypt?

S: Yeah yeah.

M: Were they expecting you to marry a Danish girl?

A: They were hoping! (laughing)

S: They were hoping of anything (laughing) I have to say. For them I got too old, because I am now 36.

A: Yeah, you were 33 when we met.

S: I was 33 or 34 when we met. So until that age I was single, and my family was like: is something happening? Anybody, anywhere? But of course they tried, many years ago, to hook me with somebody from Egypt of something, but it wasn't that successful. I wasn't really… I didn't feel good enough. So once this happened, they were very glad, yes, fantastic! Anything is good, just bring us a girl.

A: But they like me.

S: But still, if is was maybe another girl, it wouldn't be that nice, but Annette is good, and that's one of the things they liked about her.

A: And I think I had a very good reception in Egypt.

S: Yes, she had a very good reception. I didn't have such a good reception in Egypt, for me it was like 'Hi, go inside' (quick tonality) .. 'helloooo Annette' (sweet tonality).

A: But your mom also kissed you, I remember.

S: Yeah.

M: And Said, do you have the Danish citizenship?

S: No, no, I don't.

M: But are you planning to get it?

S: I don't know, to be honest. I never thought about it, but slowly and slowly I am having all the requirements for it. Like, you know, for example to get a Danish citizenship you have to be certain years in Denmark, you have to work in Denmark, you have to speak Danish, you have to get this PD3 examination, and I never thought about the Danish citizenship, but slowly I've been here long enough in Denmark, I got the PD3, I'm working in Denmark, so for me it's just very simple to make the decision, because I just have to submit the application at some point.

A: And you can still have dual citizenship.

S: I don't know about Egypt. I know in Denmark it's legal, but I'm not sure about Egypt. But I never thought. It wasn't a target for me at any step, but sometimes maybe it becomes something that 'oh, maybe I can do this'. So it can make thing maybe easier.

M: I am asking this because I was wondering about your sense of belonging to Denmark.

S: Yeah…

M: Do you feel like this is your home now?

S: Hmm… it's… well, it feels more home than any other countries, but not more than Egypt, still. Yeah, so let's say I'm on a working trip somewhere in Russia, or any other country, and then I am really looking forward to come home in Denmark. But when I'm in Denmark, I'm looking forward for an occasion to go to Egypt. So that's how it feels. It's more home than any other country, except for Egypt. For me, that's how it feels. It never… I mean the ranking is Egypt, then Denmark. So, still Denmark feels, like I said, very very homey, once I'm done with working trips. Even if I am in Copenhagen, I am looking forward to come to Aalborg.

M: I guess that's because Annette is here.

S: Yeah (laughing)

A: (laughing) Aalborg was even your city before I came.

S: Yeah well, it was 2 years you've been here for, and I for 7, so still Denmark is…

A: I came from Aarhus.

S: Yeah, she did. Maybe she came to Aalborg because of me.

A: I came here to Aalborg because of you.

M: You gave up on beautiful Aarhus?

A: (laughing) Yes.

S: And now she works in Aarhus again.

A: Now I work in Aarhus.

M: Really? And you go back and forth every day?

A: Yeah, that's why he says I come home late.

S: And we are actually going to Aarhus after this.

A: Yes, many of my friends live in Aarhus, so we're going for a barbecue..

M: Oh that's nice. Actually I have one more question. I'm not going to ask you if you fight, because I guess that's quite normal sometimes.

S: We doooo.

M: So, on average, if you were to think about the reasons why arguments come up in your relationship, is it because of external factors like media, family, friends, workplace, or is it more like your own personal opinion differences, attitudes, behaviors?

S: Hmm… That's a difficult one.

A: Yeah, it's a difficult one. I think it's mostly within.

S: Yeah…

A: Our different personalities, and then…

S: Yeah, it's more about the personality I guess.

A: And then it's because we have different personalities, and then because we have different cultures. The way we were brought up is different, so that affects our personalities. But it's still within us, I would say it's….

S: I think basically the way we are, yeah, sometimes it's only that. One thing I could remember well, is how angry I get and how less angry she gets. Because in my culture we're very impulsive.

A: Expressing also what he means.

S: Expressing also, especially when it comes to anger. When somebody pisses me off, I can really be angry and I can… but Jeannette, for example, I had a situation where I was… first time we moved in together, I was leaving my apartment, and then I had a big part of my deposit cut, I didn't get it back because he claimed a lot of things, the landlord. And then I was very angry at that, I wrote him an e-mail, where I said that strong and bla bla bla, but I was talking to Annette about this explaining that I'm of course being nervous on the phone and angry about how could he do that, and then from her way she was more… I don't know if it's the Danish style, but she was more 'But maybe he is right, have you tried to look…' It's just taking your very very high angry state into a very logical and mental state, it doesn't work, it just creates a clash.

A: Yeah, I was being more constructive, like 'Let's look into it, let's find out this and this, maybe he's right about that one, or maybe look into that…

S: When you are so angry, you don't really try to use your mind so much, and that has actually caused a lot of fight.

A: That's the one actually.

S: That's the one that really caused a lot of fights.

A: You are much more… if you get frustrated by something, I will say that you don't know yet it it's that big, because for me, it sounds like 'Wow, the world is falling down', you can become so angry! And for me it's like… I get uncomfortable with it.

S: Yeah, she cannot handle me when I'm angry.

A: No…

S: She is just like {showing shocked face}, she doesn't know what to do. And this makes be more angry..

A: Yes! (laughing)

S: Because what? Am I crazy to you? Why are you acting like that? Why are you being uncomfortable? She makes me feel uncomfortable because of this.

A: You become angry with me.

S: Yeah yeah, because…

A: Because I don't share your anger.

S: Not necessarily (laughing) but I feel like my feelings are being… or my anger is being down [unintelligible]. Like somebody is looking at me in a weird way when I'm angry, I feel like 'What? I have the right to be angry.' As long as I'm not hitting anybody (laughing)

A: But do you? (laughing)

S: I'm not beating anyone. It's just when you're sitting like this and being angry and mumbling with yourself, it's me, I can do it. So that's the only…

A: But it's definitely a big cultural difference, but then also, I think I am from a family where we are very… we don't… I mean it's just a random case that comes from that family that we are not very angry.

S: Yeah cause some Danes are also… but I would say that the chance to meet a Dane that's very expressive it's veeeery low.

A: Yes, Yes. But some are…

S: Most of the Danes are very….

A: But we are very calm. And I do care, but I can't handle that.

S: Exactly, I think they have been taught, or they have been raised in an environment that absolutely… very very less anger, no madness around them, so they are very quiet, and once it happens around them, they just…

A: We've just been raised that you don't get this angry.

S: Yes, and in Egypt for example, that's something you usually see in the people in the street, they are always angry anyway, so you're used to it, you can also be angry back there.

A: But they say that in the traffic here in our own car, we can be angry at other people, when we drive, we can be really mad. But that's still not confronting.

S: Mmm.. maybe when you measure it within Denmark, yes, but if you go to Egypt, then it's a different way of being mad. People can even hit your car just for being mad at you.

A: Yeah.

M: But I've actually seen so much respect in the traffic in Denmark.

S: Sometimes I think I am making a mistake but nobody is saying anything.

A: Yeah, that's the way, we are just forgiving.

S: Yeah it is, but then it comes on the other side that… ok, I'm going too much on the side now, it's a completely different case, but do you see how much Danes are comforting, they still, when you come to the personal… they don't let you… you cannot make very close friendships with Danes, like we do in my country.

A: That's something I would disagree with.

S: No no, between them of course it's going to happen, because they have similar values and similar ways to make stuff, but between me and a Dane, it really has to be a special Danish person, that I can really be a close friend to. For me and [Hamam, a friend], or for me and [Ali, a friend], it's more of an impulsive, you call and then you go out, you just go by and ah, let's eat together today. You will never be able to do this with a Dane, it's still… even though they are… but between you and your friend, you are close friends, but you still arrange three weeks in advance when you go and eat together.

A: Yeah. But when I lived in Aarhus with my girl friends I could also with [Alexandra, a friend], do something spontaneous.

S: How many times? (laughing)

A: Three times! (laughing)

S: You had three spontaneous times with your friends, you have to check. (laughing)

A: But we are close. That's what they say about Danes, that we are not easy to get close to, but when you do, you have a really good friend that you can depend on.

S: Yeah, as you say, if a Dane is talking to you very much, then they are drunk. If you find them very talkative, then they are drunk. And then the next day they see you and you are just a person.

A: It's a very contrastful way, that we are very polite outside, except when we get drunk, then it's the opposite, we throw garbage everywhere.

S: Yeah, I've seen that.

A: It's nasty,

M: Well, thank you!

S: You're welcome!

M: I don't have any other questions, for now.

A: But you can contact us if you have one last thing that 'ah, I need to know this!'.

M: Sure, thanks a lot!

7.2. Appendix 2: Interview Laura and Ahmad

Interviewer: M..
Wife: Laura (L)
Husband: Ahmad (A)

M: Hello, and thank you for meeting me and for agreeing to make the interview. This interview is anonymous, your names will be changed, and it will be read by my supervisor and the exam censor only, please tell me if you agree to these terms.

L: Yes.

M: Ok. So how long have you been living in Denmark? I understood that you, Laura, have been born in Denmark, right?

L: Yes, I am born here.

M: And you, Ahmad?

A: I was born in Pakistan and I came to Denmark in 2004, September 2004. So it has been long time.

M: And for how long have you been married?

L: It's not so long actually. It's from October, now it's June, so it's almost a year. July, actually. So it's nine months.

M: Ok, did you marry here?

L: Yeah.

M: Both your families are in Denmark?

A: My family is not in Denmark, but they were here visiting, and her family is in Denmark. And then we also had a wedding in Pakistan, which was more or less a party, like the traditional Pakistani wedding and all this kind of fancy stuff happening. That was in February.

L: Yeah.

A: The end of February this year.

M: That sounds so colorful.

L: It was! It's true!

M: If you've been here for a long time, Ahmad, do you speak Danish fluently? Do you speak Danish at home, between yourselves?

A: I don't speak Danish fluently, although I've been here so long, and although I have Danish citizenship as well, but I do not speak Danish fluently. So we basically use English for our communication.

M: Ok, and what do you do for a living?

L: I am a junior doctor, I just finished last year the medical school. So I'm in the beginning of residency.

M: Are you working here? (Aalborg)

L: Yes. Right now I work in Aarhus, I am in a … how do you call that? There is a maternity leave, so I make replacement for that girl. And then from October I will start my residency here in Aalborg. So right now I'm going back and forth, daily, yes. But from October I will be just 15 minutes away, so that's going to be good.

M: And what about you, Ahmad?

A: And I am chief engineer in Siemens Wind Power R&D in Brande. That's almost 2 hours from here.

M: Oh, so more than Laura!

A: Twice as much.

M: And do you do that daily?

A: At least four days a week. But I used to work in Vestas before, which is in Aarhus, so I basically switched last year to Siemens, so before that I was commuting to Aarhus. That is one hour and that's ok.

M: So you got used to it, and then you just extended it (the commute)

A: Yeah.

M: Ok, so now I will move on the more cultural type of questions. What is your religious upbringing?

L: Me, mmm… I have Polish descendance so we have Catholic religion as the one I have been brought up in.

M: Did you practice it?

L: I went to a Catholic primary school actually.

M: Here in Aalborg?

L: Yes, Sct. Mariæ Skole it's called. Because we were next to the church, so we had a lot to do and I was also active in the community when I was young. But it's just when I was… I don't remember, somewhere 12, 13, 14, my parents stopped going to the church, and so we also stopped and I don't have so much connection any more there.

M: And what about you, Ahmad.

A: I am a Muslim and I was brought up as a Muslim, I practice it as well. Of course, I am probably not the most practicing man you can find around but I do believe in it. From the… what you call it, from the belief side I would say that I am really Muslim, but on the other side, like praying 5 times a day and all that, I am not that regular in it. I have never been to a mosque in Denmark, but I do pray at home, sometimes when I feel like it.

M: Well you have a busy life so I think it's quite difficult to squeeze it in.

A: Yeah, but the thing is that I also kind of feel bad about not doing it. I don't feel bad about not going to mosque of course, but I know I can, if I am… you know… kind of putting enough effort in it, I can pray five times a day at home or wherever it is possible. I have friends who do that, so I'm not losing my sleep on it, but I would of course probably feel a bit better if I would be a bit

more doing it. But I don't do that. And it's not because I don't want to do it, but it's basically because I…

M: You just don't.

A: Yeah.

M: How was the Ramadan month for you two?

A: Yeah, I didn't fast (laughing). But when I came to Denmark, I used to fast but I think in the last few years, especially because, I don't know if you are aware, but this month of Ramadan is based on lunar months, it's not on solar months, so it kind of moves every year. So the calendar month is not always the same. So Ramadan doesn't always come in August or September or something like that. It moves. So that's because the Islamic months are based on lunar calendar, not on the same calendar as… as… So the year that I came, that time the duration of the fast was kind of reasonable (laughing). And of course I was also more motivated to do it. But in the past few years, I think 4 or 5 years, it has become… of course, probably my motivation has also gone down, but also..

L: It's been in the middle of the summer.

A: Yeah, so you have like 19-20 hours of fasting, which I just think that it's somehow…

L: Too much.

A: Yes… I know people are doing it, but at least I am not…

L: Never been used to that before either, because in Pakistan you don't have so big… so long days. Yeah.

A: Because we are quite close to the Equator so the duration of the day between summer and winter doesn't change that much, as much as it changes up here in north or very much down in south.

M: A friend of mine was fasting this year after the sunset hours in Saudi Arabia.

A: Yeah, yeah, people do that as well. And I probably know your friend (all laughing). And I think it's a fair thing to do, I don't have anything against that. And that is also because I haven't fasted. In the end, I have not fasted, so that could also affect.

M: Do you think it's an influence that you received from the Danish society and the lifestyle?

A: I don't think I'm influenced by the Danish society or lifestyle to kind of not want to fast, but I think it's the other way around, because if you are in a culture where fasting is happening, you feel more motivated because everybody is fasting and there is a culture around it. It is more easy to kind of get into the rhythm of that, because the whole family is fasting. If I would be in Pakistan, for example, then everyone would fast more or less, and that means that everyone will wake up, so you also wake up. You're not the only one waking up, or you are not sitting at 3 in the morning, alone, trying to make something and then eat it. But if the whole family is up and something has been made and we are all eating together, so this is the difficult part of doing it, that early in the morning, waking up, having something to eat, all that, that is kind of… easier in a way. So that kind of culture helps you doing it, but it's not that this culture stops you from doing it. I think there is a difference in that, so… it's not that Denmark stops me in some way,

but it's just that other things help me and maybe I was hanging close to the track and then the help is not there and I will fall down to 'Ok, then I cannot do it'.

M: I understand and it makes sense. But what about your families, have you received support when you got married? Or was there an issue that you don't have the same religion?

L: Well, ok, honestly I think my family was a little bit insecure about this because they don't know themselves any Muslim people at all, and so they only have like media to get information from. In the beginning they were a little worried about me, but they just got Ahmad to know very slowly and I think then they realised that he's just a normal person, so nothing is going to happen and yeah… I think they… they just ask me if I am happy because that's the most important thing, and I tell them that I am, so then they are better, I think they are good actually. By the time we got married it was good, they were already there, it was just fine.

M: And what about your family, Ahmad? I guess if you came here to Denmark, it was a little bit expected that you would find a Danish girl for yourself.

A: Nah… I would not say that. I think that was not a part of the plan 15 years ago, that that would be the thing that would happen. But I think.... How should I put it? I think if I would have gotten married with a Dane or Polish person 13 years ago when I came to Denmark, I think it would have been a problem because my parents were not exposed to this at all. But the 13 years I have spent here, they have also spent a lot of time here, they have been familiarized with a lot of people, and they have been talking to a lot of people, they have been meeting a lot of people, so I think by the time this happened, they also kind of somehow were already quite open, and they were more like 'Ok, everyone is fun, and yes, there is a religious difference and of course that is in their kind of conscience that there is a difference of religion between me and my wife, but I think in all this period of time they have kind of grown into realising that that may not be the biggest problem which one can have. But of course, if as soon as I came, before that, they knew Europe basically from television and stuff like that, and if they would have never come here and I would just call them one day and tell them that I am getting married to a Danish person, I think it would not be that they would shoot me or something like that, or that they will say 'Don't come home' or something like that, but they would be a lot more concerned and worried. But now they are not, they are actually very big fan of her (all laughing).

M: Yeah…

A: My mom, every time when I talk to her, she keeps on telling me that 'Are you taking care of her?' (she is laughing)

M: That's so nice, so I think on both parts they had to adjust a little bit, get acquainted to the other, and then realise that it's ok.

L: Yeah, yeah…

M: So, from what I understand, are you, Ahmad, keeping your traditions more than Laura?

A: Well I think generally speaking, the daily, there is something that you talk about traditions, and something that's more….

L: Like on specific occasions…

A: Yeah, something like that,

L: Or specific day.

A: Yeah. something like daily routine, like who cooks, is it always the woman who needs to cook?

M: And what to cook.

A: Yeah, well so I think in that… more than I think, I am sure, I know that she cooks more stuff than I do basically, but it's not only because of the tradition, I don't think that's the only driver of it, it's also because for example, the time when I was single, I was always eating from pizzeria, so it was not that I was cooking for myself. Because traditionally it's like 'Ok, now I was very much into food, and I would do good food, and now I have a wife, so now it's her responsibility that she needs to do good food for me. So it's not that, it's just that I am not …

L: Interested! You're too lazy.

A: I am not interested, I am too lazy about it.

L: Yeah…

A: And I think that is probably the prime reason why she ends up doing that most of the time.

L: (laughing) yeah, because anyway I like to have homemade food anyway, like I don't buy food from outside to eat for dinner. I never do that. I've never… It's really rarely it has happened, so I prefer food from home, so it's not like I started to cook and didn't do it before, because I have to. It's how Ahmad puts it, it's because I like food from home, no matter what, and since he is not interested in it, so of course when you're not interested in something, you tend not to do it (laughing).

A: But I think maybe the reason why I am lazy about it, I am lazy generally about anything, she can also tell you that, and generally probably the most lazy person she has ever come across.

L: Yes! (laughing)

A: So I am generally very lazy, but I would say that in this specific case, probably I am also lazy about this due to the culture as well, because when you grow up as a guy in my culture, you are not expected to know how to cook, and stuff like that, so probably that also played a part that I am additionally lazy in this scenario.

L: But for example other things like cleaning, you are… I think he is more into cleaning, and he is more of a cleaning person. I am the messy one, I am the one he tells to clean. So in that way, after the tradition, I think you would also expect me to be cleaning all the time the house, but it's not like that in this case. So I think that our roles are generally personality based, and of course you can say that some things come from the culture as well, but…

A: In my personality.

L: Yeah, yeah. But still....

A: They are not exclusively because of the culture.

M: Yeah, yeah. But do you cook and eat more typical Danish dishes or …?

L: Well I am generally interested in tasting different foods from world. So I am trying to make the food a little Pakistani-ish, so it tastes good for him, but also for me because I am interested in

having different tastes and getting more rich in my gastronomy. So yes, but sometimes I do make very simple Danish stuff as well, because then I feel like that.

A: And I have a strict rule that because I am not cooking, I should not be putting demands on how it needs to be done.

L: Yes, I decide, yes yes.

A: And that's not just that… I really appreciate that, I think that's very nice, because I think things which are difficult for yourself to do and somebody else does that for you, you probably appreciate it a bit more, because maybe for people who don't mind cooking, if somebody cooks for them, maybe it's not a big deal for them because it's normal. But it's a big deal for me to cook in some way, so if somebody cooks then I actually really appreciate it, I didn't do anything about that food so I don't have this thing, to only cook Pakistani food or something like that.

L: No no no, not at all. I only have to put enough salt in it, because he likes salty food. But I think I can say it's something with cultures to do it's like, of course you don't eat pork, so we don't have that at home, and maybe… I don't know, nobody has said anything, but I am imagining if somebody would have a comment on that, then I would say like, first of all I don't mind because there so much of other food to eat anyway and then, from any kind of food restrictions people have, this is like the smallest one, because I would still prefer to have beef than pork, so it's good that you're not Hindu, and then vegetarian, and vegan, that would be much more complicated. And with somebody who is vegan, maybe this person will also not like to have some foods at home and cooking for that, and then I think for any kind of food restrictions, this is like the smallest one, so I am actually kind of happy, and I must say, I never miss it, actually I never think about that. I never think about 'Ah, I miss to eat bacon or whatever', I just never thought about it because there is so much other food.

M: But you can, for yourself, cook it, right?

L: Yeah, for myself, outside home, I eat it. (laughing) No No, but it's just because to not have it in the mixed kitchen with other stuff, it's not so nice for him, but there is not a problem that I eat it myself. Sometimes when I go out I eat it and that's no issue at all. But I don't mind it's less in my everyday home. So that's how that can work.

M: I understand. If we could go back a little, you were saying, Laura, that your parents knew about Muslims form the media.

L: Yes.

M: So I was wondering if you feel like in a way the media is affecting you personally with the anti-Muslim discourse and news, and everything they are broadcasting about the topic.

L: You mean if they affect my opinion?

M: If they affect your marriage, your relationship.

L: Aha, no, not at all, because I knew for many years that how the media tells this stuff is different than how it is in reality. In 2011 I went for an exchange when I was a student, for one month in Jordan, which is also quite a conservative Muslim country where you have to dress really tied up, not showing anything, not giving hands to men and stuff, and I was there for one

month, and of course I was as an exchange student, so there was also more exchange people, but we had a lot to do with the local people there, so I got to know how people are and that what I saw it's not what media tells me, so in my head, media, that's just bullshit. They don't tell you anything about how things are, the never talk about normal people, and I have seen the part... I have gotten a bit of taste of how the culture is, a little bit from inside, so I know it's not the same. And I know many people started to know Muslim people when I started to study medicine, they were Danish born, and they were living here, so I got to know them, their homes, their families, and I just think that I know better that what's into media, and understand, so they don't affect me at all. On the contrary, I like to talk about how I experienced Muslim people and cultures in another way to show a broader picture.

M: And have you felt, Ahmad, that you've had some problems, have you been disadvantaged in some way, because of the media? Have you had bad events, for example when you were going for a job?

A: Pff... a strictly factual answer would be no. But there might be some reasons why the answer is obviously no. And I think one reason is that I haven't been looking for jobs that offend anyway. I had as soon as I graduated, I had a job at a really good level, with highly educated people and then I had it for 10 years and after that I was asked to have another job by the people who were... [hiring]. So I have not been really in this job search market at all different levels, you know if you are looking also. And I said factually speaking I have not experienced it. So... But I don't think that that should mean that people have not experienced it in general. So that I would just say about me.

M: Sure, I cannot generalise, but I am asking you specifically in this interview, to get the overview personally.

A: Yeah, so factually speaking I have not experienced it. And I think partly it is because I think this kind of problems also exist, I think Danish society is very flat, there ar not many layers of society, because everybody is more or less quite educated and so on so forth, so you don't find different kind of, significantly different mindsets in different levels of society, it's more or less uniform. However I think there is still a difference, and that's at least the people I have been in contact with, I've been interacting so far, generally professional engineers and kind of big international companies as well, so it's highly unlikely that you will come across something like that in that environment, so I think that is part of the reason that I have not experienced it. But yes, I have not experienced it.

M: Good, ok.

A: But I think maybe, if I can add something, is that although I have not experienced it, but I think I have had some very... very... so to say, direct conversations with people, where you can take it as offensive talk, where people challenge you on some very deep beliefs you have, and I think in Denmark people don't... either they will not talk about it or touch it, because it's difficult to be confrontational in Denmark, people don't like to be confronted. If they decide to confront it, either they want annoy you, or they actually want to learn something or whatever

reason, then they confront it very directly. They don't try to make it very polite, to ask a question. So for example if somebody, it might be a friend for example, if he thinks that having a religion, doesn't matter if it's Islam or other religion, just believing in God for example is stupid, then he will say it like 'Don't you think it's stupid for you?'. Then of course you can take it very offensive, and you can say that 'I have experienced something that is odd, people shouldn't do that, how can they do that?' and bla bla bla. So I have that kind of conversations, but at least I have not taken them as if somebody is trying to be offensive, I have always taken them as of somebody is asking me from where they are coming from, and of course if they believe it can be stupid that doesn't mean that it means I am also stupid, it's just simply, it's what they believe, and I believe in something different and I will tell them that that's how it is.

M: Maybe that's why in Denmark this is such a taboo subject, people don't start conversations about religion because they don't lead anywhere, anyway.

A: Yes, that's why I mentioned that they would not do it, but if you are… in my case I can say that people who did that, who have talked with me, were basically quite close friends or something like that, because then they felt that they can have it [the conversation]. I have not experienced from people who doesn't know me, and said 'Hi!', and 'Oh, you are Muslim, you must be stupid'. Because then I would also have taken it as this is not a question/answer discussion, this is something you can't do, being offensive.

M: Yeah, but it hasn't happened to you.

A: No no,

M: Ok. Shifting through topics, has it ever crossed your mind to marry someone from your religion? Have you thought, maybe, that it would be easier for you to have a relationship with someone from your own culture?

(long silence)

A: I.... basically what I can say is that I never thought of it based on religion or culture, that if I would be with somebody from my own religion then my marriage would be better for some reason. At least I have not thought of that. And not that after getting married, before that as well. To me, and I thought of it long before we got married or anything, but I have always thought that it is difficult, there are a lot of challenges for people from different cultures and different religions to have a marriage, but I think it is equally more exciting as well, and I just always thought that that would be such an awesome thing to achieve. Because everyone says that if you are from different culture and religion, you will screw it up, doesn't matter what. So for me, I always believed that it's possible to do, people need to be a little bit different than normality or averageness of their [unintelligible] and stuff. But it is possible to do, and I think it is very exciting as well if you can do it. So… I don't know, but if you ask that question that on paper it would be easier, of course it would be easier. Because lots of things which you end up talking about, telling each other, you probably don't have to do that. Most of the time that talk is probably just a good talk, but sometimes that talk gets initiated because you have a problem, and then you talk about it and you kind of realise that 'Ah, ok, so this is how it is because she is

coming from a side that I don't'. So a lot of that thing can just disappear because it's a routine thing, you kind of know that. But of course, on paper it can be easier, but personally if you ask me, I think it's more fun to have something that people are different in culture and religion, they even have some good talks, because that's when you learn as well how they are, kind of learn to accept others. But if people say differently, or do things differently, that doesn't mean that they are stupid and you are the only one that can do it the right way. It's just different ways. It doesn't make it better or worse, it's just different. For me, no. I actually have the other way around, because I told my mom, you know in our culture we have these arranged marriages and they are not as horrible as it appears on the media. That I can tell you as well because when she was there at the wedding we had, I think everyone you met was in an arranged marriage.

L: Mm yeah.

A: And I don't think any of them looked like they are beaten up or something worse.

L: No.

A: Everyone was happy, this is just how it's done.

L: I would actually compare it to, even more so like even here in homeland, sometimes a girl friend says 'Oh, I know this guy, I think that my friend and he would go well together, let's put them up on a blind date', so that's also arranged date. And actually I think it's more or less the same, because you find people who think 'Oh, they match each other, they have these values, this whatever view in life or education, so that could go well, without any problem. But it's the same what they are doing.

A: So I don't think… Oh now I forgot what I was saying… Oh yeah, I was saying that for me it was the other way around because I was talking to my mom and my mom used to tell me after a time that I spent here that 'Ok, you cannot be with a Pakistani girl'.

L: Your mom told you?

A: Yeah yeah. And that is because I think the Pakistani women in general, given which class of society you are, if you have some money, if you are not very poor, and if you are doing quite ok… it's a very diva culture, so to say there. So you know, they will need a lot of things to happen, they want to have a lot of servants, they don't want to do anything. Of course they will put the food in front of you, but it's probably a servant who has made the food. (laughing) So you get a lot of food from your wife, but your wife has to have a lot of staff and they do the stuff.

M: It's more high-class.

A: Yeah, I think it's just like in almost all classes they cleared this somehow (laughing), so I think it becomes… for me it was always that if you… and then you meet people that are… of course a lot of people are doing a lot of things, and women are doctors, and engineers and all that, but if you don't find among one of them, and you find a normal person who is probably a Master in something, but they don't have much exposure, then I just understand that I cannot talk to her about anything. Of course she is a really good person, and she is nice, and she takes care of me, and she takes care of the family but she would expect a lot from me, that I have to be home at this time, and then I have to do this and that, not that I have to clean the house or make the

food, but you know, go to my parents, and then meet this, this, this, and bla bla bla, so it's a lot of protocol you have to give and cannot really talk about stuff intellectually, so I don't want to sit with my wife and talk about what kind of drama she has seen on television, which drama series are going these days and who … bla bla bla. So I always felt that I need to be with someone who is kind of career oriented, independent, and I can talk to her about things. So my mom kind of told me that 'Ok, with a Pakistani girl you will go nuts, because she will only want drama, and movies, and what's new in the fashion, and that. And I cannot handle that I think.

M: Well, now that you know another way…

A: Yeah.

L: And I guess, it's kind of the same, like you say, that of course some things will be implicit and obvious for both people, so you don't have to mention, if you are with somebody from your own culture. But still, even though it's the same culture, religion, who can be very different people, and also have challenges anyway, If I was with a Danish or Polish person, we would still have disagreements on stuff or different opinions about other things anyway. But here, you get more opened up to view one, also on world, on your life, because the roots are so far away from each other, and what we have experienced in our childhood is also different, and the view over the world is so different, so that's what you get to learn, that the world is not how you view it and how you have been used to it necessarily, so that's the good part of it.

M: Can you tell me about a situation when you misunderstood each other because of cultural reasons, and it was obvious that it's because of the culture?

A: I get my ass kicked so often that I don't remember actually (laughing)

L: Yeah, I have a feeling that probably we had, but I don't remember right now, but what we do usually when we have some disagreements, that's what I actually really like, is just we talk and talk and talk, and then we talk again, until we actually reach the root of the problem. And sometimes it can be that it's because we have basically viewed on something differently and then we figure that out and then we are like 'ah, ok!'.

A: But it's usually me who is wrong, after all that time. (both laughing)

L: But actually right now I don't remember because I think that we reach out the root, and it kind of gets really solved because we really go get to the bottom of it. And then, after that it's fine, so… Actually I don't remember right now. We probably had, but …

A: But maybe I … we didn't have anything about the culture.

L: I don't know…

A: I think we had other disagreements, because I had a different opinion about something, but…

L: But I don't know if that opinion could have been because of culture or not. I just don't remember (laughing)

M: But if you were to make an average of disagreement reasons, is it more because of your personalities, something coming from within the marriage, or is it more coming from external factors, like friends, parents, media, society?

L: No no, I think it's definitely from personality. Like I'm so tired that you're so lazy. (laughing)

A: But I would also say that a couple of big ones, long discussions that we had, that was actually not about us, that was basically about friends and stuff.

L: Yeah… But that's also about how we view things differently.

A: Yes, it was not that it was something that I was doing towards her, which she didn't like…

L: Yes, no no.

A: … or she was doing something. It was basically something like…

L: It came from outside, but we just had different views on it.

A: So I was thinking, I was saying something, or doing something, which I was telling her 'Why is it happening like this?' and it was nothing about us, and was basically also saying that 'Yeah but this doesn't make sense'.

L: Aa yeah yeah.

A: So it was about how people around us were acting, that I was explaining it in a different way, or saying that 'This is how I see it', and she was seeing it in a different way. You know what I mean, the argument is within us.

L: Yeah yeah, in the group interactions, if somebody says this, we interpret it differently and then we discuss what was meant by this action.

A: But is was not something that we were doing to each other. That was probably the biggest argument I remember we had.

L: Yeah yeah, exactly.

M: So there is a little bit of a mix.

L: Yeah, but that is not a cultural thing, that is like a social thing, how you interpreted a situation. So you think that it's because if that this thing happened, and I think no, it's because of that, and it's obviously because of this and this, and he says no, I think because this person is like this and that.

M: So it's not really a culture specific argument.

L: No, no… you know, just like people.

A: But I think I would say that between us it's always these personality things as she said, I am lazy and she doesn't [unintelligible].

L: Or for example, he's not so expressive. If he does something, it's nice, but he's just being quiet, just like this. And I'm always like 'Wow, this is so cool!', so then I think that he didn't enjoy it. For example, I was like 'Are you having fun, honey? Is this fun?' [excited tone] and he just 'Yeah yeah it is' [serious tone]. And then I think that eh, he doesn't care at all. This is the latest.

A: So we had to talk about that, I had to explain it to her, that ok, you see, the point is that I will never jump up and down about anything, no matter how big it is, basically.

L: Yeah because you're just a calm person.

A: I am just a calm person. But if I am doing something, that means that I like it, because if I don't want to do it, I will maybe do it once, but then tell you 'ok, honey, I don't want to do it.'

L: Yeah.

A: So never think that if I am going along with it, I am just going along because of that. I won't do that.

L: Yeah, that is actually our latest thing that we talked about.

A: The last thing we had.

L: Yeah, and I was thinking just that he is not enjoying it because he never shows it. I am always like 'Look, this is so fun, this is so nice'. And I expect that from the other person because I am more expressive in that way and maybe I have some friends who also are like this, so I am more used to this interaction that both express that 'Ah, this was nice'. Because he doesn't, and then I think 'hmm… what's wrong?'. So this is like a typical thing for us

A: So that's more personality…

L: Yeah, that's his personality.

M: But do you think that you have created some kind of your own personal family culture, that is specific to you only?

L: Yeah.

A: I think so.

L: I feel that.

A: In my mind I think it is, because it's a bit of everything in some way, because everything is just notorious in each culture, I think that we don't have that. For example, if you take my culture, then ok, you are more restrained, you cannot do this and that, but I am not like that. So it's very, at least in my mind, it's very normal, relaxed, stuff like that. And I think, Laura can tell you as well, she is not sticking to this thing that 'Ok, I will never cook for you or something, bla bla bla, because this is men and women, so she understands that this is not me making her into a housewife or trying to do that, it is basically a personality thing, so we have come to an agreement about that.

L: Yeah.

A: So I think that that's what is very special, in my mind, because you don't get that kind of combination if you are completely in your culture, or you are… something like that.

L: Yeah, I think in order to have this kind of relationship, you have to be somehow not… sticking to these routines and expectations in a culture, like I mean, for me I think it works because I am curious about other cultures and how it can work otherwise. And I don't have to do it, the things in my tradition way necessarily, so you need to give a little go of the very… the most… I don't know how to say it. The most… strict… you have to let go a bit from these… the routines, rules, expectations like that. But on the other hand, I think modern people are like that too, in general. But I don't feel like I am compromising anything of myself, just that I let other things, I invite other things in my life as well, than my own.

M: But do you feel you have changed since you've been with Ahmad?

L: Well of course you can say it because now I have this in my everyday life. There are some small things like… yeah, there are some small things that I have in my life now, so I have to adjust to that, but I just think that people anyway have to adjust to new things, although no

matter that partners are from different culture or not, there are just other things they have to adjust to. Like, I could have a Danish partner who was vegan, and had some crazy hobbies that have to be in his life, and I would also have to adjust to that as well. So it's just that maybe people are very focused on… they don't want to adjust to maybe Islam because uuuuh there is this media thing. But actually people do adjust anyway, so it's just about that I … yeah, just say that these things I don't want to adjust to, these things are fine, but I don't want this. You just have to not say which ones you should choose, if you know what I mean.

M: Yeah yeah. And what about you, Ahmad?

A: It's the same for me because I think that there are sometimes things which of course can be that you care a lot. Generally, I think people have this fixed set of things that they believe they cannot not do, just because that's what they do, and that's how they grew up. They don't know why and it kind of becomes a win-lose situation for them. A bad example maybe would be that if I strictly try to be in a culture that 'ok, a man never has to cook. It's always the wife who has to cook'. There is no foundation, or ground to that in a religion, a culture, there is nothing. But if you just, without thinking about it, if you make a pattern for you that if my wife asked me to cook than it means I lost something. Then of course you will end up in a problem. And I think people have a very huge box of these, they do not know why they have to stick to that but they really want to stick to those things. And every time they have to give up on something like that, although they don't know why they like it so much, or why they want it so much, but it becomes a bit of a problem, because that's how they've been growing up, it was something like that. I think for me it has always been that… of course there are always things with you. If you think about all the things you really want, my personal experience is that they are very small subset of things that you practice, and you actually really want. The rest are there because they are there. And if you don't make it an ego problem of yourself, you don't really care about them actually. They are just there. So for me also there is a set of things which I know that that's my limit, I cannot compromise on those things. But beyond that the lot of things which are just there and I think I don't really care about them because I don't really think of.

L: For example, now I think about when we went to Pakistan. Because there they also have to have a certain type of clothes, like the women go out on the streets I had to have a scarf on my head, you know. And then maybe people could be reactive and say 'Oh but you should stick to who you are, you cannot go under that', but that's also because of how people have made it like that, not because that means that you go under that religion or whatever. But if nobody has ever made it a problem, it would not be a problem that you go somewhere and you try to adjust to the people around you.

M: You just show respect by doing that, right?

L: Yeah. But somehow, for example maybe in the media they would say that you're compromising, but in reality I don't really care about the fact that I have to put a bit more clothes on me, so why make it …. You just make a problem for yourself by making it a problem, because it doesn't have to. And people might ask questions about that and maybe there was a Dane who

had his own weird views, then you would maybe say 'ah yeah, he has his own special world, that's interesting', so suddenly that would be fine. So it's just like the opinions where it's good or bad, needs to be changed, or do something about. If there has not been anything in the media about Islam, then people would never say anything about it. It's just because now there is so much focus on it.

M: Yeah. So, there is one more topic that I want to ask you about, it's about belonging. Do you feel like you belong to Denmark, Pakistan, Poland?

L: Well, I think… of course there is the root of who you are and for me, I've been also having identity problems as a young person, because I'm raised Polish but I live in Denmark and stuff. You can say that in the core, as my roots, I feel more Polish, but there is a difference in which country you feel like coming from a culture, and what your everyday life is about. Now, because I'm also quite Danish as well, and I also know that in opinions and in behavior I am of course more Danish than Polish person. This question has bothered me a lot, but then I figured that it's not about finding one answer, it's not about saying Poland or Denmark, because that is impossible for a bicultural person. You cannot put a person who has had two cultures in his life and make him choose one of them. So in the end I figured out that the question is wrong. You just have to take whatever you like from both sides. Then you're just your own… yeah. But I think being raised in two, you lose a little bit compared to other people, you lose a little bit of belonging. I think you have a little less of it than other people. You have your family, that has these traditions, and people who do the same, like you lose a little bit, you are different than the people who are born and raised in their own country.

M: You are different, but you're neither similar to the people in your own origin country and culture.

L: To no country, yeah, if you take a person who was born and raised in the same country he is from, he has more sense of belonging to the place and culture. And people who are mixed, they have, I think for me at least, they a little less sense of belonging, I am not completely 100% belonging to Poland, and I'm not 100% belonging to Denmark. So that sense is overall a little less. But then on the other side, I feel I can easier adapt wherever I go. Whereas a person who was born raised in the same… maybe feel more distance to a new thing. That's my theory about that.

M: Yeah.. and what about you, Ahmad?

A: For me, I think it's also… when I came here it was quite… different. I came here when I was 21, or something like that. See, I haven't experienced this lack of belonging issue as severely as people who were born here but are from a different religion. But I must say that I have also after a time experienced it because if you stay here for 5, 7, 8, 10 years, especially in that age like when you are 20 or 21, so you don't really fit here or there actually. Because you… because the world moves on, Pakistan has moved on, so it's not the same Pakistan as when I was there. 100% of time. And I haven't learned the skills of how to be social as the society has evolved in Pakistan. Because society has evolved and I have not been in that society, so I didn't learn those

skills, I have not lived there anymore, you know, just like an old guy in a teenager place, you know? It can be the same kind of thing, that people have become a bit different, and you are not part of that change and therefore you don't know. So you don't fit basically. And on the other hand, you've spent some time here, which I have, but because I am not that deeply immersed in that society, then I also don't know this pretty well, so basically, at some point of time I also feel that I don't belong anywhere now. If I go to Pakistan and stay there, probably I will be quite frustrated because of the way people will behave and I will not understand that why is this guy talking like this and so on.

M: You feel you can't adapt anymore.

A: Probably I will adapt, but in the next 5-6 years when I go there, I think I'll be very frustrated because I have to re-learn that somehow. And here as well I feel that even if I'm having my pension here when I am really old, I will not be like another Danish guy who was born here because I will still not know a lot about things and so on so forth. And that at least stresses me, or stressed me some time back, but the way I see it is that this is unavoidable, this feeling of belonging to a place is basically the way we have experienced over the last maybe one thousand, one hundred years, but I don't think that one hundred years from now many people will be feeling like that and I think, the way I look at it is that maybe I am one of the people from the generation which is kind of, you know, in the middle. We are not completely on one side, but we are also not on the other. I mean, some people have to go through that thinking that maybe one hundred years later everything will be so mixed, or everything will be so isolated, that you will not have that problem. When things are flowing like right now, people are coming, mixing, globalisation, and all that, so I just feel that… I mean, you don't really have a choice to not feel that and you have to learn to live it and you realise that there are other things which are better and not be too focused on 'Ah, now I don't belong to any place'. Because then what are we going to do? Do I want to leave Denmark one day and then start belonging to Pakistan? No, I don't really want that. And can I suddenly become an ethnic Dane? I cannot really.

L: But that's the thing, you can't really choose one of them.

A: Yeah yeah, but even if you want to do it, you will not be able to do it, I think.

L: Yeah, yeah.

A: Because it's basically, practically not possible.

L: I feel that for me, what solves it, what is good is that you meet other people with this background of not belonging anywhere because you can somehow feel in group with these people and you have this in common, such a basic thing, so you…

A: So you somehow belong to this group of members.

L: Exactly, that's what I mean, yeah.

A: But I think it becomes more and more… the more people you meet, from different cultures, society, and all that, your affiliation starts to become more value based rather than geography based, because now I feel more close to people who have certain values, thinking and stuff, you know.

L: Yeah, not matter what culture they have.

A: Yes, no matter which country they come from. And if I don't find those things in a Pakistani guy, who is from Pakistan, then I feel a lot farther from him compared to if I find those values in a Brazilian guy. I would feel a lot closer to him, because it's more value based now rather than the geography.

L: And we also care less about tradition, than people did before, maybe. So we don't care that he has other traditions and other religion, we just care about some more basic values.

M: But you got the Danish citizenship, Ahmad, was it long ago?

A: No, it was actually last year.

M: And don't you feel like it contributed a little to you feeling a little bit closer to Denmark? Has the citizenship changed anything, do you feel?

A: I think I feel a bit more embarrassed about not knowing Danish now, because if they stop me on German border, I give them Danish passport and start speaking English, so they would completely [unintelligible]. So you totally understand Danish and you have Danish passport, so I think that kind of concerns me a little more than anything else, but as I said, I don't think having a passport has really made me feel more Danish. It makes me feel a bit more… from a practical side of view, it makes me feel a bit more at ease, that Ok, I will not be thrown out one day, because now I am here and I don't belong back there as well, and you know, this feeling that here you can just, completely out of practical reasons you can be in a really weird situation, where you have to be somewhere else. So I feel that kind of at ease…

M: More secure, maybe?

A: Yeah, but it's not that I feel more Danish because of that. I mean that it's purely practical reason which makes me feel a little bit better about having the passport. But it's not like the passport has created some additional Danishness in me. But I like Denmark a lot and that is probably because of the people I have met. I think I met some really nice people who are Danes, so I think that's my relationship or feeling for Denmark. That comes from, it doesn't originate in the passport or citizenship. But I think I feel better about it for practical reasons, that I cannot just be asked out of nowhere to leave or something like that.

L: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

A: But my feelings are there even before I was citizen of Denmark, I like this place and I like the people I have met, so yeah.

M: And you like the weather.

A: No! (both A&L laughing)

M: Well I thank you very much for your time.