VOICES OF LATIN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN THE SWEDISH LABOUR MARKET

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this qualitative study are threefold: 1) to explore, describe and analyze the paths for accessing the Swedish labour market among a group of women of Latin-American origin; 2) to address the question about role of the women’s social networks in relation to the processes of gaining/maintaining employment; and 3) to present how the participant’s perceive their job careers within the Swedish labour market. Individual semi-structured interviews constituted the primary source of data collection. Conceptualizations from labour market theories and social capital theories were laid out to bring relevant understandings. The sampling strategy used was ‘criterion’. The results shown the interaction of personal and structural aspects in the job-search process, jobs attained and perception of occupational careers. Bonding, bridging and linking social capital are relevant concepts to understand the extent to which women obtain information and mobilize resources in the job-search process. Perceptions regarding career paths are tied to the participant’s expectations on the jobs they have looked for, the meanings they attribute to their occupations and the learning derived from their working experiences. Further research on networking at the workplaces and its impact on job satisfaction, job attachment, and self-esteem, are suggested.

Keywords: latin-american women/ swedish labour market/ social capital/ job-search strategies/ perception of job-careers
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Sincerely,
Laura Patricia Mantilla Y.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Concerns have emerged during the last decades regarding the challenges experienced by migrants in their paths into European labour markets. Issues like high unemployment rates, or low employment participation have been mentioned in the public debate, also being the focus of attention of economic, social, and ethnic studies.

In June 17, 2008 a communication from the European Commission stated that “While access to the labour market is a key path to integration, current figures show that, overall, the unemployment rates for immigrants remain often higher than those for EU nationals although there are great variations between Member States. Furthermore, immigrants are often more exposed to being employed in precarious work, jobs of lower quality or jobs for which they are over-qualified, with the result that their skills are not fully utilised” (Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, COM 2008, 359 final, p.3).

It has been observed that foreigners from non-EU member states enter the EU labour markets to cover needs at both ends of skill spectrum; in some industrialized countries of Europe –e.g. Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Germany and France- high skilled foreign workers fill job openings in the manufacturing and mining sectors or in the information and technology sectors. On the other hand, low skilled foreign workers regardless of their legal status, cover vacancies or create demand for new jobs at the lowest social and occupational categories (Katseli, 2004).

As noted by Bäcklund (2002), Diez and Pichelman (2006), foreign labour participation rates within the EU are presented in different ways across their member countries; much of this variation is due to discrepancies in the conceptualization of the term ‘migrant’ and the sources used to gather information on migration. Who is a migrant, a foreigner, EU national, or native of the host country? How the criteria is used to define these concepts and how their figures are presented in the statistics regarding labour market participation would generate a varied picture.
across countries, which in turn would imply different ways of interpreting such figures, making more complex their analysis and comparison of the trends between these groups.

Notwithstanding the limitations and difficulties implied in the statistical figures, a growing body of literature show that foreign-born population especially from countries outside the European Union face multiple hinders when trying to access internal EU labour markets (Bäcklund, 2002; Le Grand and Szulkin, 2002; Rydgren, 2004). These studies offer varied interpretations, some of them find that when competing for working opportunities with the native population of the host country, foreign-born people might experience difficulties not only located at the individual level, such as language barriers, educational background, but also located at a structural level. Some of the difficulties at a structural level could be the process of validation and accreditation of the foreign working experiences and foreign education; current employment opportunities or variation in the labour demand for certain occupational sectors, internal job structuring, and characteristics of the recruitment processes. The differences in employment and unemployment rates between foreign-born people compared to EU nationals or natives from the host countries remain even when controlling for skill levels and other socio-economic variables (Diez & Pichelman, 2006).

As noted by several researchers a vast majority of the literature about migrants directed the attention towards migrant male populations blurring the position of their female counterparts in the labour markets. The majority of such studies risked to generalize research findings as if they applied to women as well, widening the gap in the knowledge about migrant women. Moreover, the role of migrant women as economic actors in the labour markets was largely ignored (Diez & Pichelman, 2006; Grossman, 1984; Knocke, 1999). Therefore, it seems relevant to acknowledge that migrants are women and men, they socialize differently, they occupy different places in the social structure, and their choices when entering the EU labour markets might respond to particular interests as well.

The situation of migrant women in the OECD countries was brought up at the OECD High Level Conference on the Employment of Women in 1980 (Jonung, 1982), this event was of particular importance because it allowed not only the identification of the difficulties faced by migrant women in the labour markets, but it also opened the road to further consideration of possible measures aimed to target such problems. Two decades later, within other context, a
report from the European Commission stated that “Female non-EU migrants face particular difficulties in the labour market” (Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, COM 2008, 359 final, p.3). Then, what kind of difficulties are these and, how do they differ from those experienced by male non-EU migrants? Academic studies reported patterns of division of labour on ethnic and gender lines in European countries (Jonung, 1982; Phizacklea, as cited in Knocke, 1999; Castles, 2000; Castles and Miller, 2003). Similar findings concluded that “Women encounter the difficulties that are part of their status as immigrants, while at the same time being confronted with the social subordination of women and the gender segregation in the labour market” (Knocke, 1999).

Even more, migrant women should not be taken as a homogeneous group, instead they constitute a heterogeneous group influenced by other aspects besides their gender, such as ethnicity, position in the class and social structure, position in the life cycle, all of them aspects of social differentiation which “constantly cross-cut and interact, affecting life chances, lifestyles, culture and social consciousness” (Castles and Miller, 2003, p.36).

General information regarding migrant women in the EU labour markets, their countries of origin, educational background, or employment by occupational sectors, can be found in the annual OECD reports; however this type of information is limited in the sense that it reflects only statistics but the subjective experiences of these varied groups of workers is not mentioned within such reports. Little is known about the ways these women deal with the process of access to the labour markets, how do they construct meanings through their working experiences and what is the role of others around them with whom they interact in the private and public spheres of their lives.

Castles (2000) mentioned that the restructuring of the economies and labour markets in Europe after the 1970’s and the ongoing years has been characterized by the erosion of traditional skilled manual occupations; growth in the service sector, demanding high and low skilled workers; increasingly insecure conditions of employment; increased differentiation of the labour force on the basis of gender, age and ethnicity, through mechanisms which push many women, youth and member of minorities into casual or informal-sector work; as well as international mobility of highly skilled workers. Furthermore, when observing and analyzing the situations of foreign-workers in host countries, researches should not rely only in numerical
indicators which tend to be limited in their scope, instead of that, should include the narrated experiences of individuals always influenced by the historic, social, politic, and economic contexts in which they have lived. Castles (2000, p.90) argues that “there is a need for a multidisciplinary and international social science of migration and multicultural societies, combining elements of political economy, sociology, political science, law, demography, anthropology and related disciplines”. Following this author, it is possible to construct and gain a better understanding on migration movements and multicultural societies by drawing knowledge from a broad range of theories and methodologies.

Other relevant aspects regarding migratory movements in a globalizing and multicultural world are described by Castles and Miller (2003, p. 46) when they say “Migrations are likely to continue and there will be increasing numbers of people with affiliations to more than one society. Dual or mutual citizenship will become increasingly common”. Therefore “Immigrants and their descendants do not have a static, closed and homogeneous ethnic identity, but instead dynamic multiple identities, influenced by a variety of cultural, social and other factors” (Castles & Miller, 2003, p. 39).

In the present study the author acknowledges the efforts made by different sciences in order to advance knowledge and understandings in regards to migration movements, and have paid attention to a specific area, that of foreign labour force, exploring the existing literature regarding job-search strategies and establishing a link with possible explanations from some conceptualizations introduced within social capital theories and three notions in particular: bonding, bridging and linking social capital. At the same time the researcher is aware of limitations, such as the scarcity of documented literature which gives account on the experiences of migrant working women from the women themselves in the fields of migration and labour market studies.

The researcher as a woman of Latin-American origin intends to continue with the line of research on ethnicity and job-search strategies, focusing the attention on a group of women of Latin-American origin participating in the Swedish labour market, in order to expand knowledge and gain insights on their narrated experiences.
The participant’s narratives is a departure point to explore how these women perceive their process of access into the Swedish labour market, how they have negotiated between offer and labour demand, how they perceive the role of family and social networks during the process of access to the labour market, as well as their perceptions of job careers. Then, special attention is placed to the interplay of individual and structural factors that facilitate or make difficult the working experiences of women with foreign background in the Swedish labour market.

1.1 Object of the study

The overall aim of this study is to explore, describe and analyze paths for gaining and maintaining employment in the Swedish labour market among women of Latin-American origin, with special attention put on the women’s social networks and their perceptions of job careers.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How do foreign-born women with Latin-American origin describe and perceive their process of access to the Swedish labour market?

2. How do these women perceive the role of their social networks in relation to the processes of gaining or maintaining employment in the Swedish labour market?

3. How do foreign-born women with Latin-American origin perceive their job careers within the Swedish labour market?

1.3 Design and Methodology

The author is interested and oriented by a constructivist perspective. Constructivists assume that realities are multiple and constructed through the negotiations between individuals and their environment, where language is essential, and meanings are determined through the manipulation of words and symbols (Rodwell, 1998, p.26). There is not such a thing as ‘objective’ reality but instead, reality is the product of the individual’s perspective or position, it is something that is self-created, that is subjective. The concern of the researcher is towards the understanding of multiple realities and multiple constructions through a communicative process that allows approaching to the view of the world of those involved in the investigation, what meanings they attribute to the experiences they have achieved. Instead of being at a distance or
assuming an ‘outsider perspective’, the researcher acknowledges her role during the inquiry process as a human trying to understand and interpret the internal world of human participants of this research.

Accordingly, as Creswell (2003, p.8) argued “constructivist researchers often address the “processes” of interaction among individuals. They also focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work in order to understand the historical and cultural settings of the participants. Researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they “position themselves” in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences”.

In this study, the researcher attempts to reach understanding about the perceptions of the experiences of access to the Swedish labour market and perceptions of job careers among a small group of women of Latin-American origin, making emphasis in the role of their social networks.

As a qualitative study, it is focused on’ individual’s lived experiences’ and one way to access those experiences is through the use of the language, the word spoken, but also including other aspects of communication such as body language. The researcher as interviewer acknowledges that ‘human actions cannot be understood unless the meaning that humans assign to them is understood’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p.53).

1.3.1 Discussion regarding the choice of the data collection method

At an early stage of the present study the researcher considered the possibility of using focus groups and individual interviews as potential tools for this study, because both of them are important and useful tools within qualitative social research, allowing for the exploration of the participant’s experiences, opinions, perceptions and feelings concerning their paths into the Swedish labour market. The author looked at the strengths and limitations of focus groups and interviews presented by other researchers, in order to evaluate the appropriateness of each method for this particular study. Marshall and Rossman (2006, p.133) presented a useful guide to identify strengths and weaknesses among several data collection methods; from this it was possible for the author to find that both, focus groups and interviews ‘foster face to face interactions with participants’, they promote ‘immediate follow up clarification’, both are ‘good for obtaining non-verbal communication’, they are ‘useful for describing complex interactions’,
both facilitate ‘discovery of nuances in culture’, they provide ‘context information’. “As with individual interviews, focus groups elicit a rich body of data expressed through respondent’s own words and activities” (Stewart, D., Shamdasani, P., and Rook, D., 2009, p.592), both are well suited for exploratory questions about “why”, “how”, “when”, “where” and “what kind”. Nonetheless, Stewart et al (2009, p.592) considered that “focus groups are more efficient in terms of time and (sometimes) budgetary considerations in providing a quick overview of within group differences, ranges of ideas, and so on”.

Focus groups as a resource to obtain large amounts of information quickly seemed to be convenient for the author of this study, and two workshops were initially thought to provide wide ranges of data; however three main concerns derived from the limitations of the focus groups as the appropriate method for this study. First, the women invited to participate in this research live and work in different areas of the city, their schedules are dependent on their occupations and personal interests, thus focus groups would have been dependent or limited to the participants’ availability to attend the meetings at certain times or dates. Second, the researcher was aware of the complexity implied in the dynamics within group discussions, where power relations enter to play a role when some participants take the word or extend in their comments while other participants could be less active in the discussion. As a consequence of this situation, “the results obtained in a focus group may be biased by a very dominant or opinionated member” (Stewart et al, 2009, p.595). The researcher was also concerned because she was not sure whether focus group would have allowed discussing the main research questions in depth.

Having considered this, the author turned her attention towards the strengths and weaknesses of individual interviews. Semi-structured interviews constituted the primary source of information for the present study, because they allowed more flexibility in the access to the participants, since they have different schedules which are incompatible for a planned group discussion. Thus, the date and times for each individual semi-structured interview was dependent upon the participant’s particular situation. The design of the semi-structured interviews allowed a degree of flexibility in the exploration of the topics already set up by the interviewer, and a deeper understanding of the varied research topics.

As a flexible research instrument, in semi-structured interview, “question wording can be changed and explanations given” Robson (2002, p.270). The interview situation could also be
managed in a way were the interviewee felt free to express her believes and thoughts, in a confident manner. “Face-to-face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one’s line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives” (Robson, 2002, p.272), at the same time that they allow the observation of ‘non-verbal cues’ which provide important information to complement or contradict what already has been said by the interviewees. Nonetheless, the “lack of standardization that it implies inevitably raises concerns about reliability” as Robson (2002, p.273) mentioned, which called for special attention and consideration by the interviewer in order to overcome potential bias, even though ‘biases are difficult to rule out’.

A pilot interview was conducted in order to test the reliability and usefulness of the semi-structured interview guide. After this interview was done some questions of the original formulary were changed, in order to select those that focus the attention on the three main research questions. The participant for the pilot interview was included among the other four participants of the study, and her responses were included among the final results.

Since the first research question is addressed towards the perception of the process of access to the Swedish labour market, the author acknowledges that this process as such already had taken place because the interviewees participate long ago in the labour market, thus the most appropriate research tool that seemed most appropriate to respond that question at this specific moment of the study was through the use of semi-structured interviews which would allow to gain insight of such experiences.

1.3.2 Data collection Method

All the qualitative interviews took the form of semi-structured questions, and before the interview took place the interviewer asked the participant’s consent to record it, and assured the participant that the personal information (real name) would be kept in secret. There was a general guide contemplating some general topics to be discussed during the interview session, thus there was an ‘agenda’ for the conversation. The approximated time for each interview was 60 minutes. During the pilot interview there were some technical problems related to the recording quality, thus the interviewer made use of her notes to complement data that might be missing from that
tape. After the pilot interview, the researcher used a digital recorder in order to assure the best
quality of the recorded interviews and a backup in case of further technical issues.

    After each interview was done the tapes and the digital records were coded by
pseudonyms which substituted real names to identify each participant, information was written
regarding the date, time and place where it was done. Full-transcripts of the tape-recorded or
digital-recorded interviews followed a process of identification of recurrent themes, as well as
organization by topics that could be related to the three main research questions. Colours served
as codes to identify each theme. It was important to acknowledge that far from being a ‘merely
technical task’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006), the transcription process implied a lot of
interpretation and judgment by the researcher, who paid attention to the subtle aspects of the
communication, such as body language, pauses in the interviewee’s discourse, or sudden
emphasis in certain words. In the proposed study, all these aspects were taken into consideration
and possible meanings for long pauses in the interviewee’s conversations or sudden changes in
the themes were interpreted and offered by the interviewer in the final transcripts.

    Translation from Spanish to English occurred for selected fragments of the interviews
which were considered illustrative and in relation to the research topic, a process done by the
researcher whose native language is Spanish, being fluent in verbal and writing communication
in both languages. Additional interviewer’s ability consisted of making use of the knowledge
gained from the academic formation in Psychology, and interviewing skills applied during the
Clinical and Social practices.

    After the selected fragments of each interview were translated from Spanish to English
they were used as texts which were analyzed and interpreted, but always taking into account
important aspects of the communication such as body language. In this study the researcher was
also aware that issues of connotation and meanings play an important role in the translation
process, because trying to locate or identify a spoken word in the Spanish language and find a
connotation for the English language is an exercise of careful attention to meanings. The
researcher chose to be the only person responsible for the transcriptions and translations, for
several reasons. First, because the researcher was the interviewer and was in the position of
recalling subtle aspects involved in the interview process, and did not rely in other person as a
translator who had not being part of such process; second because the researcher had access to
the interviewees and made possible to clarify their words by contacting them; and third, because the researcher was aware of the interpretive process involved in transcription and translation, and tried to generate ‘accurate and meaningful data’ (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

At times, selected fragments of the interviews appeared throughout the text in the form of quotations made in Spanish accompanied by the corresponding English translations in parenthesis. This strategy served specific purposes, first, as a warning to the reader that there is not direct translation of the phrases’ meanings into English, but a process of interpretation by the researcher; and second, “as a remainder to the reader that the interviews were originally conducted in a language other than English” (ibid, p.112).

At other times, there were other selected fragments larger in extension, thus the author considered to present them only in English, in order to ‘lend emphasis and focus’ on the content of the material (Wolcott, 1990, p.66). Thus, the appendix contains the version of the selected fragments in Spanish which is the source language.

On the other hand, even though Spanish is the official language in most countries of Latin-America, women with Hispanic background might use different words or expressions due to the variations in the dialect of their countries of origin, sometimes reflecting the particularities of the informal language. In order to gain an understanding about the variation of the language uses, the researcher asked the participants to define from time to time what they meant when using certain words.

**Research scope and limitations**

The author framed this specific study within a qualitative research because of the primary interest was placed on the approach, exploration and understanding of the perceived experiences of a group of foreign-born women participating in the Swedish labour market. It was not intended as a comprehensive study that might capture the experiences of all foreign-born women currently working in Sweden, neither it was possible to invite to participate in this study to all women of Latin-American origin currently working in Sweden, as there are several reasons for that, such as limitations in time and resources for this research. Instead, the focus was placed towards a small group of five women of Latin-American origin, in order to present and idea about their experiences while working in the Swedish labour market. Scarce literature is found
on this specific ethnic group, the documents and reports usually group women of all foreign-background within their statistical figures, and little is known about their own voices and how they see themselves within the structure of the labour market.

The nature of the research questions were formulated in a way that could allow to explore specific topics, such as the process of access to the labour market (job search strategies used), role of networks, and perceptions of job careers, although other kind of information such as the motives for their migration to Sweden was not included in the questionnaires.

After academic and practical considerations the instrument for data collection that rendered more appropriate within a limited time framework and limited resources was the use of semi-structured interviews, as it provided useful information to approach and understand the research questions. Nonetheless it would have been interesting to include other kind of tools, such as the focus groups, or even the development of case studies, in order to follow the participants over certain time span and be able to witness aspects implied in the three research questions, since they allude to ‘processes’.

1.3.3. Sampling strategy

Access to the participants of this study was facilitated through natural occurring interactions between the researcher and the women, in their workplaces or through referrals by persons who served as intermediaries and commented about the research project to the women of Latin-American origin working in the Stockholm area, at Stockholm city or in Vaxholm. The researcher was not related by friendship or kin with the participants, instead the researcher approached them directly or through other persons in order to extend the information and the invitation to participate in this study.

Even though there are several countries within Latin-America, there are common aspects shared by some of their inhabitants. The majority of the language spoken is Spanish, some cultural and religious traditions are shared, and there are some variations among countries such as culinary characteristics or variants in the use of the language and dialect.

The sampling strategy used in the present study was ‘criterion’ as defined by Marshall & Rossman (2006, p.71), which “includes all aspects that meet some criterion” and is “useful for
quality assurance”. However, due to some limitations in the process of identifying potential participants for this study, the author asked other students from the Department of Social Work about persons they might know who might be willing to participate in this study; thus, this was another strategy for getting access to participants. Several aspects were considered in order to select the women invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews. First, to comply with the criterion, these women were born in (any country of) Latin America and have accumulated a period of residence and working experience in Sweden of more than one year. This criterion was established to allow the women to give account of their relatively wide experiences in Sweden, and facilitated to obtain rich full information for the exploration of the main research topics.

The women who participated in the study were between the early 30’s and 50’s years of age. The age-related criteria established for this study was considered of importance for several reasons. For many youths including natives Swedes it is possible that the transition from school to work is experienced as a particularly difficult period in life, and might be influenced by other aspects as educational attainment, or shifts between temporary jobs. In order to avoid situations that could seem relatively similar amongst young people, the women invited to this study were in their early 30’s years of age, thus enabling to focus on other aspects such as the role of their ethnicity in their paths into the Swedish labour market. As for the case of other women between their 40’s and 50’s, they were included because they were expected to give extended account of their participation in the labour force.

The criterion related to the educational background was flexible, allowing the variation in educational attainments and their influence in the process of access to the Swedish labour market. By educational attainment it was meant high school, vocational or technical studies, graduate or postgraduate studies.

The age related criteria or the educational attainment criteria were not intended or used as variables from statistical analysis, but they were thought to bring up more diversity and richness in the characteristics of the sample.

The women from the sample agreed to voluntarily participate in the study, donated of their time and found individual means for accessing the sites for the research activities.
Limitations derived from the sampling strategy:

The author is aware that women from other countries of Latin-America were not included in this study because the sampling procedure was indeed limited. Only the experiences and perceptions of a small group of five women from three countries of Latin America (Peru, Chile and Venezuela) who currently work and live in Sweden, in the Stockholm area (Stockholm city, and Vaxholm) were described. To certain point it could be claimed that saturation of the sample did not occur. Therefore, it is not the intention of the author to claim generalizability in the responses provided by the participants of this study. Nonetheless their narrated experiences were useful to elicit ‘multiple constructed realities’ regarding their paths into the Swedish labour market, how the participants describe and present their subjective understanding and interpretations’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p.53).

1.3.4 Data Analysis

The results from the interviews were transcribed in Spanish which is the language source, and presented in the form of a written text which facilitated the identification of themes and its organization. Once the author had identified themes and subthemes that emerged throughout each interview, the author extracted those answers that responded to the research questions and interpreted them in relation to the concepts from social capital theories and labour market theorizations.

Next to this, it followed a process where the attention was turned towards the similarities and differences in the interviewees’ narratives. At the same time, the literature that was explored prior to the interviews along with the results from previous researches offered the author a general picture of important aspects to be considered in the analysis, such as job search strategies, use and mobilization of resources, networking characteristics, amongst others.

Accordingly, the analysis is presented following the order in which the research questions were formulated, and it encompasses the author’s interpretations of the experiences described by the participants of this study and from the results of the literature revised.
1.4 Ethical considerations

The researcher considered important to assure the participants the confidentiality of their participation before the interviews took place, due to the fact that they might reveal some sensitive information. The participants were asked if they would like to have their real names changed, and all of them were asked for their consent to keep record of their communication, as means to improve and facilitate the gathering of information. Since the opinion regarding anonymity varied amongst the participants, were some participants were more concern while others not, the researcher opted to treat them equally and used pseudonyms for each participant. Similarly, information regarding work places or institutions was substituted in order to avoid situations where the participants’ life or current position in the labour market could be compromised.

Sensitive situations were described by the participants and at times the researcher felt the need for supporting the women when such topics emerged, in the way of giving them feedback or allowing them to extend in the situations they described. Participants in this study were observed to have a will to communicate their thoughts and experiences; when the interviews concluded they kept talking about their experiences, whether recalling situations already mentioned and extending comments on them, or presenting new situations. The researcher interpreted this not only as a participant’s will to share their experiences but as a need for the women to talk about their lives, because through the communicative process they could elaborate meanings over situations that were of importance to them.

In order to retrieve something to the participants for their voluntary share of time and experiences, the researcher offered them a summary of the present study once it was concluded.

1.5 Validity

In an effort to render validity to this study, the author made some reflections regarding relevant aspects around the question for validity. First, some concepts about the discussion regarding validity in qualitative research were explored through different authors, and then a question about the validity of the method used is placed. Other aspects such as generalizability and reliability within qualitative research are discussed next.
Even though this section is not intended to make an exhaustive discussion regarding issues of validity within qualitative research, the author acknowledges the contributions made by authors who brought elements that motivated the discussion regarding the validity in qualitative research. “Validation becomes investigation, continually checking, questioning, and theoretically interpreting the findings” (Kvale, 1989, p.77), thus it might be possible to understand that the question of validity within the frame of the present study could be evaluated through the whole process of research itself. Thus, it would be necessary to evaluate the fundamental questions of the research, how they were addressed and interpreted.

Taking up the arguments presented by Robson (2002, p. 93) “validity is concerned with whether the findings are ‘really’ about what they appear to be about”. Answers provided by the interviewees were assumed to be true answers in the sense that they, under no means, were pressured to answer; they were spontaneous in their responses, they had freedom to expand and comment what they considered relevant in regards to the topic of their working life in the Swedish labour market. Under this frame, individual interviews deemed valid and appropriate methods to access each participant’s experiences, where verbal and non-verbal communication constituted important elements to be explored and interpreted.

The notions of ‘validity, generalizability and reliability’ appeared to be central concepts within the context of traditional quantitative research of fixed designs being operationalized rigidly, as a consequence there has been a debate about their applicability for flexible designs within qualitative research (Robson, 2002, p. 93). As Creswell (2003, p.195) argued “validity does not carry the same connotations as it does in quantitative research, nor is it a companion of reliability or generalizability”, whereas, reliability and generalizability play only a minor role in qualitative inquiry, validity is a strength of qualitative research useful to determine whether the findings are accurate from the stand point of the researcher, the participant or the readers of an account (ibid).

Thus, it seems appropriate relevant to operationalize each of these concepts within the frame of qualitative research and flexible designs. Perhaps the concern should be directed towards the ‘credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness of the research’ (Creswell, 2003), but also it will be useful to make an evaluation of the quality of the research and a consideration of possible threats to validity (Robson, 2002, p. 171). Thus, for this study in particular, three aspects seemed of
relevant consideration in order to evaluate how the researcher prepared herself for the challenges she might face, these aspects were brought up by Maxwell (1992, in: Robson, 2002, p. 171) ‘description, interpretation and theory’.

1) “The main threat to providing a valid description of what you have seen or heard lies in the inaccuracy or incompleteness of the data. This suggests that audio- or video-taping should be carried out wherever feasible” (ibid). Thus, this particular aspect was already considered by the author before the interviews started taking place. Tape and digital recorders were used having the consent from the participants; in order to avoid that important information could have been lost. Other measures aimed at providing other aspects of the communication were described in the interviewer’s notes.

2) Other “threat to providing a valid interpretation is that of imposing a framework or meaning on what is happening rather than this occurring or emerging from what you learn during your involvement with the setting” (ibid). When interpreting the findings of the research, the interviewer paid specific attention to the answers provided by the participants which were related to the topics of the main three research questions, but the she was flexible enough to include new themes that emerged from the participant’s desires to talk about other situations not previously contemplated within the interview guide. New themes emerged during the interview situation illustrating aspects of importance to the participant’s process of adaptation to the society they are living in, those aspects are important understand how the participants attributed meaning and interpret their experiences.

3) “The main threat is in not considering alternative explanations or understandings of the phenomena you are studying. This can be countered by actively seeking data which are not consonant with your theory” (ibid). Even though the author had initially chosen a particular segment of the theories of social capital, and placed especial attention on the role of three core concepts (bonding, bridging and linking social capital) to understand how foreign born women make use of the resources available to them for accessing the labour market, other conceptualizations from labour market theories were introduced during the literature revision, in order to broaden the view of several aspects on job search strategies. The author compared responses between participants in order to look
for similarities or differences among them, and give explanations from theoretical constructs or from literature reviewed and the researcher’s own understandings.

As a measure to check the accuracy of the findings of this study, the researcher made use of some strategies, such as ‘rich and thick description of the comments made by the participants, in order to illustrate the readers something of the shared experiences, and also the presentation of ‘negative or discrepant information’ that runs counter the themes (Creswell, 2003), this in part to show how the participants mentioned diverse perceived experiences in regards to their networking strategies and perceptions of job careers, and also to contrast the information provided in other studies in other contexts. “Because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account for a reader” (ibid, p.196).

1.6. Generalizability

On the other hand, other common concern when evaluating the extent of a research is the question related to ‘generalisation’ or the ‘generalizability of the results’. As Rodwell (1998) stated generalizations create a knowledge problem for the constructivist researchers, first, because generalizations do not apply to particulars, and second because of their nature generalizations tend to overlook the multiple perspectives so necessary to tell a full story. As a consequence, within constructivist research “generalizations cannot provide the description of range or depth necessary to relate a holistic picture of a phenomenon under investigation” (ibid, p.31). For constructivist it is important to give account of the data that appears on the margins of the research or the kind of information that falls outside the norm. Since all the findings are located in a social and historical context, and they are influenced by the time in which research occurs, the characteristics and presumed relationships of the constructivist findings must be understood and contemplated as time-limited and context-limited. “Therefore, the desire product of a constructivist study is not one that generalizes to any other setting, but one that is accurate, rich, reconstruction of the various perspectives within the context of investigation. If the findings transfer, it is the responsibility of the reader of the inquiry report to make that determination, since it is only the reader, not the inquirer, who can be familiar with the time and context in which transfer of the findings might be possible” (ibid, p.31).
Robson (2002, p. 93) argued that “generalizability refers to the extent to which the findings of the enquiry are more generally applicable outside the specifics of the situation studied”. In this study the author tried to be clear that the main concern has been towards the interviewees’ felt experiences and perceptions regarding their process of access and position in the Swedish labour market, as well as their perception towards the role of their social networks and perceptions of job careers. All the experiences mentioned by the participants of this study were interpreted by the author as ‘multiple individual experiences of reality’, as if they ‘all have their own truth, none being more valid or real than others’ (Kvale, 1989, p.76). This aspect is of vital importance since the author is not interested in making any kind of generalization claims from the participant’s responses, it is not possible to make generalizations from the responses of a small group of women, but instead some of their responses illustrate the particularities of their experiences, while at other times even such experiences corroborate or contradict results from previous studies. Thus statistical generalization definitely cannot be accomplished neither it is the intention of the researcher, however other kind of generalization such as analytical generalization might be pursued if the results from this study were compared or contrasted with the results of previous studies on similar topics.

1.7 Reliability

In this section the author discusses some reflections and measures aimed at overcoming potential threats to this study, how the interviewer prepared herself for possible problems during the interview situations - in the data collection stage - and after the interviews in the following process of data processing - transcription, translation, organization and interpretation -.

In an effort to compensate for possible weaknesses implied in the data collection method, the author who was the interviewer tried to avoid leading questions and was careful in the design of the interview questions were the main topics around the research question could be embraced through open ended questions. At times, the interviewer had to adapt the order or wording of some the questions to follow the interviewee’s conversation and to get into depth some details that were considered of importance by the informants or the interviewer.

The author acknowledged that interviews can be affected by ‘misinterpretations due to cultural differences’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006), that is why the researcher assumed that
being a woman of Latin American origin might have played a role in the kind of relationship developed between interviewer-interviewee, where aspects like empathy and identification might have been present in the interview situation, facilitating a more relaxed atmosphere where confidence and trust was developed and assured.

Other potential limitation implied in the interviews as a research tool is their dependence on the ‘cooperation of key individuals, on the participant’s openness or honesty’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006), however, the interviewer offered a clear description of the research purpose to the interviewers and assured them about the confidentiality of their responses, how their identities will be kept, and motivated the participants to feel free in their responses. Thus, the interviewer was interested in the participant’s communication, in their responses and did not judge them or doubt about their honesty.

The researcher was also aware of her role as facilitator and interlocutor during the interview process. The dynamics of the interviews were permeated by the inter-subjective experiences between the interviewer and interviewees; here both of them were part of an ‘interactional system’. As Salner (1989, p.51) argued “people do in fact communicate and do achieve inter-subjective agreements through which they sustain self-knowledge, knowledge about others, and interpersonal cooperation”. When the interviewees felt that the interviewer might have not interpreted what they said, they made comments and correct the interviewer’s misunderstandings. Similarly, if a question posed by the interviewer was not clear, the interviewees asked for clarification or rewording of the question. The author of this study interpreted this interchange as ‘communicative validation’ (Kvale, 2009, p.261) between the interviewer as researcher and her interviewees, where the objectivity is placed within an inter-subjective dialogue between them.

The researcher acknowledged that ‘language’ served as an important instrument not only used to describe such experiences but for communicating and constructing meanings. During the interviews, the interviewees offered they own interpretations to the experiences they had lived, in this sense, the communication went far beyond the merely process of description, but expanded to a process where interviewees constructed meanings.
The interviewer felt the need for carrying out the processes of transcription and translation of the selected fragments of the interviews in order to exercise a careful writing and avoid misunderstandings due to cultural differences. The process of transcription and translation were rendered reliable due to the interviewer’s skills in the Spanish language, but also because the interviewer tried to put the corresponding words and meanings as accurate as possible to the informant’s communication.

All the interviews were conducted in different contexts, at different dates and times; several alternatives were offered to all participants and they chose the place that suited them best. Two of the interviews were conducted in a reserved room of the Stockholm University Library; two others were facilitated in the participant’s residence, and one in the interviewer’s residence.

The researcher tried to avoid noisy places or highly transited spaces, instead looked after ‘nurturing’ or more appropriate environments which could facilitate confidence in the communication flow and allow the participants feel comfortable in the interview situation. Aspects such as ‘past experiences and mutual revelations of ideas and information, combined with respectful listening, in search for meaning in the present, were all contemplated in the conversation in order for this to be productive.(Rodwell, 1998). It was also important that the interviews took place individually, since this kind of situation allowed the participants freely express their thoughts.

It is not possible to establish if the participant’s answers would have changed if the interviewer was different in gender or ethnic background. Since the experiences were narrated by the women in their native language it is not certain if the same spontaneity would have emerged if the interviews were conducted in a language other than Spanish. It is uncertain that replication could occur if a change was introduced in the context, by the researcher, by the language spoken. Therefore, these aspects might be problematic in the sense that “identical circumstances cannot be re-created for the attempt to replicate” (Robson, 2002, p.168).
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to get a picture about the position of foreign-born women in labour market studies it was necessary to gather literature from western countries, as well as documented literature specific to the context of this research, from Sweden. The author chose to present diverse and representative materials published during the last two decades in a chronological order, to intentionally show the trends of those studies, and the topics developed by them. A great majority of the literature is in English, as this is the dominant source of documented literature, although some other studies were explored in Swedish and Spanish.

For the selection of the relevant literature, previous studies have been searched using different data bases: ERIC, EBSCO, Social Services Abstracts: ILLUMINA (SCA), Studies on women and gender abstracts, Labor Doc. Key words useful during the research process were: women in labour market/integration women labour market/immigrant working women/ Swedish labour market/foreign born women/labour market participation

An additional strategy used to gather relevant literature was to look for references cited by authors in their respective reference lists.

2.1 FOREIGN-BORN WOMEN IN LABOUR MARKET STUDIES

This section explores some of the research advanced in Sweden throughout the past three decades, and is presented in chronological order, to present the evolution of the literature on foreign-born women and native Swedes, which document their positions in the Swedish Labour Market. Although it is not possible to make an exhaustive description of all documented literature in this respect, and that there are not many studies concerned about the situation of specific ethnic groups in the labour market, in general the studies advanced in Sweden have brought up important contributions to the observation and comparative analysis of the position of female foreign workforce in the Swedish labour market. The majority of their data sources is based on the Central Bureau of Statistics in Sweden or in Census, which allow for descriptions of the occupational distribution, intensity of labour, wage differentials, employment and unemployment rates between these groups of women (Behtoui, 2008; Grossman, 1984; Jonung, 1982; Knocke, 1999; Leiniö, 1988; Wadensjö, 1976; Bäcklund, 2002).
According to Wadensjö (1976, p.2) the occupational segregation of migrant workers in Sweden is due to several reasons, which can be analyzed taking into account factors operating at the country of destination as well as factors related to the country of origin. In the first case, “the composition of immigration and the composition of the migrant’s first jobs after their arrival in Sweden have to a great extent been determined by the presence of excess demand in different parts of the Swedish labor market”. After the Second World War there was an expansion of the public sector, also in service occupations and industrial sector. In 1976, Wadensjö found that white collar jobs or high qualified jobs had specific requirements such as Swedish citizenship, a high proficiency in the Swedish language, a degree from a Swedish school or University, or possession of a certificate from the Swedish authorities to exercise certain occupations; which could function as barriers of entry for migrants and might explain why their participation seemed to be low. An excess of supply in a specific occupation, for instance blue-collar jobs, may have induced more to migrate from their countries of origin; thus a combination of those factors could have played a role in the occupations filled by migrants in Sweden. On the other hand, Wadensjö (1976, p.8) noted that the Swedish labour market was sex segregated and that even though migrant and non-migrant women were highly segregated it did not mean that both groups had the same occupational distribution.

In 1982, Jonung presented a review and analysis of existing literature and official documents with regards to migrant women in the Swedish Labour Market. This study was part of a larger project called ‘Long-term Effects of Immigration to Sweden’. In the report, Jonung (1982, p.13) argued that “Differences in cultural background, motives for migration and the length of stay in Sweden can all be expected to result in differences in labor market status by sex between immigrants and Swedes and between different ethnic groups”. Even other aspects such as marital status, the presence and number of children, market opportunities, education and husband’s earnings could have been observed influencing the varied labour market positions of immigrant women. It was mentioned that foreign women were less prone to work part-time than Swedish women; instead they tend to work longer or inconvenient hours (ibid). At the time of the mentioned study, some of the differences in labour force behaviour between Swedish women and various female immigrant groups could have been attributed to variation in child care responsibilities and associated to the age and differentiated fertility rates, but also to some variation in the educational background. According to Jonung (1982, p.66), “Immigrant women
marry younger, have children earlier and have a larger number of children than Swedish women on the average. This should serve to reduce their labor supply and limit their occupational options in relation to Swedes”.

Interesting to note, the position of foreign-born women in the Swedish labour market when analyzed carefully by decomposing the general group into nationality groups evidence differences in their participation rates as well as in their occupational attainment, for instance, Finnish and Southern European women might have higher participation rates in the work force if compared with non-European women, and their occupational distribution might differ as well. Illustrative studies that gave account of such variations might be found in the works of Leiniö (1988) and Knocke (1999).

In an attempt to understand why the occupational attainment of foreigners differ from that of natives, Grossman (1984) used data from the Central Bureau of Statistics in Sweden, ‘Level of Living Conditions Surveys’ for the years 1978 to 1980 and applied multinomial logit models, simulating two hypothetical distributions. In the first hypothetical distribution it was assumed that foreigners have the traits of natives, but acted and were treated as foreigners, whilst in the second hypothetical distribution it was assumed that foreigners acted and were treated as natives. The purpose for elaborating such simulations was to establish a comparison to the actual occupational distribution of the foreigners, and determine if the difference between the natives and foreigners could be explained by the differences in the foreigners’ characteristics or because they have different job preferences and opportunities. The results lead Grossman(1984, p.349) to think that the measures of socioeconomic factors under study could not explain the observed differences in occupational attainment between foreign and natives women, concluding that “differences exist because (1) immigrants characteristics are evaluated differently than those of natives; (2) immigrants are treated unequally in the market; (3) immigrants have a different distribution of preferences for occupations; and/or (4) we have omitted important variables in explaining occupational distribution, whose effects were not picked up by the variables included”. Although the notions of ‘tastes’, ‘preferences’, and ‘treatment’ were mentioned by Grossman (1984) they were not discussed in a way that allowed an understanding of their relation to occupational differences between foreign-born women and natives, instead it would have been interesting to explore them under the social capital theories.
Leiniö (1988) analyzed gender and ethnic segregation in the Swedish Labour Market, comparing native and foreign-born women and men aged sixteen to sixty-four, while paying specific attention to three subgroups—Finnish, Yugoslavian and Turkish. Leiniö used the 1980 Swedish Census as her data source, to identify employment and unemployment figures and the distribution across ‘branch of industry’. From the data observed by Leiniö, she stated that the gender occupational segregation in the Swedish labour market was not as notorious as the ethnic occupational segregation. It called her attention how foreign-born people were overrepresented in the manufacturing and service industries or in the public sector. Equally important for her, was the significant percentage of foreign-born people outside the labour market if compared to Swedish population, which was interpreted by Leiniö not much as a personal choice but “often caused by the special difficulties they encounter in a labour market with a job structure changing towards more and more qualified jobs” (ibid, p.115). According to Leiniö, the role of education is significant when competing for jobs, and the foreign-born groups studied by her seemed to have lower educational standards than natives Swedes of the same age and gender, which in turn could explain their relative vulnerable position in the labour market. But other factor that could be possibly related to the ethnic occupational segregation is the regional distribution of foreign-born people, because the demand for different kinds of jobs varies substantially across the country, thus limiting the jobs available to them.

Concerned about the wage differentials between foreign-born workers and native Swedes, Le Grand and Szulkin (2002, p.37) evaluated the assumptions presented by the main theorizations on labour market inequality studies, namely, labour quality and labour market discrimination hypothesis. For their research it was necessary to gather multiple sources of information such as Swedish Employers Confederation, Swedish Trade Union Confederation, Statistics Sweden, which provided relevant data concerning earnings, educational attainment, seniority, experience, occupational distribution, for the individuals—foreign and native born—employed in Sweden by the public and private sector in 1995.

In ‘labour quality theory’ individual characteristics such as education, labour market experience and ability—all together considered human capital— are deem to have a powerful and increasing influence in the labour market outcomes in a favourable manner over the time, however, this quite linear assumption tends to disregards the role of social background, gender.
and ethnicity in the process of achievement or improvement of the mentioned characteristics. According to Le Grand and Szulkin (2002), labour quality theory –also called meritocratic approach– is not sufficient to explain the earnings differentials between immigrants and native workers in Sweden. They acknowledge that later theorizations within that line further distinguished between ‘domestic resources of human capital’ and ‘foreign resources of human capital’; where the former referred to the skills acquired in the host country (Sweden), while the latter referred to skills previously acquired in the country of origin (education abroad). Following this trend, Swedish employers tend to value ‘domestic sources of human capital’ over ‘foreign resources of human capital’, in other words, they give more credit to studies done in Sweden, but lesser consideration to studies and experiences made outside western countries.

The other hypothesis, namely ‘labour market discrimination’, attributed the differences between foreign and native born, to a ‘differential labour market treatment’. According to this theory, “ascriptive characteristics such as gender, race and ethnicity are critical aspects influencing distributional processes in the labour market” (Tomaskovic as cited in: Le Grand & Szulkin, 2002, p.40). For instance, some employers who make use of differential treatment in their recruitment processes might prefer to hire individuals who share their background and tend to exclude certain ethnic or racial groups which in turn would affect their employment rates and lower their earnings. However, a less straightforward explanation regarding differences in treatment is found in the ‘theory of statistical discrimination’, as mentioned by Le Grand and Szulkin (2002, p.41); because “employers decisions on whom to employ, promote and reward are based on imperfect information on individual’s ability, productivity and aptitude”. Furthermore, when employers lack reliable information on potential new employees or when that information is difficult to obtain, they tend to use generalizations based on average productivity of a group, and stereotypes enter to play a role in the decisions made. Summarizing their results, Le Grand and Szulkin (2002, p. 58) concluded that the labour market opportunities and outcomes differ not only between foreign-born and native-born Swedes, but also within the varied group of foreign-born women and men; where the process of labour market integration is being problematic specifically for people born outside Western countries, namely, from Africa, Asia and Latin America, which face substantial obstacles when entering the Swedish Labour Market”.

Other studies on labour market have included the exploration of the Swedish legislation, in the fields of labour policies and/or Swedish immigration policies, because they are considered important frameworks for the labour market processes. It was noted by Rydgren (2004, p.698) that “The Swedish anti-discrimination Law was enlarged in 1999 in order to create conditions of plurality, and to protect against direct as well as indirect discrimination, and against ethnic harassment in the work place” but “despite these legal documents and policy programmes, the Swedish labour market is not characterized by equal conditions for migrants and native Swedes, and a review of labour market research reveals that there are strong arguments suggesting that discrimination against migrants –in particular non-European migrants- is rather extensive in Sweden”. In his analysis, Rydgren (2004) found three mechanisms of exclusion, namely: statistical discrimination (based on stereotypical thinking), network effects (due to separated, ethnically homogeneous networks), and institutional discrimination.

As discussed by Korpi (2001) and Bäcklund (2002), the Swedish labour legislation requires that all employers notify their job vacancies to the National Labour Market Board and no compliance of it should be penalized; yet it has been estimated that one-third of all vacant jobs are not overtly advertised and the predominant way to transmit information on available jobs is through informal recruitment channels (AMS, 1998; Klingvall as cited in Bäcklund, 2002, p.40). Neither job-seekers rely on the use of formal search methods to obtain job information, but might consider their social networks as additional sources of information. Then, it is possible to find that, some Swedish employers and some job-seekers might use informal strategies to spread and obtain job-related information, which in turn would allow social relations to play a vital role in the transition from unemployment to employment. Those job vacancies disclosed through personal contacts might benefit individuals who know people already in the labour market, because they could be referred or introduced with prospective employers, though having higher chances to be granted the position. As for the case of individuals lacking the contacts who could provide job information, the use of informal search strategies should be limited. Bäcklund (2002, p.40) commented on the relative vulnerable position of migrants in the Swedish labour Market, because they could have less contacts who could provide job-related information, also because they could lack the necessary job experience within the country that is highly valued by Swedish employers.
A more recent line of research about job-finding methods in Sweden was presented by Behtoui (2008) who examined the probability of success for different methods of finding employment in the Swedish labour market, in times of both economic growth and decline, making use of an extensive data set from statistics sources which describe how natives and immigrants use their social networks to find a job. Behtoui’s findings show that “immigrants, compared to natives, are less likely to be able to find jobs through informal methods and that jobs found through informal methods do not pay as well for immigrants as for natives”.

2.2 JOB-SEARCH STRATEGIES, SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

In order to contextualize the diverse trends in the studies of job-search strategies, a brief presentation of the evolution of the interest in this topic will be presented as follows, however this can not make justice to all the literature accumulated world-wide, but serves as a departure point.

Job-search studies

The interest in the study of job search was derived from the contributions of Granovetter (1973) who found that most individuals obtain job information and are able to get a job through their social contacts, rather than through formal channels. Similarly, when employers are looking for candidates to occupy vacant positions in their organizations, they transmit such information among current workers because they could provide referrals and more reliable information about potential new-employees. Thus, Granovetter (1973, 1995) acknowledged that job search studies should look at both, the supply-side factors (characteristics of potential employees) as well as the demand-side (employer behaviour, hiring processes, recruitment strategies) with special attention to be paid to the impact of social networks on employment outcomes (wages, occupational attainment, status).

Furthermore, in his early work ‘The strength of weak ties’, Granovetter (1973) explored the ‘nature of the tie between the job-seeker and the contact person who provided job information’, because it could bring in part some insight on the variation of the individual’s paths in the labour market. Instead of looking at strong ties -which tend to be characterized by similar
information exchanges which occur within similar contexts- Granovetter (1973, p.1373) turned his attention towards weak ties, observing that, “from the individual’s point of view, then, weak ties are an important resource in making possible mobility opportunity”. Following Granovetter, weak ties provide different sources of information because individuals circulate in different circles, thus, allowing exchanges of valuable resources amongst individuals who look for opportunities and aim their integration into communities.

As it was noted by Hanson and Pratt (1991) regardless of the fact that in his initial work Granovetter focused exclusively on high-status white men, his pioneering work motivated further reflections on the impact of daily life social interactions and how people search for a job. This led in 1987, to Hanson and Pratt to address an exploratory and explanatory study on job search strategies between men and women. The mentioned study used a spatially stratified random sample of the Worcester-Massachusetts area working age population (21-65), consisting in different participants, (190) men and (336) women. Hanson and Pratt (1991, p.229) found that the majority of their respondents, both women and men, had no actively searched for their jobs, but had ‘fallen into’ them largely through informal personal contacts. Moreover, that the channel of information through which people obtained their jobs was notoriously different between men and women, and also between women in female-dominated occupations versus women in male-dominated occupations.

Hanson and Pratt (1991) recognized that men and women evaluate job attributes differently, with the result that they end up in different types of employment. From the data obtained through the open and closed interviews, it was possible to see that for women job attributes such as hours of work and the location of the job are considerably more important than wages in the decision of whether or not to work or to take a certain job. Then, this study introduces the gender dimension that was missing in Granovetter’s previous work, and make possible to understand why “individuals with certain characteristics become linked to certain types of employers in certain types of jobs” (Granovetter, as cited in Hanson & Pratt, 1991, p.229).

When reviewing the literature about informal job-search strategies, social resources and mobility outcomes, in the United States, Green, Tigges, and Diaz (1999) noted that studies from the middle of 1980’s included more diverse samples and gave examples of the trends for such
works. Attention was later expanded towards ethnicity and job-search strategies, among the few studies of that time, Falcon and Melendez (1996) compared three different ethnic groups of Hispanic, Blacks and Whites in the city of Boston and showed that, when looking for a job people with a Hispanic background are most likely than other groups to use their social networks. Falcon, L. expanded this line of research in 1999, by noting that among Hispanics, the use of personal networks reduce their income.

Continuing with the line of research on ethnicity and job-search strategies, Green, G. et. al (1999) advanced a comparative study in Atlanta, Boston and Los Angeles, observing the data provided by the Multicity Study of Urban Inequality, from which they looked at the responses of four racial and ethnic groups -White, Black, Hispanic, Asian- in regards to their job-search strategies. Specific attention was placed to the interaction between racial and ethnic attitudes, racial and ethnic segregation and labour force dynamics. Amongst the results for type of job-search strategy used, although all groups reported to contact friends or relatives, Hispanics were considerably more likely than others to use this strategy, followed by a direct contact with potential employers, walking in and applying or answering a help wanted sign, but less likely to use formal job-search methods such as private employment service or a school placement officer.

“Only about one-fourth of Hispanics got their jobs through a formal source, while three-fourths used an informal source. Not only do Hispanics use family and friends more often to search for jobs than do other groups, but these strong ties are much more likely to get them a job” (Green et al., 1999, p.270). When examining the characteristics of the job contact, the kind of ties with the job-seeker, as well as the effects of job-search strategies on earnings for each racial and ethnic group, Green et al., (1999) found that using formal job-search methods is not usual amongst Hispanics but when they do so might have the opportunity to get access to jobs that would generate more income, while the contrary would be observed if Hispanics make use of informal search methods that might guarantee them a job but at the expense of other things, like getting jobs of lower quality, lower paid, low status, thus being in a vulnerable position in the labour market.

More recent trends in the job-search literature have tried to expand knowledge on the influence of the use of social networks and the job outcomes, such as status and occupational attainment, as well as income earned. Most of these studies belong to the Economic and
Sociological fields, have favoured quantitative research and have selected more often large-size male samples. Lin (1999) made a summary of the studies and findings on the varied researches related to the relationships between social resources and status attainment; identifying three different trends for study: one called ‘mobilized social capital model’, other ‘accessed social capital model’, and the ‘joint accessed/mobilized model’. Added to that, Lin (1999) identified a convergence in two parallel but independent theorizations for the study of social networks; one belongs to the social resources theory (Lin, Ensel, Vaughn, 1981, 1982, 1990) and the other to social capital theory (Bourdieu, 1973, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). Lin (1999, p.483) noted that, “there is persistent evidence that extensity or size of network ties are significantly related to richness or diversity in social resources...Having both strong and weak ties enhances the extensity of networks”.

From the literature presented above it is possible to find several elements regarding the complexity of the job-search process which has been described and analyzed in a variety of ways, sometimes with converging or diverging results, but stressing the influence of informal strategies used by job-seekers and employers and its consequences on job-related outcomes, whether positive or negative for certain individuals. Some authors have used different terminology to refer to the characteristics of the social networks and ties that connect people, some use the term ‘strong ties’ to make reference to close relationships between individuals and their family or close friends, while ‘weak’ or ‘loose ties’ might refer to distant and occasional relationships between individuals and acquaintances as co-workers, colleagues, and neighbours. Distinctions have also been done regarding ‘formal’ versus ‘informal’ job search strategies, which are used differently by individuals, depending on their life circumstances, or particular preferences, and networks characteristics; where formal strategies tend to produce benefits mostly to those in privileged positions in the social hierarchies, whilst informal strategies could have both beneficial but also negative consequences for those who rely on them.

“If someone is looking for a new job or planning to appoint someone to a job...using the formal procedures is no guarantee of success. To make things happen, people often prefer to bypass the formal system and talk to people that they know. Calling on trusted friends, family or acquaintances is much less stressful than dealing with bureaucracies, and it usually seems to work faster and often produces a better outcome” (Field, 2003, p.2). Well, certainly the use of
informal methods by job-seekers might save them time in the job-search process, but the outcomes would rather vary depending on several factors, such as the position or status attained by the job contact, the type of job searched, the extent of the quality of the information flow, the quality of the relationship with the job-contact (informant), the job-seeker skills (social skills, educational attainment, previous working experiences), and more. The same could be said for the employer who is trying to fill a job vacancy, and needs to hire a new employer, for whom the use of informal methods in the recruitment process would save time and cost; but the outcomes of this process would vary depending on several factors, such as the kind of position that is going to be offered, the quality of the relationship with the job-contact (informant), the potential employee’s skills (social skills, educational attainment, previous working experiences). It would be necessary for the employer to trust current employers in the firm (organization) who have a good reputation and who are known as good workers, if they are about to consider their referees as potential employees.

How informal methods are used by both, job-seekers and employers is worth of study, because it could give account on the role of social networks regarding the employment process. Social Capital theories are helpful to understand the importance and the role of social relations and social networks in the transition from unemployment to employment. In the present study the focus would primarily be on strategies used by women who are currently employed, however exploration on employer’s strategies could not be captured at a practical level but only from a hypothetical level.

3. SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORIES

In order to explore how the women of Latin-American origin perceive the role of their family and social networks during the process of access to the labour market, special attention is placed to the interplay of individual and structural factors that facilitate or make difficult the establishment and mobilization of their social capital, in their varied forms of bonding, bridging and linking social capital. It is necessary to departure from a definition of the concepts which will be used within the theoretical framework of social capital developed through the last decades. Initially, the author selected the works of the main social capital theorists, namely,
Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, making use of literature revision from first and second hand. They have been selected because their concepts around the notion of social capital inspire the author’s understandings and interpretation of the influence of social networks on job-search strategies chosen by job-seekers and employers, as well as serve to partly explain some of the inequalities that are reproduced and sustained in the labour markets. Thus, it is necessary to contextualize how the notion of social capital has evolved during the last decades.

The concept of ‘social capital’ was introduced by the French Sociologist Bourdieu in the 1970’s and ever since it has been interpreted in different ways, authors form the North American tradition as Coleman (1990), and Putnam (1995) have developed other conceptualizations. It is important to pay attention to the variety of conceptualizations because they provide diverse understandings on how social capital operates, and for the present study it seems relevant to note each of them, in order to explore the role of social networks in the job-search process from a broader perspective.

Influenced by the Marxist ideology, Bourdieu was interested in understanding social hierarchies and the ways social inequalities are created or reproduced. According to him, ‘economic capital’ was not enough to explain how inequalities operate at a structural level, there should be other ways, probably found in the human interactions, thus looking at social relationships was certainly one of them. In an earlier stage of his writing Bourdieu discussed how members of professional groups secure their position, and conceptualized the notion of social capital as “a capital of social relationships which will provide, if necessary useful supports’: a capital of honourability and respectability which is often indispensable if one desires to attract clients in socially important positions…” (Bourdieu as cited in Field, 2003, p.14). Most of Bourdieu’s studies focused the attention on the experiences of individuals who occupied high status in the social structure, may be because he was interested in understanding how they produce or reproduce their privileged positions.

The concept of social capital thus, was understood within a quite narrowed context. In Bourdieu’s later works, social capital was presented as the “sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu as cited in Field, 2003, p.15). From the previous argument is possible to interpret that Bourdieu saw social
relations as interchanges that serve merely instrumental purposes, where being recognized and affirmed by individuals positioned in the high ranks of a social hierarchy is something desired and needed by individuals who try to maintain their power and status.

The ‘density and durability of ties’ constitute essential features for the social capital the individuals have; the more connections they can mobilize and the more volume of capital (cultural, social and economic) they have in each connection would determine the value of the ties. From time to time Bourdieu prompted that ‘connections require work’, “their maintenance requires ‘investment strategies, individual or collective’ aimed at transforming contingent relationships, such as those of neighbourhood or workplace or even kinship, into ‘social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term’; for these to be effective over the long term, they must involve ‘durable obligations subjectively felt’” (Bourdieu, 1980, 1986, as cited in Field, 2003, p.17).

Prior to the development of the notion of social capital, Bourdieu noticed in his studies on tribes, how ‘cultural symbols’ were used by individuals in order to show their position in the social structures. Further studies allowed him to understand that “groups traded on the fact that some types of cultural taste enjoy more status than other” (Bourdieu as cited in Field, 2003, p.14). As Field (2003, p.16) illustrated, Bourdieu was interested in exploring how inequalities operate in education, thus he “used the concept of ‘cultural capital’ to explain the unequal academic achievement of children from different social classes and from different groups within social classes”. Cultural capital could be transmitted and inherited through the family, in the form of education received. Then, the notions of social and cultural capital could be interpreted as relevant to understand how certain inequalities operate in the micro and macro spheres in societies.

Other authors who must be mentioned because of their relevant contributions to the development of the concept of social capital are Coleman (1998) and Putnam (1995). The American Sociologist Coleman (1998) expanded the notion of ‘social capital’ with an interdisciplinary view which integrated elements of theorizations in the economic and sociological fields. “Like Bourdieu, Coleman’s interest in social capital emerged from attempts to explain relationships between social inequality and academic achievement in schools” (Field, 2003, p.22) but he quite differs from the former author in where he located social capital. It is
possible to interpret from Coleman’s conceptualizations, that social capital was not a resource only available to privileged individuals; it is possible to find social capital within the family structure and other institutions such as the school and the church. Thus, Coleman defined social capital as “the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization” (Field, 2003, p.22) although the use of these resources vary between different actors. Coleman (1988) highlighted the importance of elements such as trust, norms and obligations for understanding ‘social transactions’. Equally important were the characteristics of the ties because, “the strength of ties makes possible transactions in which trustworthiness is taken for granted and trade can occur with ease…in the absence of these ties transactions could not take place” (Coleman, 1988, p.99). Furthermore, this author argued that “without a degree of trustworthiness among the group, the institutions could not exist”. Nonetheless, from such assumptions authors have criticized several aspects of Coleman’s theorization, first, the overemphasis that Coleman puts on the role of strong ties underestimating the importance of weak or loose ties in socialization.

From a different academic tradition, Putnam draws on his Political Science background in order to understand the relationship between social values and political attitudes. Inspired by the de Tocqueville observations and writings about Americans’ associational life and civic engagement, Putnam explored and noted differences in civic engagement in contexts like Italy and in his natal North America (Field, 2003), and came up with new understandings that allowed him to identify ‘social capital’ in constructed organizations, presenting the notion as “features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam, as cited in Field, 2003, p.31).

Putnam’s notion of social capital was not static but fluent and evolved according to his empirical observations, introducing vital elements that were ignored or understood in different ways before. For instance, Putnam saw that in their associations individuals are not only pursuing their own interests but get together because they are looking for a common goal. Putnam’s conceptualizations allow to think that aspects as ‘like’ or ‘dislike’ might play a role in the particular associations and interactions among individuals, which could motivate individuals to share interests and pursue together certain objectives. When Putnam used the metaphor of the ‘league bowling’ he referred to it as “a type of associational activity that brings relative strangers
together on a routine and frequent basis, helping to build and sustain a wider set of networks and values that foster general reciprocity and trust, and in turn facilitate mutual collaboration” (Putnam as cited in Field, 2003, p.32).

As it can be observed, there is not uniformity or consensus regarding the notion of social capital, for Bourdieu it is something transmitted and reaffirmed within elite groups, while for Coleman social capital is not limited to elite groups, but instead it is something found also within the family and certain institution such as the family and the school, while for Putnam social capital extends and is present in the community as well.

Moreover, authors such as Putnam acknowledged that social capital was a complex entity, and it was possible for him to identify varied types of social capital, such as ‘bonding social capital’ and ‘bridging social capital’. ‘Bonding social capital’ refers to those connections between individuals or groups aimed at reinforcing specific (exclusive) identities and maintain homogeneity, at the same time that promotes reciprocity and solidarity. Other connections could take the form of more open and inclusive relationships, where people from different social divisions can be brought together, and Putnam called this particular form ‘bridging social capital’. Accordingly, ‘bridging connections’ might serve as a linkage to external assets and provide information diffusion, at the same time that can ‘generate broader identities and reciprocity’ (ibid, p.33).

Further conceptualizations on the types of social capital were done by Woolcock (as cited in Field, 2003, p.42), who defined them as follows: ‘bonding social capital’ denotes ties between like people in similar situations, such as immediate family and close friends; ‘bridging social capital’ as distant ties of like persons, such as loose friends and workmates; and ‘linking social capital’ those ties between unlike people in dissimilar situations through which it would be possible for individuals to get access to a wider range of resources beyond those available within the community”. As noted by Field (2003, p.66) ‘linking social capital’ is a vital element because it allows people the possibility for mobility, promotion and access to resources, ideas and information from contacts outside their immediate social environment.

Since the notions of ‘bonding social capital’, ‘bridging social capital’ and ‘linking social capital’ appear under diverse constructions and interpretations within the social capital theories,
it is necessary to mention how these notions are going to be interpreted and used by the author. Putnam and Woolcock’s notions about ‘bonding social capital’ are interpreted by the author who borrows elements from their descriptions, to refer to ‘connections characterized by strong ties between individuals, family members and close friends, aimed at reinforcing specific identities and maintain homogeneity, promoting reciprocity and solidarity.

The notion of ‘bridging social capital’ that will be used in the present study borrows some elements from Putnam’s conceptualization, denoting more open and inclusive relationships; also from Woolcock’s conceptualization. Nonetheless, the author considers necessary to expand the definition of ‘bridging social capital’ to lose connections, amongst acquaintances or workmates who might be or not in similar situations, whether their share or not the same background, whether they occupy different places in the social structure, for whom their connections facilitate the flow of diverse information, access to wider resources, generate broader identities while promoting reciprocity and solidarity.

The author of this study interprets the concept of ‘linking social capital’ related to those connections amongst individuals which occur in the frame of institutionalized relations, where social interchanges are held between individuals who are not related by family, nor by close proximity to home, school or work environment. Borrowing the idea of Field (2003) these connections are established to allow mobility, promotion and access to resources, ideas and information from contacts outside their immediate social environment.

Far from Bourdieu who identified social capital only amongst privileged groups, or from Coleman who saw the family and church as the main sources of social capital, Putnam identified other associations within the community as additional sources of social capital, while paying attention to the resources that could be increased through ‘loose ties’, thus contributing to the expansion of the notion. Furthermore, if Bourdieu showed that the social capital was beneficial only for those who were in relatively advantaged positions in the social hierarchies, and Coleman had seen social capital as beneficial for all because it was present in the families and certain constructed institutions as the churches, what is interesting with Putnam’s conceptualizations is that he made possible to see not only the positive side but the ‘dark side’ of the social capital.
One of the authors interested in exploring and analyzing the dark side of social capital is Field (2003, p.71), who argues that “social capital can enable individuals and groups to achieve a variety of common goals, many of which may be negative in their consequences for others, either directly (as for the victims of organized crime), or indirectly (as illustrated by the roles of informal norms and networks in underpinning institutional discrimination)”. Furthermore, the ways individuals make use of their social capital might contribute to reinforce and reproduce inequalities at the micro and macro spheres of the social life, although social capital should not be treated as the only factor in creating inequality. Among other things, Field (2003, p.74) noted that “social relations can sometimes serve to exclude and deny as well as include an enable”.

This negative side of the social capital is interesting to explore in critical processes such as the relation between employer and potential employee, or even in daily life interactions. This study is limited for exploring the employers’ side since it is not possible to witness or to document the employers’ perception regarding their hiring practices; however the participants as employees are able to contribute with their experiences recalling their job search process and their outcomes.
4. RESULTS: Women of Latin-American origin in the Swedish labour market

4.1 PRESENTATION OF THE INTERVIEWEES

Before the presentation of the results obtained through the interviews a brief introduction of the women who participated in this study will follow.

1. **Rosa Gomez**, 50 years old, born in Peru, arrived to Sweden in 1999, studied a vocational course as nurse assistant in her country of origin, has worked as personal assistant in Sweden for approximately 10 years in the same workplace. Rosa is divorced and the mother of two grown up sons.

2. **Juliana Araujo**, 31 years old, born in Venezuela, has been in Sweden six years approximately, obtained in her country of origin a Degree in Social Communication with specialization in Journalism, studied and obtained a Master Degree in Sciences of Communication at Stockholm University in Sweden. Juliana is married and has worked as school teacher during the last three years, although the workplaces have changed.

3. **Angela Gaitan**, 49 years old, born in Chile, have lived in Sweden at different periods during her life but arrived the first time during 1982, studied four years Pedagogy in Biology in the University of Chile, studied a vocational course in Sweden and holds a title as technician in laboratory (*laboratoribiträde*), also completed a course of six months in health care (*vårdbiträde utbildning*). Angela is married, has three grown up daughters, and she works in the retail sector as assistant and sales-representative in an optometrist office.

4. **Bibiana Larsson**, 42 years old, born in Chile, has been in Sweden since 1988, completed her high school in Chile, after her arrival to Sweden went to Åva Gymnasium and KOMVUX in order to learn Swedish and receive vocational advice, studied one year and a half and became assistant nurse (*undersköterska*). Bibiana is married, is working in the Health Care Sector as Assistant Nurse, an occupation in which she has achieved approximately 11 years of working experience.

5. **Sandra Trujillo**, 35 years old, born in Peru, lives in Sweden since 1996, completed her high school education in Peru, studied basic courses in KOMVUX, then studied Social Work at Stockholm University during three years and a half and earned her degree as social worker. Sandra is single, and currently works as social worker (*socionom*).
After the interviews were done they were completely transcribed in the original language (Spanish), were the results took the form of a written text. The author went through the answers provided by the interviewees, and tried to identify those that were related to the main research questions, such as process of access to the Swedish labour market, job search strategies and role of social networks, and perceptions of job careers. The answers were organized then under three specific rubrics or themes named by the author. One strategy that motivated the author to organize the themes was the literature that was explored prior to the interviews, because it offered the author a general picture of important aspects around the labour market processes. In that sense it was possible for each main theme, to organize answers between seven to eight subthemes that reflected its relevance and relation to the research questions posed. Other strategy that motivated the author to organize the answers and create new subthemes was to rescue the participant’s voice, thus some rubrics reflect the interviewees’ emphasis regarding certain aspects that are important to them.

Special attention was paid to similarities and differences in the participant’s narratives. Quotations made in the original language were cited in the text accompanied by the corresponding English translation in parenthesis, or if they were too long they were presented at the end, in the Appendix. At times, when the interviewers were talking they suddenly changed their tone of voice and made emphasis in certain words, this was interpreted by the interviewer as an act of meaning, and the corresponding transcriptions and translations of such words or expression are highlighted or bolded, in order to keep this aspect of the participants’ communication. Similarly, at times the interviewees used words in Swedish even though they were talking in Spanish, thus the author kept such words the way they were spoken in order to illustrate how important is a language when it is internalized, since it is full of meanings. Foot notes accompanied the introduction of Swedish words during the conversation held in Spanish, and were translated into English for audiences not familiar with the Swedish language.

A general questionnaire showing the questions formulated during the interviews is also offered in the Appendix.
4.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS OF ACCESS TO THE SWEDISH LABOUR MARKET

Formal Job-search Strategies

When the participants were asked to describe their process of access to the Swedish labour market they mentioned among their job-search strategies a first contact with the Swedish Office for Employment (Arbetsförmedlingen), which could be taken as a formal contact or formal job-search method.

This early contact took place soon after their arrival to Sweden, although the opinions regarding the support received varied among the participants. For Angela Gaitan an early contact with the Swedish Employment Office (arbetsförmedlingen) was useful because they helped her to prepare a presentation letter that should be presented to potential employers, and they told her she will receive information by post a publication that contained job opportunities. Bibiana Larsson looked for works within the elderly care, for positions as personal assistant (vårdbiträde) through the Swedish Employment Office. Although Juliana had also made an early contact with the Swedish Employment Office she felt at that time that her skills were not taking into consideration by the contact person who talked to her, instead that person only limited Juliana’s search for work within the services towards the elderly.

Other types of formal job-search were used amongst the participants, such as Yellow pages, announcements in the news papers, ads posted in public places, and web-search, which constituted additional resources to get information regarding job vacancies. They selected those vacancies that suited best their specific interests, such as proximity to home, jobs with flexible schedules, jobs related to their vocational or professional career.

J: I searched for jobs and found them through the yellow pages, anything close to my home, because I did not want to work far away...I wanted to find something where I could go walking...and I found a work after making phone calls (1)

A: I think it must had been in the news paper, in the Dagens Nyheter¹ (...) I solicited because I wanted to work, with three little children I wanted to work during the weekends

¹ Dagens Nyheter is a local newspaper.
and worked late afternoons, in uncomfortable schedules, why? Because I wanted to be most of the time with my daughters, so the father could be with them during the weekends, thus my children were not much time in the day-care...that was it!(2)

B: (...) I made my curriculum and sent it to all hospitals and the one that responded me was Karolinska and Solna...I went there for an interview and they asked “when can you start?” and I said ‘yesterday’, so they said “okay”... two days after that I received the answer and I got the job (3)

Internet search was common among the participants who looked for a job within their professional careers. For Sandra this seemed to be an exhausting process of search, were at times she described that she just sent applications aware of the minimal possibility for getting those jobs she had applied for.

S: A Social Worker here works within the State Offices...then I used to enter in the web pages of the varied city halls, to see if they were hiring personnel (...) And I sent daily, every day I sent...and there comes a moment when you send just to send because you know that maybe there will be a chance, but...(4)

J: I did it through the internet, the web postings they had in the job-search servers online (5)

Direct Contact with Potential Employer

Besides formal search strategies, direct contact with a potential employer was mentioned by Juliana, although this position seemed to be rather atypical among the participants of this study. When Juliana visited a Consular Office, she introduced herself with the person responsible for consular affairs (consul) and later presented an unsolicited resume, even though the position as Consular Assistant was not open at that time, neither the potential employer was aware of the possibility to extend such job offer. There were not intermediaries between Juliana and the consul, not personal connections such as friends or relatives, or school connections, neither employment agency. This kind of job-search can be interpreted as different from informal or formal search methods in the sense that the information derived from the interpersonal exchange occurred in a natural way without any previous acknowledge of demand for job, but instead the
contact was the result of Juliana’s visit to the Consular Office and her expectations to get a job different to the one she held.

**Occupational Sectors**

All the participants mentioned in their narratives that there is a great demand for workers in the health care sector, specifically in the services for the elderly; where occupations such as personal assistant are common among persons with varied educational degrees, skill levels, and ethnic backgrounds, although as one participant made explicit, this kind of jobs are typically female. The information regarding the availability of these types of jobs is provided to the participants either through formal channels, such as the Swedish Employment Office or through informal channels such as personal contacts. Juliana commented on her working experience within this sector, and described that she found this available job through the yellow pages, she applied and was given a temporary contract. Juliana and Angela recognize that in Sweden there is a great demand for people working with elderly care; both commented that their entrance to that sector of the labour market was relatively easy and quick after they applied for it.

When the participants were asked about the requirements for jobs ‘taking care of others’ or for ‘people with special needs’, Rosa, Bibiana and Angela answered that there were not much exigencies but a basic knowledge in the Swedish language, and less often it was required a training in that kind of job, or even previous experience. Rosa commented that ten years ago occupations as personal assistant required basic knowledge of Swedish but today the complexity of the duties implied in this job make necessary for an applicant to be fluent verbally and in writing in the Swedish language. She said that the more acute is the health status of the person for whom one is personal assistant the higher the need for the employee to be able to contact health institutions and services in behalf of the client. This argument reflects an increase in the qualification demands for certain jobs, where communication skills are of vital importance.

Angela and Sandra mentioned that the flexibility in the work schedules as well as compensation for overtime or holiday-working hours is something that makes jobs within the health care sector attractive even for persons who are overqualified for positions as personal assistant. Sandra mentioned that working with elderly care was a temporary job that allowed her to gain experience while receiving a relatively fair income. Similarly Juliana said that working
with the elderly was a temporary alternative while looking for other jobs more related to her career, although Juliana specified that she benefited from that working experience regarding her training in the Swedish language.

One participant commented that most of the jobs she has held in Sweden have been overrepresented by female participation; she thinks that women tend to occupy positions where traditional female roles are reproduced, such as taking care of others, cleaning, and as a consequence they tend to receive lower wages. Although she has not witnessed male participation within services for the elderly, she knows friends who work in hemtjänsten, but acknowledges that they are very few among them.

Besides a high demand for jobs among Non-Institutional Care for the elderly (hemtjänsten) and Institutional Care for the elderly (servicehus) working as a vårdbiträde or personal assistant, other commonly advertised jobs appear in the commerce and retail sector. Angela, Sandra, and Juliana commented on her experiences with positions available as sales representatives, and that certain proficiency in the Swedish language is expected because the nature of the work, where communication to others is essential to sell a service.

Juliana and Sandra mentioned that at times available jobs are advertised under other rubrics; as a consequence the process of applying for a job is followed by the encounter with unexpected duties related to such jobs.

J: I looked for a work within marketing and they called me for an interview right after I sent the application; I thought it was marketing assistant but it was not such a thing...these were people who are in the streets selling, asking for fifty crowns for this organization and that (6)

S: Because they are looking for socionom but you actually work as behandlingsassistent...I did not know it was like that, because they said they needed

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2 Hemtjänsten: in home services organized in Sweden mainly by the municipalities, in order to assist individuals with their needs in their own homes. Most often it is carried out by personnel from the municipalities but it also can be provided by private companies, it is coordinated with home health care.

3 Vårdbiträde in Sweden this term refers to a person who works as care assistant within geriatric care. Duties include assistance to individuals in their daily living activities and daily care.

4 Socionom is a word used for a person graduated from Social Sciences, working as a social worker.

5 Behandling assistant is a person who works as assistant in a rehabilitation treatment.
socionomer, so I sent my application, but ok, what I wanted was to get a job, besides that I considered it important because I read the international multicultural line, so I said to myself ‘wow with these young people I’m going to learn a lot and it’s within my line’…but the job itself it wasn’t for a social worker.

Sandra, Angela, Juliana and Bibiana have switched between different types of jobs throughout their working life in Sweden due to several reasons; the strategies used by them to get information on available jobs have varied from time to time, according to the occupation they have looked for, the opportunities the labour market offers, but also in response to their felt need to enter the market. Rosa who is the first participant interviewed in this study represents rather an uncommon situation if compared to the other participants, because she has remained in her job for almost ten years, and this job is the one she found when she arrived to this country about the same time, ten years ago.

Three of the participants (Angela, Sandra and Juliana) argued that it is easier and faster to get a job when applying for unqualified jobs; specifically in sectors where there is great demand for female participation, such as those described above. The situation turns out more problematic for high skilled female job-seekers, especially those who have completed a Bachelor or a Masters Degree, for whom pursuing a title is not a guarantee of getting a desired job in accordance to their professional level.

S: because one could think that studying or having a career would allow doors to open...yes eventually those doors would open up, but the process is really hard...because you get hit, you have to fall down and get up yourself and avoid losing your hope. But it is hard...(8)

J: even though I have completed the magister program, this has not helped me at all! I mean nothing, otherwise I would have been working in a different job, isn’t? I mean, my studies done in Venezuela and being a Spanish speaking person is what has helped me, that I am a journalist and speak Spanish, therefore they assume that my Spanish is outstanding!(9)

Angela and Juliana commented that the situation of getting a high qualified job is easier depending of the professional field elected by a person. While in Sweden there is a great demand
for engineers, health professionals, there is less demand for other careers such as journalism & mass media communication, or within the social sciences. Not only the gap between those careers is reflected in the demands from the Swedish Labour market, in the form of wages and status attained, but also the resources the country is investing in education vary depending on the type of career. Angela noted that “also there is a budget problem, there is not inversion in certain careers, there are less resources for some of them, where a teacher is no longer needed, he just gives a class and the pupils work almost alone” (10).

**Working under limited Contracts**

Working under limited contracts in Sweden and working per hours was a common situation for most of the participants of this study, when they entered the labour market; although their degree of concern varies between them:

Juliana, who works under short-term contracts as a Spanish Teacher, is highly concerned about her unstable situation in the labour market, because she cannot make plans for her future. “Por lo menos la situación en la que estoy ahora es que tengo trabajo nada más hasta Junio a pesar de que tengo dinero hasta Agosto es muy estresante y... te hace sentir muy inseguro y eso afecta todas las áreas de la vida aunque yo trate de mantener una mente positiva” (For instance, the situation in which I am right now having a job only until June in spite that I still have money until August it is very stressing to me…it makes you feel insecure and it affects all spheres in your life even though I try to keep a positive attitude). Angela, who is currently working for Private Optometrist Offices, argues that she is aware that working per hours (timanställd) might imply a lower income, because in case of sickness or absence, her income would be compromised as her future pension would be. As Angela states “yo conozco mucha gente...con la que incluso trabajamos juntas, están super preocupadas...pero yo en realidad no me preocupo te digo porque yo no me veo trabajando a largo plazo así, yo tampoco me veo aquí” (I know a lot of people I worked with, they are very worried...but I am not worried because I don’t see myself working to the long term like this, neither I see myself here”.

Sandra commented that she never worried about having a permanent job before; because those varied jobs she had before served the purpose of surviving and were enough to pay her bills, she saw them as temporary jobs while she was studying. However as of today, Sandra
comments “tengo un contrato de tal tiempo a tal tiempo, no? Y despues si es que ellos siguen teniendo necesidad pues me van a alargar ese contrato” (I have a contract from that time to that time, right? And thereafter if they still need me they would extend that contract). Important for Sandra is the fact she is already working within her professional field, and she is aware that even though she has a short-term contract she has future prospects of mobilization within her workplace. Nonetheless Sandra and Angela coincide when they say that getting a permanent job is not easy for all employees in Sweden, independently of their background, ad the field within one is working, instead is the result of shifts in the structure of the contemporary labour markets.

Juliana has associated her unstable position within the labour market to the fact that she is not a certified school teacher; she currently works within a project that has a limited time, but according to the law she cannot hold a permanent position if she is not a licensed teacher, thus she is interested in pursuing such license.

Angela commented that as the years passed the situation of getting a permanent job in Sweden has been affected by several changes, such as shifts in the demand in certain occupations, were some forms of job were replaced by new ones, were technological advance marked a change and affected workers, where privatization was introduced. Angela recalled when she worked as laboratory assistant, and said “en el lugar en el que trabajé ese lo cerraron, no hay gente trabajando allí...ahora hay empresas eso es lo que hay, empresas que te hacen eso, como está la cosa privatizándose...”(the place where I used to work is closed, there is not people working there...now there are business that’s what it is, companies doing that, because it’s about privatization...).

As Angela described how was for her the process of access to the Swedish labour market throughout the different periods in her life, when she held mobility between Chile and Sweden, she recalled that getting a job in Sweden twenty years ago was relatively unproblematic for her. Angela had completed her studies of the Swedish language and made a vocational course that took her directly to the labour market. In her words, “when I started working...after a month I had a job, a permanent job, and it feels like at that time you did not appreciate it, all your friends, your family, those who were in the labour market, all had permanent jobs...it was very strange that someone would have a job like the one I have now...everybody worked, you had your job but it was not appreciated” (11).
Different opinions emerged about the participation of foreign workforce in Sweden. While Rosa and Juliana commented that they have noted a high ethnic diversity at their workplaces, Angela and Sandra commented they have noted it to a lesser extent. Rosa has worked as Personal Assistant for ten years in the same place; she has witnessed the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their co-workers, and former co-workers who come from Peru, England, El Salvador, and Sweden. Juliana works within the community as a School Teacher and talked about her colleagues from Chile, Peru, Argentina, and Estonia. Sandra said that “The population who live within this community is one of the most cultural diverse here in Stockholm, because there is a high concentration of foreigners, there are hundreds, hundreds of languages are spoken there, they are from different countries...I thought that there were going to be a lot of foreign workers within the social offices...not few...but there are indeed few. And I was kind of impressed, right? There should be more diversity at the workplace” (12). Similarly, Angela commented that “In general, well...in my job I always say I’ve been lucky, there are few foreigners, really few, because always the language it’s a big limitation and...it costs you more efforts and that’s a real matter, it’s more hard to get a job.” (13).

Stereotypes

Other difficulties in the process of access to the Swedish labour market are mentioned by the participants, regarding how foreign-workers are perceived by potential employers. Sandra recalled how hard it was for her and some of her classmates with a foreign background who looked for qualified jobs but experience difficulties to obtain such jobs; sometimes they talked about it and share their thoughts and situations they went through. Sandra describes it her own words “we have to struggle the double in order to get a job, and now I’m not talking about myself, because I have other classmates who studied in the University here...and it’s like their experiences are similar to mine, that when they talked to me they already had graduated while I was still studying, and when they talked to me I said ‘you are exaggerating, maybe you haven’t been lucky; ’ but after that when the same happened to me I was able to understand them and thought to myself ‘they were right...’.” (14).

When Sandra was asked about the content of such conversations she continued ‘they more or less as I am telling you now they have a foreign last name that is why...foreigners, yes we are foreigners’. Even more, Sandra brought about several situations experienced by a
close friend of her who applied for jobs within her field and was called to interviews because she had an American name and have acquired a Swedish last name after her marriage, but who was faced by situations where the interviewers were surprised when they saw her, because of her dark skin colour, where interviewers had some sort of stereotypes. Such situation was seen by Sandra and her friend as kind of funny, and they made of it a joke. After recalling that situation, Sandra acknowledges that “on one hand I think is natural because if they tell me that there will come a person named Chin Chun Chan, I picture a Chinese, and then comes a blond young man, ‘Uy, aha’...I would say to him ‘I thought you were Chinese because your first and last name is Chinese’. I mean it is something that one already has here (pointing to her head)” (15).

Juliana said “I think if one is grown up here, has studied here all schooling years and speaks Swedish without it sounding as a foreigner is probable that one can get the same access to the Swedish labour market; however I who came here in my adult life when I open my mouth and sound that I’m not from here...no...I don’t think so...My personal experience, particularly during the last year is that if one is willing to get equal access then it’s necessary to look for jobs within the community and landsting” (16).

Two participants commented their concerns regarding multiculturalism at the workplace. In their own words, Juliana and Sandra mentioned the idea they have that employers must not discriminate potential employees based on the ethnic origin. For Juliana it is useful looking for a public job because state employers should promote diversity and integration.

Although legislation on multiculturalism is nowadays promoted and gradually known, Sandra estimates that it is far from reality. According to Sandra, her own experiences and those experiences she shared by her classmates, or people she has known in several contexts, she is reaffirmed on the fact that, in spite of the exigencies by law about multiculturalism, and in spite that many job posting seems to be open to person with a diversified cultural background or mångfald6, most of the persons who get hired in the Swedish Labour market are Swedish-born applicants. As Sandra mentioned “Mångfald (...) that is just for the posting to look nice and because now the State requires mångfald, namely multiculturalism at the workplace, thus it looks attractive in the posting, wow this community or the community of SOLNA, Stockholm

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6 Mångfald is a term to denote that people ought to be respected and treated equally regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, physical and mental abilities, or ethnicity.
Community, they are looking for mångfald, but at the end those who get the positions are those named Svensson, Håkansson, what do I know...and Mohamed or Vargas they got left behind somewhere else, it is like this.” (17).

Furthermore, it seems that some employers are aware of the legislation regarding multiculturalism but acknowledge that at times it is not implemented. Sandra brought a comment on this respect, when she described the words of a person who has worked for a long time and is currently working as a social worker, who said “Yes, we are very clever when talking about multiculturalism mångfald but the reality is other, we are always saying that there have to be more diversity, origins, persons from different countries, but at the time of hiring it is not like that”; and she was a boss I mean she was talking from her perspective, how she thought and reasoned about this...” (18)

The situation about changing foreign last names appears in the narratives of several participants. Angela for instance, commented that “hay muchos extranjeros que se cambian el apellido porque han enviado un montón de solicitudes de trabajo y no las reciben, en cambio cuando se cambian el apellido entonces por lo menos hay alguien interesado en leerlas, entonces eso indudable...los extranjeros acá tienen...menos oportunidades...sobretodo cuando no hay muchos estudios yo creo eso es la gente que se ve mayor afectada” (there are many foreigners that change their last-names because they have sent a lot of job applications and they never received them, but when they change their last-names then at least there is someone interested in reading their applications, that is undoubtedly...the foreigners here have less opportunities...especially when there are not much studies I think those are the ones more affected).

Working and studying

It has been mentioned that foreigners spend a great deal of time engaged in studies in Sweden, the women who participated in the interviews described why they enrolled in different kind of studies and how they dealt with their specific needs while trying to balance their lives as students and workers. All the participants completed their high school education in their countries of origin; some had studies at university level, while others had vocational studies. They narrated how they established contact with a representative of a vocational school or Educational Program (GYMNASIUM, KOMVUX, Högskoleverket) in order to obtain
information regarding their process of validation of foreign studies and the possibility to continue their education within Sweden.

Bibiana already had completed with her high school years in Chile, and once she came to Sweden enrolled in studies again, that time in KOMVUX, a community program where there is instruction of the Swedish language and vocational guidance. Bibiana worked part-time during the weekends to earn extra money, although she was receiving economic aid from the student support by the State. She explained that student aid is limited to cover the most urgent needs such as rent and food, but she needed extra money in order to afford other kind of activities such as going to the cinema, and for this reason she complemented her student aid with the money she earned from working. This position was shared by Juliana, who mentioned that even though she was receiving student aid and student loan she wanted to earn money to cover other free-time activities, such as travelling, or even to save for her future needs, thus she worked. Sandra already had completed her high school in Peru, and once in Sweden enrolled for studies of the Swedish language, she studied part-time and worked, until she decided to study at the university.

Rosa, who is divorced and the mother of two children, was also working and studying but she felt that there was too much effort put on the responsibilities she held at that time, and she barely had time for switching between her roles as student, mother and worker. She opted for working full-time and stopped with her studies of the Swedish language. Rosa said “I decided to work...because I told myself ‘if I stop working now then who is going to pay for my house? Who is going to buy my children all their stuff? I did not know about the system, anything about it, thus I decided to work and said to myself ‘now’...I left the school” (19). Angela who is married and mother of three daughters recalled that when she came to Sweden she already had four years of University studies in Pedagogy in Biology, done in Chile; according to her, those studies facilitated her entrance to the labour market, and even motivated her to continue with her education, applying for a related field, this time in laboratory at a technical level in Sweden. Angela also worked and studied at the same time, while sharing domestic responsibilities with her husband.
Education in Sweden

All the participants mentioned to have been enrolled in courses for the acquisition of the Swedish Language. SFI is a free of charge educational program oriented towards foreigners interested in learning Swedish, it is organized in a way where persons with all educational achievements are combined in groups who receive morning or afternoon tuition. Bibiana remembered that she and her brother were in a class with people from all ages, the level was varied and she was advised by the professors to attend other courses where education was oriented towards people of the same age, and tuition was done in her own language.

Two of the participants mentioned that they continued their education at a vocational level responding to a demand that they saw in a specific sector of the labour market. Angela for instance recalled that, she was always interested in studying; she always had in mind that in Sweden as in any part of the world, people have to demonstrate their knowledge and competence. Angela took a technical course in laboratory because she felt that there was a high demand during the 1980’s, and the process of enrolling was easy for her because they required only a basic knowledge in English besides the Swedish language; she said “after I finished this course I began to work at Huddinge’s Hospital as laboratory assistant” (20). Other participant, Bibiana commented in this regards that after she finished her training in the Swedish language she was advised by a vocational counsellor from the KOMVUX, who oriented her during the process of validation of her academic credentials and guided her with the requirements for future studies. That person who helped Bibiana is described by her as someone very kind, honest and supportive; “therefore she told me “you have this and this and that, and this and this and that you still need’…and wanting to do all that, I began ‘well now I know what is what I’m going to do’…”(21).

Juliana commented that she arrived to Sweden with a University Degree obtained in the country she was born, and she described the process for continuing her education at a Master Level in Sweden, with free and full tuition in English. As she said “It was a year between the Swedish Institute that Evaluates Foreign Studies and the University…and well this worked, but everything requires time with respect to studies done overseas…”(22). Her entrance into the program was perceived as a bit complicated, because she felt that her place might not be granted. For Sandra, entering to a Bachelor Degree Program with full tuition in Swedish required her to
complete with the basic learning in the Swedish subjects, English language, Social Sciences. Sandra recalled that when she was studying at KOMVUX she looked for information for continuing her education, it was not the case that the academic counsellors came to her but instead she went to them, ask and found out how to enter to a Bachelors Program.

4.3. SOCIAL CAPITAL: THE ROLE OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Informal Search Methods

When the participants were asked if they received any information about open positions in the Swedish Labour market through informal ways it was possible to find a variety of responses. Soon after her arrival to Sweden Rosa obtained information about non-qualified jobs through her friends, and it was relatively easy for her to get a job as a personal assistant, an occupation that she has held for about ten years: “It was through a friend of mine that I got there…she told me that there was a Swedish lady who talked Spanish and who needed help only two hours a week, and I thought it was important and thought to myself ‘maybe I am the one who can help her’.” (23)

Similarly Sandra mentioned “It was through friends and my brothers too, they were here before me (...) those jobs were as baby sitter, for other people” (24); however, later on Sandra advanced in her career education and was looking for jobs related to her profession. Sandra commented that she does not have any family member who could provide her with information about a job available in her career field, thus she is more prone to turn to friends or former classmates to discuss about job opportunities. From several communications, only in one occasion she heard about an open position in her field of interest, it was through a friend who ‘passed the voice’ about that job available, but such information did not influence the outcome of getting that job. Sandra explains that her friend was not in charge of receiving or processing the job applications, instead of it, there was another person who selected one among several applicants.

Angela mentioned that job-related information resulted from communications held with her relatives, and they served as intermediaries who not only provided her with information
about a vacancy but connected her with potential employers. Angela recalls this situation “there I had a contact...a person who worked as a chief at an Optometrist Office told a relative of mine that she needed someone to work there because they had to cover the holidays of the current employees and they did not have enough people, so (...) I was interviewed by the regional boss who asked me about my previous experience working in an Optometrist Office in Chile, it was what interested her... nothing regarding what I had studied, I mean it was not relevant for her...”(25).

Bibiana noticed that at times job-related information was channelled through her communication with former co-workers, as she recalls “It was through a co-worker (...) yes she went online through (Hospital) webpage and realized that there was an open position as nurse assistant in (Hospital) and she told me about it (...) I sent my application and talked to my boss at that time and told her I was looking for another job because I was tired, really tired and I wanted something else, I wanted to see something different, I wanted to see more life than dead and sickness! Therefore I went to an interview in the Hospital, I talked about myself, what I have done, were I worked and it is the same hospital, thus it was not a problem”(26).

Juliana is less likely to ask friends or people she knows about job opportunities, she commented that she does not want to “use” her friends in order to obtain job-related information because she feels ashamed of asking for this, and that the only occasion when she tried to get a job interview through a friend she did not obtain any help at all, thus she refused the idea of getting involved in future similar situations; moreover, that her close friends were professionals who knew about job availability in fields different to that for which she was looking for. As Juliana mentioned “maybe I have not put to much pressure on those who could help me to get a job, because I feel embarrassed about using them for such purposes, and others are engineers, how could they possibly help me?(27).

Job contacts are important as well as references made by former employers who can verify working experiences of former employees and serve as recommendations for them when applying for new jobs; however at times is difficult to obtain such references due to several reasons. A former employer might not longer be holding the position of supervisor, might be absent, or the employment site might not longer exist, thus turning difficult the process of validation of a previous working experience for a job-seeker. Other case could be that job-
seekers might not count with the necessary experience in their career jobs, even though they might had worked in other types of jobs, thus their previous working experiences could be not relevant for certain jobs they actually apply for, or can be ignored by potential employers. Angela’s case serves as an illustration for some of the examples described above.

\[ A: \text{“Only a contact from someone who could recommend me, who could say anything about me, and at that time it was very hard for me to find a contact because long ago I had left the labour market. I mean, my boss the last I had in a centre in a servicehus was not longer there, thus it was very complicated”} \text{(28).} \]

If someone is looking for a qualified job it is important to count on previous working experiences preferably related to the field for which one is applying for; Sandra expands this comment arguing that her varied working experiences allowed her to apply knowledge about different groups of persons in different situations.

**Supportive Relationships: family and close friends**

When the participants were asked about their social networks, they mentioned the supportive relationships held among family members and closest friends.

Rosa described how hard it was for her to find a place where to live once she arrived to Sweden; however friends from Peru helped her. It was a very unstable and worrying situation because she depended on her friends and acquaintances to look for an apartment to rent. Rosa also knew about a job opportunity through a friend, and obtained her first and only job in Sweden in which she has remained ever since.

Juliana has described her social network as composed by professionals; some of them are acquaintances through her husband’s group of close friends, and the majority of them of Swedish origin, although she meets other people with foreign background with whom she can ‘practice’ the Spanish language.

Bibiana commented that even though her social network is not wide she has friends, and most of them are people she met at work. She remembered her working years at a Hospital where she made friends. As Bibiana described “I have few friends, maybe like this (making a gesture with her hands, showing ten fingers) but they are friends friends friends, those friends that in
good and bad situations you will call them and they will come to you” (29). Bibiana extended her comments explaining that she feels they understand and accept her as she is, the way she is, because they know her. Although limited in amount they are valued by her because of their friendship, in her words: Por lo tanto tengo amigos y de verdad te digo los amigos son pocos pero son muy buenos, son muy buenos y...son todos suecos” (therefore I have friends, and I am telling you the truth they are few but they are very good, they are very good and...they are all Swedish).

Marital support was noted among two of the participants when they recalled their working experiences. Angela described that her husband was very supportive when she chose inconvenient working hours, and they alternated their free time to take care of their offspring. Juliana also commented on the supportive role of her husband, especially when helping her to keep up and go through her unstable position in the labour market, because year by year she has to look for new jobs because she is not a licensed teacher and cannot get a permanent job contract.

Long-time friendships established since they were at their countries of origin have been maintained by the participants through the use of several means, such as phone-calls, or travel visits; although the frequency of the contacts does not seem to be that often due to varied reasons. Rosa mentioned that during her days off she used to call them, and at times she makes arrangements with friends who are going to travel to Peru and she sends presents for her family and friends over there. Regarding her friends in Sweden she commented that she has a wide social network, composed by people from different ethnic and cultural background. Rosa met a lot of people in different circumstances, not only at her work place but also when attending church, or participating in a group of women. Rosa describes that her friends invite her to social meetings to celebrate birthdays, and they always consider her working schedule in order to plan for the celebration, and together they make arrangements for the meetings.

When the interviewer asked Rosa about the group of women she commented they were from Chile and they used to gather to celebrate special occasions. Among the motives for meeting Rosa recalled the celebration of Independence Day, the international day of the women, to attend a speech, or participate in a seminar regarding cultural roots, and other themes;
although she told during the interview that she has not been able to meet them lately due to her family and working demands.

Similarly Bibiana commented that she participated in a group where women from Chile gather, at the beginning of her description she mentioned that after two years of meetings she cut her ties with that group, and the logic for this decision evolved in her narration. Bibiana said that: “When we first came here we had a group of Chilean families, all families from Chile gathered at this house, we made activities, then all from that disappeared when I started working...indeed more when I started dating this guy from Sweden” (30). Bibiana recalled that she met this guy at her former workplace and they were dating about seven years, and she mentioned that she learned a lot with him, his family accepted her and introduced her with the Swedish society, and today they still are meaningful figures in her life. This part of her narrative was full of emotions and extended throughout the interview, she mentioned several times that she learned a lot from them and how in debt she is with them because of the social learning she achieved. “Y, estar escuchando el sueco todos los días a cada rato...te vas acostumbrando y lo vas aprendiendo más y más, por lo tanto corte toda comunicación de habla hispana, no tengo a nadie de habla hispana” (And, to be listening Swedish every day all the time...you get used to it and you learn more and more, therefore I cut all Spanish communication, I do not have anybody Spanish speaking).

It was Bibiana’s decision to cut the ties with this group of Chilean women, as she mentioned, “I told myself ‘if I want to go ahead, if I want to be what I want to be...what I have to do is to learn the language and what the rules are, and which foot I should use to step in and how I have to seat down, at what time I should say this and that, the schedules, the costumes, and the Chilean citizenship is not going to give me that...I have the Spanish, I do not need more Spanish, I need Swedish, with the Swedish I can make it’, therefore I cut all communication...only with my mother and my brother we talk Spanish, and...nobody else...and now with you! (Smiles)” (31).

When asked about family ties in her country of origin, Bibiana mentioned that she kept that contact with them, however their communications are not often, she writes them and once in a while she gives them a birthday call. Bibiana’s mother serve as an intermediary at times, because she is more in touch with them, thus she tells Bibiana about family members. Travels or
visits to Chile are rather uncommon for her, as she told the interviewer she has been there twice after her long stance in Sweden, and she considers that “it’s been helpful for me not having communication with people from Latin-American origin or Spanish speaking”(32).

On the other hand, friends and family served as supportive figures for Sandra, who was very depressed after her unfruitful efforts to get a job. After her graduation Sandra told the interviewer that she began an exhaustive process of job-search, making phone-calls to follow up those applications she had already sent, but the time passed and she was not getting an interview appointment. Sandra described her feelings of sadness and frustration, and the interviewer asked how she handled those feelings, to which she responded “I benefited a lot from my friends, thanks God I have very good friends, who know how to listen, and I also received professional help, I contacted a Psychotherapist in order to tell her about it, because I felt that I needed help, and she helped me a lot, very much, so that’s the kind of help I have had”(33).

Sandra described how bad she felt because she did not have a job, she did not have money to pay for her daily living expenses, and she got overwhelmed by all that. Fortunately for Sandra after a long period of search she found a job opportunity, though not in her career field. She mentioned that her friends told her later that they knew she was going to get better, and get the job, but she acknowledged that it was at the expense of a lot of worries, through a long process just to get there.

Social networking at the workplace

Interpersonal relations held at the workplace were characterized as positive for most of the participants; they all had their particular ways of interpreting why those relationships between them and their co-workers were perceived “good” or in few cases “negative”.

Rosa described how a friend taught her to fill her working hours in the paperwork and advised her to notify overtime, something of vital importance for Rosa because from that moment she started receiving a compensation for her work. There is a mutual empathy and recognition between Rosa and her co-workers; at times she presented her role as ‘a mother who teaches the others’ when referring to the newcomers to her workplace. As it was mentioned by Rosa, she has accumulated many years working as personal assistant for the same person, thus
she positions herself as someone with maturity, always willing to share the knowledge she has gained.

Bibiana recalled her working experiences when she first started working in the health care sector, specifically at a centre for elderly care, where she learned a lot from their former co-workers regarding the job duties but also about the Swedish costumes and society in general. Sandra also mentioned to have got along with their co-workers, being estimated by them due to her flexibility or disposition to take extra jobs, or adjust her schedule to help others. Angela commented that overall her relationships with co-workers have been always good; as she said “I have been lucky to find nice people, except one person who is not kind, but is not against me rather that person is that way with everyone around her...but when she has not been kind with me I do not care, I just say ‘ah’. I am not going to make a big deal about it” (34). She considers it important to help newcomers at her workplace, especially those who are not familiar with the duties, and relates this as a matter of solidarity, which is missing in the person she mentioned before. In spite of that person, Angela noted that the majority of her co-workers are friendly, young people, old people, but only women. There is an overrepresentation of the female workforce at her workplace, to which she commented that could be due to the occupation.

Contrary to what was presented by the participants above, Juliana mentioned that her relationships with former co-workers were negative when she was working in institutions for the elderly. She said she never got along with the permanent workers who were older than her, besides she saw them ‘inferior’ to her from the academic point of view. Juliana said that she has ‘a classist view of the society’, where all their members have different positions in the social structure, are differentiated not only by gender but also by class and educational attainment. As she said, in Sweden there are educational opportunities available to all, and education is free of charge and there are several resources to obtain economic support, thus Juliana considers unacceptable to think about people rejecting such opportunities who are complaining later on their wages. Although she noted that the situation is different if compared to her country of origin, because in Venezuela those opportunities do not exist or are very limited, though she does not judge people who cannot study. Only positive relations with co-workers were mentioned by Juliana when she recalled that the people she had got alone are precisely those who share an
academic background as her; this has been a constant during her working life, and characteristic of her networks.

**Difficult times at their workplaces & strategies to handle them**

When Sandra is in a situation where she feels threatened at her workplace, she knows she can rely on the support of the security guards, and there are good channels of communication to ensure she receives the support she needs. Also trustful relationships with colleagues and supervisors were described by Sandra. As she mentioned “*me siento muy bien... muy apoyada con los compañeros, siento esa confianza, pienso que con ellos he trabajado veinte años ya, gente linda*” (I feel very well, I feel very happy and supported by my co-workers, I feel this trust, it’s like if I’ve been working with them over twenty years, very nice people).

At times during the interviews some participants mentioned that there were moments when they felt tensions with their co-workers, and commented about the ways they overcome such situations. Bibiana’s strategy was to ignore negative comments made by co-workers because she was a foreigner, and she considers that this attitude helped to enter smoothly into the Swedish society. For her it was more important to keep learning about the culture, the societal norms, and mastering the Swedish language.

Rosa described that it was hard for her to understand how co-workers with Latin-American origin take their jobs only as a duty, instead of looking at the position as a personal assistant in its whole, where the care takers should be sensitive towards the patient’s well being, towards the patient’s needs. In Rosa words “*eso pues es un poquito que me afecta...me decepciona, no?...las personas que son así*(that’s what affects me a little bit, disappoints me, isn’t it? persons who are like that). Communication is Rosa’s strategy for overcoming misunderstandings and differences at her workplace, as well as a tool for introducing new comers with the activities regarding to their job.

All the participants mentioned how important it is to be able to be one self at the workplaces although having in mind a professional attitude; how appreciated is the fact of having people around to discuss and share interests with one another, always respecting and accepting how one is, all these seems to be very important and related to job satisfaction. These aspects play an important role in the ways people relate to one another, how people form networks and
serves from them in a variety of ways. While some occupations like elderly care allow for more interaction among workers other occupations might limit the space people have to socialize at the workplace, as Angela commented when recalling a former job she held as security guard at the train station: “ahí no tenia prácticamente colegas, porque uno trabajaba sola” (there I did not have colleagues as I worked literally alone). Angela barely had time to meet a co-worker during the changes between shifts, thus it was perceived by her as something boring because she did not have a real contact, even other jobs she had later were kind of limiting in the sense that the lunch time and pauses were taken by each worker one at a time; but when she was working within institutions for care for the elderly there was more opportunity to socialize, to share with her co-workers.

Pulling friends or acquaintances to their workplaces

One day walking around the down town, Rosa suddenly met a friend’s nephew, who told her about the hard times she was experiencing in her job. These women shared a talk at lunch and Rosa suggested her to apply for a job within her workplace. In Rosa’s words “I found even more people who were in need, I saw them and thought to myself ok I’m going to tell them if they want to work a couple of hours here...I’ve helped them” (35). Rosa informed the Spanish speaking people (from Central and South America) about available work; she noted that many of these women already had a knowledge in the Swedish language but found it hard to get a job.

On the other hand, Bibiana who works at a Hospital described that she has pulled friends and colleagues from a former workplace to the new workplace where she is now; because she felt she needed the support of people who had worked with her for a long time. Bibiana shifted the section where she worked seven years and moved to a new location, but she felt alone in her new workplace. It was perceived as a process of change, in the sense of starting from the very beginning, from knowing new people to adjusting her new duties, even though it was the same Hospital and she still was a nurse assistant. Once Bibiana had the chance she informed a friend and former colleague about an open position within the same section, and as Bibiana said “cambió mi mundo del cielo a la tierra porque ya no me sentía sola” (it changed my world from heaven to earth because I not longer felt alone). Besides her friend, Bibiana has informed about job vacancies to people she is related by kinship. So far, Bibiana has introduced to her workplace two referees, and she said “two close persons and they really support you a lot, the fact of having
someone who really knows you, and knows your values it is highly appreciated”(36). This position was also common to Rosa’s description, as she told “Now all of them see me as a mother, because if anything happens they come to me and tell me “Rosa look this has happened to me...”(37).

In order to assure the process of recommendation, Rosa and Bibiana committed to talk to their current employers about the persons they were referring, in this case, their friends or former colleagues. Since Rosa and Bibiana held their jobs for a considerable amount of time and were known as good workers, their employers trusted their suggestions regarding potential new employees, and there was mutual benefits, not only for those persons who were granted the jobs but also Rosa and Bibiana because they had their friends, colleagues or relatives close to them.

4.4 PERCEPTION OF JOB CAREERS

Having a job is full of meanings for each participant from this study; the experiences achieved through the years they have been in the Swedish labour Market are described with great detail often accompanied by emotions. At times during the interviews the participants came up with situations where anger, frustration, sadness and joy where verbalized in their stories, but also where subjective meanings spoke through the unspoken words, namely, through their body language. The researcher had the role of a listener but also of supportive figure when two of the participants described critical situations in their lives.

Juliana said that she has not noticed any improvement in her developing career after completing her Master Degree in Communication Sciences in Sweden, even though she thought it will help her to get a job related to her field of studies. She has been in Sweden six years but she had found hindlers to work within her career, though she acknowledges that only the jobs she has hold during the last three years have been acceptable and slightly related to her interests. When she compares herself with other foreigners who might have been unemployed several years she considers herself lucky, because her unemployment periods have been relatively short, no longer than eight months in total from the six years she has been in the country. When looking back to her working story in Sweden, Juliana recalled the multiple occupations she has hold, which she describes as a hard process of adjustment because she never though she will be doing certain activities that did not relate to her academic achievements. Working within the
elderly care doing service work, cleaning and doing duties related to the daily living and care, was perceived by Juliana as something very difficult in the sense that she felt ashamed of that. Juliana said “I don’t think I had talked to my friends regarding what I was doing here, I think it was a subject I ignored to a large extent…And in Sweden when they asked me ‘oh well I worked in a house for the elderly but that’s because I’m studying’”(38).

The situation turned out the opposite to this experience of ‘being embarrassed’ about her job when Juliana got a job at a Consular Office for a Country of South America. She commented on the positive aspects of that working experience as well as the negative side. Juliana considered that working there was the first time she was not longer ashamed of her work, she had a full time job, earned a relatively fair salary, was to a walking distance from her house, and felt well in many respects. Nonetheless Juliana mentioned that after that job she does not longer want to work for people from South America, explaining that she would rather prefer to work for Swedish people or Institutions because of the benefits, the compensation for work, and because she felt that her boss did not give her a treatment in accordance to her position as Assistant for the Consulate. Juliana concludes “I thought that experience was going to help me achieve such a great job, because it could look fine in the resume to have worked at a Consular Office, thus when I resigned I started looking for a job again. The same situation thirty or more applications, nothing happened, therefore I started searching for a job as a school teacher”(39).

Similar to the experienced described by Juliana, Sandra had a lot of expectations after her graduation from a Swedish University “I looked for jobs in my field, within the competency I have, however I did not find any related to it, so the first job I got was with the elderly, right after my graduation, but at the same time I kept searching for jobs within my career”(40). Sandra as well as Juliana has gone through several occupations and switched between jobs in a long process of match between the labour market demands, availability of jobs and their specific interest and needs. As Sandra recalls “when I first came here, as I told you, my first jobs were as baby sitter, taking care of children, then I worked cleaning hotels, after I received my permanent residence I worked with the elderly, as a personal assistant, then in stores selling things, that was the type of jobs before I entered to study at the University”(41).

When the interviewer asked Sandra about her perception regarding those working experiences she was previously describing Sandra commented that she felt how she was
‘evolving’ as she was working. She recalled taking jobs where the Swedish language was not a plus, gradually holding new positions where mastering of the language was required as a vital part of the job, from unqualified jobs until getting jobs related to her career development, until finally achieved the desired position in the labour market, although getting there was a long process. Sandra had gone through several jobs keeping in mind that she wants to go ahead and advance in her career. Sandra mentioned that all her working experiences are valuable because she learned different things from them, which enriched her personal and professional life.

Angela mentioned the differences in the labour market demands and how it affected her choices of work, but she feels fortunate to have hold jobs when she has needed them, because she found herself switching between countries, which marked a break in her working life in Sweden and Chile.

**Self Identity and Multiculturalism**

All participants mentioned that learning the Swedish language implies not only the acquisition of communicative skills but is also understood as a way to integrate into the society, is described as a complex process which constitute a first step into socializing, getting access to the Swedish Culture, being in touch with others, and was facilitated by the experience of education or enrolment in local programs, but it was also enhanced through the variety of working experiences accumulated by the participants.

*B:* (...) maybe I had this idea from the beginning, the goal that if I am going to stay in Sweden I must learn the language, because without the language I am not going anywhere, without the language nobody is going to listen to me and without language they are not going to understand what I want and what I do not want, thus learning to listen and learning to talk as well as keep working it was all to get where I am now!(42).

Bibiana commented such experience with specific emphasis on the role of learning the Swedish language as a way to gain a place in the Swedish society, where she could feel as any other and be treated equally when she says ‘I am not going to feel as any other here in Sweden if I don’t learn the language...It doesn’t matter if I change my last name to Larsson when I get married, it doesn’t matter if I leave behind my Chilean nationality and switch it for the Swedish one, if I don’t learn Swedish they are not going to treat me as a Swedish(...)It is a weird
association I have made with regards to learning the language in order to be at the same levels as the rest of the people who is born here in Sweden’ (43)

Frustration

In spite of being in the labour market for many years and survived periods of uncertainty regarding her contract, Juliana mentioned throughout her talk about the difficulties experienced by her when trying to find a job that matches her career. She sounds very annoyed and frustrated after several attempts sending her resume and applying for positions as a Journalist in Sweden; as the following lines illustrate: “I have not exercised my profession in six years (...) I am aware of the fact that right now when I go to the labour market to look for a job within the mass media the people (employers) are going to see that I haven’t work in that during the last six years (...) that doesn’t look good anywhere! (...) It is not the case that I have not tried… it is the way this country is!”(44)

Similar arguments were found in Sandra’s comments in this respect, as could be noted in several sections of this study. “I had many hard times after my graduation, because I always wow wow wow in a month I will get a job, or at least three months later as if I was exaggerating, but it wasn’t like that! I mean, I was sending…and I sent the applications and then I say to myself, okay it isn’t enough to send, I must do something else, then I started making phone calls…in order to show my interest, but it was No and No and No…and one says ‘Oh my God why so much effort?’ Why I have lend money? I’ve lost my time…I mean a lot of frustration…I felt really bad…may be I did not have luck, I don’t know…”(45)

Self-esteem

When the participants had the chance to remain several years in their jobs they commented that they acquired a sense of belonging to the workplace, they felt secure and appreciated by other co-workers. Rosa and Bibiana told the interviewer that the fact of being recognized by others made them feel very well; they felt that their experience was important and valued by others. Bibiana said “seven years in the same place with the same people around you, you are improving from being the new one this month after one two or three years you are the one who knows everything, everyone comes to you to ask you ‘how do you do this? Where is this
and that? Is this okay? Where do we have this? ’...so, everyone come to you, they ask you because you are the one with more experience in that place...it made me feel very well and needed”(46).

A negative way in which self-esteem might be affected is the encounter with less successful experiences in the labour market, such as obstacles that impede someone the opportunity to get a job within one’s career field. This situation can be experienced as something that compromise one’s self-esteem, as two of the participants mentioned before. Juliana who is a journalist and has a Masters Degree in Communication Sciences said she had never found a job within her career, and that situation is described by her as follows: “the point is that, right now I am struggling with myself regarding to believe in myself, that indeed I can get a job in other field...and the truth is that I haven’t sent an application yet because I say to myself ‘well, why am I going to send it if they are not going to call me anyway?’...and it might not necessarily be the case...maybe they are going to call me, but that part... that of my self-esteem has been hit hard here in Sweden...because if I interpret the signals that the market send me is that I am useful to clean and even might be useful as a teacher, but apparently I am not able to do something else than being a teacher...”(47).

In an attempt to give explanations about the hinders for getting a job within her career field, Juliana brought her own reflections in a narration that to the simple viewer could be contradictive, but was more of the kind of elaboration about her own interpretations about her situation in the market, and the extent she would face the hinders. Every now and then she commented that “I am not sure that I could even do the job that I really want to do I mean in my career, and that’s kind of weird because on one hand I say ‘okay, cool, I am going to find a job’ but on the other hand ‘if I find that job would I be able to do it?’” (48)

About Patience

Rather common amongst the participants was to develop the virtue of being patient, when working. Angela, for instance described that it has helped to be calm and take things smoothly, do not hurry or rush to attend all the customers at the same time, instead of this, she takes her time to give attention to each of them providing the best service, offering a quality in her duties. Bibiana mentioned that she has learned to be patient and understand each person who comes to her at the Hospital, instead of irritating herself if they do not listen to her, just be calm and
understand them. Juliana as well mentioned that, she has learned to be patient and flexible, to adjust her plans to the demands of the market, making use of the resources she has.

**Perceptions about their current jobs**

Rosa does not perceive her job as a job but as part of her life; she receives a payment for her duties but she has established a caring relationship with the person she works for, who is seeing by her as a daughter, as part of her family.

Angela who currently works as Assistant in an Optometrist Office commented that she likes her job although it is hard because she is working per hours, she does not have a permanent working place, she must work at different locations, and the hardest thing is when she goes to locations with high sales and she ends up very tired. In her words “*it happens that you don’t even have the time to take a break, a pause of fifteen minutes simply because you ‘cannot’, you can’t leave if there are several costumers...it happened to me that I’ve been alone and all of a sudden I have difficulty for going to the toilet because I’m alone...so it’s complicated, and why is it? Because at the end it’s a matter of saving personal, economize*”(49). Angela commented that she is satisfied with her current job but if she had the opportunity to change occupation she would like to work in another field.

Bibiana commented that the communication held with her patients is what she likes the most about her current jobs; even though she is a little bit constrained about the time during which social interchanges occur. Bibiana works at a Hospital and should inform the patients about the surgery process in a short time, but she perceives that contact with her patients as meaningful, and she likes her supportive role as well as the variety of persons she can interact with. In Bibiana’s words: “*Esa relación es buena, te ayuda, vaya son pequeños detalles que en realidad esta persona tenía problemas...y ya no los tiene, ya está mejor*” (That relationship is good, it helps you, those are small details that this person had problems... and now those problems are gone, that person is better).

When the interviewees talked about the possibility to change their actual jobs the opinion was divided. Rosa, who is a personal assistant, told the interviewer that she has received a lot of job offers but her response is always a ‘no’ because she is satisfied with her job and never felt the need for a change. Bibiana, who is a nurse assistant, said that she has considered the idea of
changing her occupation to assistant in a drugstore and realized that she not only needs to keep with the updates and read a lot but also the contact with the patient is very limited, so she was not enthusiastic about this idea.

Angela, Sandra and Juliana talked a lot about their switch between jobs due to opportunities available and immediate personal needs, where certain jobs were temporary and helped them achieve certain goals.

Sandra perceives that she had gone through very hard times during her working life in Sweden, as she commented before she was very frustrated at several times, but now has achieved her desire goal and is working within her career field. In her own word Sandra described it “As of today I feel very well more than anything because the place where I am now, I mean I couldn’t be better (...) I got the perfect job at the perfect time, and this is to encourage me,(...)because I feel that it is a great job, I like it, I am learning a lot...and this gives you legitimacy...Now I feel as a Social Worker, now I feel that it was worthy(…) now I am doing what I have studied, thus it was worthy” (50).

Juliana is advancing in a career field relatively new to her, she is taking the opportunities she has for being in the labour market as a school teacher, and is currently working in her certification, in order to gain a permanent job. For Juliana, her primary plans of working within her career as journalist remains in standby, and has been supplemented with the ‘plan B as she calls it’ where some of her skills can be put into practice.

Other social interactions at the workplace and its influence on job-career’s perception

All the participants brought several situations referred to the relations they hold with clients or patients and how those relationships turned meaningful while they were working, at the same time that allowed them to perceive some sort of benefits in their career development. Although the interviewees offered varied examples, most of the situations were perceived as positive and derived from interchanges of social and cultural information which facilitated among other things, their training and improvement in their knowledge of the Swedish language. At other times, during the interviews, the participants described some difficulties raised during their encounters with patients or clients.
Juliana mentioned that “during those six months I studied a lot of Swedish, I took help from one of the patients who helped me to revise my grammar, I wrote to him and he helped me, and I studied and all free time I had all my breaks I was sitting there and studying with a grammar book” (51). This position was also shared by Bibiana who commented that she learned a lot form the elderly at her workplace, because they make use of the Swedish language in a way the schools and other institutions cannot teach, she learned “how to say something and when to say it, they teach you the variety of ways to say the same word, maybe it is the same word but if you accent them in certain way it means something else, thus the elderly taught me a lot, to speak and speak loud!(52). Sandra commented that most of her interactions with clients have been positive, she felt well with them, but less often she experienced uncomfortable situations because her patients arrived to consultation under the effect of drugs.

On the other hand, besides refinement of language skills or training in the Swedish language, other gaining’s at work are characterized by the introduction to cultural information about Swedish society through the social interchange between the women and their patients, or clients.

When describing her relationship with the person she works as a personal assistant Rosa said “it all has been during my working days, she taught me how should I drive myself...she taught me to get into the Swedish society, to the Swedish System, how I should pay the bills, I mean everything in order, my papers, my taxes...she is the one who helped me go through all this, what should I do” (53). Rosa in particular has established a very close relationship with the person she works for, she described how they introduced each other with family members and friends, and their social network expanded through those contacts. As Rosa said “I know all her family, her friends, because she goes with me to all her social meetings, and if I don’t work that day then I don’t mind sometimes I also receive her with my family” (54). Rosa expands during the interview to describe how important is this person in her life, how she estimates her and that everything she does is embedded in warm feelings, because Rosa sees her as a daughter not as a job.

Differences in opinions regarding culture and costumes were not the exemption when talking about social interactions between the participants of the present study and their clients or
patients. Several situations were recalled by the women, and the ways they cope with their differences.

Bibiana, for instance, commented that it is hard to deal with people when they do not respect what she is telling them regarding their health care needs, because sometimes there are patients who ignore her advice and assume attitudes of superiority as if they knew how to plan for their surgery and recovery. Sandra’s strategy to cope with situations as that described above is to do her job, inform her patients in a professional way.

Rosa mentioned that the major difference held between her and the person she works for was due to their discrepancies regarding religion; however talking to each other and respecting their own views allowed them to overcome conflicting situations. Rosa acknowledges how the person she works for introduced her within the Swedish society, as well as Rosa exchanged cultural information regarding her country of origin, thus they had a better knowledge about each other roots, costumes, and values. In Rosa’s words “Now she respects my religion as well as I respect hers…I’ve always respected her, attended her, isn’t it? Now, if there is a misunderstanding I let her know, because she has improved a lot, a lot, as well as she introduced me to the Swedish society I did it too...for instance about the cultural practices in my country”(55). Several times during her narrative Rosa commented that this person is not longer perceived as her patient but as part of her family.

Conflicting emotions must be rationalized by Sandra, and she makes efforts to be clear with her duties while keeping a balance in her relationships within her workplace. For Sandra it is very important to draw the line that differentiates between a professional and therapeutic relationship with her clients from another kind of relationship, that of a friendship nature. She stresses her need of keeping that line clear, in order to avoid conflicting situations where her ethic would be compromised, because she as a Social Worker finds herself in a position where she represent the interest of the State as well as the persons who receive the social services.
5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In order to analyze and discuss the results that were presented in the preceding chapter, each research question will be formulated again, followed by the corresponding comments made by the author of this study.

It is not possible to make statistical generalization from the answers provided within this study, first because the nature of this study is qualitative but also because the author made explicit in the previous sections that there was not a concern towards generalization based on the small number of interviews done, neither from the small number of participants. Nonetheless, the results from the interviews are compared with the results from other studies in order to expand the external validity of the answers provided by the participants.

1. How do foreign-born women with Latin-American origin describe and perceive their process of access to the Swedish Labour Market?

The interviewees offered a wide picture of their perceived experiences regarding the process of access to the Swedish Labour Market. They illustrated several situations in which they narrated the use of multiple job search strategies at different times in their working lives, the role of the educational level they have, and the outcomes in their paths.

Although the opinion between the participants varied amongst them regarding the type of strategies used to get a job, depending of their position in the life cycle, their interests, skills, and social resources, it was common to find that they evaluate job attributes in a way that illustrated aspects mentioned by Hanson and Pratt (1991), where hours of work and the location of the job are important when taking the decision for applying for certain jobs. When the interviewees described the characteristics they looked at first when considering to apply for certain jobs, all of them mentioned that the flexibility in the work schedules as well as compensation for overtime or holiday-working hours is something that makes jobs within the health care sector or retail industry to some extent attractive even for persons who are overqualified for the positions offered.

The information regarding the availability of jobs where there is dominance in the female participation was provided to the participants either through formal channels, such as the
Swedish Employment Office or through informal channels such as personal contacts soon after their arrival to Sweden. “The composition of immigration and the composition of the migrant’s first jobs after their arrival in Sweden have to a great extent been determined by the presence of excess demand in different parts of the Swedish Labor market” as Wadensjö mentioned in his researches (1976, p.2). Other authors observed that the gender occupational segregation in the Swedish Labour Market was not as notorious as the ethnic occupational segregation in the late 1980’s (Leiniö, 1988); where foreign-born people were overrepresented in the manufacturing and service industries or in the public sector.

Foreign-born women tend to look for, or find jobs, associated with traditional female roles such as taking care of others -in education, or cleaning services- because they notice that those are occupations in high demand. The interviewees mentioned that it is easier and faster to get a job when applying for unqualified jobs; such as those described above. As a consequence they tend to be involved in a cycle in which they reinforce the social and occupational division of the genders.

However, it should be mentioned that one of the interviewees held in the past a position which was not typical for the female workforce; though that experience might not be representative amongst the participants of this study.

Entry jobs were perceived by some interviewees as temporary jobs that made possible for them accumulate working experience in the country, they were beneficial for the purpose of getting knowledge about social and cultural aspects of the society they were in, and served as learning and training in the Swedish language. Some participants decided to switch between jobs willing to find a place where they could put into practice their educational level.

For the interviewees who completed a Bachelors or a Masters Degree in Sweden, their paths into the labour market were described by them as challenging and complicated, where pursuing a degree not necessarily guarantee that they might get the job they desire, or corresponding to their skills levels. These participants perceived that their connections with other persons within their professional fields are to some extent limited, because they have few contacts to discuss employment opportunities in specific sectors of the labour market. Added to that, three interviewees mentioned that getting a high qualified job depends of the professional field elected
by a person, because there is greater demand for high qualified jobs for engineers, health professionals, whilst there is less demand for other careers such as journalism & mass media communication, or within the social sciences.

Leinö’s noted (1988, p.115) that there was a significant percentage of foreign-born people outside the labour market if compared to Swedish population, “often caused by the special difficulties they encounter in a labour market with a job structure changing towards more and more qualified jobs”. It would be interesting at this particular time to offer new interpretations to the arguments presented above, and it might be useful to do this from the answers provided by the interviewees in this study, since many of them already achieved certain academic competencies which could be expected to influence their entrance into the professional occupations within the Swedish Labour Market.

On the other hand, as for the use of formal job search strategies, 3 out of 5 participants, mentioned to have had an early contact with the Swedish Employment Office, which served a supportive function in the sense that it provided them with information concerning job vacancies, even though most of such vacancies tend to be related to typical female occupations. It could be interpreted that in the absence of an extended social network or other sources of information about job vacancies, the interviewees turned towards the Swedish Employment Office, soon after their arrival to Sweden. This sort of contact might be interpreted as ‘linking social capital’, accordingly to Woolcock’s and Field’s conceptualizations, because the interviewees looked after other resources, ideas and information from contacts outside their immediate social environment.

Internet search is another job search strategy, common among three participants who were looking after opportunities within their professional careers; here the outcomes for getting the jobs they had applied for varied amongst them; it was related to the kind of job and the labour demands that were specific at that time. For a nurse it was relatively easier to get a job within the health care sector than for a journalist to be called for within the mass media industry. As for the case of the social worker, although several job openings were posted online, less luck she found when waiting for an answer to her applications. It might have played a role in the outcomes of getting a job through online applications if the applicant counted with a licensure that enable her to work within the field she had applied for, or other aspects such as accumulated experience or working references, while the absence of any of those aspects might influence
negatively the outcomes, thus limiting their chances to find a job within their professional occupation.

Rather typical for the interviewees was the situation of working under short term contracts, although this occurred at different periods in their working lives. Those working under this type of employment are vulnerable in the sense of unstable jobs, in case of sickness or absence, their income would be lower. The level of concern for being in a temporary job vary amongst the interviewees; some of them perceive that being in the labour market is already an important way to achieve experience an expertise, at the same time a first step to expand their network; whilst for other interviewees being in a temporary job limit their plans for their future. Nonetheless, getting a permanent job is a gradual process for all employees in Sweden, independently of their ethnic, social and educational background; it is part of one amongst other characteristics of a labour market that is shifting in its structure. Several examples were mentioned by the interviewees, like shifts in the demand in certain occupations, some jobs replaced by new ones, technological advance which marked a change and affected workers, privatization, new exigencies in the job requirements.

The interviewees mentioned that they were aware of the lower percentage of participation of foreign workforce in Sweden, in spite of the legislation that promotes diversity at the workplace, and in spite of the efforts to integrate foreigners into Swedish Society. Different opinions were mentioned and explained regarding the changing composition of the workforce throughout the last years. Most of the interviewees noticed that there has been a slight increase in the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of their co-workers, and they perceive this situation as a promissory future, although the stereotypes in hiring processes represent a mayor difficulty for foreigners when applying for a job.

How foreign-workers are perceived by potential employers in Sweden is a question not formulated in this study, therefore there are not answers in this respect, just interpretation derived from literature revision. Nonetheless, it has been mentioned in several researches and by many of the interviewees, situations in which foreigners have felt discriminated at some point, whether by employers or co-workers, from who stereotypes towards people with foreign background have ended up in uncomfortable situations.
Much in this respect was mentioned within ‘labour market discrimination theory’, where the labour market outcomes differ between foreign and native born, because a ‘differential labour market treatment’ in which characteristics as gender, race and ethnicity play a role influencing distributional processes in the labour market (Tomaskovic as cited in: Le Grand & Szulkin, 2002, p.40). At this point, if it is assumed that some employers make use of differential treatments in their recruitment processes and prefer to hire individuals who share their background, excluding certain ethnic or racial groups, then those assumption might be complemented by interpretations from Social Capital Theories where individuals in privileged positions tend to favor people like them, who might share characteristics or background, and tend to exclude those who are different to them. Some interviewees described several situations that they perceived as evidence of discrimination from potential employers.

From other theorizations, such as a ‘theory of statistical discrimination, it can be interpreted that employers decisions on whom to employ are influenced by stereotypes, and when employers lack reliable information on potential new employees or when that information is difficult to obtain, they tend to use generalizations based on average productivity of a group (Le Grand and Szulkin, 2002). From the theory of statistical discrimination, it is possible to find explanations regarding the way stereotypes function amongst employers, as mentioned by Le Grand and Szulkin (2002, p.41); because their decisions in the hiring process can be at times depending on “imperfect information on individual’s ability, productivity and aptitude”. Employers might evaluate attributes on potential employees according to their educational background, kind of school they graduated, cultural and ethnic background, and might prefer those who share similar attribute to them.

A big challenge to avoid stereotypes in labor market processes might be the acknowledge and implementation of the legislation that promotes multiculturalism, although it seems to be far from reality, because as many interviewees mentioned, in spite of the exigencies by law about multiculturalism, in spite that the Swedish labour legislation requires that all employers notify their job vacancies to the National Labour Market Board (Korpi, 2001; Bäcklund, 2002), and in spite that many job postings name the diversity at their workplace, it seems that people with foreign background are left behind when competing for qualified working opportunities.
Other aspect mentioned by the interviewees refers to the process of validation of foreign studies and the possibility to continue education within Sweden. There were resources available for them to achieve their goals of continuing education, and again, making use of ‘linking social capital’ in the form of contact with Swedish Institutions served such purpose. While studying, interviewees benefited from student support but they also felt that they needed to work in order to complement their income, gain working experiences, improve their language and other skills, as well as expand their networks.

For some participants continuing their education is a way to prepare them to respond to demands made by specific sectors of the labour market. Even though opportunities to engage in studies and continue education are promoted in Sweden and facilitated by student aid, few participants made explicit that having children to take care of, and other responsibilities to face, made them desist of continuing their education to a higher educational level. Thus, the academic achievements of the interviewees differ amongst them, their position in the life cycle, family composition, and particular interests.

Networking at their workplaces was of vital importance and more details shall be presented below, where the second research question is formulated and answered.

2. How do these women perceive the role of their social networks in relation to their process for gaining or maintaining employment in the Swedish Labour Market?

The answers provided by the interviewees illustrated Granovetter’s findings (1973) in the sense that all of them at any point in their working lives obtained job information through social contacts. The opinion was divided among the participants depending of the moment when they asked or received information about jobs vacancies, depending on the type of jobs looked for, and depending on the characteristics of their network and ties. Those interviewees who had friends, acquaintances or relatives at the moment they arrived to Sweden were those who counted on information about vacancies, more often in unqualified jobs; whilst those who lack such contacts turned to formal channels in order to receive information of this kind.

Information about non-qualified jobs is more common to circulate between close friends and family, but that information seemed to be limited when thinking about qualified jobs, as the participants described it. It is not surprise that those close to someone, who share the same
ethnic, educational and social background, tend to mobilize similar information; in the case of interviewees the flow of information regarding unqualified jobs was wide, while for those looking for opportunities according to their professional field it was limited.

The concept of ‘bonding social capital’ might apply for those interviewees who turned to family and friends to ask for guidance and support in the job search process, being beneficial in the sense of getting easy of access to information regarding employment opportunities and get a job, but at the expense that such opportunities might not always be of career advancement if the members of their network do not occupy influencing positions in the labour market or did not have access to qualified jobs. An exemption was found for the case of one interviewee, who was less likely to ask friends or people she knows about job opportunities, because she felt ashamed of asking for this kind of information and because she acknowledges that her close friends hold qualified jobs in fields different to the one she is interested in.

Nonetheless, the interviewees gave account of the extent and variety of their networks, and the use of ‘bonding’, ‘bridging’ and ‘linking social capital’, at several moments in their lives. The importance and frequency of the connections attributed by the participants vary according to their interests and the kind of situations they live.

Most of the interviewees not only described the role of ‘bonding social capital’ in relation to getting a job, but also the supportive role of family and friends throughout their working lives.

The family composition of each interviewee vary, and for those how are married, it was possible to note in their descriptions that regardless of the presence or absence of children, all of them have received emotional support by their partners, when dealing with situations related to their current or former jobs. Aspects such as adjusting to inconvenient schedules, dealing with unstable employment, or generating new sources of income were possible to the marital support between the interviewees and their partners.

One of the interviewees is divorced and mentioned how hard it was for her to go through different situations after her arrival to Sweden, when she was a mother of two young children, was looking for a place to live and looking for a job; fortunately she received the support of friends and came out of the difficult situations at that time. Equally important for another
participant who is single, was to turn to friends and her family in order to overcome a stressing situation when she was in the transition from unemployment to employment.

It is important to note how important are the ties between individual’s and the main figures in their social networks, such as close family members and friends, and how beneficial it is to have someone to turn to in difficult situations. Of course not only hard times were described by the interviewees during the interviews, they also noted the role of sharing special moments with family and friends, gathering to celebrate the joy of other moments in their lives.

Even though the contacts occur at different times in their lives and at varied frequencies, the interviewees mentioned the use of several means, such as phone-calls, travel or visits. How networking occur is different for each respondent, depending on their own interests, time of the life cycle in which they are. Some of them prefer to spend time with their immediate family; others prefer to gather with co-workers who became their friends, while others had participated of community groups as the church or groups of women of Latin-American origin. Thus, bonding, bridging and linking are characteristics of the networking amongst the interviewees throughout their descriptions, mostly regarding working experiences but extended to other experiences of their lives in Sweden.

It seems appropriate to recall Lin (1999, p.483) who noted that, “there is persistent evidence that extensity or size of network ties are significantly related to richness or diversity in social resources...Having both strong and weak ties enhances the extensity of networks”. Most of the interviewees commented that they have a social network composed by people from different ethnic and cultural background, and characterized by strong and weak ties. From the several examples provided by all the interviewees in their descriptions it is possible to interpret that ‘bridging social capital’ operates in the microspheres of family or working life of these women. Networking with people from diverse background or in different situations, might be understood as additional sources of information regarding employment opportunities. Two of the interviewees found themselves in situations where they pulled friends, acquaintances or former workers into their jobs; for them, having someone they knew about and someone who knew them was important to create a sense of team. In order to facilitate the process of entrance of their referees into their workplaces, these two interviewees talked to their current employers, who trusted their suggestions regarding potential new employees because the interviewees were
known as good workers. For the case presented above, the notions of trust, solidarity and reciprocity were vital.

Typical for all of the interviewees was the importance they attributed to established connections with people outside their ethnic origin, although the importance of networking with people of Swedish origin was more notorious among two interviewees, who saw those connections as more appropriate for them to achieve a better integration into the Swedish society.

For two interviewees ‘bridging social capital’ was of mayor importance in their descriptions, as they mentioned that the circles they move in are characterized by few individuals, who currently hold a professional degree, and occupy a good social position, with whom they interact and gain knowledge about the country, the culture, while practicing the Swedish language. Networking with people from Latin-American origin was not a priority or a need felt for two of the interviewees, however only one of them decided cutting the ties with Spanish-speaking people, because for her, it would be more beneficial to relate to Swedish-born people. Those participants described similar situations. They got married with Swedish-born men and eventually their husband’s friends became their own friends as well, but also that most of their friends and the people with whom they relate are professionals. The preceding descriptions might be understood as variation in the forms of ‘bonding social capital’ if they were interpreted from the original notions from Putnam or Woolcok; in the sense that intercultural marriage was a form of bonding, but not necessarily aimed at reinforcing any identity in particular. On the other hand, if Bourdieu’s concept of ‘social capital’ was used to interpret the positions described by these two interviewees when they recall being related mostly to Swedish-born people, or with professional background, then it would be possible to understand how certain individuals relate to others in order to gain or maintain certain status within the social structure. Arguably, it could be that those persons are selective in their social networking, and that they identify that their relationships are aimed at facilitating the flow of diverse cultural and social information, from which it would be possible to generate broader identities.

On the other hand, interpersonal relations held at the workplace were mentioned by most of the interviewees, and their descriptions were characterized by ‘bridging social capital’, where new connections were established among the interviewees and their co-workers. For some of the
interviewees it was an opportunity to socialize and expand their network, thus new friendships emerged. At another times, networking was less successful for individuals who worked in occupations were circumstances as time or place of work limited the contact between them and their co-workers, or were empathy was absent amongst them. Here the notions of ‘like’ or ‘dislike’ are of importance, because the participants mentioned some of the criteria that established the boundaries between friends and acquaintances, depending on the affinity and empathy established in such connections, the strength of the ties, or values attributed to the persons involved in the interaction.

Accumulated years of working experience serves an important function among the relationships held between some interviewees and their co-workers, where mutual empathy and recognition facilitate the interchanges of knowledge and strengthen their ties. For some interviewees it is equally important to help newcomers at their workplace, especially those who are not familiar with the duties, and they describe it as a matter of solidarity.

Rather atypical in this respect is the position of one interviewee who mentioned that her relationships with former co-workers were negative when she was working in institutions for the elderly, as she never got along with the permanent workers who where older than her, and were perceived as ‘inferior’ to her from the academic point of view. This interviewee admits she has ‘a classist view of the society’, where all their members have different positions in the social structure, are differentiated not only by gender but also by class and educational attainment. Networking for her could operate in quite exclusive way, and notions of status might serve to interpret the importance attributed by this interviewee to her connections. Only positive relations with co-workers were developed between her and those who share an academic background; which has been a constant during her working life, and characteristic of her networks.

Also trust relationships with colleagues and supervisors were described by many of the interviewees, where support was received and good channels of communication were used to ensure nurturing relationships. But during the interviews there were some participants who mentioned that there were moments when they felt tensions with some of their co-workers, and commented about the varied ways they overcome such situations, whether through open communication or developing their own strategies, such as patience, tolerance, or simply ignoring negative attitudes.
At times during the individual semi-structured interviews some interviewees illustrated situations where they identified and named the notions of trust, solidarity and reciprocity; whilst other participants did not specifically used those notions but described similar situations. Aware of that, the interviewer interpreted some situations in which notions of trust, solidarity or reciprocity might have been subtle in some of the participant’s descriptions. As it was identified in the preceding sections of literature revision, these three notions are important characteristics of the interviewees’ networking and they are vital for the social capital described by each of them. These aspects also play an important role in the ways people relate to one another, how people form networks and serves from them in a variety of ways; and for the women who participated in this study, they are also related to their job satisfaction.

In the following lines the third research question is presented, where the participant’s perception of their career paths within the Swedish Labour Market is explored. Job satisfaction and new aspects that expanded the notions of networking at their workplaces is analyzed by the author.

3. How do foreign-born women with Latin-American origin perceive their job careers within the Swedish Labour Market?

The majority of the participants mentioned to have started in a similar occupational sector, specifically related to the elderly care. The meanings they attributed to the activities they performed and the relationships developed while they were working vary amongst the participants. For one of the participant, it was a ‘hard process of adjustment’ because she performed activities that did not correspond to her educational level; in turn, she felt working in occupations of lower status, and felt ‘embarrassed’ about those jobs. The opposite was mentioned by other participant, for whom working in the same occupation was full of meaning and marked her special interest to advance her career within the health care sector. While for other participant, the same kind of job was perceived as something temporary that might have helped achieve new experiences useful for applying to future jobs. Other participant constitutes an exception, because her first job was taking care of a person with special needs and she has remained there until the present time; often describing in her comments that far from a ‘duty’ this job has become a ‘vital’ part of her life.
The author tried to understand job satisfaction from a wide perspective, rescuing from the participant’s voices a variety of aspects such as networking at the workplaces, educational level achieved and the particular life situation of each participant. Most of the interviewees mentioned that they have expanded their circle of friends and acquaintances while working, although it is not possible to establish if it occurred to a great extent, since they made clear that their social circles still seem to be relatively small. ‘Bridging social capital’ is illustrated throughout the situations they recall, where most of the interviewees have had access to new social resources, such as exchanges of social and cultural information with individuals of similar and different backgrounds.

For the participants who have remained several years in their jobs is the sense of belonging to the workplace; being recognized and valued by co-workers and clients/patients is perceived as something positive that contributes to their self-esteem, is related to job satisfaction and job attachment.

Nonetheless, switching between jobs has been a situation rather common among the majority of the participants, although the circumstances which motivated such changes were different for them. How do they perceive the switch between jobs or occupations vary among the interviewees. Some of them look at a the diverse working experiences as something that helped them achieve specific goals to a short term, and to a certain degree have allowed them developed new skills.

At certain point in their career development, two interviewees felt very frustrated in their search and acquisition of work, because they could not advance and applied their knowledge as much as they have wanted. They had to go through parallel lines of work, or occupations not directly associated with their academic degree. Fortunately one of them found the job she desired and is currently holding a position in correspondence with her educational level. The other interviewee is still struggling to gain a position in her field of knowledge; but that has been an exhaustive process which she considered that it is threatening her self-esteem, because at times she feels unsecure and vulnerable for not being called by any potential employer.

Even though almost all the interviewees are satisfied with their current jobs, they are aware of some limitations in their working lives, such as holding a non-permanent job or
working under short-term contracts which might interfere with their access to other kind of employment compensation.

Other aspects that were mentioned by the participants in relation to their job careers referred to the type of interpersonal relations held between them and the persons they worked for, clients or patients. Networking with patients or clients was perceived by all the interviewees most of the time as a positive experience, were several benefits derived from such interactions. Training and improvement in their knowledge of the Swedish language as well as access to cultural aspects of the Swedish society were transmitted within a frame of professional contact between the interviewees and their patients or clients. It was described by the interviewees as a two way interchange, as they also informed and discussed aspects of their own culture and origins. The communication held with their patients, clients or persons they work for, is perceived by the participants as something meaningful and most of the time beneficial and influential in their perception of the jobs the have hold.

At times the interviewees also described difficulties raised during their encounters with the persons they worked for, sometimes clients or patients. Such differences derived from their opinions regarding culture and costumes, and several situations were recalled by the interviewees, as well as the ways they cope with their differences. Talking to each other and respecting their own views allowed them to overcome conflicting situations. This sort of relationships have occurred in the varied spaces where the interviewees work, and the author interpreted them as forms of ‘linking social capital’, that allowed the interviewees to expand their immediate social environment and mobilize new resources.

Summarizing, the paths from low-qualified jobs until getting jobs related to one’s career development seems to vary among the participants, as well as their perceptions in this respects. Nonetheless, it is possible to find in most of the interviewee’s descriptions that their working experiences are valued by them, first because they considered themselves successful to a certain point for being already in the labour market, and second because the participants perceive other type of achievements that are beneficial to them and extend beyond the material rewards.
6. SUMMARY

In this study the voices of five women with Latin-American origin living and working in the Stockholm area is presented, in order to explore their perceptions regarding their paths for gaining and maintaining employment in the Swedish labour market, with special attention placed on their social networks and their perceptions of job careers.

The author is aware of the limitations in the number of participants, and that not all countries of America Latina have representation among the participants. It is not possible to make generalizations from the responses of a small group of women, but instead some of their responses illustrate the particularities of their experiences, while at other times even such experiences corroborate or contradict results from previous studies. Comparisons among answers were possible from the experiences that the participants mentioned, which were also compared to the results provided by other kind of researches in similar areas of concern.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews constituted the main source for data collection, although additional information concerning the position of migrant women in the Swedish labour market was introduced.

In order to respond the first research question “How do foreign-born women with Latin-American origin describe and perceive their process of access to the Swedish labour market?” the author based her interpretation and analysis from three levels, first, considering mainly what the participants mentioned in their narratives, second, what other studies have shown regarding the job-search process amongst people with different ethnic backgrounds in other contexts (in the United States and Sweden), and third, offering possible interpretations from social capital conceptualizations, and to a lesser extent from labour market theorizations.

The results showed that, limitations in the participant’s social networks hinder their access to information regarding currently job vacancies. Whereas the participants have wider and multicultural ties with others around them, in the microsphere of their family and working life, they tend to receive or look for job related information, although the outcomes of getting the jobs desired depend on the kind of occupations applied for, and the demands made by specific sector of the labour market. In the absence of an extended social network or other sources of
information about job vacancies, the interviewees turned towards the Swedish Employment Office, soon after their arrival to Sweden. This sort of contact might be interpreted as ‘linking social capital’, accordingly to Woolcock’s and Field’s conceptualizations, because the interviewees looked after other resources, ideas and information from contacts outside their immediate social environment.

It was common for the participants of this study to get information of jobs where there is dominance in the female participation, and this sort of information was provided to the participants either through formal channels, such as the Swedish Employment Office or through informal channels such as personal contacts soon after their arrival to Sweden. However, due to limitation in the scope of this study little exploration on the gender inequalities in the labour market was possible to explore, although it is a field worth of study since several studies have reported patterns of division of labour on ethnic and gender lines in European countries (Castles and Miller, 2003, Castles, 2000, Knocke, 1999).

Similarly to the results found in other context, by Hanson and Pratt (1991) when looking for entry jobs the women who participated in this study evaluated attributes such as proximity to home and occupations associated with traditional female roles because they noticed that they are in high demand, but also because it is easier and faster to get a job when applying for unqualified jobs. As a consequence the women themselves tend to be involved in a cycle in which they reinforce the social and occupational division of the genders.

Internet search is another job search strategy common among three participants who were looking after opportunities within their professional careers; here the outcomes for getting the jobs they had applied for varied amongst them; it might have played a role in the outcomes of getting a job through online applications if the applicant counted with a licensure that enable her to work within the field she had applied for, or other aspects such as accumulated experience or working references, while the absence of any of those aspects might influence negatively the outcomes, thus limiting their chances to find a job within their professional occupation.

Unlike previous researches (Behtoui, 2008; Bäcklund, 2002, Knocke, 1999) that presented descriptions of the occupational distribution, intensity of labour, wage differentials, employment and unemployment rates between foreign-born women in the labour market
compared to native Swedes from quantitative approaches, this study has focused the attention
towards the perception of the women themselves in order to understand how and why they have
delayed in occupations of lower status, or engaged in long working hours. Hence, the
participants of this study offered their own explanations about the reasons why they were
engaged in prolonged or inconvenient schedules, since they were aware of other kind of
compensation for overtime or holiday-working hours, which made jobs within the health care
sector or retail industry to some extent attractive even if some of them were over-qualified for
such occupations.

Many of the experiences mentioned by the participants of this study evidenced how they
have witnessed changes in the Swedish labour market during the last decades, being aware of
drastic cutbacks in the service industry and public services, or a job structure changing towards
more and more qualified jobs, where forms of internal job structuring have made jobs more
information and communication intensive, as it was noted in other studies (Bäcklund, 2002,
Leiniö, 1988).

The paths into the labour market for high skilled workers were described by the
participants as something challenging and complicated, where pursuing a degree not necessarily
guarantee that they might get the job they desire, or corresponding to their skills levels. These
participants perceived that their connections with other persons within their professional fields
are to some extent limited, because they have few contacts to discuss employment opportunities
in specific sectors of the labour market.

Added to that, three interviewees mentioned that getting high qualified jobs depends on
the professional field elected by a person, because there is greater demand for high qualified jobs
for engineers, health professionals, whilst there is less demand for other careers such as
journalism & mass media communication, or within the social sciences. These arguments serve
to understand how skilled foreign workers can also be exposed to labour market entrance barriers
due to specific characteristics of the labour market where the demands are concentrated towards
certain occupational sectors. In turn, the options for some high skilled foreign-born workers are
limited to some extent, thus they opt for applying for jobs of lower quality or jobs for which they
are over-qualified, as it was noted by the Commission of the European Communities (2008).
During the interviews the participants commented some of the difficulties located at the individual level, such as language barriers, educational background, but also located at a structural level. Some of the difficulties at a structural level were related to the process of validation and accreditation of the foreign working experiences, and validation of foreign education; current employment opportunities or variation in the labour demand for certain occupational sectors, internal job structuring, and characteristics of the recruitment processes. The participants of this study dealt with those challenges in varied ways: enrolling in educational programs where there was language instruction, advancing in their educational careers, achieving working experience in Sweden throughout several occupational sectors, and making use of their networks to access information about jobs available through bonding and bridging social capital, or extending their search to contact with Swedish Institutions (Arbetsförmedlingen, Högskoleverket, Komvux, Universities) through their linking social capital.

Most of the interviewees described similar experiences of working under short term contracts, this type of employment made them vulnerable in the sense of unstable jobs, or because in case of their sickness or absence their income would be lower. This situation was similarly described by Castles (2000) who mentioned that the restructuring of the economies and labour markets in Europe after the 1970’s and the ongoing years has been characterized increasingly by insecure conditions of employment, besides the erosion of traditional skilled manual occupations, growth in the service sector, demanding high and low skilled workers or increased differentiation of the labour force on the basis of gender, age and ethnicity.

Even though the interviewees noticed that there has been a slight increase in the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of their co-workers, and they perceive this situation as a promissory future, still the stereotypes in hiring processes represent a mayor difficulty for foreigners when applying for a job. This study did not deal directly with the question of how foreign-workers are perceived by potential employers in Sweden; however other type of information provided by previous studies (Rydgren, 2004, Bäcklund, 2002, Le Grand and Szulkin, 2002) and from the participants of this study (Juliana, Sandra, Angela) might serve to illustrate situations in which foreigners have felt discriminated at some point, whether by employers or co-workers, from who stereotypes towards people with foreign background have ended up in uncomfortable situations.
Notwithstanding some of the difficulties experienced by some of the participants of this study, as it was illustrated above in the process of access to the Swedish labour market, but letting them aside for a while, next would follow a new dimension contemplated by the participants when they narrated that having a job enhanced their opportunities to exchange social and cultural information, and facilitated networking in certain contexts. For some participants, the context where they work is a platform where new relationships emerge, and where there is an overlap between some forms of bridging and bonding social capital. Hence, the exploration of the second research question was of vital importance in this study, because networking illustrated the varied exchanges that influence the participant’s mobilization of resources in their daily and working lives. Next, the main core ideas derived from the second research question will be presented.

“How do these women perceive the role of their social networks in relation to the processes of gaining or maintaining employment in the Swedish labour market?”

The results has shown how the concept of ‘bonding social capital’ operates for those interviewees who turned to family and friends to ask for guidance and support in the job search process, being beneficial in the sense of getting access to information regarding employment opportunities and being granted a job, but at the expense that such opportunities were not always of career advancement since members of their network did not occupy influencing positions in the labour market or did not have access to qualified jobs.

An exemption was found for the case of one interviewee, who was less likely to ask friends or people she knows about job opportunities, because she felt ashamed of asking for this kind of information and because she acknowledges that her close friends hold qualified jobs in fields different to the one she was interested in.

Although the family composition of each participant was different, most of them not only described the role of ‘bonding social capital’ in relation to getting a job, but also the supportive role of family and friends throughout their working lives. This was the case when they were adjusting to inconvenient schedules, dealing with unstable employment, as well as when some of the interviewees were in stressful situations related to the transition from unemployment to employment.
This study had rescued from the participant’s narratives how important are the ties between individual’s and the main figures in their social networks, such as close family members and friends, and how beneficial it is to have someone to turn to in difficult situations, or to share special moments with family and friends, gathering to celebrate the joy of other moments in their lives.

Networking was observed as something complex and differently amongst the participants of this study, depending on their own interests and the life cycle in which they are. Some of them prefer relationships which promote forms of bonding social capital, since they spend time with their immediate family members; others prefer to gather with co-workers who gradually became their friends, thus extending their bridging social capital, while others had participated of community groups as the church or groups of women of Latin-American origin.

Interesting to note was the emergence of new networks at the participant’s workplaces, where bridging social capital was illustrated in the varied examples provided by the participants in their exchanges of social and cultural information with co-workers, clients and patients. At times, networking at their workplaces was an opportunity to socialize and expand their network, thus new friendships emerged, but at another times, networking was less successful for individuals who worked in occupations were circumstances as time or place of work limited the contact between them and their co-workers, or were empathy was absent amongst them. Here the notions of ‘like’ or ‘dislike’ are of importance, because the participants mentioned some of the criteria that established the boundaries between friends and acquaintances, depending on the affinity and empathy established in such connections, the strength of the ties, or values attributed to the persons involved in the interaction.

Some relationships characterised by loose ties were transforming and evolving throughout the time and the intensity of the networks developed between the participants and others around them at their workplaces. Networking with people from diverse background or in different situations were understood as additional sources of information regarding employment opportunities, as well as opportunities to mobilize their social capital, since some of the interviewees found themselves in situations where they pulled friends, acquaintances or former workers into their jobs. This situation was of importance to the participants, since having
someone they knew about and someone who knew them allowed to create a sense of team, and illustrated notions of trust, solidarity and reciprocity in the workplace.

Even though many of the concepts developed by social capital theorists such as Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam and Woolcock, were of relevance to understand certain aspects concerning the use and mobilization of the interviewees’ social capital, other forms of networking such as intercultural marriage might be interpreted as a form of bonding social capital, but not necessarily aimed at reinforcing any identity in particular in the Putnamian sense of the word. On the other hand, networking with people who share the same ethnic origin was not a priority or a need felt for two of the interviewees, it was perceived even as an impediment in their effort to integrate in the Swedish society. One of the participants clearly noted that she decided cutting the ties with Spanish-speaking people, because she considered that it would be more beneficial to relate to Swedish-born people. Then, the situation described here represents an extreme form of bridging social capital, which cannot be explained from the concepts analyzed within this study. Neither other critical aspects such as multicultural identities might be understood from the social capital notions brought up in this study, therefore the author acknowledges that it is necessary to introduced new conceptualizations and other theories in order to gain a wide understanding of several situations described by the interviewees.

In order to get a broader understanding about the position of Latin-American women or other foreign-born women working in the Swedish labour market the author consider relevant to include other areas such as current labour market legislation, integration and social policies, migration policies, as well as current rates of labour market participation, or statistical figures evidencing employment versus unemployment rates of foreign-born workers contrasted to native population from the host country. Evenmore, new understandings could be derived from multicultural theories, or from other disciplines, as Castles (2000, p.90) argued “there is a need for a multidisciplinary and international social science of migration and multicultural societies, combining elements of political economy, sociology, political science, law, demography, anthropology and related disciplines”, in order to construct and gain a better understanding on migration movements and multicultural societies by drawing knowledge from a broad range of theories and methodologies.
Finally, in the following lines the third research question is presented, where the participant’s perception of their career paths within the Swedish Labour Market is explored. Job satisfaction and new aspects that expanded the notions of networking at their workplaces is analyzed by the author.

“How do foreign-born women with Latin-American origin perceive their job careers within the Swedish labour market?”

The results showed a variation in the meanings the participants attributed to the activities they performed, since they were related to the expectations they held regarding their jobs. For instance, being a personal assistant is perceived differently by all the participants, even though it is a relatively similar occupation, for some of them it is perceived as a ‘hard process of adjustment’ because they performed activities that did not correspond to their educational level, while the opposite was mentioned by others for whom working in the same occupation is full of meaning and marked their special interest to continue and advance their career paths within the health care sector. The same kind of job was perceived by a participant as something temporary that helped her achieve new experiences and it was useful for applying for future jobs.

Interesting to note some of the participant’s mentioned with a hopeless tone of voice that not being able to get a job in accordance to their educational background made them feel very frustrated since they could not advance and applied their knowledge as much as they have wanted; one of the interviewees even had to rely on the support of her friends and the psychological help from a therapist in order to cope with such difficult situation in her life. Some other alternatives to overcome frustration were a reflexive thinking about advancing education in parallel or close related lines of work, even considering applying for occupations not directly associated with their academic degree. Although situations such as the ‘skill mismatch’ (Bäcklund, 2002) were already mentioned by several authors through the use of varied definitions, in a communicate from the Commission of the European Communities (Brussels, COM 2008, 359 final, p.3), Bäcklund (2002), Diez and Pichelman (2006), none of those studies and reports introduced the implications on the foreign-born women self-esteem and how insecure and vulnerable they might feel when facing multiple hinders in their intent to achieve a job in accordance with their skills.
Job satisfaction and job attachment was possible to be interpreted from a wide perspective, rescuing several aspects from the participant’s voices, specifically when they mentioned how important was for them to established new networks at their workplaces. In addition, the participants who have remained several years in their jobs mentioned how important it has been for them to develop a sense of belonging to the workplace; where being recognized and valued by co-workers and clients/patients is perceived as something positive that contributes to their self-esteem and is related to job satisfaction and job attachment.

Themes which were not thought of at first when designing this study were discovered during some interviews, that is the case when the participants talked about self-esteem, multicultural identities, or strategies for overcoming potential hinders in their access to the labour market. Further research would help bring more insights regarding the relation of self-esteem and self-image on the job search process, as well as its relationship with job attainment and job attachment.

Summarizing, the paths from entering the labour market seemed to be characterised by challenging situations where some women move from low-qualified jobs –usually of high demand and concentrating a high percentage of the female workforce- until getting jobs related to one’s career development, though this seems to vary among the participants of the present study. Being in the labour market might constitute an opportunity to integrate in the society, at the same time that it might serve to enhance and strenght the emergence of networks, thus having an effect on the participant’s access and mobilization of social capital. Varied perceptions regarding careers path are found amongst the participants of this study, usually related to the expectations on the activities performed, the level of accordance with their skills, and how attached they are to the microsphere of their workplaces.

Interesting to note, most of the interviewee’s descriptions point that their working experiences are valuated by them, first because they considered themselves successful to a certain point for being already in the labour market, and second because the participants perceive other type of achievements that are beneficial to them and extend beyond the material rewards.
7. APPENDIX

7.1. Fragments from the interviews in Spanish

(1) J: Yo busqué trabajos y conseguí por las páginas amarillas lo que estuviera cerca de mi casa, porque yo no quería trabajar lejos...quería buscar algo a donde me pudiera ir a pie...y conseguí trabajo llamando por teléfono.

(2) A: (...)Yo creo que debió haber sido en el diario, en el Dagens Nyheter (...) yo solicite porque yo quería trabajar, ya con tres niñas chicas quería trabajar los fines de semana y trabajaba tardes tarde, en horarios incómodos para qué? Para tratar de estar el mayor tiempo posible con mis hijas, y el fin de semana que se yo que estuvieran con el papa, donde ellas no estuvieran mucho tiempo en las guarderías...eso era...!

(3) B: (...) escribí un curriculum y lo mande a todos los hospitales habidos y por haber, y el que me respondió fué Karolinska y Solna...y fui a una entrevista, me entrevistaron y me preguntaron “Y cuando puede empezar?” y yo le digo: ayer, hasta que me dice “okay”, pasaron que dos días y recibí la respuesta y ya tenía trabajo.

(4) S: una Trabajadora Social acá trabaja mucho de lo que es Estatal, no? entonces yo a veces me metía en las páginas de las comunas, de diferentes comunas y veía ahí a ver si estaban buscando (...) Y ahí o sea era, yo mandaba diario, todos los días mandaba...y llega un momento en que ya tu mandas por mandar porque tú sabes igual quizá por ahí un chance, pero...

(5) J: lo hice por internet, los anuncios que estaban puestos en buscadores de trabajos por internet

(6) J: (...) busque trabajo en marketing y me llamaron a entrevista directo cuando mande la aplicación; yo juraba que era asistente de marketing pero no era tal cosa...era esa gente que está en la calle vendiendo pidiendo cincuenta coronas para tal organización y tal

(7) S: Porque ellos buscan como socionom pero tú trabajas como behandlingsassistent...yo no sabía que era así porque ellos decían que necesitaban socionomer entonces yo mande, no? Pero ok, o sea, lo que yo quería era encontrar un trabajo y aparte me parecía interesante porque yo leía la línea internacional multicultural entonces yo dije ‘ay con estos jóvenes voy a aprender un montón, no? y está dentro de mi línea’...pero era el trabajo en sí no era para un socionom

(8) S: porque uno siempre piensa que estudiando teniendo una carrera pues se te abren las puertas...si se te abren pero el proceso es bastante duro, bastante difícil, no? Porque te da cada golpe, tienes que pues caerte y subirte o sea tu misma para no perder...las esperanzas, no? Pero es fuerte... (…)
(9) J: por mucho que yo haya hecho la maestría, a mí particularmente la maestría no me ha ayudado en nada! O sea en nada, porque sino tendría trabajo en otra cosa, no? O sea, a mí lo que me ha ayudado son mis estudios en Venezuela y que hablo español, que soy periodista y que hablo español, entonces ellos asumen que mi español es muy bueno!

(10) A: también hay un problema de dinero, no se esta invirtiendo en ciertas carreras, hay menos recursos para algunas, donde en realidad no se necesita el profesor, hace una clase y los alumnos trabajan prácticamente solos

(11) A: cuando yo entré a trabajar... después de un mes yo tenía trabajo, el trabajo fijo, y como que en ese tiempo tu no lo valorabas, que todos tus amigos, tu familia, los que estaban en el mercado del trabajo, todos tenían trabajo fijo...era súper raro que alguien tuviera trabajo como el de ahora...todo el mundo trabajaba, tu tenías tu trabajo y como que no se valoraba”

(12) S: la población que vive en la comuna en esta comuna es una de las comunas más multiculturales que hay acá en Estocolmo, porque hay muchísimos extranjeros ahí concentrados, no? Entonces hay cien, se hablan cien idiomas en la comuna, o sea, son diferentes países...cien idiomas, y este imaginéte yo pensé yo pensé que en las oficinas de asuntos sociales iba a ver muchos más extranjeros como trabajadores sociales...no... pocos, hay pero muy pocos. Y porque yo realmente me quede así un poco impresionada, no? porque debería haber más mezcla.

(13) A: En general, bueno..en mi trabajo yo siempre digo que yo he tenido harta suerte, hay muy muy pocos extranjeros, hay muy pocos, porque siempre...bueno el idioma de hecho es una limitante bastante grande y...te cuesta más y eso es una cuestión real te cuesta más encontrar...

(14) S: Por supuesto que influyo, por supuesto, por supuesto que influyo...por supuesto que nosotros... nos toca luchar el doble, nos toca luchar el doble para poder tener un trabajo y ahorita yo te digo no solo te estoy hablando por mi porque tengo otras compañeras que también han estudiado en la Universidad de acá y...es que se parecen tanto nuestras experiencias que cuando ellas me hablaban porque ellas ya se habían graduado, yo estaba estudiando, y cuando ellas me hablaban de esto yo decía ‘ay pero es que tu eres exagerada o sea quizás pues tú no has tenido tanta suerte’, no? pero ahora cuando después me pasaba todo lo que ellas me contaban cuando me estaba pasando a mí en carne propia entonces yo las entendía mucho mejor y decía ‘tenían razón o sea era verdad...’

(15) S: ...O sea de una parte yo creo que es natural porque si a mí me dicen “va a venir un Chin Chun Chan” yo me imagino un chino, y viene un rubio ‘Uy, aja...’ yo le diría “Ay yo pensé que eras chino porque tu apellido y tu nombre es chino”. O sea es algo que uno ya tiene acá (señalando la cabeza).
(16) J: Yo creo que si uno ha crecido aquí, ha estudiado aquí todo el colegio y habla sueco sin que se le suene a extranjero es quizá muy probable que uno tenga el mismo acceso a la Universidad (corrigiendo) al mercado laboral sueco, mas sin embargo yo, que vine adulta, a que apenas abro la boca suena a que yo no soy de aquí...no...no creo...Mi experiencia en el último año en particular es que si uno quiere en realidad tener el mismo acceso hay que buscar trabajo en lo que es la comuna y lo que es el landsting.

(17) S: Mångfald es multicultural, que tiene que tener personas de diferentes países, con diferentes orígenes, no? dice en la solicitud, entonces yo 'Wow pero yo paso acá'...pero paso nada porque igual o sea es No y No y No, y a los que se los dan es a los suecos, y es este...es nada más para que la solicitud se vea bonita, y como el Estado Sueco pues ahora exige que tiene que haber mångfald o sea multiculturalidad en todo lo que ellos hacen, en los trabajos, en todo, entonces se ve chévere en una solicitud, no? que Wow la comuna tal, la comuna de Solna, la comuna de Estocolmo están pidiendo mångfald, pero a la larga a los que dan los trabajos es a un Svensson, a un Håkansson, que se yo, no? Y el Mohamed o Vargas por ahí se quedaron, es así.

(18) S: Y ella contándonos y eso, y a ella se le salió, ella dijo ‘Si, nosotros somos muy listos para hablar de multiculturalidad mångfald pero en realidad es otra, nosotros siempre estamos hablando sí que tiene que haber diferentes grupos, de orígenes, de... personas con diferentes ah diferentes países, pero a la hora de emplear de emplear a alguien no es así’ y ella era jefe o sea ella hablaba de su perspectiva, de como ella pensaba y como razonaba

(19) R: Yo lo que decidí fue trabajar, no?...porque decía, no?, si dejo de trabajar ahora entonces quien me paga la casa? Quien compra a mis hijos sus cosas y todo eso, yo como no sabía el sistema, todo eso nada, entonces preferí trabajar y dije “ya...”...deje la escuela...

(20) A: después que termine el curso comenzé a trabajar en el hospital de Huddinge como laboratoribiträde como asistente de laboratorio.

(21) B: por lo tanto ella me dijo ‘bueno esto esto y esto tienes, y esto esto y esto te falta”...y yo queriendo todo eso uno empieza bueno ‘nu vet jag vad är det som jag ska göra’

(22) J: pasó un año entre Högskoleverket y la Universidad...y bueno o sea funcionó, pero todo tarda demasiado tiempo aquí con respecto a estudios extranjeros

(23) R: Mira, fue por intermedio de una amiga en la que llegue ahí...a la casa de ella, ella me dijo que había una chica sueca que hablaba español y que necesitaba ayuda solamente dos horas y me pareció importante y dije ‘de repente yo soy la persona que la puede ayudar...”

(24) S: Por amigos y mis hermanos también, ellos estaban aquí anteriormente(...) eran trabajos de baby sitter, era para otra gente
(25) A: Bueno ahí tuve una por contacto...una persona que trabajaba como jefa en una óptica le comentó a un familiar que necesitaba que alguien fuera a trabajar porque tenían que cubrir para las vacaciones del personal y no tenían gente entonces (...)me entrevistó la jefa regional de esta cadena y me preguntó algo de mi experiencia, fue lo que le intereso, nada de lo que yo había estudiado o sea no era relevante en realidad.

(26) B: A través de una compañera de trabajo (...) ella por internet en la sida que tenemos una web sida en el Hospital vio que pedía undersköterska på (Hospital, y ella me conto (...) Yo mande mi solicitud, hable con mi jefa y le dije que yo estaba pidiendo otro trabajo porque yo estaba cansada, simplemente cansada..ya no...quería otra cosa, quería ver otra cosa, quería ver más vida que muerte y que enfermedad! Por lo tanto fui al Hospital, hice una entrevista, le dije quien era, como era, que hacía, y es la misma clínica, es la misma clínica por lo tanto no hay mucho problema, no?

(27) J: también con los que quizá me pudieran ayudar yo no he puyado mucho porque como que me da pena usar mis amigos para eso, y los otros son todos ingenieros, de que me van a servir?

(28) A: (...) solamente si un contacto de alguien que me pudiera recomendar, que dijera algo o sea algo de mí, y en ese momento fue súper difícil para mí un contacto porque yo hacía que hace mucho tiempo que ya había prácticamente dejado el mercado laboral. O sea mi jefe la ultima que yo había tenido que había tenido en un centro en una servicehus ya no estaba, entonces súper complicado.

(29) B: Tengo, si tengo que va a ser, tengo pocos amigos a lo mejor así tantos (gesto con las manos mostrando los diez dedos) pero son amigos amigos, esos amigos que tú en realidad en las buenas y en las malas tú los vas a llamar y ellos van a venir...

(30) B: Con todos...Cuando llegamos acá teníamos un grupo de como se llama föreningen un chilanska föreningen, todas las familias venidas de Chile se juntaban en esta casa, en este local, hacíamos actividades, entonces todo todo eso de ese primer año segundo año desapareció...cuando empecé a trabajar...y de hecho mas cuando me hice compañía con este chico sueco.

(31) B: Me dije yo ¡si quiero salir adelante, si quiero ser lo que quiero ser, si es que me decido algún día que es lo que quiero ser, lo que tengo que aprender es el idioma y como son las reglas, y con qué pie tengo que entrar y como me tengo que sentar, y a qué hora debo decir esto y lo otro, y los horarios, las costumbres, y la ciudadanía chilena no me lo va a dar...Yo ya tengo el español, no necesito de mas español, necesito sueco, que con el sueco me tengo que arreglar!, por lo tanto corte toda comunicación...solamente con mi madre y mi hermano hablamos español, y...nadie mas...y ahora contigo! (risas)
(32) B: así que creo que me ha ayudado bastante eso de no tener comunicación con gente latina o de habla hispana...

(33) S: Pues bueno fue...me...mucho, me valí mucho de mis amigos, gracias a Dios que tengo muy buenos amigos, que saben escuchar, y también recibí ayuda profesional, me contacte con una Psicoterapeuta y para contarle porque sentí que necesite ayuda profesional también, no? y me ayudo muchísimo ella, o sea muy bien, esas son las ayudas que yo he tenido

(34) A: (...) he tenido la suerte de encontrar gente agradable...excepto una persona que no es no es cordial, pero no es conmigo sino que es con toda la gente...pero cuando conmigo no ha sido cordial yo tampoco me complico, ‘ah’ digo yo, yo no me voy a hacer mala sangre, yo no me voy a tomar...porque a veces ella, tú sientes que hay una energía negativa, y esta chica que te digo que se fue también se fue por eso...

(35) R: a más personas que a veces me encontraba y tenían necesidad y pues tu sabes si las veo hum le voy a hablar a ver si quiera para que trabajen un par de horas aquí...las he ayudado

(36) B: dos personas cercanas claro y...en realidad te apoyan bastante, eso de tener en realidad a alguien que en realidad te conoce y sabe quién eres y sabe cuáles son tus valores es muy apreciado

(37) R: ya todas también me ven a mí como una mama a mí, porque ya cualquier cosa ya ellas me llaman, me dicen “Rosa mira esto, mira a mi me ha pasado esto...”

(38) J: yo...no creo que haya comentado mucho con mis amigos que era lo que estaba haciendo exactamente, yo creo que fue un...la verdad no recuerdo, pero yo creo que fue un tema que yo ignore bastante “ ¿qué haces tú?”... Y en Suecia cuando me preguntaban ‘a bueno yo trabajo en un ancianato pero es porque estoy estudiando!’

(39) J: Yo pensé que esa experiencia me iba a ayudar a tener tremendo trabajo, porque se ve bien el CV haber trabajado en Consulado, y cuando renuncie empecé a buscar trabajo en mi área otra vez. También otra vez treinta más o menos aplicaciones, no sucede nada, entonces empecé a buscar trabajo como profesora...

(40) S: Bueno busque trabajos dentro de mi rama dentro de la competencia que tengo pero como no lo encontré entonces el primer trabajo trabaje con los ancianos, no? después precisamente después de mi examen, pero al mismo tiempo yo seguía buscando buscando dentro de mi carrera

(41) S: Si bueno cuando vine, te dije, mis primeros trabajos han sido como babysitter, no? cuidando niños, después un tiempo trabajé limpiando los hoteles, después ya cuando tuve la residencia y todo trabaje con los ancianos, trabaje
como personal assistent, trabaje así en butiks vendiendo cosas, eso...eso fue o
sea ese tipo de trabajos antes de entrar a la Universidad

(42) B: (…) a lo mejor ya tenía esa idea desde el principio no? la meta de que si me
voy a quedar en Suecia tengo que aprender el idioma, porque sin idioma
entonces no voy a llegar a ninguna parte, sin idioma no me van a escuchar y sin
idioma no van a entender lo que yo quiero y lo que yo no quiero, por lo tanto eso
de aprender a escuchar, aprender a hablar y a seguir trabajando fue como para
llegar a donde estoy ahora!

(43) B: (..) no me voy a sentir uno mas aquí en Suecia si no aprendo el idioma...No
me voy a sentir uno mas no importa que yo me cambie el apellido a Larsson
cuando me case, no importa que yo deje mi nacionalidad chilena a sueca, si no
aprendo el sueco no me van a tomar como sueca (...) no sé, es una relación rara
que tengo yo con respecto a aprender el idioma para así quedar al mismo nivel
que el resto de la gente que es si nacida aquí en Suecia.

(44) J: Si pero pues yo no he ejercido ya en seis anos(…) yo estoy consciente de que
ahorita cuando yo vaya al mercado a buscar trabajo dentro del área de
comunicación la gente va a ver que yo no he trabajado en eso durante seis años
(...) eso no se ve bien en ninguna parte! (...) Tampoco es que no he
tratado...este país es así!”

(45) S: (...)Yo pase muy duro, no? después del examen porque yo siempre pese que
‘uy uy uy al mes voy a tener trabajo, o por lo menos a los tres meses como para
exagerar’ pero no fue así! O sea era mandar... y mandaba las solicitudes y
después yo decía ‘bueno no solo es mandar, tengo que hacer otra cosa’
entonces empecé a llamar ‘mira he mandado hace tres semanas, si ha
llegado?’... “Si, si, ha llegado”, o sea para mostrar mi interés que realmente yo
quiero ese trabajo, no? Y no, igual no, o sea era No y No y No y...entonces pues
uno dice ‘Dios mío para que tanto sacrificio? Para que he prestado dinero? He
perdido tiempo si es que no voy a...’ o sea mucha frustración, mucha frustración,
no? Me sentí muy mal...muy muy mal...o sea quizá no tenia suerte no lo se

(46) B: Y siete anos en el mismo avdelning con la misma gente a tu alrededor vas
escalando, vas escalando de haber sido nueva este mes, ya después de un ano
dos anos tres anos ya eres tú la que sabe todo, ya todos van a ti a preguntarte “y
como se hace esto? Y donde esta esto otro? Y esto, está bien esto? Y en donde
tenemos esto?”...entonces todos llegan a ti, todos te pregunta porque tú eres la
de más experiencia en ese avdelning(...) me hizo sentir muy bien, necesitada

(47) J: (…)el punto es que ahorita yo me estoy debatiendo conmigo misma con
respecto a la parte de creer en mí misma, de que en efecto si puedo conseguir
un trabajo en otra cosa...y pues la verdad es que no he mandado una sola
aplicación todavía porque dije ‘bueno para que la voy a mandar si de todas
maneras no me van a llamar’...y no necesariamente es así en este momento a lo
mejor si me van a llamar, pero la parte de...la autoestima se me ha visto muy magullada aquí en Suecia ...porque o sea si yo interpreto las señales que el mercado me manda es que yo sirvo pa’limpiar y sirvo hasta profesora, pero aparentemente no sirvo para mas que profesora.

(48)J: (...) no estoy segura de que siquiera yo pueda hacer el trabajo que yo quiero hacer en realidad...o sea en mi carrera, y eso es muy raro, porque por un lado digo ‘ay si chévere voy a conseguir un trabajo’, por el otro lado ‘será que si consigo el trabajo será que si soy capaz de hacerlo?’ Entonces por una rama chévere yo consigo y por la otra rama...es complicado...

(49)A: (...) te pasa que no tienes ni siquiera tiempo, ni puedes tomarte una pausa de unos quince minutos porque ‘no’ no se puede, no puedes irte si hay un montón de clientes, tú no te puedes ir que se yo, a mi me ha pasado que a veces he estado yo sola y de repente tengo dificultad hasta para ir al baño porque estoy sola...entonces es complicado, y eso es porque? Porque al final se trata de ahorrar más personal, economizar

(50)S: (...) hoy en día yo me siento muy bien y más que todo el lugar donde estoy o sea no pude caer mejor (...) me llego el trabajo perfecto a la hora perfecta, tú me entiendes? Y eso es para darme ánimos, no? porque siento o sea es un trabajo celerísimo, me encanta, estoy aprendiendo un montón. Y te da también este te legitima, como ahora si me siento como una Trabajadora Social, ahora si siento que pucha valió la pena(...)ahora estoy haciendo lo que yo he estudiado, o sea valió la pena’, no? Así siento hoy en día.

(51)J: en esos seis meses estudie muchísimo sueco tome ayuda de uno de los pacientes que me pudo ayudar a revisar mi gramática, yo le escribía y él me ayudaba, y yo estudiaba y todo el tiempo libre que yo tenía ahí todas las pausas yo estaba sentada estudiando con un libro de gramática

(52)B: y el modo de decir las cosas y cuando las dices, te ensenan los diferentes tonos de decir la misma palabra, que a lo mejor es la misma palabra pero si le pones otra entonación es otra cosa, entonces aprendí bastante, los abuelos me enseñaron cualquier cantidad a hablar y a hablar fuerte!

(53)R: todo ha sido en los días de trabajo, ella me ha enseñado como me debo conducir...ella me ha enseñado mas a meterme como quien dice a la sociedad sueca, no? al sistema sueco, al sistema, como debo conducirme, como debo pagar, como debo. O sea, todo en orden, mis papeles, mi skattpengar...ella es la que me ha encaminado todo, que debo hacer

(54)R: yo le conozco toda su familia, a sus amistades, porque a todas sus reuniones a todas sus cosas va conmigo, y si no trabajo ese día entonces a mi no me importa, como dicen a veces también con mi familia cierto yo la recibo

(55)R: Ya ella respetaba mi religión y yo así como respetaba la de ella...yo a ella siempre la he respetado, la he atendido...no?, ahora que si hay un error le puedo
hacer ver porque ella ha superado mucho, mucho, así como ella me ha metido a su cultura entonces yo también
7.2. Interview Questionnaire in Spanish

**PREGUNTAS PARA LA ENTREVISTA**

**Información Personal**

Cual es tu nombre?

Qué edad tienes?

De qué país vienes?

Hace cuanto tiempo estás aquí en Suecia?

**Acceso al Mercado laboral y Percepciones sobre el proceso de busqueda de trabajo**

Cómo ha sido para ti el proceso de búsqueda de trabajo en Suecia?

Cómo has obtenido información sobre oportunidades de trabajo en Suecia?

Qué dificultades has encontrado cuando has estado buscando trabajo en Suecia? (Qué dificultades has tenido cuando has buscado trabajo en Suecia?)

Cuando estás buscando trabajo, qué cosas consideras importantes para tener en cuenta?

**Nivel Educativo**

Qué estudios realizaste en tu país de origen?

Cual nivel educativo tienes?

Cómo has hecho para que los estudios realizados en tu país de origen o fuera de tu país de origen puedan ser reconocidos en Suecia?

Qué estudios has realizado en Suecia?
Información sobre trabajos antiguos y trabajo actual

¿Qué tipo de trabajos has buscado aquí en Suecia? Y porque los ha escogido?

¿Cuántos trabajos has tenido en Suecia?

¿Cuánto tiempo has permanecido en ellos?

¿Por cuáles razones has cambiado de trabajo?

¿Cuál trabajo tienes en este momento?

¿Cómo obtuviste información sobre este trabajo?

¿Cómo conseguiste este trabajo?

Percepciones sobre trabajos antiguos y actual trabajo

¿Cómo te sientes trabajando en esa ocupación?

¿Si tuvieras otra oportunidad de trabajo, qué tipo de trabajo te gustaría tener?

Red Social

Familia

Cuentame cómo es tu situación familiar, tienes familia en Suecia? Fuera de Suecia?

Con que frecuencia te relacionas/comunicas con ellos?

¿Qué medios utilizas para comunicarte con ellos? (visitas, llamadas telefónicas, correo electrónico, correo tradicional?)

¿Qué tipo de ayuda/apoyo puedes recibir de ellos?
Cuando tu has buscado trabajo en Suecia, cual ha sido el rol de tus familiares en ese proceso? (De qué manera tus familiares han apoyado tu búsqueda de trabajo en Suecia?)

**Amigos/as**

Tienes amigos/as en Suecia o fuera de Suecia?

Cómo es tu relación con tus amigos/as?

Con qué frecuencia te comunicas con ellos/as?

Qué tipo de ayuda/apoyo puedes recibir de ellos/as?

Cuando tu has buscado trabajo en Suecia, cual ha sido el rol de tus amigos en ese proceso? (De qué manera tus amigos/as han apoyado su búsqueda de trabajo en Suecia?)

**Compañeros/as de trabajo**

Cómo es tu relación con tus compañeros/as de trabajo? Qué tan cercana es esa relación?

Qué tipo de ayuda/apoyo puedes recibir de ellos/as?

Cuando tu has buscado trabajo en Suecia, has buscado ayuda a través de antiguos/as compañeros/as de trabajo? Si ese ha sido el caso, qué tipo de ayuda/apoyo recibiste de ellos/as?

**Vecinos/as y Conocidos/as**

Cómo es tu relación con tus vecino/as o conocidos/as? Que tan cercana es esa relación?

Con qué frecuencia te comunicas con ellos/as?

Qué tipo de ayuda/apoyo puedes recibir de ellos/as?

Cuando tu has buscado trabajo en Suecia, cual ha sido el rol de tus vecinos/as o conocidos/as en ese proceso? (De qué manera tus vecinos/as o conocidos/as han apoyado tu búsqueda de trabajo en Suecia?)
7.3 Interview Questionnaire (translation to English)

Personal Information

What is your name?

Where do you come from?

How old are you?

How long have you been in Sweden?

Perception’s about the process of access to the labour market

How do you perceive your process of job-search in Sweden?/How has it been for you the process of job-search in Sweden?

How have you obtained information about job opportunities in Sweden?

What difficulties have you found when searching for a job in Sweden?/What difficulties did you find when you were looking for jobs in Sweden?

What aspects are important for you to consider when looking for a job?

Educational Background

What studies have you done in your country of origin?

What is your educational level?

How can you validate in Sweden the studies you have done in your country of origin?

What studies have you done in Sweden?

What kind of jobs have you looked for in Sweden? Why have you chosen them?
**Job-related information** (former and current jobs)

How many jobs have you hold in Sweden?

How long have you hold each of them?

Why have you switch between jobs?

What is your current job?

How did you obtain information about your current job?

How did you get that job?

**Perception’s about current job**

How do you feel working in that job?

If you had an opportunity to change your job, what kind of job would you like to have?

**Social Networks**

**Family**

How is you family situation, have you family in Sweden? Out of Sweden?

How often do you talk to them?

What means do you use to communicate with your family members (relatives)? (visits, phone calls, electronic communication, regular mail?)

What kind of help/support can you receive from them?
When you have searched for a job in Sweden, what has been the role of your family during this process? (In which ways have you received support from your family when looking for a job in Sweden?)

**Friends**

Do you have friends in Sweden? Out of Sweden?

How often do you talk to them?

What means do you use to communicate with your friends? (visits, phone calls, electronic communication, regular mail?)

What kind of help/support can you receive from them?

When you have searched for a job in Sweden, what has been the role of your friends during this process? (In which ways have you received support from your friends when looking for a job in Sweden?)

**Co-workers**

How is your relationship with your co-workers? How close is that relation?

What kind of help/support can you receive from them?

When you have searched for a job in Sweden, what has been the role of your former co-workers during this process? (In which ways have you received support from former co-workers when looking for a job in Sweden?)

**Neighbours and acquaintances**

How is your relationship with your neighbours or acquaintances? How close is that relation?

How often do you communicate?

What kind of help/support can you receive from them?
When you have searched for a job in Sweden, what has been the role of your neighbours or acquaintances during this process? (In which ways have you received support from your neighbors or acquaintances when looking for a job in Sweden?).
8. REFERENCES

BOOKS


CHAPTERS IN BOOKS


ARTICLES FROM ONLINE JOURNALS


**SECONDARY SOURCES FROM BOOKS**


SECONDARY SOURCES FROM JOURNALS


REPORTS


INTERNET SOURCES


http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=274