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“Learning to swim is like learning Swedish”:
A Grounded Theory study of immigrant swim teacher’s
conceptualization of swimming ability and their strategies
used for newly immigrated families

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Author

Jamie Linnea Luckhaus

Supervisor, Lund University
Maria Emmelin, Docent, PhD

Faculty of Social Medicine and Global Health

Supervisors, Svenska Livräddningssällskapet
Lisa Grinell, Camilla Hansen

The Family Water Safety Program

Abstract

Introduction Swimming ability provides many known benefits while a lack of ability can result in dire consequences including death. Swimming and water safety are taught in the Swedish school system and increase the likelihood of being able to save oneself and other. Immigrants miss some or all these lessons – a safety concern in addition to a social and integration challenge. The Swedish Lifesaving Society implemented a project in which immigrant swim teachers were certified with the goal of teaching newly immigrated families. Understanding these teachers' experiences revealed barriers and strategies transferable to other contexts.

Aims The objective was to develop a model of how immigrant swim teachers conceptualize swimming ability and strategies used in promoting it.

Methods Eight open-ended in-depth interviews were conducted across Sweden. Data collection and analysis were done in parallel using a constant comparative method following Charmaz' constructivist grounded theory.

Results (a) Learning to swim is like learning Swedish; it entails more than a school requirement or hobby but a crucial part of the integration process and a safe society. Teaching families who migrated from countries with little water – where swimming was a personal choice or luxury – involved communicating this new understanding. (b) The swim teachers' goals and strategies differed based on age and gender of their students, with females often facing additional barriers. The strategies encompassed gaining families' interest as much as teaching.

Conclusions This study adds to the slowly growing body of research confirming that population-specific water safety interventions are needed, especially in countries with high water exposure and a strong aquatic culture. Early action among immigrant parents is important for a trickle-down effect in the family. Efforts must target females, especially from nations of traditional gender norms. The study results can be used to increase understanding and in teaching and promoting swimming ability.

Key words: aquatic knowledge; drowning prevention; drowning risks; immigrants; integration; intervention, health promotion; nyanlända; swimming; swimming ability; Svenska Livräddningssällskapet; water safety; water safety attitudes

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1. Introduction

There are many obvious health benefits associated with proficient swimming ability, including providing low-impact aerobic activity thus minimizing stress on the joints while exercising all the major muscle groups of the body (1). Participation in aquatics-oriented activities such as swim teams and water polo foster social, emotional, and psychological well-being (1). Swimming ability has also been shown to increase the likelihood of being able to save oneself or others, which is important since drowning is the 3rd leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide (2).

Learning to swim and water safety knowledge, such as using personal flotation devices and never swimming alone, are among proven drowning prevention methods (2). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, formal swimming lessons can reduce the drowning risk of young children aged 1-4 years by as much as 88% (3). In Sweden, where although fatal drownings are rather infrequent since implementing mandatory swim lessons (rate of .81 per 100,000), these records do not include drownings among asylum seekers, as cause of death is not recorded for this population (4). Additionally, literature suggests immigrants may be at a greater risk for water related injury due to certain cultural beliefs as well as unfamiliarity of the aquatic environment impacting how one approaches aquatic situations (5).

Research has found socioeconomic status and gender to be factors in swimming proficiency (6) and research within the U.S. and Netherlands found a higher risk of drowning among certain ethnic groups, possibly related to a lack of swimming and water safety skills (5). Such research has yet to be conducted in Sweden, possibly because of how recently Sweden became culturally diverse, and due to the significantly lower drowning rates in Sweden. However, there is an obvious intervention need among immigrant populations, especially those from countries of low aquatic exposure. Additionally, there is a need for research on immigrant and other minority groups' meaning of swimming ability which is crucial in designing culturally appropriate interventions. Certain immigrant groups are likely to have different practices and risk perceptions surrounding water as they are unaccustomed to local safety regulations.

1.1 Swimming Ability in Sweden

The Nordic Countries defined the term swimming ability in 1996 as having the ability to, after being immersed in water, swim continuously for 200 metres, of which at least 50 meters is backstroke (7). The Swedish Lifesaving Society (Svenska Livräddningssällskapet (SLS)) states that, "swimming entails more than just being able to swim a certain distance. It entails

knowledge and skills addressing the risks associated with being near and in water and on ice (translation)” (8). The SLS also has swim tests and badges to demonstrate swimming ability levels, which are implemented in Swedish schools.

Sweden has plenty of lakes, rivers, coastlines, and ice, most of which are not guarded, which is likely why Sweden’s drownings have predominately occurred in open water (92-96% were in open water in 2006) (9). Sweden addresses this public health topic by requiring students to take swim tests in their physical education courses (10). At the beginning of the 20th c. Sweden lost 1,000 people annually to drowning. In the 1940s Sweden implemented swim lessons to reduce the death toll, which resulted in a 50% reduction in drowning rates. By the 1960s the numbers had dropped below 350 drownings a year, and today there are approximately 100 fatal unintentional drowning incidents per year in Sweden (7). In 2018 the total drownings were the 3rd highest of the 2000s and the number of children and adolescent deaths to drowning was the highest since 2015 (11).

2018 Drowning Statistics Preliminary Report, Sweden



Source: Mikael Olausson, Head of Statistic, Svenska Livräddningssällskapet

Figure 1: Number of fatal drownings in Sweden 2018 according to age, gender, and activity

*Source: Swedish Livesaving Society | Translated by author JLL

1.2 Immigrants and Swimming Ability

In theory, with mandatory lessons, swimming and water safety are skills every Swede should possess. However, in practice this is not true. Those who immigrate to Sweden miss the school swim lessons and in turn these important life skills, had they not learned prior to immigrating. Even those who can swim likely have differing behaviors and skills regarding water, and may lack the lifesaving and ice safety, for instance. Missing swim school is particularly relevant

since Sweden has accepted record numbers of refugees and asylum seekers over the last few years, most of whom come from countries with low swimming ability (12). The largest influx period was between 2005-2015 when 36,645 asylum seekers were granted residency between (13). This demographical change is likely a factor in the recent drowning trend.

Most of the world has no official definition of swimming ability to compare to Sweden, and many of the countries from which refugees are fleeing have poor drowning records. Afghanistan, for instance, ranks as the 14th highest globally for drownings at a rate of 11.89 per 100,000 (14). Much of the Middle East and Africa also have cultural traditions that may make obtaining swimming ability especially challenging for females. Additionally, most refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden do not have experience with ice safety, which as seen in *Figure 1*, claimed 15 lives in Sweden in 2018 (11).

The Swedish Lifesaving Society (SLS) has acknowledged and responded to the ability gap among Sweden's newly immigrated population through the Family Water Safety Program described under Study Setting. Research is needed to understand what differences newly immigrated families face in learning swimming and what strategies are used to teach them. The teachers' personal experiences and the importance they ascribe to this process likely impacts their attitudes and practices when teaching swimming.

2. Aims

The **aim** of this grounded theory study is to develop a model of how immigrant swim teachers conceptualize swimming ability and the strategies used in promoting swimming ability among newly immigrated families in Sweden. Data was collected through posing the **research question**: What does swimming ability mean to immigrant SLS swim teachers? Sub-questions include:

- What has shaped this understanding?
- What strategies do teachers use to promote swimming ability among other immigrants?
- What structural and behavioral barriers or opportunities are there towards achieving swimming ability among the target population?

This study takes a symbolic interactionist perspective with an understanding that there is no universal definition of 'swimming ability,' but rather this context-dependent concept is constructed on an individual basis (15).

3. Methods

3.1 Study Design

A qualitative study was conducted as the phenomenon in question has to do with experiences and meaning. A grounded theory (GT) methodology following Charmaz' constructivist approach was used, as the phenomenon involves actions and processes, lending itself to a GT methodology (15). Additionally, this study seeks to understand the phenomena through developing theory rather than describing the phenomenon, as per many other qualitative methods. Grounded theory's iterative process of collecting and analysing data in parallel – and undergoing constant comparison – allows for new theory to emerge (ibid). The constructivist approach is less rigid than Glaser & Strauss' traditional GT and acknowledges the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data (15). As opposed to traditional GT where theory is discovered, constructionist GT views theory as co-constructed through interaction between the interviewer, interviewee, and structural and situational influences (15). This emphasis on subjectivity encourages the researcher to be aware of their own perspectives and take measures to capture the informant's perspective (15). In-depth open-ended interviewing was chosen to capture individual meaning and experiences and to allow personal narratives (15).

3.2 Study Setting

This study was conducted within the framework of the Swedish Lifesaving Society's (SLS) three-year **Family Water Safety Program (2017-2020)** which aims “for the target population to gain the necessary skills and knowledge regarding water and swim school to feel safe in and around water and to be able to enjoy Sweden's nature (translated)” (16). The target population for FWSP is a specific immigrant group called *nyanlända* in Swedish, or “newly arrived,” a term used by government agencies for refugees the first 24 months after being granted residency in a community (17). The term is also used in everyday language as an unofficial term for those “new” to Sweden and is associated with the large influx of Syrian and Afghanistan refugees in 2015. One must not necessarily be “new” to Sweden, nor hold a specific migration story to acquire this name. This newly immigrated group is the focus of this study, also, which is important to consider in applying the results.

FWSP involves training immigrant swim teachers and/or water safety ambassadors (WSA), – who were once “newly immigrated” themselves – who in turn provide water safety information and formal swim lessons to immigrant families in their communities (16). **Water safety**

ambassadors (WSA) is a new SLS position created by FWSP in which immigrants were trained to serve as gatekeepers for newly immigrated families to quickly and smoothly receive appropriate aquatic information, preferably in their mother tongue. WSAs are in contact with migration and resettlement organizations, and provide a culturally appropriate introductory course, communicating the importance of water safety (including boating and ice) and refer parents to swim schools (preferably with a teacher in this program) (16). In referring to the informants, the term swim “teacher” is used rather than “instructor” as the Swedish translations for these terms tend to mean, respectively, a certified teacher helping others learn to swim, versus someone instructing swimming in a sports context who is often a competitive swimmer themselves (coach/trainer). Although the project and the SLS as an organization seek to increase aquatic safety and ability among all individuals, the focus of this specific intervention is “newly immigrated” families, as defined previously.

3.3 Sampling of Informants

Seven semi-structured in-depth interviews and one paired-depth interview were conducted across Sweden. The informants were sampled purposively based on their participation in FWSP. The two program leaders distributed the invitation letter to all FWSP participants comprised of roughly 42 swim teachers and 50 water safety ambassadors (many were trained as both). The author, JLL then corresponded directly with the informants, both receiving interest and reaching out to request participation. Initial sampling was conducted based on first availability with the following inclusion criteria: (a) having completed SLS training associated with the FWSP 2017-2020; (b) possessing experience teaching swimming in Sweden. Initial sampling led to informants 1-3 and served as a point of departure for the rest of the study (15). In this early stage, the inclusion criteria and interview guide were both broad to remain open to discovering phenomena and concepts not considered previously. Preliminary theoretical categories were then developed based on the analysis of these initial interviews, which guided the interviews to follow, including revision of the interview guide (15). Then, theoretical sampling of the next informants focused on refining and saturating these categories as done to the best ability within the short timeline of the study (15). Negative cases emerged, requiring an alteration of developing theory. Abductive reasoning was used, in keeping with theoretical sampling, to test and explain these outlier cases which did not fit into previous inductive generalizations (15). Previous data was then re-examined, and new data was collected with attention to the theoretical adjustments and the new hypothesis.

The majority of the FWSP participants were from Syria and Afghanistan, with many others from Somalia and Iraq. Around 80% of the population in this program were men (~20% women) with the majority ranging between 18-25 years old (SLS). Most of the informants live in southern Sweden which is where most interviews were held (see *Table 1*). However, the researcher (JLL) sampled one informant from northern Sweden as well as varied the regions of southern Sweden with the aim of maximum variation of informants. Variation was also considered to discover possible differences due to age, gender, current residency, country of origin, and swimming ability prior to migrating. Characteristics of the informants are given in *Table 1*. The majority were male, which reflects the actual demographic of the FWSP participants. All the informants are of Middle Eastern origin, which although unintentional, reflects the majority of FWSP participants as well as those who were interested in and able to participate in this study.

Informant #	Completed WSA Training?	Able to swim before emigrating?	Birth country	Current Residency	Age Range	Gender
1	Y	Y	Syria	Västra Götaland	20s	M
2	N	N	Afghanistan	Västra Götaland	Teens	F
3	N	N	Afghanistan	Västra Götaland	20s	F
4	N	Y	Syria	Uppsala Län	20s	M
5	N	Y	Syria	Västmanland	20s	M
6	Y	Y	Syria	Småland	40s	M
7	N	Y	Syria	Skåne	30s	M
8	N	Y	Iraq	Skåne	30s	M
9	Y	Y	Syria	Norrland	40s	M

Table 1: Overview of informants participating in qualitative study on swimming ability

*Informant # displays order of participation and conceals identity

*WSA = SLS Water Safety Ambassador Training

3.4 Data Collection

Seven in-depth individual interviews and one paired-depth interview were carried out across Sweden in February and March of 2019 by the author (JLL). All interviews were done at the location of the informant's preference. The public library in each informant's place of residency was suggested as the interview location if the informant did not have a preference and is where six were held with another at a café and two at the informants' home. Each interview took roughly 50-60 minutes of recorded conversation. Several of the informants provided a tour of

the poolhall and/or community in which they teach; this gave the researcher insight into their working environment and social dynamics, documented in memos.

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended to allow the informant to share rather freely on the subject. In interviewing, pauses, silences, and emotions can be picked up better than in a group setting, and create theoretical direction (15). A mind map (*Appendix 1*) was created with the following main topics surrounding '*swimming ability*': '*personal understanding*', '*birth country's understanding*', '*Swedish understanding*', '*relation to other water skills*', and '*strategies*.' The topic '*barriers*' was added after the initial sampling. Mind maps allow for a conversational dialogue without pre-determined structure or direction; a page of questions was used as a checklist for the interviewer to ensure main questions were covered. The mind map remained visible to the informant at the end of each interview and the informant was asked whether they had anything to add while given time to reflect on the mind map and interview.

The paired interview was conducted per the informants' preference; this method allowed the informants to feed off each other and engage comfortably. JLL spoke minimally and moderated the direction of the conversation, ensuring both informants were speaking rather equally. This interview served the purpose of complementarity, development, and triangulation which increased trustworthiness (18).

Data from the first interviews guided the selection of the following interviews as much as was allowed within the short time frame. Per grounded theory, data collection following the initial sampling was done with the purpose of developing the emerging theory and elaborating and refining preliminary categories, called theoretical sampling (15). Although the sample was small, saturation of the theoretical categories was achieved, meaning that no new properties emerged in the last interviews (15). Memos were written throughout the process and used in analysis, including substantive, analytical, and methodological journaling directly after each interview.

3.5 Analysis

The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim in Swedish. The transcribed text was then coded and analysed in Open Code software following Charmaz' constructivist grounded theory. This analytical method involves constant comparison of data, aiming to construct a theory grounded in empirical data (19). The interview text served as the basis for

analysis, beginning with line-by-line initial coding (in English) aimed at capturing substantive and conceptual level meaning. As demonstrated by the codes in *Table 2*, gerunds were used to shift focus from the individual to the action (e.g. “becoming braver” versus “became braver”) (15). Line-by-line coding breaks up the data and allows the researcher to see it in a new light. These steps aid in remaining close to the data and serve as a heuristic device, giving the researcher direction in further exploration (15).

Next, focused coding was conducted based on relevance to the research question and comparison to previous data. Focused coding involved keeping initial codes as well as rephrasing and creating new codes. From the focused coding, sub-categories and categories were constructed (*Table 2*) with Glaser and Strauss’ *fitness* criteria in mind, meaning that categories were not forced by the research but grounded in the data (20). The saturated categories were sorted and diagrammed to create a theory. Memo writing was conducted throughout the study starting directly after the first interview and served as a critical analysis tool.

Table 2: Meaning of swimming ability (text-to-category)					
Original Text	Translated Text	Initial Codes	Focused Codes	Sub-Category (from all interviews)	Main Category (from all interviews)
”Ibland sitter barn på kanten och vill inte simma. Vi får ha en simlärare övertyga dom att hoppa i vattnet med att börja leka med barnen. (18)”	”Sometimes children sit on the edge and don’t want to swim. We have to have a teacher convince them to jump in the water by starting to play with the children. (18)”	Children being afraid to swim Children not wanting to swim Overcoming fear Distracting child from fear Motivating children with play Convincing child to get in water	Overcoming fear Distracting child from fear Motivating children with play	Motivating with play	Developing a positive relationship with water (children)

Table 2: Illustration of the analysis process moving from text to category

Symbolic interactionism was used as an analytical perspective from which to view what the informants’ experiences meant to them as well as about the time their meanings formed and why. The symbolic interactionist perspective views people as active beings who construct their own self, situations, and society, but while recognizing that there are structural influences as

well (15). This perspective entails that each interviewee has their own meaning of swimming ability shaped by their own experiences, which the interviewer aimed to understand and capture.

Grammatical corrections were made in translating the quotes from broken Swedish as the interviews were not conducted in the informants first language; Dahlgren et. al describes the importance of presenting the data in an understandable way as well as representing the informants in a non-diminishing way (20).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study followed the Swedish Research Council's ethical principles for humanities and social science research (CODEX) (21) at all seven stages identified by Brinkmann & Kvale, beginning at thematizing and designing the study through to reporting (22). No formal ethical approval was needed according to Swedish law, as this study was part of the author's education at Lund University.

Participants were informed verbally and in writing about what these guidelines entail (see *Appendix 2*). Written consent was obtained from all study participants prior to the interviews (see *Appendix 3*). All interviews were conducted in a safe environment at the informants' convenience. Considering Swedish was not the informants' first language, the interviewer explained the study and ethics verbally and welcomed any questions in addition to providing the written information and consent letters.

In naming files (recordings, transcriptions etc.) all personal names were changed to "Informant #" ("I#) and towns or other nouns which could reveal personal information about informants were changed to "xxx." In the paired depth interview confidentiality could obviously not be kept from the other informant, however, this was understood and preferred by the informants. Additional details were masked since many of the informants knew each other from the SLS trainings and since the population is very small and specific; instead of including the informant's exact residency, the region was provided to broaden the number of possible informants, and an age range instead of age was provided.

4. Results

The coded interviews resulted in one core category, *learning to swim is like learning Swedish*, with four main categories illustrating the different goals when teaching children, adolescents and adults to swim. These categories were in turn supported by several sub-categories indicating the different strategies used based on the informants' personal experiences of

immigrating to Sweden and teaching newly immigrated families swimming. Along with memos and focused codes, these categories were used in constructing a model (*Figure 2*) of the concept swimming ability and strategies used in promoting it among newly immigrated families.

The red arrows represent females (F) while the blue represent males (M). The distance of each arrow from the green arrow (target) signifies the magnitude of barriers one faces, varying based on age at immigration and gender. The main categories are visualized as goals corresponding to age and/or gender of the student, with strategies (sub-categories) used to achieve each goal. Categories in red correspond to female students while the purple correspond to any newly immigrated students, regardless of gender (a mix of blue and red). To achieve the end goal of swimming ability, teachers must work with students to get “on track” with the Swedish pathway (green arrow).

Learning to swim was interpreted as like learning Swedish (core category), which describes the context in which the teachers are working. The codes surrounding the core category are relevant descriptions of this context and the meaning ascribed to swimming ability.

It is important to acknowledge that informants were all from Middle Eastern countries, teaching students from the Middle East and Africa; results would likely differ had the informants and their students been from other cultural and geographical background.

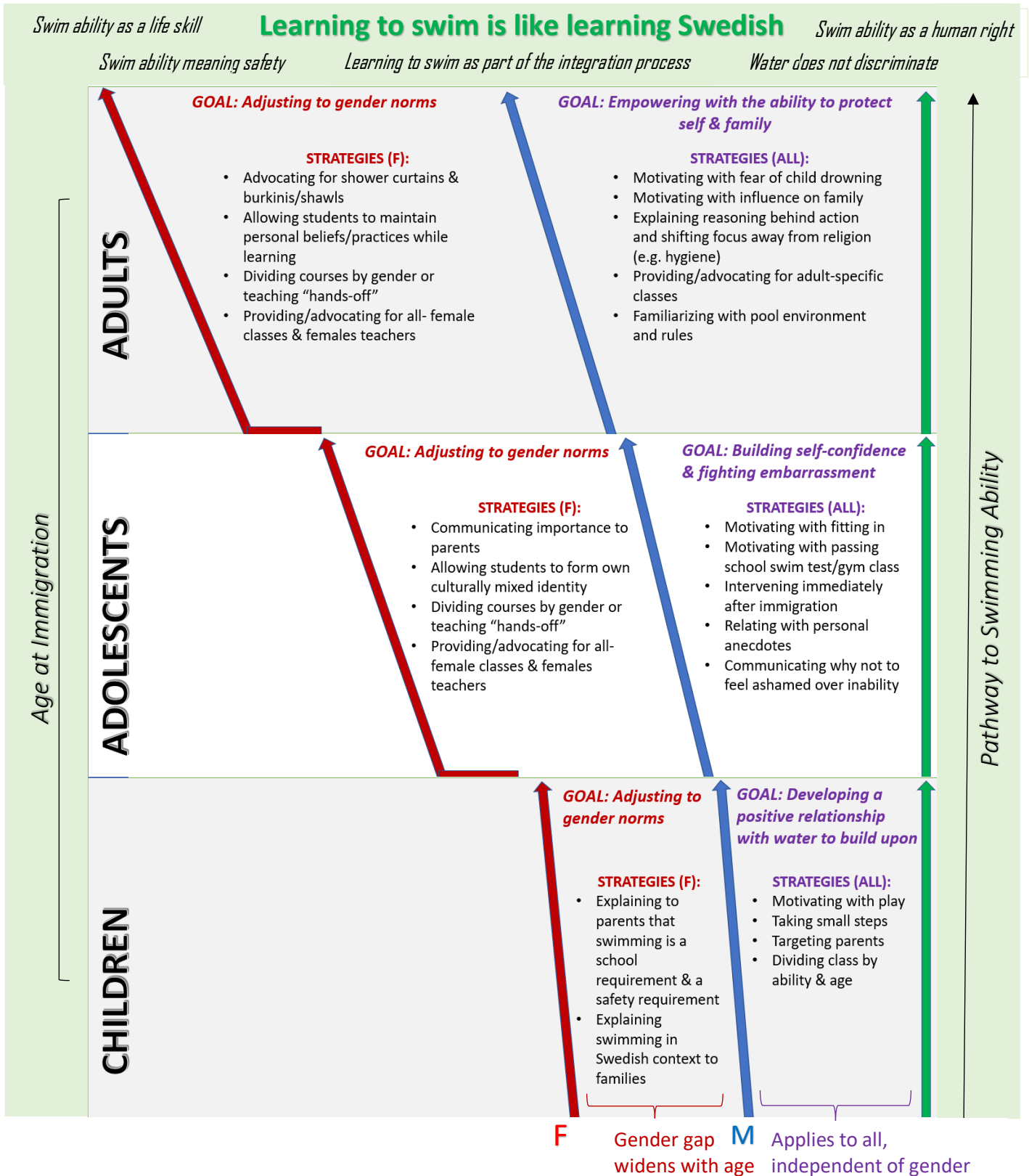


Figure 2: Model depicting swim teachers' understanding of swimming ability and strategies used in teaching newly immigrated families in Sweden

The results are described in more detail under headings dividing the findings based on the research questions into: (a) how the immigrant swim teachers understand the concept of swimming ability (visualized in the top green section of *Figure 2*) and (b) the strategies used in promoting swimming ability among newly immigrated families , although the two parts are connected. The main categories connected to children, adolescents and adults are indicated below, while bold-italicized phrases indicate focused codes or sub-categories highlighting important strategies for achieving swimming ability that are included in the model (*Figure 2*).

4.1 Swimming Ability as a Concept

The meaning that the teachers ascribe to swimming ability provides important insight when considering the context in which they are teaching and the approaches they take. Additionally, the conceptual process that the informants experienced reflect what many of their students are currently experiencing, though this time with the guidance of the informants.

4.1.1 Learning to Swim is like Learning Swedish

This core category resulted from the informants' meaning of swimming ability, and how this meaning has transformed through life and especially the immigration process. Just like learning a language, learning to swim becomes harder with age, as seen by the widening of arrows with age in *Figure 2*. Both are slow processes with many plateaus, requiring patients and effort and ***taking small steps***. Also like languages, the meaning of swimming ability is culturally-bound and a crucial ***part of the integration process*** into an aquatic-oriented culture. Using this analogy helps provide a different perspective for those feeling shame and embarrassment.

“... when children are born, they cannot do anything, so just think as though you were a child. Think about how you do not know the Swedish language, it is not my mother tongue, but we can try to speak it, even incorrectly. The same goes for swimming. You could not swim because your country was facing war and there was no swim school, think, now you have the chance [to learn]. (I3)”

It is difficult to fit in or excel in school or Swedish society without Swedish or swimming skills. From a young age Swedes are exposed to water both through leisure activities and mandatory school swimming. Even if a family does not swim regularly, they likely participate in boating, ice activities, or simply walk down a street of canals. Nature is a large part of Swedish culture but requires water safety to truly enjoy.

“Sweden has more water than land ... there are two things to learn in Sweden, to swim and to walk in the woods. (15)”

The Middle East, among other countries, has little access to water, creating a very different perspective of swimming and water safety, which must be learnt upon immigrating just as much as the Swedish language. As a Swede it is easy to take for granted not only these skills but being willing to admit to a lack of ability.

“If someone had water phobia [other immigrants] would be like ‘what?!’ They would laugh at you because it isn’t normal among us ... we don’t have many drownings ... we don’t even have water for people to be afraid. (15)”

Swimming ability allows participation in Swedish cultural activities and provides a way of *fitting in*.

“[Swimming] is not just required by the city or schools but it is part of society. (18)”

Without intervention through integration courses or informally through WSAs and other community members, immigrant families may remain in a bubble without integrating, causing both social and safety concerns.

“We have immigrants ... maybe 4-7 years old who cannot swim at all even though they were born and raised in Sweden and I think it is because the parents, they don’t show interest. (12)”

4.1.2 Water Does Not Discriminate

The poolhall and other aquatic settings often highlight the cultural differences of immigrants and Swedes. The informants expressed embarrassment over inability as well as culture shock and standing out, especially among females regarding burkinis and showering naked. The informants continued on, however, to say that their duty as a swim teacher is to communicate the fact that they should not let embarrassment or culture clash get in the way of their learning, because regardless of age, gender, background, or beliefs, if someone cannot swim or take appropriate precautions when swimming, they are at an increased risk of drowning.

“Water does not know who is man and who is woman when someone is drowning” (17).

In this way, water is *equalizing*. Just like when learning a language, no one else can learn swimming for another, but rather rich or poor, educated or uneducated, man or woman, one must put in the time and work themselves.

After being exposed to swimming in Sweden, especially SLS, the informants experienced a shift in perspective and saw swimming as less of a hobby and more as a **human right**. With a burning passion as they spoke, informant dreamt of spreading aquatic skills across their Swedish community and in their birth countries, speaking as though they felt it was their duty.

“Swimming ability is a basic skill ... You need to know it. Whether it is required in school or not, whether you were born in Sweden or not ... I believe that this skill needs to spread across the whole world, all children in the world have the right to be safe in water. (I7)”

Even the swim teachers interviewed who could swim extremely well prior to coming to Sweden discussed having to learn and understand the Swedish perspective of swimming ability. What swimming ability means to Swedes, described by the informants, is a term which is not exclusively swimming, but rather multidisciplinary, including water safety and lifesaving. Preventative measures such as reaching for a victim before jumping in and putting one's own life in danger are important to emphasize among this target group.

“Immigrants are all from another country, so to jump in and rescue someone drowning, it ends up being two victims. So that arm reach rescue is really important. (I6)”

Swimming ability is a **life skill** which everyone in the Swedish society is expected to have on at least the level taught in school. Swimming is ingrained in the culture and needed in everyday life in a country covered in water. This contrasts countries such as Syria where going to a pool or the sea is seen as a luxury, knowing how to swim is a privilege, and lifesaving a missed topic.

“People who come from the Middle East look at swimming and they think of ice skating, whether they can or not is not so important. They don't know the difference between being able to swim and not. It can save lives. Not knowing how to ice skate is not so important but they think they're the same - just an activity. (I6)”

The importance of early education on this topic was therefore stressed; many informants, especially the WSAs, conducted informal outreach through getting to know all immigrants in their own and neighboring communities. Others had or were planning to, collaborate with the community to incorporate this topic into the integration courses.

4.2 Promoting Swimming Ability

From the very first interview it became clear that barriers, strategies, and goals depend on the age of the student at time of immigration, as well as gender, as portrayed in *Figure 2*. Each arrow shows the challenge of reaching the group-specific goal, which, ultimately gets the students to the overarching goal of swimming ability, defined and shaped by the mix of their birth country's and Sweden's perceptions. The sections below provide greater detail of the informant's experiences with each group. Although many strategies (sub-categories) apply to multiple ages, they have been placed under the group for which they are most relevant. In teaching, however, it is important to take it "person by person (I2)" because "we are people, we are not all the same. (I1)"

4.2.1 Children – *Developing a Positive Relationship with Water to Build upon*

"Children are children," as one informant put it, meaning that even though immigrant children are often behind Swedish children their age and may not have support from family to learn, children are generally quick learners. Also, the younger one is at immigration, the less behind they likely have fallen, demonstrated by the steepness and closeness of the arrow in *Figure 2*. Children are curious and *motivate[ed] with play*.

"Children ... know that in the summer they will get to play in the water ... so in that way you can convince them that swimming ability is important in order to feel safe when playing in the water ... (I5)."

The goal at this age is developing a positive relationship with water, including feeling safe and comfortable in and around water (as indicated by the main category). Immigrants face an additional challenge, however, as confidence in water takes time and experience, which is limited when one must catch up to Swedish children their age. If parents are not exposing children to water then they will have to begin from square-one upon joining school.

"As a child, [Middle Eastern] parents ensure you don't go near water ... so you won't drown. Swedish kids are allowed to play but newly immigrated kids may

not go near water ... When [parents] always say 'you will drown' instead of 'you could drown' it makes children afraid and develop a phobia (15)."

Parents are often a barrier for children, for if they were not exposed to aquatic activities prior to emigrating then it is unlikely that they will understand the importance of lessons for their children, nor know how to begin. Parents' fear can also negatively impact the mindset of children, although this was discussed as also being a motivator for signing children up. Informants spoke of the importance of **targeting parents**, explaining swimming in the **Swedish context**, including that it is a **school requirement and safety requirement**, as well as how to begin the process. Reasoning this way is effective for boys and girls of all ages but is an especially important way of motivating parents to sign their girls up for swimming; gender norms less frequently cause problems at younger ages, however, it was discussed as a problem for a few of the informants,' but mainly when the parents did not understand that swimming meant more than a sport.

The cost of lessons was also mentioned repeatedly, especially among larger families which is common among Middle Eastern families. Through the FWSP and in their free time, informants provide free lessons for those in greatest need. Another structural barrier mentioned was the insufficient support from the school system, although this varied by community. The school swim curriculum is built on the premise that children have grown up with exposure to water and pool halls, and most likely swimming, which many immigrant children have not experienced.

"The school system is based on having started at 6 years old. There must be something to get the school or community to understand that when you come here at age 10, well there isn't always time in school to start from step 1, and many people come at the last step (17)" "... we cannot compare those who come directly to the last step with those who started at the first. It's completely different. (18)"

Another benefit to **targeting parents** is that if they can swim and lifesave then they can teach their children and help them outside of school which prevents embarrassment and provides needed additional training.

Swim schools often cause problems by putting children together based on convenience so that a newly immigrated child ends up as the oldest in the group or the only one who cannot swim.

This mismatch highlights the fact that the student is “different” from his/her peers and creates a negative association with learning to swim from an early age.

“I had two immigrants who were 11 but put with four-year-old Swedish-raised [children] ... we used a pool suitable for four-year-olds, like 40-50 cm and they were really, really tall ... I suggested taking them separately but was told ‘they cannot swim, they must start with level 1, getting acquainted with water.’ ... They become uninterested when the water doesn’t fit their bodies and what should I do with them? ... but for them to have their own course they must pay loads. (I7)”

Ideally adults and adolescents would also be placed with similar age and ability groups, however, the difference is especially noticeable among children, since a three-year difference is more extreme when considering a five and eight-year-old than 30 and 33, for example. ***Dividing the class by ability and age*** is a way to avoid this barrier but requires the resources to do so.

Although most immigrants have not experienced water-related trauma, most informants had known of at least one such horror story which involved strategic care to overcome trauma and establish a positive relationship with water. Trauma is important to address, especially before it develops and creates a lifetime of fear. This is best done through ***taking small steps***, like starting in shallow water or even sitting on the side of the pool (see *Figure 2*).

“[the child] is from Somalia, he didn’t want to shower because he was scared of water - even showering ... I taught him but it took 6 months. First, I showered with him and showed him ... that it isn’t dangerous. Then I put water on his arms and legs ... then when we went to the pool ... he just sat on the side ... just feeling the water. Then we started walking - not swimming, walking - to show him that it is not dangerous. And step-by-step ... he learned ... His mom said ... before coming to Sweden, ... that [the boat] broke ... so he watched his dad die in front of him, in the water, and that is why he got scared. (I4)”

This strategy of ***taking small steps*** is used in working with all immigrants. It is important to gauge each student and cater lessons to them, which is often a challenge due to class size and/or time. Being a swim teacher, especially for refugees, involves helping children overcome emotional barriers, such as the previous example. Informants stressed this challenge as another reason why immigrants need additional swim lessons and with a small student to teacher ratio.

The school classes do not allow the time nor focus for such slow, one-on-one progression. This also means the child is at a higher drowning risk and falling behind in school.

4.2.2 Adolescents – *Building Self-Confidence and Fighting Embarrassment*

Ninth graders are required to pass the last swim test to pass gym, which at this point assumes students have been tested multiple times leading up. The informants, three of which were secondary-education (gymnasiet) age themselves, expressed the importance of *passing the test* in gym, both for the grade and for *fitting in*. Unfortunately, the amount of school support varies greatly based on the community and is often inadequate. Class time is generally too short for in-depth teaching, but rather designed more for testing and correcting among this age group. When students are not provided early, intensive lessons, they are likely to become discouraged and never learn to swim, resulting in failing gym. *Communicating* to families upon arrival about *why they should not feel ashamed* and why they must overcome this embarrassment for school and life is simple yet crucial before they lose interest.

“Two students immigrated recently ... it is better that I teach them instead of waiting for them to get to school and start from zero. It’s harder when everyone else can swim and they can’t. And then the teacher has to devote more time to them (I5).”

Informants shared stories of resorting to teaching themselves to swim or teaching their friends outside of school, either due to inadequate lessons in school or to avoid the embarrassment of learning in a school setting. Then, once they become comfortable in water after the initial motivation of gym class, realizing that there are larger benefits to swimming than passing gym, such as safety and fitness.

“At first I thought I’ll learn to swim to get the grade then I don’t have to continue. But when I got an A I thought how good swimming is, and sports, it’s better to continue. You become energized and curious (I3).”

Teaching oneself caused problems, however, due to the *unfamiliar environment* of a poolhall, and the informants reflected that had they not been very stubborn and had a friend pushing them to learn, they likely would have quit.

“They become shy and uninterested... scared of water. ‘The same generation can do something that I can’t. Why? Is there something wrong with my body? With

my ability?’ They cannot understand that they have missed all those lessons, all that time. (I7).”

Relating with personal anecdotes from their own struggle is an effective way to help students realize that there is nothing wrong with them. Sharing experiences is particularly important among female adolescent who may be at a cross-roads; at this age one is old enough to have developed personal beliefs from their birth country that may make swimming in Sweden challenging, but one is also young enough to question these beliefs and adapt Swedish culture. Furthermore, parents are stricter about holding traditional values among daughters than sons. A girls’ family may be pulling her in an opposite direction than that of her school and social network. **Communicating to parents** that swimming is needed in school and for safety are ways to gain their support through logic, without bringing religion or gender roles into the discussion.

“...I tell [parents] ‘there is a requirement in school’ and when they hear that they become more interested ... (I7)”

Female classes, or most importantly **female teachers**, who can use contact in demonstrating stroke work, are important to get the ball rolling and create that initial confidence and security. Female-specific challenges and strategies are discussed further below.

4.2.3 Adults – Empowering with the Ability to Protect Self and Family

As with learning a new language, learning swimming becomes more difficult with age, as seen by the distance of the arrows from the green (*Figure 2*). Both the mentality of an adult as well as the poor social acceptance of an adult lacking this skill cause psychological and structural barriers.

“He was 30-40, how should he begin?! ... especially when from another country, it is hard to teach an adult. The courses we have are just for teaching children. As an adult you have to teach yourself. (I7)”

Perhaps even more dangerous than allowing fear to prevent learning is when adults form a false sense of confidence. Especially when from a “tough” Middle Eastern culture where one should not show weakness, adults are likely to put themselves in situations beyond their skill level.

“It’s different when it comes to an adult who wants to swim and has no experience. They just want to jump in the water without thinking about the consequences. Then they might have their kid with them and think they can handle

it themselves, but it can be disastrous if they jump in a lake or ocean. He doesn't want to learn, he's an adult. It's a big mistake. (I7)''

Informants stressed communicating the importance of learning to swim and why one should not be ashamed nor embarrassed over inability. Sharing their personal journey is a useful way to relate. When parents do not show interest in learning for themselves, motivating with the ability to save their children is effective.

''[Regarding] a parent you should explain differently ... 'imagine if something happened to your child, or someone else's child, and you were alone while they were drowning. They need your help ... (I5).''

The informants expressed that after the hardships refugee families faced in relocating to a safer place, the safety of their children is priority, and an effective motivation for action. Many shared stories of people they knew, and how they motivated others in the community to learn.

''The dad was devastated [after the drownings]. He fled his country because of war, then lost his children right in front of his eyes. He couldn't help, he didn't know how. (I7)''

4.2.4 Adjusting to Gender-Related Norms

Although gender norms provide challenges for all genders, barriers Middle Eastern women and girls face were expressed repeatedly by all informants and experienced first-hand by the female informants. In some countries, such as Afghanistan, it is very uncommon for females to know how to swim or to even step foot into a pool hall, making simple things such as pool rules, challenging due to the *unfamiliar environment* and social context. One informant nearly drowned after entering a new pool which suddenly deepened, since she had only been in one pool prior which was of consistent depth.

Showering nude prior to swimming provides an extreme culture shock, even for the men, though especially the women. Explaining the hygienic reasoning behind showering and leaving religion out of the discussion is a successful strategy. Providing *shower curtains* is another simple yet effective solution which some formants had managed at their local facilities while it is a work-in-progress for others.

''This discussion over religion is tricky. We wouldn't succeed. It's got to be about hygiene, and religion I wouldn't say anything against (I9).''

A lack of female instructors and/or all-female classes provides another barrier, as many females, mostly older women, do not feel comfortable learning with males around.

“They didn’t dare to come at first because in our culture male teachers cannot be in the poolhall, so they didn’t dare take their shawls off ... But when they ... realized that the men just stood on the side and explained what to do, only female teachers were in the water showing technique and the men weren’t touching them ... they told all their friends and more ... came. (I3)”

For some women, it is enough for the male instructors to **teach “hands-off”** verbalizing instructions from the pool deck, though others need private sessions. When teaching religious women, the informants allowed them to **maintain their beliefs and practices** and tried to leave religion out of the discussion. This method respects the women’s decision and often leads to adapting Swedish characteristics once comfortable, in their own time.

“When we started all the girls had a shawl ... the following semester they all removed them ... I didn’t recommend anything, they could decide for themselves ... but they felt that it was easier to swim and they saw [the male teacher] was not touching them ... (I3).”

Other religious factors cause some women to miss long periods of lessons due to Ramadan or menstruation. Having females from a similar cultural background helps in establishing a mutual understanding so that the students see value in learning and the teachers understand their students’ challenges.

As seen in *Figure 2*, young girls (defined by informants as under 8-15 years old, depending) also face additional difficulties, though this is mostly due to the parents.

“... it is easy for children because they don’t think much about religion ... the problem is adults ... “I contact the parents and explain ... because I am from the same country and culture, so I sort of understand how they think (I4).”

Convincing the parents was described as easier in regards to children, both because the parents are more accepting of young girls learning in a mixed gender class, as well as because some of the male teachers did not feel it was their place to suggest how a parent should handle such a sensitive issue (regarding older girls).

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of Results

The purpose of the current study was to analyze varying experiences and strategies regarding promoting swimming ability among newly arrived immigrants in Sweden. The results show both the complexity of the issue as well as the importance of targeting this at-risk group. Swim teachers tailor their goals and strategies based on age- and gender-specific barriers and characteristics. Gender differences proved a main finding, with Middle Eastern females requiring additional strategies compared to males within the same age group. The overarching context within which the teachers work is the understanding that *learning to swim is like learning Swedish*. Meaning that swimming ability is part of the integration process and is crucial to be able to participate in Swedish culture, and safely due so. Additionally, like learning a language, the informants observed personally and among their students that swimming becomes increasingly challenging with age and is a slow process with many plateaus.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

5.2.1 Cross-Cultural Psychology

The teachers' experiences of dealing with challenging students is consistent with that of cross-cultural psychology, namely that while there is acculturation on a group level, psychological acculturation on an individual level may differ from that of the group (23). There are different ways of interacting with and mixing the cultures, which must be considered in ethically and effectively targeting groups who were raised in another culture. For example, some Middle Eastern women choose to dive into Swedish culture by learning in a mixed gender class, while others choose only to learn with a female teacher or private female courses.

Swimming is important for all to learn and an important step in the integration process even if learned in a way which seems odd in Swedish culture. It allows participation in Swedish society down the road, not to mention safety. According to research by psychologists, there is a fine line between assimilation and marginalization; there must be a mutual accommodation where both groups accept the cultural differences of the other (23). The non-dominants group must adopt core values of the dominant and the dominant must adapt national institutions (e.g. health and education services) to meet the needs of minority groups (e.g. through intensive swimming lessons).

The different challenges teachers expressed based on age of their students are also consistent with the challenges identified in cross-cultural psychology. Generally, young children have a

smoother acculturation after immigrating, possibly due to the flexibility of youth or due to the little time spent in the first culture making it easier to take on a new one (23). Older youth and adolescents often face grave challenges, with possible explanations including the pressure from peers and family and the journey of self-identity which is multiplied in the face of a new culture. Adults, and overall the older one is at immigration, was found by psychologists to increase difficulties is acculturation, as confirmed in this study (23).

5.2.2 Gender Differences

Although it may seem to a Swede that allowing Middle Eastern women to learn separately is promoting gender inequality and halting integration, everyone acculturates at their own rate and through an individualized process, as found in cross-cultural psychology. As the informants emphasized, if the girls and women are uncomfortable in the pool then they will not come back or perhaps never even try to begin with. It is most important to get the ball rolling through creating familiarity and comfort with an aquatic setting through small steps; often women later choose on their own to integrate into mixed gender classes or remove layers of clothing, and if not then this is also something that should be respected.

A qualitative study by Kahan exploring Arab American college students' beliefs towards socioecological factors in their physical activity and body composition found pronounced gender differences. Not only did participation in physical activity differ by gender, but parents imposed their birth cultural norms on their children, especially females (24). Kahan's findings are consistent with that of this study, as the swim teachers identified parents' interest and cultural beliefs (including gender norms) as the main barriers to overcome when achieving swimming ability among young girls. Kahan's study confirms the notion that gender norms of immigrant parents impact their children, and in these cases, physical activity and swimming ability. Additionally, Kahan's study discusses an "intermediate adjustment period" during which the informant's transition from a Middle Eastern to U.S. perspective of physical activity, including purpose and form of activity. Such a shift in understanding and practice was also expressed by the swim teachers themselves, and as a goal to shift their students and students' parents' perspective of swimming "from ice skating to swimming."

5.2.3 Water Safety Research

Although the body of literature is small, there is a growing amount of research, mainly in North America and Australia, showing associations between ethnicity and/or culture and swimming ability. A study in Australia, another nation with high water exposure and aquatic culture, found

immigrants were significantly less likely to: identify adequate supervision ($p = 0.004$); have participated in child water familiarisation programs ($p = 0.000$); or perceived themselves as able swimmers ($p = 0.000$) (25). Immigrants were also found significantly less likely to have taken CPR training. The study concluded an obvious “importance of tailored drowning prevention strategies for migrants in countries ... with a strong aquatic culture” (25). These results are consistent with what was found in the interviews, as even those who learned to swim in their birth countries were lacking safety and lifesaving skills. Informants also expressed that, due to embarrassment of inability as well as lack of understanding, immigrant adults were reluctant to learn to swim. This knowledge gap and dangerous mindset must be addressed when designing interventions and creating a safer society. Strategies which worked for swim teachers in Sweden include relating to informants’ cultural background while explaining swimming in a Swedish context. Additionally, motivating parents with the ability to save their family’s lives was another way of getting adults onboard.

Research has shown that dangerous submersion is more commonly associated with inadequate supervision than no supervision (measured by quality of supervision and proximity to child). Parents tend to underestimate the risk at hand and supervision needed (26). The informants spoke of this problem among parents from countries where swimming was uncommon and therefore the safety risk is severely underestimated. Having trained gatekeepers in the community (such as the WSA) who can understand both the birth culture and the Swedish culture effectively shifts the perspective of swimming from just a hobby to safety and drowning prevention. The SLS WSA are especially beneficial in the sense of bridging the two cultures and knowing the language in order to intervene immediately upon immigration. However, the interviews revealed that sharing a migration history is not as important as recognizing and understanding the barriers identified and using the corresponding strategies with patience and persistence.

Another study examining U.S. Spanish-speaking minority families’ knowledge of home and child safety in regards to injury prevention, including drowning, compliments the idea of water safety interventions, as the knowledge creates lasting change (27). The study involved a training with pre- and post-training surveys to measure behavior outcome, and found that teaching swimming to children was one of the most significant behavior changes (27). Speaking to parents’ drive to create the best life for their family, especially after fleeing their home country for this very reason, is a sensitive but effective strategy.

5.3 Methodological Considerations and Limitations

The trustworthiness of qualitative findings can be evaluated based on the concepts: *Credibility*, *Confirmability*, *Dependability*, and *Transferability* (20). Multiple measures to increase credibility were taken; the study achieved intimate familiarity with the setting which is crucial (15). Additionally, systematic comparisons in the data were made in creating categories which cover a range of empirical observation and make logical connections (15). Negative cases analysis was conducted in which a conscious search for outlying data was planned into the data collection to force revision of the hypothesis, including interviewing informants who could and could not swim prior to immigrating (20). Peer-debriefing was done with a fellow researcher and the supervisor, receiving critical input from someone outside the research process (20).

An audit trail in the form of memos document reasoning about the emergent design and thick-descriptions allow other researchers to judge dependability and transferability (20). Although the sample size was small, saturation was met and informants were selected with the aim of analytical generalizability, meaning that each informant contributed to the theory as it developed (20). The sample may have varied by demographics, though, all informants come from similar contexts before migrating to Sweden and much of the results is due to the Swedish culture and system. These results serve as analytical generalizations of both immigrating to a strong aquatic-cultured nation and entering and navigating this aspect of Sweden as an immigrant. The resulting theory is *relevant* and *modifiable* in a changing world, as per Glaser and Strauss' criteria (20). Memos documented interpretations and analytical decisions throughout the study, which were shared with the supervisor to ensure neutrality of data and that conclusions are grounded in the data, hence, confirmability (20).

A limitation of the study is that the interview language (Swedish) is a non-native language for the participants and was translated to English, creating two areas for which meaning may be lost. However, informants were not rushed in formulating sentences and the interviewer clarified as necessary.

Another limitation was the lack of time for proper theoretical sampling. Roughly half of the interviews were scheduled ahead of time based on interest and availability within the study's timeframe. Ideally, each interview following the initial sample (first three) would have been scheduled one at a time in accordance with the emerging categories. However, the interview guide was revised to focus the following interviews on developing the preliminary categories as per theoretical sampling (15). The sample size was small, although the sample population

was homogeneous and small itself, requiring a smaller sample. Most importantly, saturation was met, meaning when collecting new data no longer “sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories” (28). Additional female informants would have benefited the study as the experiences were mostly from males and women were a key topic in the interviews. However, this sample is representative of the actual population, as more males participated in the FWSP, due to more male refugees coming to Sweden in the 2015 influx. Additionally, the sample does provide variance of age, birth country, and urban/rural locations, which was considered in selecting informants.

5.4 Conclusions

The findings of this study support the notion that Middle Eastern immigrants (and likely other origins) experience additional challenges in obtaining this vital skill and require targeted interventions such as that SLS has implemented. Such interventions are most appropriately done through a community-owned approach, with collaboration from community leaders. Although the meaning of swimming ability varied across informants, mastering this skill was considered a crucial element of integration. Much of Swedish culture surrounds bodies of water, whether swimming in the summer or ice fishing in the winter. Children and adolescents are required to take swim tests throughout school, and swimming is often taken for granted as something everyone can do, at least up to the test level. Meaning is fluid, changing throughout a lifetime, and strongly tied to culture. Informants’ meaning of swimming ability showed in their strategies and is something they aim to communicate to their students. The specific strategies used while teaching were less relevant than the strategies used to get families in the water in the first place, and interested to learn. The informants expressed adults as especially challenging to teach, and due to their potential to influence children, as important targets for interventions. Females should be given special consideration, as well as additional time to learn given the additional barriers they face. Simple solutions such as female classes and teachers, shower curtains, and explaining the reasoning for practices are effective strategies to aid females from countries of contrasting gender norms and religious beliefs. Programs such as FWSP empower at-risk community members to feel confident in their own safety and that of those around them, ultimately preventing a public health concern – drowning.

5.5 Recommendations for Practice

The FWSP is clearly benefitting many communities, though there is still a gap in swimming ability among immigrants versus Swedish born families. This study provides insight into next

steps and identifies barriers and pathways for action. It is clear from the interviews that swim teachers alone cannot solve the problem. Collaboration between migration agencies, local government agencies, the education system, poolhalls and other aquatic businesses, and immigrant populations is crucial to ensuring early intervention upon arrival.

Integration Courses

Some communities already offer water safety topics in their integration courses, though this needs to widen across all communities and be adopted by Swedish for Foreigners (SFI) classes. This first step is crucial to ensure safe habits around ice and water, as well as getting the ball rolling – explaining where and how to begin swim lessons, pool rules, etc. Aquatic activities and swimming especially are engrained in Swedish culture and conveying this is important to allow immigrants to begin integration and for safety. Emphasizing the safety behind aquatic skills and knowledge is a crucial strategy towards swimming ability among females especially, leaving religion and gender-roles out of the discussion, but rather emphasizing the need across all, regardless of age, gender, religion, etc.

The interconnectedness of many immigrant families, especially given their culture and having gone through migration together, means that it is important to target the parents in order to impact the children. Children, especially daughters, may not be exposed to swimming until beginning school, which is both dangerous and creates a culture shock and embarrassment later. Explaining that swimming is a safety measure and a school requirement is an effective strategy for reasoning why all children, regardless of gender, must learn to swim. Many informants spoke of the parents later becoming interested in learning themselves after seeing their children learn.

Schools

School systems (those which are not already) need to be able to cater to their students. There ought to always be at least two teachers so that a class can be divided by ability, so no one is ever forced to watch while the class goes to the deep end. Schools must provide additional, intensive support for youth who cannot swim. Schools need to develop an interest in learning this lifesaving skill among a group who is already behind their peers; without proper support adolescents risk accepting a failing grade and never learning to swim. Additionally, female-only classes are crucial to provide girls equal learning access, especially in this difficult transition period.

Schools are a key link in the chain and can either aid or worsen the pathway towards swimming ability. Having to pay for lessons is not always an option, especially for larger families, and if the parents are unable to swim themselves it may even put the children in greater danger if the parents then decide to take them swimming to practice for the school test. The support services provided through schools should also be more standardized than they are; one's education and personal safety should not be dependent on mere luck of school placement.

Aquatics Staff

Regulation is needed to improve inclusion at pools. Simple measures such as ensuring all facilities offer a shower with a curtain, and posting multilingual signs explaining rules and expectations, are cost-effective and effective. These methods were discussed as either having been done by informants and helping significantly or were desired by informants at their local facilities.

Adult-specific classes need to be implemented across more facilities, especially among parents, as they can greatly impact their children's attitudes towards swimming, positively or negatively. Recruiting more female teachers and offering private all-female classes are another crucial step for including all community members. Over time, many female students were reported to have taken off shawls or welcomed a male teacher once trust was gained, but female teachers who respect the women's beliefs are a crucial first step.

Research Application

This study demonstrates why newly arrived immigrants require specific attention and can be used to motivate key authorities mentioned above. It is easy, especially as a Swede, to take for granted not only knowing to swim and lifesave, but being familiar with a poolhall or showering nude, for instance. Several informants spoke of the difficulty of getting community leaders onboard with their proposals. Many even offered to provide free lessons but need politician's interest in collaborating. Holding staff meetings at aquatic facilities, community offices, and migration services to brief staff on alternative perspectives and eye-opening challenges many immigrants face is crucial for the integration and safety of this group. Additional research is still needed to further explore this topic among immigrants from other backgrounds and even among Swedes with poor swimming ability. Furthermore, gender proved a key factor in learning and teaching swimming among this target population; now knowing this, additional research is needed focusing on gender and Middle Eastern women in particular. Strategies and barriers for females identified in this study would benefit from further exploration.

5.6 Implications for Public Health

Swimming provides low-impact, full-body exercise and is an important protection against drowning. Especially in a society where education and leisure activities involve water, it is crucial to ensure the entire population is knowledgeable in water safety and possess the basic swimming ability. Parents are most important to target for a trickle-down effect in the family, which has been found effective in other studies. Additionally, the social integration aspect of learning to swim is important for the psychological wellbeing of this group and for an equitable society. The government ought to standardize the aid received through the education system and migration agency, as it is unfair for certain families to receive better support than others due to community placement. The results of this study can be used in designing and implementing initiatives to increase safety in and around water and ice among immigrant groups in Sweden and other settings.

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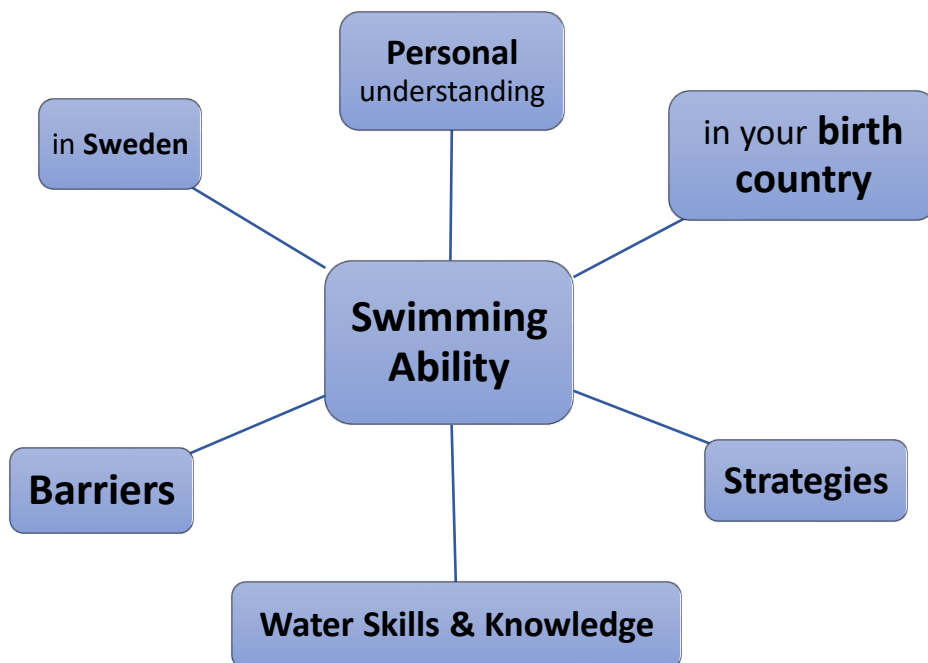
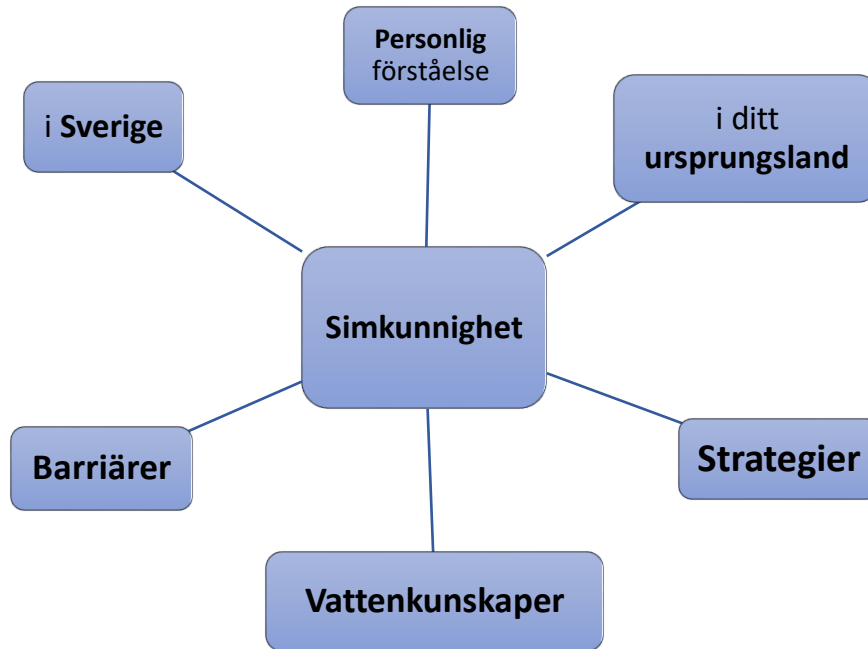
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8. Appendix

Appendix 1: Mind Map



Mind map interview tool for study on swimming ability, actual (Swedish) and translated version (English)

Appendix 2: Information Letter



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**Svenska
Livräddningssällskapet**

INFORMATION OCH INBJUDAN ATT DELTA I EN INTERVJU OM SIMKUNNIGHET

Hej,

Du kontaktas eftersom du har deltagit i Svenska Livräddningssällskapet (SLS) Nyanlända Projekt och är utbildad till simlärare och/eller vattensäkerhetsambassadör. Jag är mastersstudent i folkhälsovetenskap på Lunds universitet och genomför en intervjustudie som en del av min masteruppsats om hur nyanlända siminstruktörer uppfattar begreppet simkunnighet och hur siminstruktörer arbetar för att uppnå simkunnighet i de grupper de arbetar med. Resultaten av uppsatsen kommer att användas av SLS för att marknadsföra er som nya simläraren samt engagera fler för att öka simkunnigheten bland nyanlända i Sverige.

Studien följer forskningsetiska riktlinjer. Att delta i intervjun är helt frivilligt och du kan när som helst avbryta intervjun eller låta bli att svara på frågor. Vi kan ta det på engelska eller svenska beroende på vad som känns bäst för dig. Med ditt medgivande kommer intervjun att spelas in och beräknas ta cirka-45-60 minuter. All information kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt och resultaten kommer inte att kunna härledas till dig som person. Den inspelade intervjun kommer att förstöras vid slutet av kursen i juni 2019. Resultatet från studien kommer att presenteras i min masteruppsats samt tillhandahållas Svenska Livräddningssällskapet.

Om du kan tänka dig att prata om dina erfarenheter kring simkunnighet eller önskar mer information om studien så kan du nå mig via mejl, telefon, eller sms. Vi kan då planera en mötesplats och en tid som passar dig. Tack för din tid!

Kontaktinformation:
Linnea Luckhaus
jamielinnea4@gmail.com
079-#####

Appendix 3: Consent Form



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Svenska
Livräddningssällskapet

SAMYCKE TILL DELTAGANDE I INTERVJU OM SIMKUNNIGHET

Nedan ger du ditt samtycke till att delta i uppföljning, analys och forskning av simkunnighet som begrepp bland nyanlända SLS simlärare. Läs igenom detta noggrant och ge ditt medgivande genom att skriva under med din namnteckning längst ned.

Jag intygar att:

- Jag har blivit informerad om intervjustudiens syfte och vet att resultaten kommer att presenteras i en masteruppsats vid Lunds universitet samt att användas av SLS.
- Studien följer forskningsetiska riktlinjer och jag förstår vad det innebär.
- Jag deltar helt frivilligt och jag kan när som helst avbryta intervjun eller låta bli att svara på frågor.
- Jag är medveten om att all personlig information kommer att behandlas konfidentiellt och att inga uppgifter kommer gå att härledas tillbaka till mig.
- Jag samtycker att intervjun spelas in. Inspelningen ska raderas efter att studien slutförts (juni 2019) och Lunds Universitet har godkänt masteruppsatsen

Ort / Datum

Informanten Signatur

Namnförtydligande

Intervjuaren Signatur

NamnförtydligandeJamie Linnea Luckhaus.....

Kontaktinformation:

Linnea Luckhaus
jamielinnea4@gmail.com
079-#####



LUND UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Medicine

Master's Programme in Public Health

9. Popular Science Summary

Learning to swim is like learning Swedish, not Ice-Skating

A nation with plentiful water sources and strong aquatic culture, swimming ability is as expected in Sweden as being able to drive in the U.S. With mandatory swim tests in schools, standardized by the Swedish Lifesaving Society (SLS), in theory, every Swede should possess this crucial skill. However, immigrants not only miss some or all swim schooling, but often have differing perspectives on aquatic safety and behavior.

SLS has therefore implemented a program, training immigrant swim teachers to increase swim ability within their communities. Following this program, a study was conducted in which nine such teachers from Middle Eastern backgrounds were interviewed across Sweden regarding their meaning of swimming ability and experiences while teaching newly immigrated families.

Analysis shows that strategies and barriers vary according to gender and age of students, depicted in *Figure 2*. Females face additional barriers, mainly regarding clothing, lacking female teachers, and gender roles stemming from their birth culture.

Swimming ability developed as a concept since immigrating, even among those who could swim prior to emigrating. The meaning shifted from a hobby or luxury – like ice-skating – to an empowering, lifesaving necessity. Learning to swim is crucial in the integration process, something the teachers communicate to newly immigrated community members. Swimming ability allows participation in Swedish social activities and nature, enables children and youth to pass gym and fit in at school, and moreover, it allows families to be safe in and around water and ice.

Programs such as SLS' are crucial for an equitable and safe society. The results of this study will aid designing and implementing similar programs in Swedish or other settings. Collaboration and willingness among swim teachers, pool management, community leaders, and migration agencies is necessary for effective implementation.