

Social support and well-being of refugees in Finland

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Master's Thesis

Intercultural Communication

Department of Language and

Communication Studies

December, 2017

University of Jyväskylä

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

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| Tiedekunta – Faculty FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES | Laitos – Department DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES |
| Tekijä – Author Margarita Goda-Savolainen | |
| Työn nimi – Title Social support and well-being of refugees in Finland | |
| Oppiaine – Subject Intercultural communication | Työn laji – Level Master's thesis |
| Aika – Month and year December, 2017 | Sivumäärä – Number of pages 81 + 4 |
| <p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Objective: The objective of this study was to explore the impact of social support on acculturation process and its' outcomes on the current mental and physical health of refugees resettling in Jyväskylä, Finland.</p> <p>Method: Data were gathered qualitatively. Eight participants of refugee background filled out a questionnaire assessing socio demographic information and participated in semi-structured interviews. Two interviews were held individually and two focus-group ones. To analyse the data, qualitative thematic analysis was used.</p> <p>Results: Refugees settling in Finland evidenced experiences of acculturative stress. Participants had received social support both from formal and informal networks. The results indicate that social support – particularly support provided by settlement social services play a significant role during the acculturation process of refugees. Provided and perceived social support had a positive effect on diminishing refugees' acculturative stress. Pre-migration trauma and previous socioeconomic status was associated with acculturative stress and health outcomes.</p> <p>Conclusions: Nonetheless traumatic pre-migration experiences, experiences of acculturative stress and poor health outcomes, perceived and provided social support had a positive effect on acculturation strategy choice and attitude, thus lessening refugees mal-being during the acculturation process in Jyväskylä, Finland.</p> | |
| Asiasanat – Keywords Refugee, Acculturation strategy, Acculturative stress, Social Support, Finland | |
| Säilytyspaikka – Depository University of Jyväskylä | |
| Muita tietoja – Additional information | |

Acknowledgments

There are numerous people who deserve my thankfulness for their help, support and contribution to this study and to my personal achievement during my Master's degree. It has been a long way, but with your support and assistance I made it. Therefore, my deepest and sincerest thanks go out to:

My adviser, Marko Siitonen, who during master thesis process supported and encouraged me to keep on. Your patience and serenity have been a powerful mean of support for me during this lengthy process. Working hard and making use of your valuable advices, gave fruit and to me personally a deep feeling of accomplishment. So, special thanks go out to you Marko.

My colleagues and superior. Thank you for giving me the possibility to take a break from work and concentrate on the final part of this learning process. Thank you to my colleagues, for your encouraging words and your trust in me. I take the chance to thank you as well for your help in finding participants for the study as well.

A heartfelt thank you goes to each one participating in the study. I am deeply grateful that you opened your hearts and shared with me your experiences and opinions. I must say that talking with you, has been the most pleasurable part of the thesis process.

Finally, my deepest thanks go to my dear family, to my parents, Violeta and Vasil for teaching me to love learning, to my adored sister, Elona for your daily support, to my dear children, Ilir and Klaara and my beloved husband, Marko for your patience and continues encouragement. It's hard to find words to describe my gratitude to you all. Your support was constantly felt throughout this learning process. Without the strength I have received from you, this project would have not been possible. I am forever thankful.

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1. Introduction

Immigration has always been present in the Finnish society throughout history. According to Valtonen (1994), Finland has entered the arena of modern refugee reception activity in the late eighties. The acculturation of immigrants, and specifically of people with refugee background, to the Finnish society has been a very popular theme in the political and public discussion. These discussions have increased especially during the refugee crises starting from spring 2015 up to today.

Issues of acculturations have been widely studied in Finland as well, such as issues of social support through theory of networking and support through interpersonal relationships (Kokkonen, 2010), trust-building, recognition, social esteem and issues of dependence (Turtiainen, 2012), Russian-speaking adolescents' acculturation and adjustment (Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000), child-welfare social workers and migrants' communication (Anis, 2008), on refugees' integration in Finland (Valtonen, 1999, 2000, 2004 and 2008) and so on. This study explores firstly the acculturation of newcomers with refugee background into the Finnish society. Secondly it investigates the role social support plays during primary phase of resettlement process and its' effect on individuals' health outcomes.

This study contributes into the research done on the subject by focusing on acculturation, acculturative stress during primary phase of refugees' settlement and the role of social support provided by settlement social services in supporting refugees to better cope with acculturative stress. Emphasis has put on the role of social support provided to refugees through settlement social services, including social workers, social instructors and psychologist. Based on experiences of refugees given through their narrations, this research looks at how provided support meets the actual and perceived

needs by refugees, and its perceived effects in diminishing acculturative stress at the beginning of the resettlement period. The theoretical framework of the study is inspired by the four-folded model of acculturation by John W. Berry (1995, 1997, 2005, 2011), whose work has played a fundamental role on acculturation studies.

The data were collected qualitatively, through individual and focus-group interviews. Participants were migrants with a refugee background who have lived in Finland for less than three years. This choice was made based on the fact that the first three years of residency, is the integration period set by the Finnish act on the promotion of immigrant integration (1386/2010, §1). The analysis of the data brings to surface the voices of refugees and their personal experiences of acculturative process at its varying stages.

At the first part of the study I go into theory of acculturation and acculturative stress. Next, I have a look at social support theory and particularly on the coping and appraisal prospective. Thereafter, I go into phenomena of forced migration and refugees' viewpoint of acculturation. These are founded by a look at the Finnish context followed by research methodology and method used in collecting and analysing data. The study concludes with the discussion, conclusion session and proposals to further studies.

2. Researchers background

The choice of accomplishing a study on refugee's acculturation process and the role of social support during this important process, could have not been affected by my personal background. During my lifetime my own nation has experienced genocide, extreme violence within the country and a shift of regime from almost fifty years of socialism into democracy. As a result, hundreds of thousands of compatriots exiled. Personally, I have spent half of my life being a migrant and have lived in four foreign countries. I have studied international social work first and thereafter intercultural communication. Most of

my working life I have worked with refugees both in asylum centres and in integration services. I have always been fascinated by the way people from diverse backgrounds, states, nationalities, ethnicities, continents, behave when meeting each other and how they find the common ground to live besides each other. For the last ten years I have worked in Finland as social worker supporting refugees from at least fifteen countries during their resettlement process. Resettlement work is close to my heart. This research has given me another chance to broaden my own personal knowledge, and to contribute as little as possible on the studies concerning this field.

3. Theory of acculturation

3.1. Acculturation of refugees

When individuals meet, and interact with one other, they notice the manifestation of culture in the other. To be able to understand acculturation theory, which has focus on cultural change of the individual, it is important to define first what culture is. Culture itself is not just what we see, hear, taste, and smell. Culture is an abstract explanatory concept, that is used in research to describe the reason we see differences in individual's behaviour (Matsumoto & Juang, 2003). Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from the others" (p. 6). Hofstede's (2010) mental programming includes:

- personality, which is specific to individual and at the same time inherited and learned
- culture, which is learned and is specific to a group of individuals
- and human nature, which is universal and inherited.

Matsumoto and Juang (2003) define, both broadly and compactly at the same time, culture as a dynamic system of rules, explicit and implicit, established by groups to ensure

their survival, involving attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and behaviours, shared by a group, but harboured differently by each specific unit within the group, communicated across-generations, relatively stable but with the potential to change across time. But are these rules always the same? Don't attitudes, values, beliefs, norms and behaviours change shape and form with time and space no matter the country the individual finds him/herself living in? Weinreich (2009) claims that culture itself is not static. Weinreich (2009) believes culture is not a given entity, but it is maintained in part and reformulated in part as a set of complex socio-psychological processes in which people are to varying extents active agents (p. 126).

Individuals independently, but also as part of a group have been migrating throughout history, taking with them own inherited and learned complex culture. Currently this increased phenomenon is becoming more and more recognisable in societies of today as well (Valtonen, 2008). Societies are becoming more attentive towards migration, as a result the interest of studies on this phenomenon also. Valtonen (2009) argues that the migration process is a long one and its dimensions can be looked at from the individual perspective or international and societal ones. The long-term integration process of the individual, according to Valtonen (2008) requires involvement of the individual, family and community as well. This involvement is important and needed throughout resettlement and acculturation process, where adaptation and cultural transformation happens. Personal and social resources might be challenged to change, evolve and develop to be able to deal with own' settlement in the new society.

While in political and public debate the term integration is preferred, in literature of acculturation studies, the term acculturation is largely used and favoured. In literature the term integration, often refers to the positive change process of individual, that occurs when immigrants adapt into the new society, by maintaining own heritage culture and also

having contact and participation into the new society (Berry, 1997). Adaptation itself means the process of cultural change that happens to the individual during acculturation. It is acculturation itself that, as mentioned above is the outframe of this study.

Acculturation of individuals and groups has been studied throughout the last century and yet is a subject that with its' complexity intrigues many schoolers. According to Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga and Szapocznik (2010) between years 2003 and 2010 there has been edited at least three books on acculturation, and a search done on PsykInfo only searching for the word acculturation on the title of articles, resulted in 107 articles from the '80's, 337 from the '90's and 727 articles starting from year 2000. The theories of acculturation have been developing from being unidimensional, where the migrant is looked at as the active actor acquiring beliefs, values and practices of the host or receiving culture (straight line assimilation), to two-dimensional model with focus on the outcome when heritage-culture meets receiving-culture (assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization), and furthermore proposed as a multidimensional process (Schwartz et al., 2010).

Schwartz et al. (2010), have proposed acculturation as "as a multidimensional process consisting of the confluence among heritage-cultural and receiving-cultural practices, values, and identifications" (p. 237). The most used definition of acculturation is presented already in 1936 by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits: "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continues first-contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both group" (p. 149). Chirkov (2008) criticises use of this definition when studding and investigating acculturation of individuals, as originally this definition was meant to be used in analysing cross-cultural acculturation of groups and not acculturation on personal basis.

Berry (2005) defines acculturation as “the process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (p. 698). Berry (2005), argues that during the process of acculturation, each one involved must engage in intercultural contact, thus the scene for a potential conflict is ready. In a conflict situation when individual meets the other culture, own patterns of diplomacy, patterns of dialogue, sharing ideas and feelings are confronted. This includes also laws, arts, customs and any other habits which are learned or acquired by the individual in a given society. In case conflict arises, both parts have the need to communicate and negotiate, to achieve a common language that is suitable to both parts. The link between cultural context and individual, and dominant cultures internal and external behavioural change or evolvement is very important, and it is in this framework that acculturation can be investigated. Berry (2005) claims that negotiation is looked as the main meaningful way to avoid conflict both on group and individual level, so each person finds a way to live together, where everyone is satisfied. Though the goal of the individual is to find this common language, according to Berry (1997), the individual personally chooses an acculturation strategy to achieve this goal. By choosing acculturation strategy, the individual makes a choice in positioning oneself in two dimensions. These two dimensions are: heritage cultural maintenance and contact and participation in the new society orientation. This positioning is called acculturation strategy. Acculturation strategies outcome can be integration, assimilation, separation or marginalization according to him.

3.2. Acculturation strategies

Cultural acculturation occurs on psychological, economical and sociocultural level. According to Berry (1995) and Kim (2001) the cultural changes on all these three levels occur on the individual/minority level, but also the dominant culture/receiving society

level as well. When examining acculturation strategies, the relation between heritage cultural maintenance and contact and participation within the receiving society on an individual plan is looked at (Berry, 2005, Berry & Sabatier, 2011). *Cultural maintenance* means the extent to which heritage cultural identity and characteristics are considered important, therefore the individual strives to maintain or to distance oneself from them (Berry, 2005, Berry & Sabatier, 2011). *Contact and participation* is the extent to which the individual gets involved in the other group or to contrary primarily remains among own countryman (Berry, 2005, Berry & Sabatier, 2011). In Berrys' theory of acculturation, there are two questions which immigrants answer to "yes" or "no". The first question concerns individuals' relation to own heritage culture and ethnic identity: "Are cultural identity and customs of value to be retained?" – and the second question concerns the relation between heritage and receiving culture: "Are positive relations with the larger society of value and to be sought?". Out of these two questions and the combination of the answers given, Berry (1997) has defined *fourfold acculturation strategies*, which are used by migrants, independently the reason of migration. Berrys' strategies of acculturation are: assimilation, integration, marginalization and separation.

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| <i>Assimilation:</i> | The case when individual does not maintain anymore his or her own cultural identity and gives in to the culture of the receiving society. |
| <i>Integration:</i> | The case when the individual maintains own heritage cultural identity, and at the same time accepts and makes use of the values, norms and practices of the culture of the receiving society. |
| <i>Marginalization:</i> | In this case, the individual does not identify neither with heritage nor with receiving societies culture. |
| <i>Separation:</i> | The individual maintains own heritage cultural identity, but rejects to contact and participate with the receiving societies culture. |

Regardless the strategy of acculturation the individual uses during the acculturation process, acculturative stress is to some extent experienced. During this period the individual deals with adjusting own beliefs, norms and practices when meeting with new ones belonging to the receiving dominant culture or society (Berry, 2005).

3.3. Acculturative stress

Individuals stress reaction, when going through own acculturative process, is termed as acculturative stress. “Acculturative stress is defined as a reduction in health status [including psychological, somatic and social aspects] of individuals who are undergoing acculturation, and for which there is evidence that these health phenomena are related systematically to acculturation phenomena” (Berry et al., 1987, p. 491). Through the process of experiencing acculturative stress, individual tries to cope with the given situation, to be able to achieve pleasing adjustment to this new situation and environment. Coping, according to Sarason, Levine, Bashram and Sarason (1983), is the most advanced and mature ego process, which is thereafter followed by defence. By defence the authors understand neurotic models of adaptation. In moments and times of experiencing stress, such as in acculturation stress, individuals use strategies to reduce the tension caused by it. These used strategies are called coping devices. The coping devices used in interpersonal relationships, could be among others: self-control, humour, crying, swearing, weeping, boasting, talking the stress and its symptoms out. Another way of coping with acculturative stress is thinking it through or working of energy.

Berry (1997) understands acculturative stress, as individuals’ stress reaction when undergoing different life events that are strictly inter-related and linked to experiences of acculturation. Acculturative stress can be expressed in all areas of health in life, psychologically, physical and social area. Its’ outcomes on the psychological level can be

experienced as confusion, anxiety, and depression. On psychosomatic level the outcomes of acculturative stress could be experienced as headache, insomnia, stomach pain etc. On social level, acculturative stress could be manifested as feeling of marginalisation, being an outsider in the new society and identity confusion (Berry, 1995, Kim, 2001). When an individual is relocated from one society to another, previous social order, norms and practices known from the previous environment, might change or disappear. When acculturation and acculturative stressors have negative effect on the individual, it might be that she/he experiences hostility, anxiety, depression, and identity confusion. On the contrary, when acculturation has a positive effect on the life of the individual, its outcome enhances life quality, thus the process is seen and experienced as benign and positive one.

There are various moderating factors effecting the acculturation process and experiences of acculturative stress (Berry, 1995). Some of these most important moderating factors are: - individuals' demographic characteristics

- socioeconomic status previous to acculturation
- nature of the larger society
- type acculturation group
- modes of acculturation
- and psychological characteristics of the individual

A key moderating factor effecting acculturation process and experiences of acculturative stress, is also the variable of social support provided through social networks during acculturation process. According to Berry (1997, 2005), supportive relationships of the migrant with both networks of own heritage culture and networks of receiving societies predict successful adaptation of the individual. The way receiving society reacts

towards its new comers is of crucial importance. If the receiving society makes available networks providing support, expressing tolerance and acceptance for the newcomers, the individual might experience an easier acculturation process.

Another moderating key factor is the policies designed in the receiving society to exclude or include the newcomers (from practical instrumental needs such as housing, medical care to political and socio-cultural rights) (Phillimore, 2011). This level of including – excluding the newcomers into the receiving society, might decrease or increase the experience of acculturative stress. Inclusion or exclusion can help or make it more difficult for the migrant to settle into the new society. Berry and Sabatier (2011) found out in their study that the policies promoted in a country effect the acculturation strategies and attitudes of migrants as well. They found out that in Canada where multiculturalism is promoted, young migrants favoured integration, while in France where assimilation is promoted migrants also tried to pursue assimilation (Berry & Sabatier, 2011).

From the fourfold strategies of acculturation, integration is usually valued as the most beneficial strategy and the less stressful of them all, and marginalisation as the least beneficial of them. Berry (1995, 1997, 2005) claims that integration causes the less of acculturative stress from all the four strategies of acculturation. Berry (1995) argues that “Policies or attitudes in the larger society that are discriminatory (not permitting participation, and leading to marginalization or segregation) or assimilationist (leading to enforced cultural loss) are predictors of psychological problems” (p.486). The idea of integration resulting in less acculturative stress is criticised, among others by Rudmin (2003) and Ahadi & Puente-Diaz (2011). Berry and Sabatier’s (2011) study reinforces Berry’s previous opinions on integration. Results of this study show that youth with integration attitudes, had also better psychological adaptation into the situation of living in

two cultures. Berry and Sabatier (2011) stress out, that it is also important to specify which kind of society the individual settles into, when looking at acculturation process.

3.4. Critic of Berrys' acculturation theory

There is a collective understanding that integration as a strategy of acculturation is the best choice, and it is also the acculturation strategy that causes less acculturative stress compared with the other strategies (Berry & Sabatier, 2011). According to Rudmin (2003) though, there is no evidence that the individual might always experience acculturative stress when experiencing accountancy with a new culture. The results of a study on Iranian refugees living in Norway, Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001) showed that Iranians in Norway favoured Global Multiculturalism and no distress was shown. Ahadi & Puente-Diaz (2011) support Rudmin's statement as well. The results of their research on Hispanic students in university of Texas, showed that there is weak evidence between acculturation and psychological adjustment. Even though they remark that these results could have been as such because of inconsistencies in the measurement of acculturation or either acculturation not highly relevant to the well-being of migrants. Ahadi & Puente-Diaz (2011) found no correlation either between traditional indicators of acculturation such as language and generation level, to individuals' well-being in a study on Hispanics acculturation in USA. According to them, cultural-distance on the other hand, plays a small role, but its significance is influential in understanding psychological adjustment.

By observing the fourfold theory of acculturation studies and its measurements, Rudmin (2003, 2006) claims that he has not found significant correlation between integration and acculturative stress. Therefore, he means that integration cannot be considered automatically as beneficial form of acculturation for individuals' mental well-being. Additionally, he is certain of, that there is little, if any, psychological evidence to

recommend integration as the one and only one public policy. Weinrich (2009) supports Rudmin's idea and brings up the issue of assuming that both culture of heritage and receiving culture are benign when looking at Berry's acculturation theory. This is not always the case according to him. In case the receiving culture is i.e. a xenophobic one, it would be more beneficial for the migrant to keep distance, instead of integrating into this dominant culture. Separation in this case would be more positive than integrating or assimilating (Weinrich, 2009). In case migrants are refugees, whom escape their own country because of oppression and relocated in a malign receiving culture, the most beneficial strategy of acculturation would not be integration, but marginalisation.

According to Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001) the goal of Berry's acculturation theory is to demonstrate, that individual goes through less distress when integration acculturation strategy occurs. In this way multiculturalism is chosen and favoured, thus "psychological science is to serve advocacy of a particular public policy" (p. 42), which is one of the reasons Rudmin criticizes Berry for. Rudmin (2006) goes through the details of the liberalistic policies and theory of biculturalism as follows, "1) "freedom to choose" is the essence of liberalism; 2) "cultural diversity " is liberal plurality of values; 3) "mutual accommodation" is liberal tolerance; 4) "low levels of prejudice" is liberal opposition to oppression; and 5) even the use of psychometric evidence that minority individuals are distressed due to acculturative pressures fits the liberal idea of minimizing and redressing harm".

While integration is considered by Berry (2005) as a beneficial acculturation strategy, separation and marginalization on the contrary are not and they are causing higher acculturative stress. Rudmin (2003) argues that neither separation or marginalization can be even considered as acculturation strategies, since according to the acculturation definition, there must be contact between two or more cultures for acculturation to happen.

This contact between two or more cultures does not occur in case of separation and marginalisation.

According to Ahadi and Puente-Diaz (2011) and Ward et al. (2004) personality variables have been neglected in acculturation studies. Ahadi and Puente-Diaz (2011) have looked at the relation between acculturation, personality and psychological adjustment by making use of acculturation strategies and the personality variables. They found out that acculturation strategies used by individuals were: cultural resistance (marginalization), cultural shift (assimilation), cultural incorporation (separation) and cultural transmutation (integration). The personality variables were: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. The results showed that acculturation strategies did not have high effect on individuals' well-being, except the connection of cultural resistance was greatly related to reported depression. Ahadi and Puente-Diaz (2011) by looking at the effect of stable characteristics, life circumstances and intentional activities effect on adjustment found out that migrants' well-being was affected 50% by stable characteristics, 10% by life circumstances and 40% by intentional activity.

Personality is relatively stable characteristic of the individual, and has not been surprising to find out that personality variables are strongest predictors of psychological adjustment (Ahadi & Puente-Diaz, 2011). Adjustment and adapting to a new culture, acculturating, is complicated processes and cannot though be explained only based on individual's personality, societies and cultures in with individual is in contact with must be taken in consideration as well (Berry & Sabatier, 2011).

3.5 Alternative viewpoints on acculturation

According to Padilla and Perez (2003) psychological acculturation is the internal processes of change that immigrants experience when they come into direct contact with members of

the host culture (p. 35). Their model of acculturation includes social cognition, cultural competence, social identity, social stigma, cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty at individual level. *Social cognition* is the mental processes that guide individuals' social interaction, motivation and intention. Individual thinks first and does thereafter depending on own goal accordingly with the social situation. *Cultural competence* is the learned ability to navigate in a specific culture in a way that the individual has balance and consistency with the values, beliefs, traditions, manners and language of the dominant culture. Padilla and Perez (2003) claim that in this case, the individual is being perceived by the members of the dominant culture as one of the group, "insider".

By *social identity* is understood the need and ability of the individual to be and feel unique and part of the of the cultural group at the same time, differentiation and inclusion simultaneously. *Social dominance* is strongly bonded to consensual hierarchies, which includes both inevitability and functionality. i.e. which social class an individual belongs too, the given gender roles, individual differences and so on. The more distinct an individual is (colour, religion, dressing), the more difficult the acculturation might be. When an individual possesses some particular attributes, such as colour, sexual preference, accent that differ from the majority in the receiving society, it might be that the individual gets socially stigmatized by members of receiving or dominant cultural group. This *social stigmatizing* is as such context bounded. It is this social context that devaluates the given attribute itself, that leads to stigmatizing. In addition, the fact that the individual belongs to a minority that owns less power than majority, most probably re-enforces the social stigma. Visibility as well is a crucial factor as it cannot be hidden i.e. adopted kids that have dark skin differing from majority or children born by multinational parents.

A variety of factors, influences the acculturation on of the individual, such as family structure and function, religion and practical beliefs, gender, power relations (majority v.

minority), ethnicity, language, dress as well. Padilla and Perez (2003) argue that the individual, depending on the above-mentioned factors might experience more discrimination than others, and therefore they undergo change not of personal choice, but because of political, social and / or economic situation and so cultural adaptation becomes preferable or even securing own survival. *Perceived discrimination* might influence acculturation attitude as well. Less motivation because of perceived discrimination, could result in lower social mobility in the new culture.

All in all, not only personal, but social and environmental factors have strong significance during acculturation process. The attitude of intolerance, prejudice, and discrimination aimed at immigrants, refugees, and sojourners is often reflected in host conformity pressure (Kim, 2001).

Weinreich (2009), uses the term 'enculturation' for the process of change in the individual when relocated in a new society. Weinreich (2009) claims that enculturation occurs, when learned values that have become part of our identity through childhood, adolescence and adulthood in the heritage culture, change and evolve when influenced by elements of other cultures, including aspects of the dominant society. An important viewpoint by Weinreich (2009) is, that the migrant or people in general, do not necessarily make conscious

“...choices about, or adopting strategies towards acceptance or rejection of mainstream and heritage cultures. There will, however, be those who do consciously strive to make choices, say, to ‘lose’ their heritage culture and ‘take on’ another, but who are constrained in so doing by their biography of successive identifications with ‘influential’ others from childhood onwards” (Weinreich 2009, p. 135).

However, is it a question of acculturation, cultural learning or enculturation, features such as age, personality, gender, strategies use, social support and coping, and the fact of migrating as a free choice or being forced to, do have effect on individuals' settlement, adjustment and well-being in the new home county. In the next session, I look at the role of social support during the meaningful process of acculturation.

4. Theory of social support

When refugees have been resettled to a safe place, their first basic needs for which they have fought a long way, are met. The instrumental needs to a certain extend are fulfilled, they have housing, basic income and most of all they can live in peace and life is not threatened to the same extend as under war. The need for contact and thereafter for self-esteem and self-actualisation need to be met. This can only happen through re-building of own network and making use of the social support that comes with/through it. Migrants with refugee background do not often have existing non-formal social networks, or existing networks might be minimal during the initial phase of resettlement. These extreme changes of social networks in refugees' lives, amongst other factors, during the primarily phase of resettlement, makes crucial the role of resettlement social services personnel and the support given to rebuild and strengthen the individual's social and personal life.

Social support is defined by Albrecht and Adelman (1987, p. 19), as cited in Mattson and Hall (2011) and Adelman (1988), as "verbal and non-verbal communication between recipients and providers that reduces uncertainty about the situation, the self, the other, or the relationship, and function to enhance a perception of personal control in one's life experience". According to this definition the key aspects of social support are: communication, reduction of uncertainty and heighten control over own life and situation.

Thus, it is through supportive communication that uncertainty reduces and as such self-control and stability is being nurtured and enhanced. The emotional support given, even though it might in this case diminish the level of i.e. sadness or feeling of loneliness, it might not necessarily reduce the uncertainty level. Therefore, this definition is to a certain extent limited (Mattson & Hall, 2011). Cobb's (1976, p.30) definition of social support, as cited by Nurullah (2012, p.73), is "... information leading the subject to believe that he (or she) is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of network of mutual obligations". Through these first two definitions social support is understood as information and emotional support both given and perceived by the individual who is in a need of it.

Hupcey (1998) means that even Cobb's definition, which includes both informational and emotional aspects of social support, is not yet complete. According to her, this definition does not include provision of instrumental aspect of social support, and therefore is incomplete. Thoits' (2010, p. 46) definition is the most completed of them all; "emotional, informational, or practical assistance from significant others, such as family members, friends, or co-workers, (and that) support actually may be received from others or simply perceived to be available when needed" (Nurullah, 2012, p. 173 underlined by me). *Emotional social support* is demonstration of love and caregiving, esteem, sympathy and re-enforcing ones feeling of belongingness. *Instrumental support* (or tangible support) consists of actual actions offered to the individual or materials which would easier the individuals' life at the time of experiencing stressful situation. *Informational support* is communication of opinions, giving factual information to make one's life easier, it is giving advice and feed-back (House, 1981 mentioned amongst others in Thoits, 1986, Burluson et al., 1994, Simich et al., 2005, Stewart et al., 2008). *Perceived social support* is the idea and believe individuals have, that support is available in case needed from people

in general. This, according to Sarason and Sarason (2009), sense of support is “part of an individual’s orientation to interpersonal relationships” (p. 115). It is these perceptions of the continues availability of social support, that help individual to anticipate danger and reduce fear in such a case.

Through interpersonal relationships and belongingness to social network makes it possible for the individual through interaction to ask, receive, reject, provide and perceive social support. According to Cohen, Brittney, and Gottlieb (2000), the process of social support, that occurs during social interaction in social relations, is seen in two types of processes: the first one includes provision or exchanging of emotional, informational and instrumental support when there is a perception that the other needs given aid. This aid is provided and received in a stressful situation in one’s life, such as i.e. the stressful situation of acculturation and resettlement of refugees into the receiving culture and society. In this case or model, social support refers to formal and informal social resources that the individual perceives to be at reach when needed. These formal and informal resources are considered to be nonprofessional groups.

The second process is the model of health benefits from taking part in one or more particular social groups, which have influence on individual’s cognitions, emotions, behaviours, psychological and physical well-being. In this case, social support is provided by both formal and informal networks. Social support given through social relations might have effect on “the diversity of our self-concepts, feelings of self-worth and personal control to behavioural norms that have implications for our health” (Cohen, Brittney, & Gottlieb, 2000, p. 5).

In addition, when individual believes that own social network is able to provide the needed social support in the right timing, it is perceived social support that one is

experiencing. Studies show that perceived social support has a strong effect on individual health outcomes (Uchino, 2009).

Simich, Beiser, Stewart and Mwakarimba (2005) argues that, access to social support in person's life, is just as important as food, housing, and access to healthcare to be able to secure one's well-being. Subsequently, social support is more than needed for the individual, to achieve little by little to the level of motivational need of self-realization. But what is social support in general and specifically needed in this critical point of acculturation period?

4.1. Research on social support

Social support with its own distinct construct, as a crucial aspect of social relationships, has been widely researched since 1970's (Nurullah, 2012). Social support is vital in individuals' everyday life struggles and disappointments, such as it is in times of major life events (Thoits, 1984). When an individual is going through major stressful events in life, such as nears' death, or fleeing home country to survive war, it is through social support given by the intimate or confidant social relationships that buffering effect, lowering stress of psychological disturbance is achieved (Thoits, 1984). It is through perceived and given emotional support that individuals feel better, experience pain and stress relieve, and thus improved life quality (Burlison, Albrecht, & Sarason, 1994).

Studies of social support are done from three deferent perspectives (Lakey & Cohen in Cohen, Brittney, & Gottlieb, 2000). The first perspective is the stress and coping prospective. This prospective looks at social support from the point of view of trying to help individuals in a stressful situation, and the result of help given is to protect the support receiver from negative effects of stress. The second prospective is the social constructionist one. From the constructionist perspectives point of view, the support given

has a direct influence on health outcomes by promoting both self-esteem and self-regulation. Social support and the self, are both seen as social constructions. The last perspective is the relationship one. From this perspective, the effects of social support on health, cannot be separated from relationship processes which happen simultaneously while support is provided or received. These relationship process could be i.e. companionship, intimacy and/or low conflict.

It is especially the first theoretical perspective, stress and coping perspective of social support that I will go deeper into in the next theory section. This coping perspective is also used as the frame of the analyses done in practice.

4.2. Supportive action on stress and coping perspective

The aspect of the supportive action perspective, is that supportive behaviour provided by significant and trustful others, makes it possible for the individual to cope with the stressful situation in life. It predicts that through intensive social support, people can be protected from stress by improving their coping performance (Gottlieb, 1987). The main effect of social support provided is in this case stress-buffering, and therefore making possible to enhance individuals' general well-being.

The buffering effect of social support given in a stressful situation or during a stressful event in ones' life, is achieved either actively giving this support, or un-actively when the individual believes the support to be available when needed. Consequently, it is mainly through received support, but also to certain extant perceived one, that the way individuals cope with stress and stressors is affected. As consequence individuals' psychological and physical health, and overall well-being improves (Cohen, Brittney, & Gottlieb, 2000).

In a way that a positive outcome is attained through provided social support, it is of an extreme importance, that the perfect match is made between individuals' needs during the stressful situation and form of support provided. In addition, it is of importance to understand the fact that the social support provider, is also the right person (Adelman, 1988). All in all, the main effect of provided and perceived social support is stress buffering. Only in the case that the form of support matches the need of the individual in the stressful situation, the support has a positive effect on health outcomes.

Social support though can be provided as well to cause improvement on individuals' coping performance. By improving individual coping styles and efforts, through social support individuals can be protected from stressful situation. The strengthened coping styles and efforts can be problem-focused and/or emotional-focused (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) or avoidance-oriented one (Endler & Parker (1990) as mentioned by Berry (1997).

Appraisal can be used as a supportive action, in leading individuals to interpret stressful situations less negatively and threatening. Appraisal can be primary or secondary. Primary appraisal is helping individuals in making judgements of events as safe or dangerous or threatening, learning the signs and reasoning "Am I in trouble or not?". Secondary appraisal involves evaluation of personal and social resources, availableness to cope with stressful events in life. Evaluations such as what can I do about the situation I am in! Through appraisal actions individuals can be reinforced on taking active action in changing own life situations (Cohen, Brittney, & Gottlieb, 2000).

It is through interpersonal relations that the appraisal is possible to happen. What in the case of forced migrants resettling to Finland, where family is far away, and non-formal social networks are minimal during the primary phase of resettlement and acculturation? In the next session I look at forced migration in general and particularly case Finland.

5. Forced migration and refugees' viewpoint to acculturation

People have always been moving from one area to the other, from one city to the other, from one country to the other throughout times. Considering Europe's situation today, migration is made easy and flexible for European Union and Schengen area nations. Considering forced migration during year 2015-2017, it has been the first time after World War Two, that the old continent of Europe has been challenged by growing number of uncontrolled migration of refugees from areas where people's life has been badly endangered by war and violence such as Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

During year 2015, 65,3 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced, 21,3 million of them are refugees under the age of 18. Of all 65,3 million displaced people in the world, only 6% of them were hosted in Europe. Refugees from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan represented 53% of refugees worldwide during the same year. In 2015, according to UNHCR, 107,100 refugees were resettled, which means that after they were granted the refugee status by UNHCR, they were given the leave to Remain resettle or continue life in a third country (UNHCR, 2017). Only 25 countries in the world receive numerical quota refugees, and Finland is one of them. From quota refugee receiving EU countries, Finland is third in the list, with an annual quota of 750. As a response to the Syrian crisis, the Finnish government announced an additional quota for 2014-2015 of 300 persons, so in total 1050 refugees. Finnish government decided that from the total amount of quota refugees, 500 of them would be Syrian refugees (Ministry of Interior, 2013). This quota is back again to 750 refugees nowadays, even though the situation in Syria has not changed for the better.

When people are forced to migrate, in difference from voluntary migration, they do not have a choice, they must flee to be able to primarily secure, own or family members'

physical security. In addition to not having alternatives at all to continue living a safe life in own home country, it might be that there exist some alternatives to be able to ‘stay alive’, but those alternatives are not reasonable ones (Bartman, 2015). When voluntary migrants chose to cross the borders, their goal is to secure personal financial growth. Voluntary migrants do have a good enough alternative to live at home country, but they chose to leave in search for a better one (Bartman, 2015). This is not the case when forced migration takes place. Forced migrants do not have at all alternatives or they have unreasonable ones, thus the only optimal thing to do is to put their lives at risk, in search for safety. The discourse around forced migration politicly and generally in the media, involves issues of legality, social frames and it is symbolic as well (Yarris & Castañada, 2015). According to Yarris and Castañada (2015), a displaced person is both migrant and refugee, and this displacement exists exactly in the continuum of force and will. It is not always war that forces people to live their home country. Yarris and Castañada (2015), and Bartman (2015) claim, that it is not only in case of war that we are dealing with forced migration. Desperation in life, like extreme poverty, degrading condition of work, being forced into human trafficking, not being able to exercise own religion, nor to live by own philosophy of life, forces people to migrate, even though leaving home country in this case is not completely involuntary. The above-mentioned authors, mean that this kind of migration too must be considered as forced one, even though this is not found in the definition of convention of refugees (1951 Convention). Gibney (2004) as mentioned in Bartman (2015), defines refugees as people who if forced to return to home country, would meet threats to own vital subsistence needs. The right to basic subsistence need, is just as basic as the right to security, as Bartman expresses it “The core argument here extends that point to forced migration in a broader sense: when one’s local options for gaining subsistence entail violations of basic human rights, migration is sometimes forced

by one's reasonable insistence on finding elsewhere a means for subsistence that preserves a basic level of human dignity" (Bartman 2015, p. 453).

When life become unbearable and there are no reasonable alternatives in home country, it is this involuntariness in the continuum of force and will, that makes forced migrants, deserving protection and support by the international community. When forced migrant gets' the refugee status by UNHCR, and is thereafter granted the residence permit by a third country, it is this given status and residence permit that gives the privilege and entitlement, to be able to be resettled in a receiving country (Zolberg et al., 1989). It is the push factors to migration such as oppression, suppression, malcontent and poverty, plus the question of false or genuine need to migrate, that frame nowadays the overall discourse on migration. Migration is nowadays "one of the most politicised policy area in EU, if not the world" and despite restrictions on immigration policies, refugee population in EU continues to expand (Phillimore, 2011, p. 576). For this and other reasons, research on refugees' adjustment and acculturation continues to be in schoolers' focus.

Phillimore (2011) has explored the ways social and public policies facilitate migrants' integration in UK and she claims that factors which help refugees in their integration process are among others access to education and training, housing, employment and social capital. On contrary, factors having negative effect are lack of effective integration policies, negative attitudes towards refugees, frequency of racial incidents such as racial bullying or racial abuse, and lastly fear and insecurity (Phillimore, 2011).

Furthermore, variables affecting refugees' acculturation process are those existing prior to migration and post-migration ones. On individual level, variables prior to migration effecting acculturation are high or low social-economic-status in home country,

low knowledge of local language, cultural distance, openness-closeness of dominant society (Epstein & Gang, 2010, Kokkonen, 2010), cultural dressing codes, weather (cold withers), gender, being a single parent, age, experiences of violence, torture and maltreatment in home country or during the devastating escaping journey (Phillimore, 2011, Vitale & Ryde, 2016, Padilla & Perez, 2003), and having to rebuild trust (Turtiainen, 2012). The results of the studies mentioned show that refugees with high SES in home country experience greatest cultural shock in the receiving country and difficulties in adjusting to the new life.

These studies show that not having proficiency in English affected people in not being able to connect with members of the majority, thus not being able to re-build social networks and share everyday events. Findings from Finnish studies support the results found in UK as well. Limited knowledge of Finnish language, resulted in people isolating themselves and not being able to connect as much as desired for example with neighbours (Kokkonen, 2010, Valkeapää, 2015).

High cultural distance also made it more of a challenge for refugees to adjust. Refugees with distinct traditional dresses expressed higher level of harassment and discrimination in UK. The cold weather made individuals isolate, as not knowing what clothes to wear and being afraid of the cold as well.

Capps et al. (2015) on a report on integration outcomes of refugees in U.S. expresses that refugees' resettlement has been more challenging during 2009-2011 compared with early years. Difficulty has consisted in resettlement agencies' and communities' inability to meet refugees' needs. Employment and self-supporting is the core of U.S. resettlement programs, and according to the mentioned report there has been a noticeable decrease of refugees' employment. This can be a consequence of low-skilled workers, low-level of

education, limited English proficiency. Therefore, there is a need according to Capps et al. (2005) for developing the given support to refugees i.e. through combined language- and with job-skill education. Another issue that have been a challenge, is non-existing countryman communities i.e. for Burmese refugees. This is as mentioned earlier one of the issues confronted in Finland as well.

5.1. Refugees in Finland

There are 25 resettlement countries in the world excepting quota refugees and Finland is one of them. Finland accepts as quota refugee, individuals whom the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has selected as such. Excluding individuals whom are granted the refugee status, UNHCR might present to resettlement countries, at times also other individuals, whom are in need of international protection (Finnish Immigration Service, 2017). In Finland, Parliament decides every year, how many quota refugees will be resettled, and this depends on the state budget for that specific year. Refugees have been resettled in Finland since at the beginning of 1970's and systematically, since the start of 1990's. Refugee quota accepted by Finland has been 750 per year since 2001. The Parliament decided on an additional quota during year 2014, as the situation in Syria got more and more severe. The refugee quota 2014-2015 has been 1,050 as mentioned earlier too (Tilastokeskus, 2017). Within the quota, Finland admits, also emergency cases (individuals with severe health issues) on the basis of UNHCR's documents every year. At the moment, the number of emergency cases is 100 (Finnish Immigration Service, 2017). Besides the quota refugees, a migrant can apply for asylum as well. Statistics show clearly the radical increase of asylum seekers during 2015 in Finland with a number of 32 476. During 2014 there were 3 651 asylum seekers, which has been almost the same number for each year during the last decade. During 2016 the number of asylum seekers has decreased again down to 5 651 (Finnish Immigration Service, 2017).

Reasons to attain asylum and refugee status must be justifiable ones, and fear of persecution in home country must be present. Reasons of persecution are considered as follows: (1) individuals' origin, (2) religion, (3) nationality, (4) being a member of a certain social group who experiences persecution resulted in this, and (5) political opinions. Because of the fear, the individual does not wish to return to the country concerned for protection. If the individual has committed war crime, crime against peace and humanity, or a serious non-political crime before arrival in Finland asylum is not to be granted (Finnish Immigration Service, 2017).

Another reason for getting residence permit can be on basis of subsidiary protection. Subsidiary protection can be granted if the individual is in:

- danger of death penalty or execution,
- danger of imprisonment and torture
- danger of punishment that is inhuman or violates human dignity

The danger must exist in own home country or country of permanent residence. The leave to remain on basis of subsidiary protection, can also be permitted in case the individual cannot return to home country or country of permanent residence as armed conflict is present and individuals' life can thus be endangered. Humanitarian protection though can no longer be granted in Finland since 16 May 2016, due to an amendment to the Aliens Act (Finnish Immigration Service, 2017). Statistics show clearly the change on the refugee situation in Finland as well. For decades, there has been low numbers of asylum seekers in Finland (2011/ 3 088, 2012/3 129, 2013/3 238). The increase of asylum seekers' number was drastic in 2015, and it went up to 32 476 applications. During 2016, the numbers went down again and only 5 651 asylum seekers entered the country. A lot of people that entered Finland as asylum seekers in 2015 are still waiting for the decision

about leave to remain. The whole number of foreign citizens in Finland has increased from 3,3% in 2000 to 5,9% in 2016 (Tilastokeskus, 2017).

While individuals granted residence permit and asylum in Finland are free to decide which place of residence to move to (Aliens Act 301/2004, section 41), quota refugees cannot influence the decision made by officials to which community they are being resettled in. Resettlement of refugees is organized in diverse ways depending on the country.

In Finland, even though the Parliament decides about the quota, local governments make independently their own decision over all on receiving refugees, and on the number of refugees to be received. Decision on the region and nationalities of quota refugees is made by the Ministry of Interiors. In Finland, local and regional authorities are given a high degree of power from the central government, in shaping resettlement work. Quota refugee receiving municipalities, are entrusted not only with budgetary power, but also administrative ones (Turtiainen, 2012). The Finnish emigration services place the refugees in municipalities through cooperation with Ely-Keskus (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment -CEDTE). The responsibility for immigrants' integration belongs to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. CEDTE together with the municipalities are responsible for integration issues in their respective territories. To achieve a satisfying acculturation and resettlement of immigrants in general and refugees in particular, close co-working between CEDTE, public employment and business services, municipalities', receiving social services (integration services), and different migrant organizations is crucial. Even though integration of immigrants and refugees is a studied area, Turtiainen (2012) sees as very important, that new studies and research is be done on refugees' resettlement from the social work point

of view, as in Finland “social workers are in the frontline of refugee receiving work” (article 4, p. 3). It is this institutional context that is looked at in the next session.

5.2. Institutional context

Finlands’ welfare institutional state model exhibits many features of social democratic regime, which is found overall Scandinavia as well. This system includes first of all the idea and principle that everyone in the country is entitled to a decent standard of living. Based on this universalism principle, all citizens no matter of background, must enjoy full social citizenship rights. Social work in social democratic regime, retains deep commitment to each individuals’ well-being. Concerning immigrant minorities, on the macrolevel, social workers’ advocacy role on behalf of minority clients must be central as well, according to Valtonen (2001). Integration tasks considering forced migration immigrants, differ from those of the other migrants. Lack of information about Finland, lack of larger immigrant communities, background of flight and war are just a few of them (Valtonen, 2001, Turtiainen, 2012). Resettlement social services in Finland are organized in different ways in different municipalities, though having the same legal frame within services must be fit into. There are many municipalities that have started receiving refugees for the first time during year 2015, as a response to the refugee crises in Finland. Jyväskylä is a municipality that has been receiving refugees since 1989. As the services are grounded and developing at the same time, it is this municipality that I have been using in my case-study.

The social services of the municipality of Jyväskylä are mainly organized in departments such as child welfare, rehabilitative social work, social assistance work for young adults and social work for adults only. Integration services are situated under adult social work (aikuissosiaalityö) even though its clients are from children to seniors.

Integration services have existed since 1989 as earlier mentioned, when the city of Jyväskylä accepted the first refugees from Iran. Back then its name was Pakolaistoimisto – refugee office. Later on, the name of the department has changed many times; Ulkomaalaistoimisto – Alien office, Maahanmuuttajapalvelut -Immigrant services and since spring 2015 Kotoutumispalvelut – Integration services (Kotoutumispalvelut, 2016, 13). Users of the integration services are quota refugees, asylum seekers whom are granted the leave to remain by the migration office. Family members of the existed clients who are granted family reunification became users of integration services as well. The values leading the work done at the integration services are: equality, non-discrimination and tolerance (Kotoutumispalvelut, 2016).

The amount of quota refugees for Jyväskylä has been 50 refugees per year. During year 2017 no quota refugees came from third countries. The clients came straight from the asylum centres to the municipality when leave to remain was granted first and CEDTE had made the decision for replacement to Jyväskylä. This number increased for year 2017 up to 150 refugees. In addition, during 2016 most of the clients of integration services have been asylum seekers that were granted the leave to remain and moved voluntarily and in an independent way Jyväskylä.

In Finland asylum seekers are free to choose where to live all over Finland especially after granted leave to remain (Aliens Act 301/2004). Once housing is found and refugees are registered at registry office (maistraatti) they have the right to get the support from integration services to ease the accommodation and integration process (Law of the promotion of integration 10.12.2010/1385, 6§). The psychosocial and economical beneficial support is given for the first three years of individuals stay. Resettlement work in the municipality of Jyväskylä carried out by a team of integration social workers, social

instructors, psychologist, benefit secretary, secretary and service instructor and the leader of the services.

Resettlement social work consists mainly on providing psychosocial support during the period of integration, counselling on society construct and social benefits, community work and networking activities, provision of information broadly in any area individuals need information about, and last but not list awareness-raising activities (Turtiainen, 2012).

Valtonen (2001) as well claims, that integration tasks and needs of humanitarian immigrants differ from those of other immigrants to some extent as refugees do not necessarily have pre-information about Finnish society and culture. Furthermore, in Finland are missing larger migrant communities, or in many municipalities they are non-existing at all, so there is no countryman helping out in adjusting and integrating into the new society. Acculturation as well is influenced by background factors. According to resettlement work approach with refugees Valtonen (2001) means, that “the uprooting displacement and severing of ties to the country of origin and former circles need to be taken into consideration” (p. 251). From the institutional point of view, when providing social support to refugees it is important to promote informal support networks, foster community and civil society linkages (Valtonen, 2001, Turtiainen, 2012). As Finnish immigration policy has throughout time been a policy that does not include sizeable labour migration or business, the resettlement social work and support provided through it to humanitarian migrants is crucial.

Adelman (1988) claims, that social support has a positive influence on individuals' life by enhancing ones' perceived mastery or control over environment. It is the force of empowerment and feeling of control that are central to coping with a stressful situation,

and in case of this study coping with acculturative stress. Through this research participants' narratives on acculturation experiences and its' relation to social support is observed. My research questions are as follows:

- RQ1. What are the experiences of social support of refugees in home country?
- RQ2. What are the experiences of social support during initial phase of acculturation in Finland? How have they affected refugees' acculturation process and what kind of effect did it have on individuals' physical- and psychological well-being?
- RQ3. How have these experiences affected individuals' perception of social support?

6. Method

6.1. Methodology

This study follows the basic tenets of qualitative, phenomenological research. According to Patton (2002), a phenomenological study focuses both on descriptions of peoples' experiences and on how the experience is experienced by people themselves. It is the lived experience by people that is the essence of phenomenological studies. The inquiry is done exactly into the meanings the participants make of their own experiences. The aim of the study is to find out refugees' personal experiences on the role social support played during acculturation and resettlement in the primary phase of living in the Finnish society.

Through this phenomenological perspective, I wanted to understand "what is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?" (Patton, 2002, p.132).

This study is done on the certain context of acculturation. The phenomena of refugees' resettlement in Finland is not new as such, even though a young one compared

to other countries where abundant research is done on the issue, such as USA, UK, Canada or Australia. Need for additional knowledge from the Finnish context, and focus on this distinct area in social studies is needed (Turtiainen, 2012).

The purpose of this study, is an attempt to contribute to bringing additional knowledge about (1) experiences of refugees on the effect social support has on their personal acculturation process and (2) knowledge on resettlement works' contribution to refugees' better health outcomes and adjustment in Finland. Resettlement process, with its ups and downs, can happen in a smother way, when needed support is provided by the rights person at the right time. This study contributes furthermore insights into the influence of social support on acculturative stress and its' outcomes too.

In this study, the experiences of the individuals themselves are used to better understand the phenomenon of acculturation and settlement itself, analysed within the frame of theory of acculturation and social support. Both my personal background and my professional experiences provided me with deep familiarity of this phenomenon.

Patton (2002) points out though, that qualitative findings grow out, among other forms, through in-depth and open-ended questions and interviews. To insure credibility of the data, I selected this method as it is widely and successfully used one in research of this nature before. The choice of using qualitative data collection through interviews, was made from the desire to bring to light the voice of the participants, their "... experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (Patton, 2002, p. 4) through direct quotations. Furthermore, by using interviews it was made possible not to discriminate people, who might not be able to write in own, Finnish or English language (Kitzinger, 1995). The interviews were semi-structured, as the timing of the questions was flexible, to ensure

flexibility on the course of the topics. This way, it was guaranteed a certain flow of the discussion, and each participant was kept active throughout the interview.

To insure data saturation both, rich and thick data were collected. (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Rich data were collected by conducting two in-depth interviews. And thick data, was collected by two focus-group interviews. Semi-structured interview guide, and mainly theory-oriented questions were prepared (Patton, 2002, Hogan et. al, 2009, Kuckartz, 2014). Questions were structured in a way to be able to ask not only one, but multiple participants the same question (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Usually in focus-group interviews participate 6-12 people. It was my choice to invite only 4 people in each group, as the topic of the interview was very personal and sensitive. Through focus-group interviews multiple perspectives on a given topic and discussion about it was achieved. In addition, conducting both individual and focus-group interviews, was experienced as a good strategy to gather a great deal of data in a short amount of time. Thus, reaching data saturation as well, through both individual and group perspectives on the given themes.

Since this study was carried out at a Finnish university, and the phenomena studied out of the Finnish context, it is obvious that the primary location of the research was Finland. Central Finland, city of Jyväskylä was chosen as it has a 27-years of experience with resettlement work, while neighbouring communes have started to receive refugees during the last two years. The integration services of the city of Jyväskylä had also shown interest in the results of the study as well. Comparing the resettlement work done in two different communes and its outcomes, could be an interesting study in the future.

6.2. Data collection procedure

To collect the data, integration services of Jyväskylä were contacted. Through integration services workers, users of the services were asked for their willingness to participate in the

study. Keeping in mind credibility of the research, participants were chosen not only purposively, but randomly as well. Many migrants were asked to participate in the study, but twelve participants were initially willing to give their contribution for this research. To insure saturation of the data, richness/depth was achieved through individual interviews, and thickness/quantity through focus-group interviews. Four migrants withdraw from participating. All in all, eight participants were interviewed. Participants had refugee background and they came from five different countries. Two focus-group- and two individual interviews were conducted. In each focus-group, there were three participants. According to Hogan et. al (2009) participants in focus-group interviews must have been involved in a concrete situation, which has been already investigated and analysed before. All the participants of this study have been going through the process of acculturation and adjustment in Finland after the traumatic experience of exile from own country of origin. The situation of acculturation has been broadly studied before in other countries, as it has come through in the theory session. This study contributes to the rest of the studies done on this subject, having refugees' resettlement in Finland as focus.

Out of the context of the study, the criteria for the participants were as follows: (1) participants have already got the residence permit and are granted the refugee status in Finland, (2) they have leaved less than three years in Finland, (3) they have received resettlement social services, (4) and spoke fluent English. Asylum seekers were excluded, as the life situation, the problematics and the psychological processes they go through, differ deeply from the once people resettling go through.

There was a possibility to make use of interpreters, but participants did not see it as needed, therefore all interviews were conducted in English.

The audience to the research done, is primarily the university of Jyväskylä, but also integration services of the city of Jyväskylä.

6.3. Participants

Purposeful and random sampling based on the criteria was used in finding participants. The research population consisted of adult individuals who identified themselves as refugees going through acculturation process during settlement in Finland. Selection was made this way, to get as rich information as possible on the phenomenon of acculturation of refugees in Finland (Patton, 2002). Research participants resettled to Finland between 2014 and 2017. Part of the participants were single, and part of them were married or in a relationship, and some had children too. Only one participant had been reunited with his family through reunification application. Participants were found through integration services in Jyväskylä and the data was collected in May 2017.

Based on the criteria of research, the social workers and social instructors of the integration services of Jyväskylä asked their clients on willingness to participate, and permission to deliver to researcher the contact information. When approval was given, researcher contacted each one to ensure final participation, and as well to hear participants' opinion on interview location. Only one of the participants wished to meet at own living area. The rest desired to meet at the integration services office, as it was easy to find for everyone.

The participants ranged in age from 19 to 56. Only 2 participants were female, and 6 were male. Participants were originally from Ethiopia, Iraq, Cameroon, Somalia and Yemen. The average length of the participant's resettlement time was approximately 2 years.

Table 1: Participants' demographic information (A)

| Participant | Country of origin | Education |
|-------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| #1 | Iraq | Interrupted university studies |
| #2 | Cameroon | Elementary school |
| #3 | Iraq | Professional Bachelor degree |
| #4 | Ethiopia | Bachelor degree |
| #5 | Somalia | Elementary school |
| #6 | Yemen | Professional Bachelor degree |
| #7 | Iraq | Bachelor degree |
| #8 | Iraq | Bachelor degree |

Table 2: Participants' demographic information (B)

| Participant | Profession | Residence permit since | Current Occupation |
|-------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| #1 | None | January 2017 | Unemployed |
| #2 | Sales person | Autumn 2014 | Studying Finnish language |
| #3 | Technician | March 2016 | Vocational training |
| #4 | Teacher | November 2016 | Studying Finnish language |
| #5 | Sales person | December 2014 | Upper level of elementary school |
| #6 | Civil Engineer | March 2016 | Master degree student |
| #7 | Accountant | December 2015 | Studying Finnish language |
| #8 | Entrepreneur | March 2016 | Studying Finnish language |

To ensure anonymity of participants when using quotations during the analysis, instead of participants' names, the word participant and numbers from 1 to 8 are used, i.e. participant #1.

In the analysis session, participants' experiences and perspectives are quoted directly to describe, interpret and make visible (Patton, 2002, Kuckartz, 2014), the effect of social support on acculturation process and on coping with acculturative stress.

6.4. Process of data gathering

As mentioned before, participants were free to decide the meeting place. One of the participants chose to be interviewed in own living place for comfortable reasons. During the individual interview session researcher sat beside the participant. Focus-group interviews were held in a relaxed and quite room at the integration services as desired by the participants (Kitzinger, 1995). During the group interviews we set around the table.

Prior to initiating data gathering, interviews started first by building a rapport between researcher and participants (Kitzinger, 1995). Researcher introduced herself first. Participants did not know each other on forehand, so they introduced themselves as well to the rest of the group. After introduction the goal of the research was explained. Needed time was taken also for answering questions related to research. A letter of consent was given to every participant and its content was explained. Explanation covered the reason and purpose of the research, the methodology, ownership of the data, issues of voluntariness, confidentiality, and anonymity (Patton, 2002, Kitzinger, 1995, Shenton, 2004). Once more, the opportunity to refuse participation was given to everyone. This way it was made sure that the data collection involved only those participants who genuinely were willing to contribute freely to this research (Shenton, 2004). Each participant approved and signed the letter of consent.

Following the initial introductions, demographic and background information was collected, which also assisted in further developing rapport with each other and researcher. This was followed by the main interview. During interviews, iterative questioning was

used as well. Several times I asked to go back to earlier asked questions to make sure the answers were correctly understood.

Mobile phone was used as recording device recording all interviews. Interviews were then later transcribed by the researcher. Including the rapport building stage, interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 2 hours.

Interview questions were mainly centred on the themes that emerged by theory of acculturation and theory of social support, as well as from the preliminary studies (Patton, 2002, Kuckartz, 2014). These themes were acculturation, formal and informal networks' social support, experiences of social support before and after resettlement, acculturative stress, and health outcomes. The interviews were conversational in nature and questions open-ended ones. Examples of questions asked included below:

How would you describe the community in which you lived before moving to Finland?

When support of any kind was needed, who provided it for you? How would you describe your own personal experience of living in Finland during the first months/year of stay?

Which were the resources you used to coping with stress and the unfamiliar culture/society? In case you have got support by social service workers, can you tell about your experiences about getting the support you needed? How did it make you feel to ask for support? What made it a challenge, to ask for support from the social service workers (i.e. gender, age, use of interpreters, trusting issues? What has diminished/increased your level of stress?

6.5. Data analysis procedure

To analyse the data, thematic qualitative text analysis was used. The goal of using qualitative text analyses was to create a clear and understandable interpretation of the data and text collected in its entirety (Kuckartz, 2014). According to Kuckartz (2014) and

Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), the process of thematic text analyses is as follows: (1) reading and working with the text, (2) creating categories, (3) coding the text, (5) analysing and (6) finally presenting the results.

At the very start of the analysis process, being aware of the importance of developing manageable coding scheme I had to start by reading carefully the data (Patton, 2002, Kuckartz, 2014). Through reading the material several times, thematic categories were found. According to Kuckartz (2014), thematic categories refer to a specific content, such as a topic, an argument or a person. It is passages that contain information referring to the category that at the beginning of the analysis phase are marked accordingly. Some passages though could be used in several themes, without braking its meaning. The findings of the study, the themes in particular were shaped by participants narratives, and not by my personal motivations or understanding of the familiar phenomenon. I have been careful throughout the study not to affect unconsciously the results, by seeing what I expected to see, but rereading the material and finding the themes and sub-themes through the data. Peer scrutiny was insured through frequent debriefing sessions with both my supervisor and own mentor who has a professor degree in the field.

To be able to create a clear coding scheme, all the collected data, the interviews and notes were read many times. Sub-categories were found, which went under each theme. Carefulness has shown throughout the analysis process not to make use only of the data that agrees with my personal views, preferences and ideas on the subject. Constant focus was on what participants were expressing through their narratives. This way confirmability was achieved (Shenton, 2004). Through thick description in the result section participants views and thoughts on the studied phenomenon are brought to the reader. Detailed description of the phenomenon is illustrated with quotations to make

easier for the reader to understand the red line of the research (Shenton, 2004, Fusch & Ness, 2015).

In practice notes were made on the margins and on a notebook. Assorted colours were used to distinct different themes in the data. The shortened codes and numbers than were written both on the relevant data passages, but also on a separate paper (Patton, 2002). Each theme was numbered from one to four. Sub-categories were numbered accordingly 1.1, 1.2 and so on. Both colours and numbers helped dividing the material under each theme. A code manual was developed for the study, as this was a valuable tool in managing the data and organizing similar segments of different parts of the produced text. This made more comfortable the interpretation of the data in the later stage of work.

Themes and sub-categories developed not only deductively, based on the theory such as: social support, acculturation, acculturative stress and coping strategy but also inductively by using the data, such as; importance of Finnish language skills, trust issues and empowerment. The main categories that emerged from the data were: (1) ASCS, acculturative stress and coping strategies, (2) ESS: experiences of social support, (3) CAS: choice of acculturation strategies and (4) EMP, empowerment.

Codes were written, and definitions made. Thereafter the sub-categories under each code were found. Each transcript was read over several times not only to find the codes of the manual, but also to search for sub-categories under each code. After this stage the final themes to be analysed were decided. By constructing definitions for main concepts and thereafter sub-categories, through looking at each case separately and then comparing to each other, construct validity was achieved.

An example of how a code and its sub-categories were developed is showed beneath in table 3.

Table 3. An example of developing a code for the manual

| | |
|--|---|
| Theory driven code: | Experiences of social support |
| Label: | Number 2 theme / ESS |
| Definition: | The perceived and the reality, that the person is cared for, support is available and provided when needed and the individual belongs to a supportive social network. |
| Description: | Experiences of social support from formal and informal social networks, and furthermore its' positive or negative effect on acculturative stress experiences and health outcomes. |
| Sub-categories and examples form the data: | 2.1. Experiences of social support at country of origin 2.2 Experiences of social support in Finland 2.3 Perceived social support |

Codes, sub-codes and themes were used in the same way to analyse the rest of data as well. In the results section I go into details within each theme that was detected deductively and inductively.

7. Results

During the analysis process four themes emerged as predominant. The following three themes derived from theory: (1) acculturative stress and coping strategies, (2) making use of social support during re-settlement phase and (3) acculturation strategies. The fourth theme derived from the data: empowerment. Before going into each theme, the overall view and memories participants had on their first phase of resettlement experiences is described.

7.1. Resettlement experiences

Findings of this research show that fleeing from own country and immigrating to Finland, settling in central-Finland, even though met by numerous challenges, was experienced as a positive experience. Beyond the feeling of loneliness, health issues, not knowing the language, not having a functional network and many other reasons, getting a positive

decision on asylum request and moving to Jyväskylä was experienced as a positive moment in participants lives. Some of the settlement experiences were expressed by saying:

“Ouu, the stress just fell away, because now you are completely free. There is two words if I can say one in the camp and one outside. In the camp [refugee camp] you are too close to yourself, you are like oh my god - how do I go there and I need to see my life and this kind of feeling. Some people get depressed. And I was actually depressed there, because no education, no work, nothing to do and just eating and sleeping and was feeling that I am not alive.” (participant #1.)

“Ahhh. For me this is an important point. For me it was from zero, not even zero under zero, minus zero to hundred plus also. It was very nice situation, it was very good I was very happy. From where you are going you found help any people anywhere, is specialized for me, because I was in another country [meaning another city in Finland] and I have come here, I have lived for seven months, I am here. This is very different and it is very happy thing for me and for my life, because I am here in this place this is very safety for me. Yes, I know that my family is very far away..., but for me is now I am in a safe place I am so glad for what social or Finnish people or Finnish government all part. This is so happy and am so glad. Is very good.” (participant #8)

“For me life it started from there, because I really worried about what happen and what is also going to be.” (participant #4)

Six out of eight participants experienced moving to Jyväskylä and in their own apartments as a positive experience. They used words such as “happy”, “free”, “safe”, “join the life”, “a chance in front of you”, “commitment”, “getting advice”.

The narratives of two participants deferred from the others. Their experience of loneliness and of the complicity of the way society and social system is build was a challenge that caused feelings of unhappiness, sorrow, grief and stress.

“It wasn’t easy. I was almost depressed, I missed my people back home, all the conversations. Then here the life was a bit different. From like, it was an isolated life. I have never lived that type of life like I was doing here, like you cannot talk to you neighbour, you cannot talk to anybody. So, it wasn’t easy.” (participant #2)

“This is a big problem here in Finland I think. Social and those kinds of places like, Kela [social insurance institution in Finland] , te-toimisto [labour office], social [integration services] it was very difficult at list for me. ...we have here in social too difficult to contact with social workers. Because you know so much people, in the social they don’t have time and we have to wait to get information.” (participant #3)

The pre-migration experiences, being alone and in the middle of a chaotic situation without knowing what there is to come, not being able to communicate in Finnish, worrying about family could not but cause discomfort and acculturative stress for the participants.

7.2. Acculturative stress and coping strategies – “I am here now, and I must try to do something”

7.2.1. Acculturative stress

Acculturative stress symptoms and what it was caused from, were subjects that each participant mentioned several times during the interviews. The stress symptoms and the cause of it, came up as very crucial subjects in participants’ lives at the beginning of the resettlement in Finland. The question asked by the researcher to the participants on own experiences of resettlement was purposely unclear and wide, “how would you describe

your own personal experience of living in Finland during the first months of stay?”. The aim was to discover and understand through participants own narratives what was the most important aspects of their own experiences during early phase of acculturation. Through their answers on acculturative stress, three major sub-categories came up under this theme. These sub-categories were: (1.1) acculturative stress symptoms, (1.2) reasons which caused acculturative stress, (1.3) the strategies or coping devices used by the individuals.

The acculturative stress symptoms mentioned frequently throughout the interviews by participants were such as “being depressed”, “having headache”, “insomnia”, “feeling of being unworthy”, “nightmares”, “feeling of guilt for surviving”, “worry about family back home”, “feeling bad because of dependency”, “unemployment”, “cold weather and darkness” and two mentioned also discrimination caused by strangers. These symptoms caused both poor mental and physical health for seven out of eight participants.

“Before every stress, every day two or three tablets for stress, relaxing, headache, but now I don’t take any tablets or any chemicals.” (participant #8)

During the group interviews when one of the participants started telling about own acculturative stress symptoms, h/she was met with empathy by the others, whom used gentle looks, nodding and sharing own experiences. These actions created automatically and spontaneously a free and safe space, where everyone could tell and discuss about difficult and painful subjects of own personal life. Acceptance and understanding from the others was given in a very natural way. Throughout the interviews participants went back to the subject of feeling depressed and not being able to sleep at nights as thoughts kept them awake. These forms of stress had been extreme while waiting for the decision from the migration office on participants’ cases. Joy, happiness and feeling of relief was experienced when permission to continue life in Finland, even though moving to own

apartment was not less stressful. As participant #6 expressed it “The nature of stress has changed. It gets more complex”.

7.2.2. Factors causing acculturative stress

Numerous times participants brought to surface the reasons that were causing their acculturative stress. Participants expressed own experiences of feeling lonely and depressed at the start of resettlement. On a micro level, seven out of eight participants' close family (adult children, partner, parents or siblings) lived at the time of data gathering somewhere else than Finland. Family reunification was experienced as impossible to be attained, even though it was practically possible to apply for it. So, the only way to contact family was through phone or other forms of social media.

On a meso level of Finnish society, neighbourhoods were experienced as functioning completely differently compared to the once in country of origin. None of the participants had contact with their own neighbours.

“I was almost depressed, because I missed my people back home, all the conversation, then here the life was a bit different. It was somehow an isolated life ... you cannot talk to your neighbour, you cannot talk to anybody.” (participant #2)

“Before you got your support from your community and when you came there [Finland], there was no community.” (participant #5)

“You feel like you are abandoning your loved ones. And you should be there and help them, but you cannot. And they cannot come here neither. And what if something happens to them and you cannot be there for them. ... You think why am I here and not there?” (participant #6)

“My mom now she is old, she needs to be taken care of, but I cannot take care of her. Because if I go there they will take me. They have to take the older son of the family, so they still have the power to take you. The government is not everywhere, the government is only in the capital. It’s difficult, sometimes you cannot do anything for it, which is really sad.” (participant #3)

Not sufficient knowledge of Finnish language was experienced as a strong factor causing stress as well. Participants felt that it took time to get the help needed as there was always a need for interpreter, dependency felt bad. At times participants explained that even though they could understand the words the translator was using, the meaning disappeared, and it made it difficult to communicate with the officials. Participants felt also that they were “bothering” officials and causing too much trouble to them with their needs.

“Every office if I go and need something it make nervous and I feel stress. This is stress, it is not from the office or from the person, from the social, stress come from myself inside. Me, because I don’t know how I can tell my own problem my situation. This is not normal, this is stress, because you don’t know the language, because sometime may be with the translator, or some other people help you to translate, maybe they don’t have the same mind or the same information that you want to say. This is stressful and difficult way here.” (participant #7)

The experienced traumas and situation at home country were obvious factors causing poor health and psychosomatic symptoms. Participant #4 compered the stress before getting the leave to remain and after the leave was attained this way:

“For me the level of stress is really deferent. Specially, when you are waiting [for the decision] it was high. When I got the permission, I was stressed I even went to the

psychologist, but now it is not significant, but I still cannot delete the memories.

When I read the papers, especially bad news, that really is something I cannot control, even after my family get united I am also thinking and not sleeping.”

The feeling of being safe and excepted from the new society was disturbed by the way representatives of the majority had reacted towards two of the participants. Physical violence, one of them was hit from far away with some object while walking with a friend. The other one explained how people had been verbally violent in the media, buss or working place. These discriminative experiences made them feel sad, but at the same time both were determent to go forward and not let those experiences effect their personal life for too long. This way participants made use of their own personal resources, own mental strength to cope with the stressful event.

“... some people on the streets and on the social media. The normal react on the bus sometimes. I have been doing some kind of working and when I ask may I help you, you get immediately rejected, I don't want to talk to you where is the owner. That was challenging to stay and like why did you do that, its ok to have brown eyes and brown hair. It makes me really, really sad. Why does people do that? But I think you do have to get used to that.” (participant #1)

Even though there were many reasons causing participants acculturative stress during the primer phase of acculturation in Finland, they amazingly found different strategies and coping devices to go on with their lives in their new home country.

7.2.3. Coping devices

Without any exception all participants mentioned the fact of feeling safe and protected after arriving to Finland and even more so, after the leave to remain was granted to them. No matter the complications of life, the horrible pre-migration experiences and the hard

journey all the way up to North, participants felt as if they were given a second chance in life and they had to do something with and about it.

“I saw a lot of them, some people dying on the way to Europe, in Libya, in Greece people dying on the way, people dying on the seas. So, life was very difficult we didn’t see what is government, at least I didn’t see, but I think when we came to Finland everything is safe and you are enjoying life, so I am probably happy to be living in Finland now because in my home country I did nothing, I just live with my parents, there is nothing there. Because there is no government.” (participant #3)

The main coping devices that came up through the data analysis was the fact that all the participants made use of the support provided by integration office, third sector organizations and from volunteers. Mainly knowing that there was a place where participants could get help when needed, brought the feeling of comfort in their lives.

Seven out of eight participants had been attending consulting sessions with the psychologist of the integration services. The social support provided by integration offices’ social instructors and social workers as well, was one of the devices that all participants had experienced had a positive outcome on their mental and physical health. One of the participants expressed that the support given “helped a little”. Two participants though experienced that even though they had got the help needed, the help was delayed as social workers were too busy and their agendas too full. In these cases, the timing had not answered to the need when actual. Otherwise the result of this study shows that the social support provided from integration services was helpful and had a positive effect in participants lives and their health outcomes.

“We are like very thankful because we have now life, school, everything and we are getting used to the Finnish culture.” (participant #5)

The volunteers met by the participants were found through a program organized by the integration office, but also through Finish Red Cross or Salvation Army or evangelical free church. Participants had built their social networks at their studying or working place. It was the interaction with the members of their networks that lightened to some extent the acculturative stress experience by the participants.

“I get stress and I am afraid about my family and my friends and everything. I have so stress thing, but when I get the permission something pushes me to join the life and be in the life and live even I have many, many horrible things inside me. And all the time I think about it and I cannot sleep in the night, but it pushes me to be in the life and I joined the life. I have many, many friends, Finnish friends and Finnish family who take care of me and they help me. I can say I am now inside the Finnish culture.”

(participant #3)

“Then the social instructor or social worker introduced me to a woman [trained volunteer by the integration services] and she is still my friend, because it had to be like six months, but we are still friends, and we still communicating. She really helped me a lot. She was a good friend. She even took me to a team to play football. She was helpful and until now she contacts me.” (participant #5)

The Finnish friends played a significant role on participants lives, by providing not only instrumental support, but most of all by providing love and care, emotional social support. Through Finnish friends, free time activities and participating in different hobbies had a positive effect on participants well-being.

All the participants have had access to Finnish language courses, that were mainly arranged by the labour office but also by third section, non-profit making organizations or non-government ones. Language proficiency had brought feeling of relief as well in

participants lives, but also daring to dream for a better future, employment and life fulfilment.

Participants have built own social network starting from zero again. Through these social networks they have been able to enjoy the company of own countryman, other foreigners, but also Finnish families. Participants described how they have been introduced to Finnish behaviour and traditions as they expressed it, such as “picking berries in the forests”, “going to sauna”, “enjoying silence and own space”, “drinking lots of coffee” and just talking.

“... you cannot talk to your neighbour, you cannot talk to anybody. So, it wasn't easy. But thank God, I was introduced to one country of origin community, and from there I met with new friends, I go there.” (participant #2)

“They (Finnish friend family) have one girl and one boy and I have been with them and they help me, they really help me a lot.” (participant #3)

“But here in Finland I get to know more people, I had good friendships from female and male and they are really nice and welcoming. And my behaviour gets a little bit I think better, because now I know how to talk to people, and how to communicate and how to ask, how to hmmm be with somebody.” (participant #1)

Participants have shown admirable perseverance, in keeping going on with life no matter the barriers. The best coping device used by all of them in my opinion, it was not giving up, keeping on going, trying and trying one more time no matter what is coming a head of them. All participants mentioned how grateful they were that life had given another chance and they were and still are all doing the best out of it, to succeed.

Participants had set goals and had dreams to be achieved. All eight participants had

decided to work hard and learn Finnish in a way to make possible further education and employment in the future.

“Giving up it is not some option. So, don’t be that guy. Nobody will say sorry, I mean you are the master of your faith and the captain of your soul. You have to get out and dream pictures of your life five years from now and may be one day I will get there. And then you come back and use the experience in this land to do something good for you. It goes down to the person and how he is making use of that. ... you are at that point like a braking point, like a very sad, sad one and you just need to switch and then I mean tomorrow is another day, I mean it’s not that easy, I am not saying that is that easy, but it is possible, and you go over and you take it from there.” (participant #6)

Participants mentioned also reading books and use of internet as a stress relieving source. This especially at the beginning of resettlement when social networks were not yet built. Participant #6 continuous his narration as follows:

“When I didn’t have my community, I read, that’s how I deal with my stress. I use stress to be productive, I have to be productive.”

“If I don’t get the answer from my community, from my friend or from my family I can ask the net, you can ask the social media. You can ask everything what you need, which kind of help you need.” (participant #8)

It is obvious that the participants have had the need for social support and they have also used the support found around them. In the next session we will be looking at theme two, experiences of social support.

7.3. Making use of social support during re-settlement phase – “Help yourself and get help from social” (participant #8)

Social support was an important theme during interviews. The theme derived deductively straight from the theory session. Results on social support go under three sub-categories: experiences of social support at country of origin, experiences of social support in Finland and perceived social support.

7.3.1. Experiences of social support at country of origin

Findings according to this theme reveal the importance of family, friends, relatives and religious leaders as crucial and very important sources of social support in participants life in country of origin. All eight participants considered families' social support as vital in their lives, not only when family were together, but at the present as well. Family gave the feeling of belonging, safety and happiness. Participants shared experiences of all four types of social support provided by close social networks. All participants had significant experiences that tangible aid and service (instrumental), advice, suggestions and guidance (information), and appraisal and emotional support was provided by social network on micro and meso level, by friends, family and significant other networks.

“In case of support, if you come you find by yourself there is nobody like somebody to help. If I need help, it's the immediate family that can assist you and there is no means than you have to do what you are capable of doing.” (participant #2)

“Well, mom and dad. Mom and dad. Friends, school. I loved school very much. So, there you can ask your teacher like if you want to know more about stuff, you need like intellectual support in religion you ask someone who knows about religion and you ask what does it mean to be religious and how does that help you a person. That's the kind of support I used to have, I still have it, but I don't use it as much as before. Mom and dad for most of the stuff I guess it is family.” (participant #6)

“For me you can get the support from anyone, you know from your neighbour, because you now our culture is like you know different from here. You can get the support by anyone.” (participant #7)

Only one of the participants expressed that even though cared for as a child, while being young feeling of being alone and having no one whom could talk to about emotions and feelings was not possible. So, only one participants emotional needs were not met by her near network.

“My life was not like about here in Finland. There I was just, go to school and come back home. There was not something else between these two. No helping, not even a person to talk to. Because sometimes talking is bad and women should be quiet, behave nice.” (participant #1)

Apart from the positive effect of perceived and provided social support from informal social networks, feeling of being trapped under these networks were experienced as well. One of the participants had dual feelings about the control of family members, on one side by feeling safe and protected, but on the other side feeling of control and no freedom to move, dress or act the way one felt to do.

On a macro level, government in general was experienced as the one who could not be trusted at all and as the source of mal-being from all participants. No form of social support was provided by officials in country of origins. Half of the participants felt that throughout their life, government had been the enemy causing fear, anxiety, distress and as well was the cause of fleeing the country.

All participants had had the same experience, that corruption and nepotism was prevailing in country of origin. Participants shared experiences where officials or leaders where asked for help in times of hardships, and no protection was given. Often it was the

officials that where the cause of trouble and unsafety. Instead of trust, fear of mistreatment, imprisonment and violation was experienced towards officials in country of origin.

“For me it is different from them, but I am 24-23 and my country we don’t have a government and there has always been war. when I was 20 it was worst, because there was war everywhere. They just papapap (kill) everyone. So, it is a very bad situation and I think a lot of people escaped from there. And I saw a lot of them, some people dying on the way to Europe.” (participant #5)

“In my case, when I was victimised, I had to channel my case to the authorities, but there was no immediate solution, no way to rescue me. Because the chief in my village has all the authority. Whatever he says they put it in action, so I realised that security is almost zero, so you need to switch as I did not get any protection.” (participant #2)

“My country there are authorities, but as I mentioned they are really corrupted, they are responsible for a small region and even though you have the right to something, they can deny it. They can use any reason they can, and they can send you to jail, they can do whatever, they are not accountable. So mostly even if your political situation is really neutral, the system is really corrupted.” (participant #4)

When asked about experiences of social work before moving to Finland, all participants without exception expressed that they had no knowledge of what a social worker or social educator was. There was no knowledge on forehand and nothing to compare to the experiences of social support provided by integration services in Finland.

7.3.2. *Experiences of social support in Finland*

From the research finding has emerged a confirmation of the importance of social support provided by integration services during resettlement of refugees. By providing all four types of social support on various levels, participants have experienced feelings of recognition and of being taken care of for whom they are personally. When participants where asked about the support provided by social worker, response was positive.

“I don’t know how to express it, but I was so, so happy, I was ok. Because I never expected that. To see just transforming ones’ life from my former life into a new life, because is two extreme. Two extreme situations, so I am really happy.” (participant #2)

“The social worker was helping me and was being like a friend. The social worker gave me advice, what to do, how to do and what I have to do.” (participant #5)

“In the beginning here, in the beginning there was a program I was here, they are doing everything for us. They show us the right way how we are living, because we are coming from another culture, we are new here in Finland. They are doing the best way for us to be mixed these people with us, and how for us to be better with these people. For doing something, the rules of the social office it was very good and great, so great.” (participant #8)

Social support provided by integration services, was experienced by seven out of eight participants as provided when needed, even though at times meeting with the social workers was delayed. In such cases that the basic resources of integration services are not sufficient, and clients have extra needs for professional support, social worker plans together with the clients some extra support by professional support persons. Here is the experience expressed by one of the participants:

“... the social worker did such a great job. So, it was important to know, that the social worker is not free to be available to you every time. That’s a challenge, you cannot get the support when you need it, you have to wait. Support person I do not have to wait, on Monday I have a lot of questions for her and then on Thursday I have a lot of questions again. But I know that everything will be solved with her.”

(participant #1)

“They treat you individually, and see your background. I think you have a good system, you just need to do a little bit of improvement.” (participant#5)

The social support provided by resettlement workers, was experienced as easing participants life at the beginning of resettlement and acculturation phase. Furthermore, participants had experienced that their stress had decreased, thus mental and physical health had improved.

“The psychologist helps me, psychologically and physically also she has helped me. I am so surprised what she has made for me, it’s like magic. Yeh, and another place I take many tablets, for depression, level of stress and now it’s very good for me. Now I am relaxed, I have no problems, this make me sure.” (participant #8)

Provision of information by integration services was mentioned by all participants. First, knowledge about what social work means, as no such experience existed from pre-migration life. Knowledge on society, laws, rights and responsibilities, benefits and what people are eligible to as very important for the participants. Seven out of eight participants had the experience that integration services were the best place where information and knowledge was given from, and it would also be the place where they would go and ask for such advice in the future too if needed. Only one of participants expressed that would ask help from friends instead.

“I get the papers and the permission of stay and was a refugee I got some support I got some money, and I they directed me where I can go to kirppis (flee market) where I can get things cheaper. ... I got everything I need, and I was so satisfied. I started my life from there. ... They directed me after to this church activity. There I was so happy also to get there. And from there I came to the social office and they had to send me to school... I prefer the social because you get the real information from the social, I would rely only on the social and socials information.” (participant #2)

Having the right for economical support from the state, was both experienced as a positive thing. Half of the participants experienced the right to benefits as a relieve in their lives. It brought the feeling of being taken care of, and having the possibility to live a decent life even though unemployed. The other half, even though were grateful for the financial support, however experienced feelings of guilt and shame. They would rather go to work and pay taxes just like most people in Finland and elsewhere do. Two of the participants were frustrated that as young, healthy and well-educated people, already having a profession, could just not be employed regardless of their numerous attempts to find employment.

“I will make a celebration, when I stop my relation with Kela.” (participant #7)

While advice, informational and instrumental support was provided mainly by resettlement workers, it was obvious that emotional needs were met by informal social networks. Emotional support was provided by family members, no matter the physical distance. Emotional support was also provided religious community, by Finnish friends and by members of own community. Even though it looks like neighbourhoods are not active in taking in newcomers, other volunteers have been active in helping participants to feel at

home in their new country. All participants in this study had significant relations to Finnish people.

7.3.3. Perceived social support

Perceived social support is the believe and trust that help will be provided by social networks in case this is needed. Perceived social support predicts improved physical and mental health.

It is already mentioned several times in the previous sections that the experiences of provided social support have been positive for the participants of this study. This had had effect also on their perceived social support.

Even though all participants hadn't had experiences of social work prior relocation to Finland they believed that social work would provide for them the needed support in future as well. All participants believed and trusted that social support would be available form social services and friends in the future too.

“Basically, you can find the information from internet, but for me it is not enough when you want some practical thing and you need that thing. You go to the social to show you the procedure the way and even handle the case as well.” (participant #4)

It was interesting to hear that, trust in resettlement workers existed, but fear of change on a larger plan was real as well. Two of participants expressed that policies change and decisions made by Finnish immigration services, would have a bad impact on participants lives.

“I depend on what the emigration office will do with me in the future, after the four years of permission. What after these four years???” (Participant #6)

“I am expecting it will be harder and harder. I think about the future, in three – four years, a lot will change and not for the better.” (participant #5)

Preference of where to ask for support in the future, it was clear answer. Friends first of all, but if it had to do with advice and information on laws and different services, the place to ask for help would be the social services.

7.4. Acculturative strategies

Findings for theme three are understood by applying Berry’s acculturation theory, which argues that individual choose their own acculturation strategy. Social support given during acculturative process it cannot but have straight into the behaviour of individuals. For example, getting knowledge on Finnish culture and society, or learning Finnish language it appraises coping strategies of individuals and therefore acculturation strategies as well.

This study results, show that the participants have adapted and adjusted into life in Finland, becoming part of the community, which supported them during acculturation and resettlement. The results of this study show that none of the participants had chosen marginalization or separation as acculturative strategy. Seven out of eight participants made use of integration, where they were actively being part of both own national community and Finish community.

“When I come to Finland the first time I was very bad, but because my situation in home country was really good. Because of the change I am away from my children from my family, but now its ok because everything changes. The situation, I made change inside, I make rules, it changes my mind, it change it inside of me and for this one I am ok.” (participant #8)

Furthermore, all participants had created new multicultural social networks with members from different nationalities, friends that they had introduced to in the integrational education arranged by the labour office or third sector.

Another issue that came up several times, was the desire to give back to the society. Desire to do volunteer work and help elderly people or new refugees as well.

“About me I hope the future go well with me. I try to help who want help here. I put my phone number on Facebook and if someone needs my help I can help to translate to Finnish from Arabic, or to English. I try to get a job here and I try to get to an organization to help and be a volunteer.” (participant #3)

Only one of the participants had made the choice to assimilate and not keep in touch with representatives of own nation. This person perceived the contact to people from own country as damaging and unsafe, therefore decided to cut for the moment all contact with them.

7.5. Empowerment

The last theme, empowerment roused up not through theory, but by data itself. Participants had the understanding that integration services looked individually at every client, and acted according to the individual need for support. Participants have had the experience that things were not done on their behalf, but advice was given and encouragement to take care of personal issues by oneself.

“They teach you to go and get stuff done, you have to go and talk to the people. You have to try things, you have to use the language as much as you can.” (participant #5)

Participants with high socioeconomic status in home country, experienced more difficulties during acculturation. It was participants with previous low socioeconomic

status, that had experienced empowerment and remarkable increasing of life quality in Finland. It was these participants that dared to dream for their future, dreamed for further education and self-realisation.

Participant #2 - I am ok with my life how everything is going on as I am going to school. Now I am doing internship, after internship I will continue with Oppisopimus [apprenticeship training]. So, I am happy, so my life is getting to another level.”

R. What is it that you are going to study?

Participant #2 - As a lähihoitaja [practical nurse]

“Yes, I am unemployed, but I pay my rent and I pay my own food and I go and as for work and this is like you know, it gives you freedom. This is just your freedom!”

(participant #1)

“For me I am making everyday friends and friends, not only from my country but different people. They give you information, you discuss with them what you want to speak. They make life easier, make life good. So, they give you a lot of information. I think if I learn some good ammatti [profession] and will get a job. But If I don't get a job I go to social, because I do not have my relatives here, they are my parents.”

(participant #5)

The other participants had lost all the good income, homes, friends and families. They have had from the economic and social point of view a very wealthy life. Losing all that and having to start from zero had been very tuff. Participants criticized the fact that they could not make use of their previous education as diplomas were lost during the war. Even though these participants felt empowered too, as they felt that they had the obligation to cherish life as this second chance was given to them.

When participants were asked how life has changed from the first days in Jyväskylä to the present moment, they answered:

“My life is much better, more than before.” (participant #8)

“I am satisfied with my life, I cannot give it a number, but may be a seven.”
(participant #6)

8. Discussion

Participants' narrations of social support in home country, showed clearly that support was provided by near friends and family in the past. Authorities in home country were not only not providing support, but on the contrary, were the cause of escape (Turtiainen, 2012). Most of participants family members and close friends lived elsewhere. Contact was kept with family and friends around the world through different sources, internet, mobile phone etc. Even though not physically present, family and friends were still the ones providing emotional support and giving advice when needed. In the future, participants preferred to get emotional support, love and care from friends and family in case needed. Participants would ask for advice family members first, but in case advice was of practical nature and linked to Finnish laws and customs, they would make sure that advice was the right one by asking integration services workers. The results of this study are supported by results of previous studies as well (Simich et al. 2005, Phillimore, 2011, Turtiainen, 2012, Majhanovich& Deyrich, 2017)

All participants had been going through the process of asylum seeking, which was experienced as a very stressful period. After the residence permit was attained, participants had moved to the region of Central Finland. Even though participants met with difficulties during settlement, the moment of moving away from the asylum-seeking centres was experienced as a positive one, as participants could concentrate on getting settled in their

new country. All participants felt that home was in Finland at the interviewing moment, even though living period in the country was short. They were enthusiastic about the new chance that was given. Even though feelings of relieve and hope were current for most of participants, isolation and loneliness as family and friends were far away was felt too. These findings get support from other literature, visualising feelings of refugees in their new country (Penman & Goel, 2017, Phillimore, 2011, Turtiainen, 2012). This isolation was diminishing as informal social networks were built. All participants had contact to Finnish people, and most of them had one Finnish friend or Finnish “family” whom were very important contact for the participants.

From the results, it is evident that the refugees of the sample investigated in this study experienced acculturative stress during the primer phase of acculturation and settlement in Finland. Furthermore, the results of this study show that refugees’ need for social support to cope with acculturative stress during their acculturation and settlement in Finland was abundant. Participants of the study being forced to move from war areas to Finland, had no social networks at the beginning of their stay in the new country. Workers from receiving integration services were some of the few first contacts most of the participants could rely on. Results of the study show, that social support was both needed and appreciated by participants. Informational and tangible assistant provided for the participants by integration services resulted in uncertainty reduction and self-control was nurtured and enhanced, just as social support theory suggests as well (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987, Thoits, 1986, Norullah, 2012). The results of the study, contradict Rudmins’ (2003) results, where Iranian refugees did not experience acculturative stress. All participants in the present study experienced acculturative stress, and perceived and provided social support played an impeccable role on diminishing it, according to their narratives.

Participants experienced at times, that even though the right support was provided, timing was not right. Participants had had to deal with the waiting time. During year 2016 the number of refugees increased compared to previous years in Jyväskylä, and as result support could not have been provided as soon as needed at times. Integration services personal provided psychosocial support for the participants, thus supported each and every one in strengthening personal coping devices. Factual information and communication of opinions, given advice and feed-back as expressed by participants, made their life easier. Similar findings resulted from research done in Canada as well (Simich et al, 2005, Stewart et al, 2008).

Not having fluency in Finnish language, made participants feel stressed and dependent on others, such as friends or interpreters. Having the possibility to learn Finnish language reduced their level of stress and coping was made easier. Access to education and training helped refugees in Finland to settle smoothly and the same results were attained from Phillimore (2011) in Great Britain as well. Importance of learning the local language in a way to support refugees' social inclusion is found to be important (Majhanovich & Deyrich, 2017, Kokkonen, 2010, Valkeapää, 2015).

Being unemployed was experienced negatively and had affected harmfully on participants health. Among other reasons, not being able to contribute to the society by paying taxes, made some participants feel unworthy and ashamed. Integration services in Finland do not directly concentrate on finding employment for the refugees. Their duty though is to help settling refugees build everyday routines, clear vision and plans about the future and strengthening their self-esteem, so self-realization would be possible (Turtiainen, 2012).

Participants experienced the relationship to resettlement workers as meaningful professional ones. The contact of participants with resettlement workers changed with time, from being very often at the beginning, into rare contact at the time of data collection. The contact was mainly when instrumental and informational support was needed. Participants were confident that social support would be provided by social services in the future as well, if needed. Thus, perceived social support is thought to be a protective factor for the participants (Uchino, 2009).

Issue of trust that emerged from the participants was interesting. Previous studies (Kokkonen, 2010, Turtiainen, 2012) have shown that refugees have had difficulties in trusting social workers at the beginning of the contact. According to Turtiainen (2012) trust was to be built. The results of this present study show that a shift has happened. Participants expressed that they could “trust with a blind eye”, “rely only on social workers” from the start. As mentioned before, it was on a macro-level that participants could not trust, politicians changing the laws and Finnish immigration services who makes decisions on permission to stay or not in Finland. Another policy change that has happened in Finland from 1.1.2017 is, that social workers do not anymore make decisions on basic social benefits. These decisions are made by the Social Insurance Institution of Finland. Has this fact affected the shift on trust issues? Another fact is the restrictions on family reunification laws and practices. In both cases social workers play a very crucial role to help and support refugees through advocacy. In general restrictions have happened overall on the Aliens Act (301/2004) and being able to get the next residence permit or not is not sure. Social workers and the whole stuff of integration services provide support through information and supportive conversations through these stressful situations to refugees. Could it be that, the active role in supporting clients in the stressful process of

family reunification, benefit applications and leave to remain applications has affected issues of trust? Further studies must be done in this issue to get the right answers.

Berrys' acculturation theory as a framework for the study, was in my opinion very functional and helped understanding better the phenomenon of refugees' acculturation, acculturative stress and coping devices used to ease the life. Rudmin (2001, 2006) argues that acculturation strategy scales are measures of attitudes and not behaviours, yet they are discussed as attitudes which lead to certain behaviour, so fourfold outcomes are result of attitudes plus behaviour. Simplified Berry's process of four folded theory of acculturation would look such as: Decision → Attitudes → Behaviours → and outcome is the Situation. Rudmin (2001) on the contrary argues, that it is when individuals attend situations of encounters with others, through networking, that individuals behavioural change and evolvement takes place. So, he sees the process as: Situation → Behaviours → Attitudes → Decisions. The results of this study though show, that participants attitudes towards acculturation and settlement to Finnish society were affected both by the situation they were in, but also form the decision each participant had made. The decision to thrive in life and make the best out of it. All participants had taken Finnish attitudes and costumes and make use of them in own life. Own heritage culture was respected and adjusted to the new situation. Social support was one of the important variables in participants life that played role in getting coping devices to deal with the new situation in life. Those devices would have not been on their own affective without participants personal views and own goals to be achieved. It was first participants strength in taking up the challenges life had brought, and being committed to succeed in life no matter what. All participants attitude towards life in Finland was to get integrated and be a healthy citizen in their new country.

The purpose of this study, was to try to contribute in bringing further knowledge on (1) experiences of refugees about the effect social support has on their personal

acculturation process and (2) knowledge on the resettlement works' contribution to refugees' better health outcomes and adjustment in Finland. In light of the findings, especially support services in the communes that have just started to receive refugees, are recommended to give abundant time to the newcomers at the beginning of their life in their new place. Support people to rebuild healthy social networks, establish social structures to help newcomers preserve their own language, values and culture, but make sure they have time and space and possibility to get in contact with Finnish people and Finnish values, traditions and possibility to learn Finnish language. Create safe spaces where it is possible to conversate about settlement and its hardships.

9. Limitation

One of the limitation of this study, is the fact that I was not able to go through the findings with the participants and hear their opinions on that. To insure trustworthiness of analysis of data, I made use of the support of my adviser and mentor. Time was a challenge too.

The goal of this study was not to make generalisation; thus, the sample was small and not so heterogeneous. This sample may not be considered as a representative of the larger community of refugees in Jyväskylä. Future studies must aim to replicate this research or parts of it, using a diverse sample of the refugee community i.e. man/women without previous education history, or only man/women with previous high or low socio-economic status. However, even though the sample was small, I see the results of this study as important in understanding a bit more the situation refugees find themselves at the beginning of their acculturation process and the importance social support plays in their health outcomes.

10. Conclusion

In conclusion, the refugees in this study experienced considerable acculturative stress, mental and physical difficulties during acculturation process. This is both as a consequence of pre- and post-migration experiences. Experiences of social support provided by resettlement social services and informal social networks, had enhanced not only the well-being of the participants, but also the way they perceived social support in the future. Trust towards resettlement workers existed, even though fear of political change and restriction of laws considering newcomers caused stress and insecurity for the future.

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13. Appendixes

13.1. Questionnaire questions

Written answers on demography/background questions:

1. First name: _____
2. Age: _____
3. Nationality: _____ Ethnicity: _____
4. Native language: _____ Other languages: _____
5. Gender: female ___ / male ___
6. Marital status: married ___ / unmarried ___ / engaged ___ / single ___ / in a
relationship ___
7. Have you lived elsewhere than home country and Finland? Yes ___ / No ___
8. If yes, where? _____
9. For how long? _____
10. Where is home to you? _____
11. What is your education?
Elementary ___ / high school ___ / college ___ / university- or master degree ___ / doctoral ___
12. And your profession/s? _____
13. When did you arrive to Finland? _____
14. What is your status of permission of stay? _____
15. When did you get the permission of stay? _____
16. What are you occupied with at present: Learning Finnish ___ / vocational course ___
working ___ / unemployed ___
17. When does your integration plan finish? _____

13.2. *Interview questions*

Section 1: Before moving to Finland

1. What was life like when normal (before war) in home country? How would you describe the community in which you lived before moving to Finland?
2. When support of any kind was needed, who provided it for you?
3. What was your experience of interacting with the authorities in your home country, or other countries you have lived in?

Section 2: After moving to Finland

4. How would you describe your own personal experience of living in Finland during the first months/year of stay?
5. What kind of support have you needed at the beginning of your life in Finland (quota refugees) / after you were granted the permission of stay (asylum seekers)? (i.e. physical, psychological, information, practical, networking, exchanging)
6. Which were the resources you used to coping with stress and the unfamiliar culture/society? Who was supporting you? (i.e. family members, social services, church, multicultural centre Gloria)
7. Which one did you prefer asking for support from relatives, friends or social service personnel? (Inter-group/out-group)
8. In case you have got support by social service workers, can you tell about your experiences about getting the support you needed? How did it make you feel to ask for support?
9. What did you think when support was not available?
10. What made it a challenge to ask for support from the social service workers (i.e. gender, age, use of interpreters, trusting issues)?
11. What was the challenge in receiving support (from the social service personnel)?

12. Have you had personal negative experiences (insult or discrimination) in Finland, when communicating with social service workers?
13. Have you found any behavior changes in relation to communicating with authorities/social workers yourself comparing *before* and *after* moving to Finland? What kind of positive or negative change you think has happened to you?
14. Thinking in terms of stress. How stressful your life was when arriving to Finland comparing it with the current situation?
15. What has diminished/increased your level of stress? How satisfied, with your life in general, are you at the moment?
16. Do you think that you will get help and support in the future if needed?

13.3. Letter of consent

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear participant,

I am very thankful that you accepted to take part in my study. I am a Master's Degree student in Intercultural Communication at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. My research project investigates the beginning of immigrants' life in the Finnish society and their experiences of support.

Your contribution in this study involves taking part in a group-interview, or personal interview if this preferred. The interview will be conducted by me personally. Interviews will be audio taped and thereafter transcribed. You are entitled to ask for a copy of the written transcript of your interview. Your name will be kept confidential.

Your participation is voluntary, you are entitled to withdraw at any point, and ask your data to be taken out after the interview has been conducted as well.

The interview will be used only in ways you agreed to. The results of the research might be published.

Respectfully Yours,

Margarita Goda-Savolainen

I agree to take part in this study by being interviewed and audio-taped.

Yes ___ No ___

The interview can be attached to or quoted in the written research project.

Yes ___ No ___

Place/Date: _____

Name of the participant: _____

Signature: _____