

‘My identity as a foreigner in Jyväskylä’

shared by seven immigrant women.

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Master’s Thesis

Social and Public Policy/

Cultural Policy

Department of Social Sciences

and Philosophy

University of Jyväskylä

Fall 2018

Abstract

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Title: ‘My identity as a foreigner in Jyväskylä’ shared by seven immigrant women.

Type of Work: Master’s Thesis

Program: Cultural Policy

Major Subject: Social & Public Policy

Supervisors: Professor Miikka Pyykkönen & Professor Nathan Lillie

Time: Fall 2018

Number of pages: 95 including references

Finland is a society which has gradually and recently turned its homogeneous character of country towards a multicultural one. Thus, while the migration rates show upward trends, challenges constantly pressure the society on how to embody the new populations and this alone can hinder a number of personal struggles when referring to the foreigner perception of reality which is closely connected with the society itself. Through integration and while existing among cultural worlds, the cultural identity of a foreigner is constantly on shape and using multiculturalism as a vehicle of performance, it interrelates with the society. The aspiration of this research was to examine the socio – cultural perceptions of seven foreigner individuals residing in Jyväskylä, Finland.

This qualitative study has as objective to contribute a closer insight of how a vivid, self-appointed, multicultural society adjusts the foreigner through integration processes, concerning their perception. The main research question is based on the socio – cultural perceptions of foreigner individuals in this society. To answer my main question and others that arise, I draw on theoretical insights from migration, multiculturalism, cultural identity, integration and hybridity books, published reports, policies, and articles akin with each area of investigation. The scrutiny

and discussion of my conclusions signify that the Finnish society has given and keeps giving keen interest on the 'two-way process' character of integration, while the individual perception is fluctuating among cultural worlds. As a result of all this process and with the help of in-depth interviews with open ended questions, the sample admits that does not feel marginalized in society. On the contrary, they feel safe and accepted on a broad level but they do feel excluded in life practicalities and that is mainly because of the lack of language skills that can assist them in entering professional fields or making deeper friendships. This alone seems to affect the sense of belonging an individual feels in the society.

Key words: migration, immigrant, culture, identity, cultural identity, integration, inclusive citizenship, hybridity, challenges, multiculturalism, other, difference

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1. Introduction

Immigration and multicultural societies articulate some of the contemporary debates globally. Resulting globalization, the pace of life has been accelerated and people are anticipated to be in constant motion more and faster than before. Simultaneously, with migrating individuals that form new groups of people who along with new and different ideas encounter each other, society with its already existing ways seems to be challenged from the new human flows that depict nothing but change.

The central of any argument concerning settlement is the disposition of migration. Migration includes change. The changes that are faced by the immigrants concern every aspect of their lives due to the fact that by changing the physical environment, one comes across changes towards language, culture, economic and societal environment as well as their personal family and working status. In this thesis, I examine, on the beginning, the phenomenon of migration and I embrace the concept of multiculturalism since as Parekh (2006) mentioned, multiculturalism is pressuring societies to embrace diversity. More precisely, he stated that “*while acceptance of differences call for changes in the legal arrangements of society, respect for them requires changes in its attitudes and ways of thought as well*” (p.2). Similarly, European Union from its first steps, prioritized the protection of human rights and the combat of all forms of discriminations (European Convention of Human Rights - 1950). The very idea of European integration is based on racial, ethnic, religious and cultural diversity and the free movement of people since the racism and the horrors of the 20th century wars led the peoples of Europe in the realization that prosperity and progress are achieved only through peaceful coexistence, social justice, human rights, solidarity and cooperation.

The migration reasons are always many and different. The diversity of reasons accentuates on the differences within the immigrants. Differences such as ethnic background, social class, and gender sketch a wide framework but when delving deeper into differences, one can realize that they are multiple and affect the settlement and its process towards acculturation. All the features of the immigration experience, the diversity within immigrants, the various reasons they decide to immigrate and the distinct cultures and societies confronted, bring on the boundlessly changing disposition of migration and settlement experience (Burnet 1998, p. 2). Hence, in this thesis I chose to investigate the individual perception of this acculturation experience in

Jyväskylä, city of Finland, and moreover and specifically the integration part of it. However, one cannot refer to individuals without alluding to the cultural identity part of the foreigner in the receiver society. Thus, the notions of culture, identity and cultural identity are to come forth with the thesis.

Being more precise, the attention towards the notion of cultural identity has increasingly been noted among social sciences and humanities (Jenkins, 1996). Researchers as Castells (2004) & Hall & Du Gay (1996) have examined long-established notions of identity. Their conclusion is that identity is socially constructed. Currently, as described by Jenkins, “*whichever way we look at it, identification seems to matter, in everyday life and in sociology*” (1996, p. 5). The term “cultural identity” ascribes to a person’s sense of self extracted from formal or informal participation in groups that instills and passes on knowledge, values, attitudes, beliefs, traditions and ways of life. The text will focus in this thesis in the cultural identity of individuals, rather than the collective identity of cultural groups, as it is noticed often in a political sense. (Kim, 2002). Following the cultural identity part, I continue with the integration process.

Given the fact that the interpretation of the meaning of integration is vast and varies among scholars, I concentrate mostly on the ‘two-way process’ of it. Among the vast literature concerning integration, one can witness that the framework of integration is most often applied when it comes to the inclusion or exclusion of the immigrant inside or from the cultural or political, and/or the socio – economic scope of the prevailing society (Bauböck, 1995). After living almost four years in Finland, I have observed that the societal attitude towards immigrant integration is working in two ways between the multicultural representative and the society. Indeed, a clear depiction of the ‘two-way process’ is the Government Report that was given to the Parliament of Finland in 2008 (Finnish Government Report...2008). That Report accentuates sufficiently that integration in Finland is a ‘two-way process’ by stating that immigrants have to adjust to the host society which in turn has to adapt towards the immigrants as well. What else to be said, is that despite the fact that the immigrant integration studies in Finland cover a vast area of research with debates such as political aspects (Pirkkalainen et al, 2016), the migration flows and the type of migrants (Pekkala, 2003), as well as the social notion of immigrant integration (Martikainen et al., 2012) and more, little has been mentioned at municipal levels. Importance has mainly been given towards municipalities such as Helsinki (Vanhanen, 2016), Turku

(Penninx, 2014) and Tampere (Tuori, 2013). Having noticed these gaps, I will try with this thesis to include to the current literature the migrant perceptions concerning their integration process in Finland (Olakivi, 2013; Mähönen et al, 2015), of seven first generational immigrant women exclusively, in Jyväskylä. Another aspect that I will be concentrating is how individually they sense the notion of their transformation of self along their acculturation process and for that, I will use the cultural hybridity as the navigation system of the self throughout this experience.

The challenges faced by immigrants in terms of adjustment into a different culture and the cultivation of their multicultural identity are of importance in the contemporary world since immigration appears to have upwards trend due to globalization (Li, 2008). The shift from a culture to another requires from the individual a navigation and a balance among two or more cultures in order to achieve the adaptation in any host society. Consequently, some academics such as Bhabha (1994), state that immigrants can arrive at an intermediate stage among cultures and cultivate hybrid cultural identities. In the city of Jyväskylä, even though there is the existence of the University which alone ‘hosts’ many foreign students, multiculturalism has entered societal life as well. In other words, permanent established foreign people are having due to the access to the welfare system, the same citizenship privileges as Finnish ones which brings multiculturalism into all kind of workplaces, interacting and interrelating with the locals. This thesis with Jyväskylä as a case study, is based on societal observation that I have conducted through the duration of a four year time period that I have lived and of involving and collecting individual experiences in immigrant spaces such as Gloria, a central multicultural center located in the same city.

Nevertheless, I did not want to neglect the important fact that Finland is a society which has gradually and recently turned its homogeneous character of country (Heikkilä and Jaakkola, 2000) towards an ethnic one (Whitfield, 2015) and this alone can hinder a number of challenges when referring to the foreigner perception of reality which is closely connected with the society itself. For that reason, at the end of this thesis, I am referring to challenges such as the rise of multiculturalism inside a previously homogenous society. To be more specific, it appears that “*obsolete hegemonic imaginaries of homogenous and defined nations*” are no more considered in that way and new theories depicting the character of the nations need to be enunciated (Howarth & Stavrakakis 2000, p. 15). Simultaneously, migration waves, inclusive policies such

as integration and their consequences, multicultural societies and their time to come are also more and more under discussion. Another type of challenges I will state is the notion of ‘the other’. The existence of the visibly different ‘other’ in a society plays a big part on the perception that one has concerning their identity and the lack of it in a societal frame cannot help us understand differences or concepts such as multiculturalism. To be more specific, the way we view ourselves relies on the way others view us and how they use communication to give content to what they perceive. One can comprehend identity as a collective, a type of commonality that is embodied in a person, structured within a “*community*” and after societal processes, whilst the same community is also being formed simultaneously through a “*differentiation process*” from others (Kivikuru 2000, p.11).

1.1 Aim of study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the socio-cultural perceptions of seven immigrant women living in Jyväskylä, Finland. The choice for conducting a research in this city is that even though integration policies are taking shape at the macro level, the practical part of the process itself takes part locally. Thus, the urban environment, or even the neighborhood, are of significance and when policy transforms into practice, this can change essentially among different parts of the country (Gebhart, 2014). Hence, my study case is Jyväskylä, despite the fact that I faced quite limited pre-existing data. The concept is to detect and investigate the research participants’ integration process and their coping mechanisms in Finnish society, which is culturally different from their backgrounds. Furthermore, not only can one navigate through various conduct patterns that the interviewees have endorsed so as to integrate themselves, but also perceive the role that the society has performed in their socio-cultural perception. One more objective of this thesis is to provide further knowledge to the academic community concerning the integration perceptions of immigrants in Finland, and more precisely in the city of Jyväskylä. Nevertheless, the concepts of migration and integration have relevance with so many fields and they have caught the attention of researches from various fields of study, from sociology to economics (Reitz, 2002). What holds the attention of this topic, stems from the fact that I am also an immigrant woman who migrated in this very same society almost four years ago and

concerning the motivation of my thesis, I had the urge to discover academically and form into written speech the integration challenges that me and other individuals in the same situation as mine have experienced, since based on my personal and public observations the integration journey is personal and unique, even though it is moving inside the same laws and constitutions. I would be more than pleased if this research paper is able to give guide and support to the ones who are now on their integration process starting points or the ones who are currently on the process. Also, with the example of the theory of hybridity, I would like to search whether a balance of cultures is beneficial to an individual and in which ways they perceive it their new cultural identities. Last but not least, the reason behind the number seven, which refers to the total number of the participants, is that this is a thesis of which purpose is to spotlight information on experiences, feelings perceptions and furthermore understanding on what foreign individuals go through when coming across issues such as their individual identity, cultural identity or their integration process in Jyväskylä. Hence, qualitative research assists in supplying knowledge on the ‘human’ aspect of a topic and demonstrates the way people undergo a research matter (Mack et al, 2005) and only because it personalizes the experiences in depth and individually the research group is to be kept small. For these reasons I chose seven participants who apply in some specific criteria.

For instance, concerning the migrant status, I chose to concentrate on immigrant women whose choice was to relocate in this part of Europe. More to say about the focus on the female gender is that it limits the research towards a more homogeneous group rather than a mixed one. Furthermore, making reason about the longevity in years of their accommodation in this city, I tried to wander around an overall of five years so that it sets a similar time basis background whilst the challenges are still common such as the small amount of winters that one has gone through and is not used to their concept yet. Also, the fact that I am a female immigrant in the same city as well plays important role on my choice on this type of research group concerning the fact that the idea of this paper came through personal observations of this society. When it comes for the reasons they live in this city, I tried to select different occupations, reasons for relocation and different cultural representatives so that the perception of the integration could be given more spherical, while at the same time for the age I chose to have the variance of a decade – 25-34 years old. Summing up, this thesis is an individual perception of the society of Jyväskylä, as witnessed through seven female immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds

with their age ranking from twenty five up to thirty four years old, accommodating in the city overall five years, and for different reasons each.

Thus, this qualitative study investigates the individual perception of their integration process of first generation immigrant women in the city of Jyväskylä, Finland. Theories on migration, multiculturalism cultural identity, integration, hybridity, and integration challenges of immigrants are what is standing behind the theoretical framework and empirical research.

1.2 Research Questions

Nevertheless, in order to reach the aim of the research it is of importance to restrict the central idea of this paper. For that, my research questions in this thesis are constituted by the main research question and the sub-questions. The main research question depicts the central research attention, while the sub-questions highlight the theory leading us to comprehend the importance of the main research question.

Main Research Question: In which ways seven immigrant women perceive their socio – cultural experiences of living in Jyväskylä?

Sub-Question 1. From the cultural identity part:

How do the participants view their ‘self’ in Jyväskylä?*

Sub-Question 2. From the integration part:

How do the participants experience the process of their integration?

Sub-Question 3. From the challenges part:

How have the various challenges contributed in the sense of belonging?

Sub-Question 4. From the hybridity part:

How do the participants perform socially in Jyväskylä?

* the sub-question number 1 has the word ‘self’ and not ‘selves’ to link it with the notion of self and the identity of an individual as it will be discussed later on the theoretical part of this thesis.

1.3 Delimitations of the study

This dissertation is an inductive research that focuses to provide further knowledge to the academic community concerning the integration perceptions of immigrants in Finland, and more precisely in the city of Jyväskylä. Even though integration policies are taking shape at the macro level, the practical part of the process itself takes part locally. Thus, the urban environment, or even the neighborhood, are of significance. What I have come across along my studies and at the same time having lived in the city of Turku for six months, is that when policy transforms into practice, this can change essentially among different parts of the country (Gebhart, 2014). Hence, my study case is Jyväskylä, despite the fact that I faced quite limited pre-existing data. What else worth mentioning, is that my cultural and linguistic background are not in accordance with the country I am writing about, and this can create some collision on the comparative analysis part (Hantrais, 1995). To be more specific, the translations of policy documents and/or research in English are restricted, so due to my limited knowledge in Finnish language my references were not as rich and thorough as I would have expected them to be. Against, these small restrictions, my research will provide indications of the general creed of Finnish integration policy. Furthermore, the concentration on first generation immigrant women makes generalization restrictive towards other groups such as men or children. Lastly, one more restriction to add is that of the longevity in years that the research participants have. I tried to focus up to overall five years due to the fact that the perspective can have similar basis. In other words, a participant that resides in Jyväskylä for two years has completely different perspective than the one who accommodates ten.

The reason for the gender and migration status choice relies on my desire more on a homogeneous sample than a mixture. One more thing that I tried to avoid was that I wanted my interviewees to have differences on their statuses concerning the society. As I said already in the introduction, multiculturalism has entered the life of society itself, further than the university campuses and that is why I looked for participants who are not only in the academic sphere but

they are also involved further in the city. Hence, having mentioned multiculturalism, it is of importance to refer to the fact that I decided my sample to appear diversity of cultural backgrounds besides two cases out of seven that were from the same ethnic group which is the Iranian. The reason of this choice was because the one woman wear the Islamic religious scarf around her head and the other not. I felt the need to include a member in the research group that attire wise applies to the concept of the 'other' as different in the research because I wanted to also investigate the concurrent possible difference in the perception of the same societal reality among two individuals whose ethnic background is similar. One of my basic concerns was to keep anonymity throughout the process and not to be familiar with any of the subjects of the research so as to maintain my objectivity as a researcher.

Objectivity is of importance and the route towards it, is to abide by scientific methods and procedures (Shamoo & Resnik, 2003). By gathering data from several scholars and by establishing arguments, I keep always in mind immigration and integration in Finland and for that my theory is driven towards my case study. Thus, this dissertation may be perceived as an inductive study (Chambliss & Schutt, 2006), through which I will gather, demonstrate and evaluate data in an objective way (Yin, 2003).

1.4 Thesis design

This thesis starts by giving to the reader the literature review and the validity of the importance of the study through the Finnish context. Chapter 3 is an overview through migration phenomenon and how this phenomenon is treated in Finland. Moving to chapter 4, I demonstrate the term cultural identity by dismantling it initially to the terms culture and identity for a better understanding. Chapter 5 alludes to integration and integration process in Finland. Along with that chapter I present shortly as well the notion of citizenship as a form of societal inclusion, while the challenges of integration appear in the chapter 6. Moreover, in the latter, I present the challenges through the multicultural notion, and the concept of 'other' from the part of identity and difference. What follows, is chapter 7 which is a small chapter speaking about hybridity before the reader moves to the research part of this thesis in chapter 8 that is the one of the Methodology process which has been used to analyze the data from the interviews. Moving,

forward, chapter 9 makes reason for the Ethics and Validity, while chapter 10 are the Findings of the research itself. Continuing to chapter 11, the reader can find the Discussion part and what follows it which is chapter 11, the Conclusion.

2. Literature Review

2.1 In Finland

One of the contemporary times' characteristics is the upwards trend of migration with its complexity of processes of changes in reach of a nation and international organizations (Castles & Mark, 2009). According to Statistics Finland, in 2013 the country had an immigrant population of 31,940 people, the highest number since the year 1917. As multiculturalism has spread around Finland, it is noticed that ninety four per cent of Finnish municipalities are accepting more people from immigration than they give away due to emigration and for that my research is based on how these individuals perceive their integration process in the municipality area – in this case, Jyväskylä - that they accommodate. Tanner (2011), had already pinpointed that due to the fact Finland is a country of societal, political and financial stability, and egalitarianism, the proportions of labor immigrants and asylum seekers were showing rising trends along the years.

Indeed, when referring to migration in Finland, Leitzinger (2008) states that this country was receiving increasingly people after the Cold War and that the appearance of refugees from the Eastern block was not discussed openly, having as a consequence the public opinion's misconceptions towards multiculturalism, up to the early 1990s on the moment that migration indicators started being noticed by the society, that the migration of refugees is a new phenomenon. He keeps pinpointing that, due to the low immigration numbers up to 1990s, forming policies for immigration did not seem as a preferable area for legislation activities. A decade later, in 2000s, the immigration discourses in Finland have become more complicated with even the rise of a political party called 'True Finns', in the year 2002 that has politicized migration and created more opposing debates to the issue than in the past (Keskinen, 2009). As I have already mentioned and I will again, Finland had much been periphrastically classified as culturally homogenous society (Lepola, 2000). Regardless that exaggeration, it is notable that this country has been home for many different and old cultural groups such as the Swedish-speaking people whose language is being taught in Finnish schools as a secondary one, and the Tatars, Russians, Ingrians, Sami, Romas and more (Häkkinen & Tervonen, 2004).

Following the Finnish Ministry of Interior on the Government Resolution proposal (19.10.2006) where emphasis laid on the endorsement of non-discrimination and multiculturalism especially in the areas of municipalities, one can perceive that discussing over homogeneity is not possible anymore and when referring to Finland from now on, multicultural is one of the adjectives that can characterize it. Bearing in mind as well what Kymlicka (2007) states that *liberal multiculturalism practices* harmonize the diverse ethnic and cultural background with *peace, democracy, human rights* and *prosperity* (p.167) and having attended courses in the master program of Cultural Policy based on multiculturalism and immigration, it has been strong inside me to take it as an account when referring to challenges foreigners face. Nevertheless, regardless the governmental actions there are always different views and actions that create challenges in integration from the rest of the society. For instance, when it comes to the coexistence with the ‘other’, based on an article Yle (2009) published, in 2008 a European Union research that took place among twenty seven countries exposed that almost half of the Muslim population accommodating in Finland have come across discrimination on issues such as health and accesses to services. Furthermore, another example of observation that depicted the challenges multiculturalism is facing came from Koivukangas (2003) who stated that unemployment among foreigners was a considerable issue due to the increase of immigration. He based his statement on the fact that in some ethnic groups, the unemployment was reaching *thirty per cent* (p.2), while nationally it was the eight per cent of the total population. He also added that alongside negative reactions and xenophobia were keep displaying towards the foreign population.

2.2. Theoretical Background

What Koivukangas (2003) highlighted in the research above about Muslims and access to services was that “*the Finnish society and attitudes will have to adjust to the temporary and permanent presence of an increasing number of people with foreign background. Immigrants and their children will be a great asset to Finland in the future, Australia bring a good example.*”(ibid, p.9). That is why, integration working in both ways was needed and has already implemented in Finland so that Finnish people can come across the different as well and coexist without focusing in the race, the color of skin, the nationality and more, that tend to create marginalization feelings towards the group and the individual as well and for that, in this thesis I

am searching for the perception an immigrant individual has from the society along their adjusting process. Hence, it is wise to refer, before I continue further, to the concept of cultural identity.

Cultural identity has been searched, discussed and contributed as well in the better perception of existence inside a society. Meanwhile, Samovar and Porter (1982) blended the concepts of culture and identity within the concept of cultural identity and teamed it up with the perception an individual has of their self. They keep up with stating that *“the center, or core, of cultural identity is an image of the self and the culture intertwined in the individual’s total conception of reality”* (Samovar & Porter 1982, p. 392). So, referring to foreign individuals in the era of multiculturalism, it is noteworthy to present the example of the interview between Chaudary (2012) and Huntington which was conducted in 2006, an example that can strengthen as well the relevance of this paper. From that online published interview one of the thoughts of Huntington was that *“the question is what will be the central focus of global politics in the coming decades and my argument is that cultural identities and cultural antagonisms and affiliations will play not the only role but a major role”*. And this will happen because *“cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones”* (Huntington 1997, p.138). What I also bear in mind about cultural identity is that besides the above it is also something that it can be - as Kim (2005) with the contextual theory of interethnic communication and Ting – Toomey (2005) with the identity negotiation theory observed - mutable to change and can lead an individual to a successful adjustment in the new society. Having clarified cultural identity and its mutable and reflexive character, I will return to the concept of integration in Finland.

The heterogeneous structure of migration which covers foreigner statuses such as economic migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, reunification of family members and more, can create pressures and challenges when it comes to policy structuring. The year 1995, that Finland entered the European Union, created demands for thorough construction of the immigration policy so that it can follow the other country members respectively and many scholars would debate that this was when the country went into a time of integration (Heckman & Schnapper, 2003). Up to then, there was a lack on constituted official immigration and integration programs (ibid) and a gap as well on the research of Finnish integration which was gradually being covered

(Pyykönen, 2007; Kerkkänen, 2008). What is more to say and referring to the integration policy of Finland, Saukkonen (2016) alludes to the fact that Finland is a country that follows a *multiculturalist policy* in which people should integrate into Finnish system while they can preserve their culture and their language. He also keeps up by highlighting that in Finland *“integration is also understood as a two-way process where the host society and its institutions also have to adapt to the changing situation.”* (p.5). The clear depiction of the ‘two-way process’ was the Government Report that was given to the Parliament of Finland in 2008 (Finnish Government Report...2008). That Report accentuates sufficiently that integration in Finland is a ‘two-way process’ by stating that immigrants have to adjust to the host society which in turn has to adapt towards the immigrants as well.

The fact that in this Finland a foreigner can choose freely to maintain their culture while integrating in the society, creates a mixture of cultures inside the self of the individual which can play beneficial role to the society itself. After my personal experience as an immigrant almost four years in Finland, I realized that the concept of my Greek cultural identity has mutated with the addition of a great many of Finnish culture and this has helped me to move into two cultural worlds easier while at the same time I can use this unique balance for the benefit of the country I chose to accommodate. Hence, in my thesis which is concentrated on the integration process, I present an example of that process which is hybridity and explains the blending feeling that I just mentioned through theory and the answers to the interviews that I will collect.

Elliot (1949) was descriptive by exposing that contemporary migration had transformed into a social, cultural, political, financial blending and that people put in practice together parts of their original culture and the new one and even though he expressed that many decades ago, it is still applicable in the contemporary migration situation. Cultures are totally detached or even have distinguished limits. They are interconnected and related because we live in a world of communication, hence cultural identities cannot be pure (Bhabha, 1994). Hoogvelt (1997) outlined that hybridity as a concept is *“celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-between, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference”* (p.158). Bhabha (2004) supports that hybridity is a type of intermediate space and the *“cutting edge of translation and negotiation”* that depicts the essence of culture. The name that he gave to it was ‘the third space’ which assists to delve

into and “*emerge as the others of ourselves*” (p.56), since the interpretation of the new society can raise challenges and difficulties when it comes to the integration part of an individual.

Daily things that may seemed as ordinary in the previous reality, can now be seen as challenges when it comes to the social participation. What moved me, to add also the part of challenges in this paper, is that I believe that is one of the important issues to take into account when one refers to personal perceptions of foreign individuals. Contemporary studies on multiculturalism have pointed out that the ones who disapprove the attention in the words “other” or “differentiation” in contemplation for culture support that apart of being a part of the dominant culture, each one is distinct concerning gender, race, language, status, religion and so on (Holm & Londen, 2010). In my perspective, on a larger societal scale challenges such as multiculturalism, the presence of the other and other issues are worth mentioning because they are responsible of shaping the new self of the individual who is about to be active within the borders of the new society and what is important for any space is to have members who act beneficially while contributing to the societal whole.

3. The migration phenomenon

Migration is not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, it is encountered from the primitive times when peoples’ basic goal was to survive and because of this they were forced to change their location constantly. However, the parameters of movements nowadays are far more complex than they used to be.

There is no country in this planet where the migration phenomenon has not taken place. Migration whether for ethnic conflict purposes, political or economic decrease, civil wars and more is going to keep shaping the world as long humans exist on it. History has given us records where we can see that all cultures and geographic spaces have experienced this phenomenon since the days of yore. For instance, there were some areas that were established as the hearts of learning and transmitting knowledge. Thus, people were travelling to study or to expand their knowledge, scholars and scientists were visiting Plato’s Academy in Athens or the Museum – Library in Egypt and so on. These centers of knowledge attracted people from around Mediterranean region, other European countries and even from Asia (Clagett, 1957). On the

contemporary times, we can experience that with the advance of technology and the information that flows everywhere with a click of a button, along with the fact that the transportation from the one side of the earth to the other moving around or just the idea of moving has been more achievable. Hence, people keep travelling to seek knowledge, employment, and better life or at some cases, like war, safer life.

In contemporary times and narrowing it to European continent, what is notable, is that generally the international movement is gaining larger dimensions the past years and to be more specific “the recent enlargement of the European Union has been followed by migration flows of around 250,000 persons per year from the new member countries to the Union” (De Giorgi J. & Pellizzari M., 2008, p.2). At the same time countries that were traditionally the ones who were sending immigrants - mostly Southern Europe - are now receivers of migration flows such as Spain from Morocco. This gradual conversion, also described by Jennissen R. (2004), of the countries of European Union to receiver countries of immigrants makes the migration flow a common aspect of countries-members of EU. This with the combination of the European Integration and the perspective of the enlargement of the borders of European Union is turning up the necessity of a common European migration policy. But in order to perceive and comprehend migration as a concept, besides the knowledge of history, one should delve into the research of that phenomenon.

3.1 Defining migration

Any attempt of a fully description of migration, is called to overcome some difficulties. These difficulties arise from the fact that the term itself illustrates a complex process, in which important parameters change at individual, collective, economic and social level both in the home and in the destination country.

There are several definitions concerning migration. In any case the meaning of migration, as stated by the Dictionary of Social Sciences (Calhoun, 2002), has been established as the natural transition of individuals and groups from one society to another or any geographical movement of large numbers of people or according to Castles and Kosack (1973) the transfer of human and work force from one area to another. The movement of individuals, groups, work forces can be

performed on the inside of a country from a region to another called internal migration or from one country to another or external migration [George et al., 2013]. Even though these migration types appear to have similarities and the same type of determinants, they seem to have also important differences which can be seen in the different nationalities, rights, languages, customs and traditions between migrants and the native population.

Referring to external migration we can locate three basic types of migrants based on the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights (2002): the first category are the individuals who “*are outside the territory of the state of which they are nationals or citizens, are not subject to its legal protection and are in the territory of another state*”. The second type are the ones who receive the hospitality of another state and they are called refugees and the last category of migrants are the ones “*who do not enjoy either general legal protection of their fundamental rights by virtue of diplomatic agreements, visas or other agreements*” (<http://www.unesco.org/>). In the same citation is pinpointed the fact that it is not always easy to categorize immigrants accurately based on the three types above so there are some sub-categories that are of importance to be referred to because they are used more often as well. To begin, there are the *temporary labor migrants*, who work in a country for a limited period of time in order to send money back to their families. The *highly skilled and business immigrants* are the ones with *important source of skills* (World Economic Forum 2013, p.9) and usually they move within the internal labor markets or they just try to find jobs from their mother country that belong in the requirements of their studies. Furthermore, there are the *irregular immigrants* or *undocumented illegal* ones who arrive to a country in order to find a work or generally better living conditions without the required documents. It is interesting to state that in this particular migrant status “*prevents the migrant of being in lawful and recorded employment*” (Fasani 2008, p.13). Another category is the *forced migration* which is contained by refugees or asylum seekers. They take that characterization because it was not their choice to move in another country but they were forced from external factors such as war. When it comes to Finland and forced migration, the Government of Finland through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has declared that the “*objective is to bring uncontrolled migration in Europe under control and to direct people to legal and safe routes*” (<http://www.formin.finland.fi>). There are also two more categories which are not taken into consideration usually when we speak about migration. The first category are the *family members* which includes the family of immigrant who has established him/herself in one country

and gradually invites the rest of the members to live with them. Based on the Finnish Ministry of the Interior, we can see that in Finland, the right of family reunification is recognized and supported (<http://intermin.fi/en>). The last category is the *return immigrants* and they are the ones who return back to their countries after a period of staying in the host one.

Within the definition from above, it is obvious that different types of migration can arise depending always on the criteria that are required in each place of the world. Also, countries have different legal status and different treatments on the concept of the word immigrant, hence different policies. As it already has been stated in this thesis the country that is going to and does already participate along the theory is Finland and from all the above categories of migrants, it concentrates on immigrant women who relocated in this country either to study or to work. What is to come to the next lines, is an effort to demonstrate migration through its theories and to delve into the notion that migration as a phenomenon is a part of social change and global processes (de Haas, 2008).

3.2 Migration Literature

When one researches the field of migration they will come across many facades and numerous stages of analysis. Portes (1999) states that there are four questions that have been thoroughly explored and these are the causes of migration, the directionality and the progression of migrant flows, the questions that answer to immigrant labor, and the cultural and societal acclimatization of migrants. Every question as we can understand covers vast topics that can be investigated differently when it comes to their indicator levels, the scientific tools that one needs to use in order to conduct research and of course the existence of the individual attention. Nevertheless, constructing a theory that can elaborate with all the four mentioned above features of migration is an ongoing intention of migrant theorists such as Arango (2000) and Massey (1999).

Currently, the neoclassical theory is the one that can consider to be dominant when it comes to give reasons in what creates migration with its fundamental hypothesis that “*migration is stimulated primarily by rational economic considerations of relative benefits and costs, mostly financial but also psychological*” (Tadaro & Smith 2006, p. 342). The neoclassical theory has been criticized both on its theoretical (Arango 2000) and its empirical basis (Massey et al. 1998).

Nevertheless, the fact that this theoretical model presents analytical accuracy and appears the ability to introduce a set of valid theories and scientific tools in order to examine either the explanations of migration or its consequences, places it in a distinguished place in the present academic research (Bonin et al. 2008). However, as I already mentioned, there is an ongoing intention to advance the theory on the migration research. Hence, various authors have been stating numerous proposals that wander among schemes of interdisciplinary studies and fabricated concepts to the demands of uniting the research of migration with the broad social theory and examine it inside the framework of general social changes and procedures.

Firstly, social scientists such as Favell (2008) and Castles (2008a) have called to a greater extend for interdisciplinary dialogue. More to say, others have also appointed towards a wider interdependence among the analysis concerning the explanations and the outcomes of migration (de Haas 2008). For instance, political economy is considered to be suggesting in the recent years intensely that migration is able to achieve suchlike goals (Collinson 2009). The political economist Menz (2009), in his work among six Eastern and Western countries, sets a model of interdisciplinary dialogue and comparative analysis of policies, economic structures and others in order to generate specific migration results. Furthermore, researches have also indicated connecting the already conceptual work on migration that has been achieved among the years so that the theoretical and empirical conception of migration can be improved (de Haas 2008).

What we have from researchers such as Castles (2008a, 2008b), de Haas (2008) and Collinson (2009) -and where my position as a social researcher at the moment-is their descriptions of desiderating attributes of conceptual framework. The aim of that theory composition should be an illustration of suchlike conceptual frameworks that would help social researchers by providing them with a theoretical and methodological basis while investigating all sorts of migration procedures. Castles (2008b) illustrates that the theory formation should be understandable, holistic, appropriate for the analysis of relations that occur among miscellaneous societal and space levels, and more while simultaneously abiding as historical and vigorous. Collinson (2009) proposes as well that this could be accomplished with the combination of an approach that is about *livelihood* and a comparative political economy one. Through the process of that theory formation plenty of academics will be able to seize *“the interaction of local – level factors immediately influencing people’s migration decisions and strategies (linked to livelihoods) with*

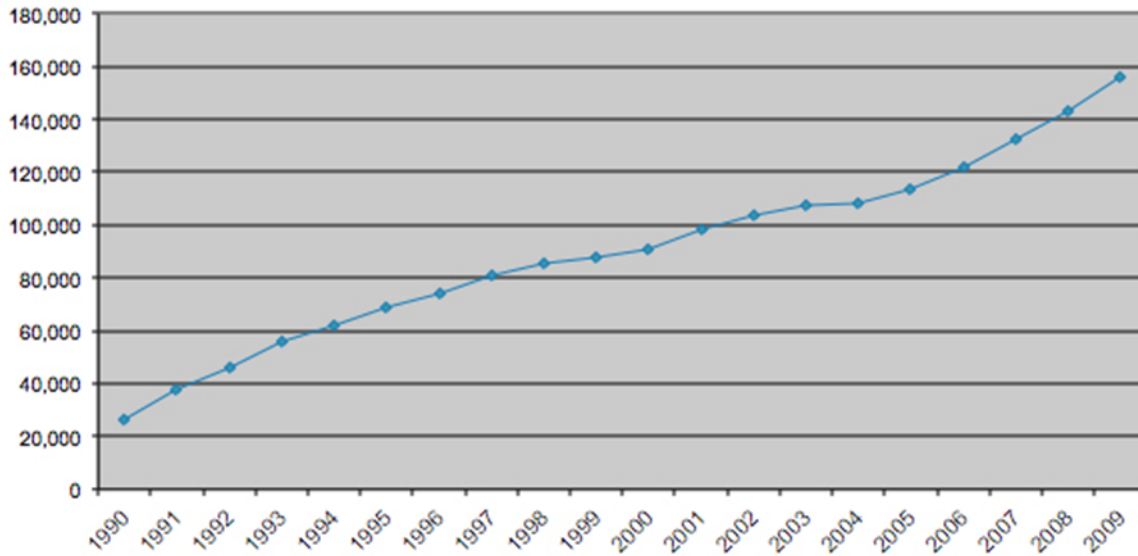
a range of political, economic and social factors and processes affecting the agency of migrants (and non – migrants) that ultimately shape migrations outcomes within specific contexts” (Collinson 2009, p. 2).

The main purpose of these approaches is to give a more whole and comprehensive notion of the migration process. Referring to myself as an immigrant in Finland with the status of social worker, and having studied theory concentrative approaches towards mental health, I place myself on the side of this theory formation as well in the migration studies in the field of social sciences.

3.3 Migration in Finland

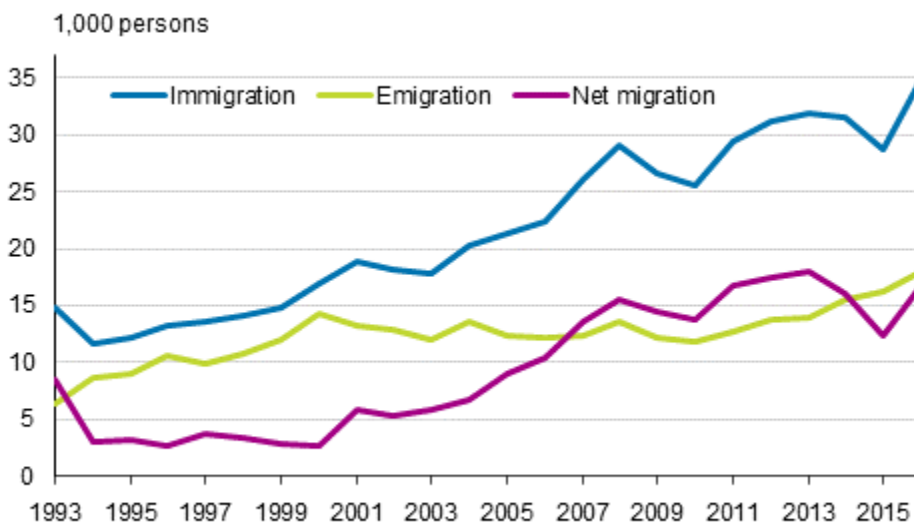
In the case of Finland, as Saukkonen & Pyykkönen (2008) mention, immigration was noted on “waves” the last 40 years approximately. Besides Russians and former Yugoslavians all these years there is and was a migration and refugee flow from countries of Africa like Somalia and Middle East such as Iran or Iraq. One noteworthy immigration wave in Finland was that of the Ingrians. In the 1,990’s they were given a right to return to Finland which has created a migration flow of 25,000 people from former Soviet Union, while almost a decade later, in 2003, there were 22,000 more coming from Russia and Estonia (Gulijeva, 2003). To be more descriptive, when referring to movements of people I will demonstrate two figures. The first table depicts the upwards trend to the population of foreign citizens in Finland from 1990 until 2009 depicted by Tanner (2011). As I mentioned on a previous chapter, he had already highlighted that due to the welfare system, the financial stability, and egalitarianism, the proportions of labor immigrants and asylum seekers were showing rising trends along the years. The graph is not a contemporary one, but it serves the needs of what was mentioned above and that is a vague depiction of the rising trend of foreign citizens in Finland the twenty years period starting from 1990 up to 2009.

Figure: Foreign Citizens in Finland, 1990-2009



Source: Population Information System 2010. (Tanner, 2011).

In the next figure, taken from Statistics Finland (2017), I will demonstrate the migration between Finland and other countries among the years 1993 – 2016.



Source: Statistics Finland (2017)

According to the statistics “34,905 persons moved to Finland in 2016, which was 21 per cent more than one year earlier. The number of immigrants exceeded the record of 2013 by nearly 3,000 immigrants. Emigration also increased from the previous year, but clearly less than immigration. A total of 18,082 persons moved abroad from Finland, 11 per cent more than in the year before. The migration gain for Finland grew to 16,823 persons from the previous year's 12,441.” This upwards trend concerning migration indicates the need of policies and laws that will help the people to protect and feel protected, programs that will assist the acculturation process of the minorities towards the society, education to natives to achieve the co-existence with the different and much more that, in this case Finnish society needs to take into account.

Even though there have been political debates about the need of having a specific Immigration Law, so that it can assist the regulation from workers from abroad (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002), no such act exists. Matters concerning immigrants are mainly conducted by two ministries including different tasks. Thus, the Ministry of Employment and Economic Development (www.tem.fi) is responsible in processing the admittance of immigrants for employment in the country, while the Directorate of Immigration of the Ministry of the Interior (<http://intermin.fi>) is accountable for the implement of the administrations.

Finnish population appears to be more ethnically concentrated than the populations of the countries in Europe. Heikkilä and Jaakkola (2000) mention that what causes it being homogenous country is the fact that customarily it appeared to have a provisional migration policy in allowing and giving residence and employment permits. This changed with Finland entering the European Union in 1995, where the country leaned towards different viewpoints concerning migration which constituted it gradually as a country of immigration (Whitfield, 2015). What else to be said about Finland and what makes it a preferable destination, is that is a country that holds a high global position based on the productivity and prosperity and this can be seen more thoroughly on the Global Competitiveness Report 2014 – 2015 (<http://www3.weforum.org>).

In this thesis we will concentrate on the type of immigrant who arrives to Finland to either study, seek a job or both. Finland's education like the rest Nordic countries is free as well to both

residents and immigrants. Even though the country spends lots of money in education, the concept of studying without paying fees reinforces the concept of the immigrant student (https://www.jyu.fi/vuosik/vuosik_13/graafiset-esitykset-statistics). This alone can explain why there is a preference to study in these parts of Europe. The education, based on empirical experience as well, is qualitative and the environment competitive in a way that the student gives their best to achieve their personal goals. What is more to say about the research subjects seeking education or employment we will see it in the following chapters where is waiting to be answered what is cultural identity of a person and their integration in the society along with the challenges that the new environment hinders and the perception of cultural hybridity. But initially and forthwith we will begin with the concept of cultural identity which I will first dismantle both of its parts – culture and identity – and then present it as the whole concept cultural identity.

4. Cultural Identity

4.1 What is Culture?

For culture, there were plenty definitions given. Similarly, in the following chapters where we will discuss more complex phenomena, we will notice that one definition is not enough because the research in social sciences is vast, the schools of thought differ and generally the perception that each scientist has for an idea is based on the previous knowledge, their point of view, current hypotheses and the constant changing world. What makes the groups united are some common aspects which can be called customs, norms, values, languages, world views and this is as a whole is perceived with the word ‘culture’. To analyze and fully understand the term ‘cultural identity’, I need to disassemble it and introduce the reader briefly to the terms ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ or with other words the concept of self.

When Hall (1959) expressed himself about culture, after his anthropological fieldwork in Micronesia, he referred to it as something abstract yet forceful that keeps us captive. More specifically, he said “*culture is not an exotic notion studied by a select group of anthropologists in South Seas. It is a mold in which we are all cast, and it controls our lives in many unsuspected ways*” (p.52). In addition to this notion I will also include what Lederach (1995) notes which is

that “*culture is the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing and responding to the social realities around them*” (p. 9). Furthermore, it lacks credibility when one attempts to refer to culture without taking into consideration some important definitions that have been given already. Thus, extracted from the Dictionary of Cultural Studies it seems that

culture is a complicated and contested word because the concept does not represent an entity in an independent object world. Rather it is best thought of as a mobile signifier that enables distinct and divergent ways of talking about human activity for a variety of purposes. That is, the concept of culture is a tool that is of more or less usefulness to us as a life form and its usage and meanings continue to change as thinkers have hoped to ‘do’ different things with it. (Barker 2004, p. 44)

Given the above terms and since this sub-chapter is just an introduction to another term, I state that on my behalf I agree with the fact that culture is something that surrounds us and with common characteristics like an invisible glue, it can make the co-existence of different ethnic background people more achievable. What is of importance though, is that one should not neglect the fact that culture is mutable to change and there is not a pure form of it since we live in a world which is interdependent and constantly alters. Having travelled and observed peoples and cultures in other countries, being also an individual that has relocated in Finland from Greece, I have perceived that cultures are shaped and influenced by globalization, by neighbor counties, and by the new human force that enriches them while carrying their own customs, knowledge, arts, customs, habits and more. Considering that culture is a part of our daily life, then one can notice that along the duration of a day they participate simultaneously and without recognizing it fully, in cultures of many places in the world. For instance, a Finnish individual begins his day by wearing jeans which is an attire that arrived from U.S.A., continues eating pizza, an Italian food, and enjoys listening to Japanese music, while along the day he participates concurrently in Finnish culture. Unfortunately, this idea requires further analysis which I will not do because this paper concentrates in different yet related concepts. Hence, I will reinforce my opinion with the statement that “*unicultures are merely mythic, like unicorns. In reality, all cultures have acculturative origins, which means all cultures are hybrid and share qualities and features with other cultures*” (Rudmin, 2006, p.69). Hybridity will be discussed later on; forthwith, I will continue to the concept of self which is identity.

4.2 Identity Conception

In this chapter I will try to depict how the identity theory and the social identity theory embrace the concept of self. The conception of identity will be demonstrated through these theories while at the same time I will show the similarities and the differences for a more spherical understanding of the meaning.

In both theories, the individual can be characterized as reflexive because one can picture him/her self as an object which can exist in categories or be classified or give names to the self in order to fit in or relate in other social categories or classifications. This procedure is named *self-categorization* in social identity theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), while in identity theory is *identification* (McCall & Simons, 1978). On the part of social identity theory, Hogg and Abrams (1988) mention that a social identity is the awareness of the individual concerning his or her belonging to a social group or category. A social group is *a number of individuals associated or aggregated together to a greater or lesser degree, either because they share certain features, as class, ethnicity, etc. or (especially Social Sciences) because they are bound together by patterns of interaction.* (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>). And when we refer to social groups we cannot neglect the importance of the terms in-group and out-group and how people who exist in or out these spheres perceive them. Henri Tajfel was the one who set the groundings for the social identity theory.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) spoke about the sense of belonging to the social world along with the self – esteem and the feeling of pride that derive from social groups such as social class, family, hockey team and others. The constant struggle to empower the personal self – esteem along with the group’s status divides one’s world into ‘us’ (in-group) and ‘them’ (out-group). They continued also, by pinpointing that the in-group and out-group perceptions of reality can create discriminations or generally feelings of discomfort when it comes to the individuals who try to reinforce their self-image. Examples of such group ‘conflicts’ can be seen in gender (males and females), social class (middle and working classes), and in our case in Jyväskylä, as we will see later on in the interviews, how the immigrants perceive their reality in this society and how they picture the perception of the society towards them.

Hogg and Abrams (1988) clarify that the social categories in which people put themselves are “*parts of a structured society*” and their existence is possible only when they relate to other contrasting categories such as men vs. women where always one (category) has more or less power, status and others. Furthermore, the authors pinpoint the fact that social categories go ahead of the individuals and this happens because people come to life into an already made and constructed scheme, the society. So when moving inside a society, one’s identity is acquired and formed from the social categories that they are a part of. Nevertheless, as time goes by an individual’s identity is unique and this happens because there is a personal choice in which social groups one wants to be a part of. So, at some point of someone’s life we can notice that he/she is a member of a unique ‘blending’ of social categories. This outcome of different social identities existing in an individual’s personality, create an exclusive person’s self-concept.

When it comes to identity theory, an individual’s identity is formed equally with the self-categorization, which itself is depending on a *named and classified world* (Stryker, 1980). Similarly with social identity theory, identity theory behaves towards structured society mainly with its components such as symbols in culture that entitle positions. Stryker (2004) defends that people participate in different roles within a social context, and the outcomes of these roles are responsible for the formation of identities. Stryker continues by declaring that when in meeting role expectations, people will consequently feel well about their selves and the others will feel good about them. To sum up, the ways the identities are collected are based on the way an individual views self. This emerges either from the reflexive actions of self-categorization or the identification when it comes to participation in roles or groups. In other words, identity theory is the inquiry on why one person given a day off, chooses to take his or her friends to eat in a restaurant, while another person decides to use that time in the playground with his or her children. Nevertheless, the way we view ourselves and perform accordingly, create different types of identities.

After I have briefly presented the notion of culture and superficially touched the concept of self through the identity theory and the social identity theory, I can now focus better to one part of a wider concept of individual identity and that is cultural identity.

4.3 Comprehension of Cultural Identity

The term “*cultural identity*” ascribes to a person’s sense of self extracted from formal or informal participation in groups that instills and passes on knowledge, values, attitudes, beliefs, traditions and ways of life (Kim, 2002). I will focus in this chapter in the cultural identity of individuals, rather than the collective identity of cultural groups. Thus, referring to the individual element, I will create a small parenthesis here and mention that subjective identity embodies what Triandis (1989) called personal and collective identity. Personal identity refers to the sense of self assumed from personality, character and temperament. These “*unique elements that we associate with our individuated self*” (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p.212) are what make for instance twins to be different from each other despite the fact they grow up in the same family context. Poles apart, collective identity refers to an individual’s perception of self, distilled from formal or informal participation in groups with common interests, experiences and solidarity and it consists of both cultural and social features which are related but not equivalent (Taylor & Whittier, 1992).

The ones who have developed a set of idea about cultural identity have described it as fragmented. Separate identities cover with layers each individual and at any given time one of them emerges on the surface. Collier and Thomas (1988), for example, conceived in their mind dynamic multiple identities such as ethnicity, gender and others where one overlies according to each situation and context. Hecht et al. (1993) illustrated the competition of multiple identities for domination in various situations and highlighted its efficient application for social scientists, since they can set apart and examine different sub components such as racial identity or gender identity.

After presenting the notion of cultural identity, I will try to consider it as a whole which is consisted by some attributes and present some of them. Besides the understanding of cultural identity as a phenomenon, one needs to imagine it as one – the unified comprehensive sense of self. Cultural identity has many important characteristics and here I will present some of them so that the reader can dive into the concept more effectively.

The cultural identity of a person is influenced by their relationship with their important ones such as family members and friends. It is noticed that a sense of self is gained throughout

interpersonal relationships (Hecht, 1993). For instance, an individual whose parents combine different national backgrounds or races, embodies values and attitudes towards life from each respectively. Even though this process is often unintended, it may drive the individual to a “*qualitative psychic transformation*” (Kim, 1995, p. 178). For that, it is of importance to take into account how relationships customize an individual’s cultural identity. Similarly,

Cultural identity is composed out of changeable and stable elements. The term *salience* is one that denotes this difference (Sellers et al., 1998). As situations and contexts in our lives change fast, some elements of cultural identity turn into more or less salient. To be more specific, they become more or less important and relevant in a short time. For instance, when a foreign student in Finland has to negotiate the terms of an internship that requires language skills and a specific level of integration then he/she will instantly feel that at this specific moment of time nationality is more salient than any other characteristics of cultural identity.

While life goes on, many people jump from one professional field into another. Some people choose different religion while some others change nationality. Even though no one forgets or changes native language, many people start using different languages or even dialects daily. All these new adjustments in the way of life influence one’s cultural identity. Plenty studies have explained how changes in cultural identity take place in order to reconstruct and reshape a whole again. Kim (2001) has investigated how people adjust themselves whenever they come across cultural boundaries, especially when they move somewhere for long period of time as immigrants or refugees. To achieve the adaptation one has to view that balance as “*a dialectic relationship between push and pull, or engagement and disengagement*” (Kim, 1995, p. 178). If the outcome of the process has positive effect, we find the individual developing what Kim refers to as *intercultural identity* – a blending of past and present: “*the original cultural identity begins to lose its distinctiveness and rigidity while an expanded and more flexible definition of self emerges*” (p. 180).

Cultural identity can be deliberated and argued through communication but only under specific conditions. People must be aware of the elements of their cultural identity and feel pleasant sharing them through discussions with others because cultural identity is not always observant. Hardly anybody as stated by Sussman (2000), “*recognize the imprint of their own culture and its ubiquitous nature*” (p.363). Using the example of Dorothy arriving in the Land of Oz, she

speculates that people become more conscious about various characteristics of their cultural identity when channeling themselves through beginnings or endings from environments experienced as divergent in peoples' behaviors and mindsets.

Even though there are some features, such as race, visible when encountering others, there are also many invisible such as education and religion. When it comes to encountering through impersonal means of communication such as talking on the telephone, even more elements of cultural identity are concealed unless an individual decides to disclose them. Thus, people can decide to communicate using specific parts of their cultural identity because identity itself can be *"invoked, used, interpreted with, displayed, performed, and so on in particular social scenes"* (Carbaugh, 1996, p.23).

Ting-Toomey (2005) in her *"identity negotiation theory"* described the 'negotiation' part as *"a transactional interaction whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt to assert, define, modify, challenge, and/or support their own and others' desired self-images"* (p.217). This is a demanding procedure and in order for one to succeed in that kind of negotiation, they need to be *"able to hold two polarized value systems and be at ease with the dynamic tensions that exist between the vulnerability spectrum and the security spectrum"* (p. 230).

By far in this paper, there have been presented as important compounds of it the phenomenon of migration and the term of cultural identity by breaking its parts and analyzing the notions of culture and identity separately. Identity concept was demonstrated through identity theory and social identity theory, and later on cultural identity was analyzed separately. Through these pages we saw that cultural identity is the formation of many characteristics combined to result a whole, in this paper the foreign individual. What will occur the moment that given individual decides to enter a society which is composed from a different culture scheme, values, behaviors and life style? This is what we will seek to know by analyzing another important compound of this thesis, the integration process which is related with the individual or the cultural group entering in any given society. In our case Jyväskylä, Finland.

5. Integration

The notion of integration appears quite often in the contemporary literature on immigration even though as a phenomenon has various interpretations and one cannot find only one definition. Hersi (2014) asserts that definitions vary in accordance with the context in which the terminology is being handled. Integration can be found in discussions in which political, economic and social integration are the areas of importance. For instance, studies on economic integration have attracted many academics who are concentrating their studies into that direction of interpreting the concept as the participation in the working force even though there is still a lot of debate on what designates as economic integration

Berry et al. (2006) call attention to the emergence of three types of identity when an individual is in another context of living. These are the ethnic identity which alludes to “the cultural and psychological changes that result from the contact between cultural groups, including the attitudes that are generated”, the national identity referring to the “*sense of attachment a person has to a particular group, including belief and feeling linking him or her to these groups*” and the bicultural which indicates that the identity of an individual is “*based on a balancing or blending of the two cultures*” (p.5). To be more specific with the latter type of identity, we can picture the category of the children who arrive in a young age to a foreign country. While attending school they come across the challenge of developing a cultural identity which is a mixture of their family culture and the one of the society in which they are active parts. In that example and generally, the way the individual is going to cultivate his or her identity rests on their acculturation stance which relates to the changes that occur during or afterwards intercultural contact (Berry et al., 1992).

Defining integration we can realize is indeed a complex task. The continuous European research project INTERACT (<http://interact-project.eu/>) describes immigrant integration as a process that allows immigrants to be involved in the prevailing society at the same position with the natives. The disadvantage in equality of power relation when referring to the majority society and immigrants is emphasized with the aftereffect that “the receiving society, its institutional structure and its reaction to newcomers are consequently far more decisive for the outcome of the process than the immigrants themselves” (Pasetti 2014, p. 30). This explanation inevitably

claims that the barriers that are portrayed by the ethnic majority are preventing integration to occur.

Nevertheless, the interpretation of the meaning of the term varies among scholars. These differences are problematic when different understandings of integration occur in various measures of the term, with unclear outcomes. Collins (2013) portrays this perplexing concept by referring to the fact that understandings on integration can appear variations which depend on the country the term is used to. For instance, the use of that term by scholars differently after the terrorist attack of 9.11 in the United States of America was an important reason to dismantle this concept. What followed the attack was that diversity and integration were under doubt due to the fear of terrorism, something that led the conception of diversity as that which has a bad outcome on society; hence, dissimilarities on the appearances of individuals today create more fear than before, constructing a barrier to the notion that integration can be accomplished regardless of the sustenance of differences (Hersi, 2014). In addition to what we have already brought up, Doornick and Knippenberg (2003) taking into consideration the already big proportions of diversity in the Canadian landscape, express that the assimilation strategy of the acculturation process cannot be taken into account as a viable plan of action. Finding methods of integration that can be successful to any given society is of importance. When integration models fail, phenomena that follow such as discrimination or xenophobia create pressures and challenges to both societal and individual level.

Nowadays, scholars seem to increasingly drive their attention towards the role the host society performs in order to achieve a higher level of immigrant integration. Some specifically focus on the prevailing society when it comes to the responsibility for integration (e.g. Penninx & Garcés Mascareñas, 2014). Others declare that to a greater extent integration is believed to be 'two way-process' in which ethnic minorities and the majority society are anticipated to adjust to one another and construct new, intercultural foundation for common identification and solidarity (e.g. Zapata – Barrero, 2012). At the same time, the integration process of ethnic minorities is of huge consideration crosswise European receiver countries, from which quite many have come across fierce debates on the 'integration failure' topics, turmoil within second generation immigrant youth leaving in marginalized regions, and the upwards trend of anti – immigrant right wing parties through the last few years. Penninx and Garcés Mascareñas (2014) admit the fact that

ethnic discrimination influences the opportunities that immigrants can have in order to participate on equal terms. When it comes to European Union approach, integration is a high ranked political priority. The General Directorate of Legal and Internal Affairs has described the mutual fundamental basis of integration, where it is characterized as a “*dynamic two – way process*” defined by common adjustment among immigrants and the majority society. The main domains of focus when formulating integration policies within the framework of European Union are political participation, employment, familiarity with the language and culture of the host society and equality when referring to accessibility of goods and services (Wiesbrock, 2013).

The interpretation of integration as a term, as a notion, as a feeling is pretty challenging due to the fact that there are many indicators and characteristics to be taken into account when one refers either to the individual or the collective. What is interesting though to keep in mind, when one studies integration nowadays, are two things. The first is that as a general notion integration is bridging cultural identities –dominant or not- with peaceful equal coexistence as a goal but it changes constantly because the society and generally the world that we move into are in an eternal move. The other important thing to bear in mind and this is where I am focusing -since the literature is vast- is the contemporary approach I already demonstrated in this chapter and that is the perception of integration as a ‘two – way process’ between the multicultural representative and the society.

5.1 Integration in Finland

Finland got its first Integration Act (493/1999) in May 1st, 1999; in full ‘*Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers*’. The main goal was to build up the notion towards integration, equality and freedom of choice from the immigrant side through measures that support them to receive the important knowledge and abilities they need to perform in society. Besides the political participation, being more specific when referring to the performance towards society one can mention the participation in the workforce, the establishment of the livelihood, and as well the welfare of asylum seekers after their reception. Simultaneously, one

of the objectives of that law was to provide immigrants with opportunities to maintain their mother language and their cultural and ethnic features (Heikkilä & Peltonen 2002).

The law outlined the accountability needed on behalf of different providers of integration work, and the liability expected from the immigrant side when participating in the society while at the same time provided economic resources in order to support integration. What else to be said is that it gave the right to an 'individual integration plan' to those immigrants who live in Finland less than three years, they are registered at a municipality, they are not fully occupied and receiving social benefits from this country. To be more specific, an example of a plan like that might combine a basic Finnish language course with occupational courses such as cooking or making crafts or it might have another approach with educative activities so that through them immigrants will find help to integrate into Finnish society. Such integration plans are created by the Regional Employment and Economic Development Centers (www.ely-keskus.fi) and local social offices. Later on, and due to law request municipalities were to work out local integration policies. The groups that in practice were the ones that called on the higher attention were refugees, accepted asylum seekers and Ingrian returnees (Gulijeva, 2003). The Act was not specific enough on other areas such culture, health and housing (Government Report, 2002). Nevertheless it is noteworthy to mention that on the local integration programs include both labor market policy and the providing from other services.

Some moments before the end of 2010, the Finnish Parliament welcomed a new *Law on the Promotion of Integration of Immigrants in Finland* (L 30.12.2010/1386) that became operational in September 2011. What emerged as a new attribute was that the target group of the law was different. Hence, instead of the 1,999's refugees, accepted asylum seekers and Ingrian returnees, the new law aimed in principle all aliens owing a valid residence permit.

By the beginning of 2012, the institution that is accountable on integration policies and programs that need to be financed is the Ministry for Employment and Economic Development. The web page of the ministry draws up the integration meaning with the following: *"Integration means that immigrants adapt to Finnish society and adopt new knowledge, skills and practices that will help them to actively participate to in their new home country's way of life. Some immigrants settle in easily, others need more time to adapt and more support of integration measures.*

Finnish or Swedish language skills and knowledge of Finnish society are important prerequisites for integration” (www.tem.fi).

Finnish authorities handling issues based on immigration and multiculturalism use the integration notion or ‘kotouttaminen’ in the concept of the integration act. In the act of December 1999, there is a feature that is important to be taken into account and that is the difference between the measures that are taken by the immigrants and the ones taken by the authorities. Thus, the former measures are described with the word ‘kotoutuminen’ while the latter ones with the word ‘kotouttaminen’. ‘Kotoutuminen’ relates with “*the personal development of immigrants, aimed at participation in work life and in functioning in society, and the preservation of culture*”, whilst ‘kotouttaminen’ relates with “*the measures taken and resources provided by the authorities to promote such integration.*” (L. 493/1999, §2). When referring to integration, social scientists seem to describe it as an ongoing process instead of something with rigid and steady limits and from there emerges the indication of a progressive path of action from which the immigrants can be adjusted to Finnish society (Valtonen 1997, Wahlbeck 1999). Alternatively, integration occurs during an interdependent cooperation among the immigrants and the representatives of the host society and that exclusively characterizes it as a ‘two-way process’, which first was defined by the government in the first Integration Act of 1999.

The clear depiction of the ‘two-way process’ was the Government Report that was given to the Parliament of Finland in 2008 (Finnish Government Report...2008). That Report accentuates sufficiently that integration in Finland is a ‘two-way process’ by stating that immigrants have to adjust to the host society which in turn has to adapt towards the immigrants as well. By what I have mentioned already, one can notice that this is adequately in accordance with the contemporary comprehension of acculturation characterizing that way of integration as the optimum consequence of the acculturation process and as Berry (1997) states, we should not mention integration if it does not function as a ‘two-way process’.

Lastly, in order to better explain to the reader the integration of the immigrants in Finland we can describe it briefly through three levels. These levels are the *individual*, the *organizational* and the *institutional* (Penninx & Martiniello 2004, pp. 142 - 143). The former refers to procedures that assist the immigrant in matters of accommodation, workforce, education and the general societal involvement towards the host society. Furthermore, it elaborates in accordance with the interest

and the needs of an individual but it does not take into consideration the collective ethnic identity. The second level, the organizational, is suitable when one wants to delve into collective interests. These can be found to the immigrant group ethnic associations, places of cultural and political representation. The institutional level concentrates on cultural and religious institutes that are planned for immigrants or institutes that are created and maintained by themselves, such as mosques.

From the city of Jyväskylä, the most representative example of a ‘two-way process’ integration is the multicultural center Gloria, located at Matarankatu 6 A1 (www.gloriajkl.fi). As described at their web page and based on personal observation, it is a multicultural center whose purpose is to promote different cultures through various activities, as well as seminars to educate about social concerns such as racism or prejudice. There are volunteers that can create and take part in activities with purpose values such as equality and respect to the individual. Gloria in my viewpoint is the depiction from laws to applying the policies in a local level. It is a space that operates as a bridge between the foreigner representative and the native one. Foreigners are able to represent their culture with plenty ways such as food, dancing, New Year celebrations and more, while Finnish people can participate, educate themselves and come across different people and civilizations.

In the introduction of this thesis I mentioned that foreigners cherish same citizenship privileges, such as health, with Finnish people which help them participate more freely in the society. In my perspective, the concept of citizenship is not only referring exclusively to laws or bureaucratic procedures, but also to “*symbolic and cultural inclusiveness*” (Stevenson 2005, p. 5) and individual perceptions on the issue. Since, I have demonstrated integration and integration in Finland, I reckon it is of great importance the fact that alongside the individual integration process the daily life can become more fulfilling when the society itself helps the inclusion. Thus, I will briefly and superficially mention forthwith and in this point of my thesis how citizenship is perceived in Finland.

5.2 Citizenship as a form of societal inclusion

In this sub-chapter I will shortly demonstrate the aspect of the notion citizenship, which belongs to the symbolic and cultural part of the term. Dahlgren (2000) describes that symbolic and cultural citizenships are features of citizenship that have symbolic dimensions of belonging and identity at their core, on the contrary with the legal elements and they contain the maintenance of individual traditions and language inside the societal space, along with connecting the common good with the demands of any given minority.

Caponio (2014) explains that the local dimension of citizenship might consider to be of importance in the policymaking dimension in current host countries, since it can be recognized as a feature of membership at a local level in a community and adopt a social notion. She continues mentioning that *“it is up to national laws to draw the boundaries between the citizens and non-citizens and to decide under which conditions the latter may aspire to become members of the national community”* (Caponio 2014, p. 8). Martikainen et al. (2012) characterize the Finnish integration policy and projects as extensive *“since the comprehensive social security system with its social insurance, social services, and welfare arrangements is available to all immigrants settling on a permanent basis”*. They carry on elaborating that Finnish social policy *“has been developed within the frame of social citizenship”* and is comprehended as *“the operationalization of social rights that focus in a substantive way on programs and services in the areas of health, education, housing, the labor market, and social and welfare services”* (p. 134). Thus while considering the above, the legal and participatory challenges on the Finnish ground are considered to be participatory and welfare providers, for through them foreigners can cherish same advantages as natives and contribute to a better quality their integration process, leaving the citizenship status on the level of a bureaucratic procedure.

Concluding, in this sub – chapter the Finnish immigrant integration process was presented mainly through the policies of the country and emphasis was given towards the ‘two-way process’ integration character of Finland which means that both immigrants and the receiver society are working towards the adaptation and coexistence of both sides. What I also mentioned shortly, is the inclusive citizenship concept of Finland which allows people having the same societal rights. What comes next are rather superficial but out of importance depictions of some examples of the challenges of integration process in a society that turns from a homogeneous

nature to an ethnic one, and these are multiculturalism and difference through the existence of ‘the other’. Also, in the interviews the reader will notice that the individuals are asked to share the challenges they face in Finnish society. What is more to say is that my challenges part of theory will at the same time refer in Finnish society, since it is my case of study.

6. Challenges for integration

Multiculturalism, the nation state and ‘the other’

Recently, as I have already stated, the national communities appear to be increasingly at issue, due to the fact that concepts such as nationalism and similar ideas are facing challenges by the global phenomenon of migration and the rising diverse character of societies. To be more specific, it appears that *hegemonic imaginaries of homogenous and defined nations* are no more considered in that way and new theories depicting the character of the nations need to be enunciated (Howarth & Stavrakakis 2000, p. 15). Simultaneously, migration waves, inclusive policies such as integration and their consequences, multicultural societies and their time to come are also more and more under discussion. *“As a result of globalization and other global processes people, goods and money are expected to move more and faster than ever. At the same time, when actual individuals move and new groups of people and ideas encounter each other, and the more new influences there are, the more the ‘old’ or the ‘already existing’ paradigms within a society are challenged.”* (Pöyhtäri 2014, p.22). Grillo (1998) highlights this challenge by arguing that contemporary societies should find ways to bridge the differences that arise within the diversity of people and simultaneously preserve and operate properly the state.

One of the main aspects of multiculturalism is how close related is with presence, translated as the whole in which various cultures related to each other take place simultaneously (Clarke, 1999). Nevertheless, multiculturalism can create a series of challenging experiences that can contain racial or other discriminations that can range from language exclusion to discriminations in the working environment. Other types of challenges can be the importance that societies give

towards the local culture, which with its norms, values, cultural attitudes and more dominates and its adaptation is rewarded from the new society (Reich et al. 2010, p.395).

Meyers (2007) additionally supports that from his research *“a highly homogeneous culture, such as may be found in an ethnically undiversified nation with a dominant religion, and which as a consequence of its insularity has experienced little migration in the past, may have a lower threshold of tolerance than a more heterogeneous one, whose identity may have come to be founded on political rather than ethnic criteria”* (ibid, p. 24).

Concentrating on the challenges in Finland, at the end of 1990s, there had been question marks which started arising concerns based on the status of immigrant. Ikäläinen et al. (2003) who have assembled the discourses that were based on multiculturalism and integration state that the multicultural model in Finland allows the immigrants to cherish and hold their language and culture along with learning the native language and culture in order to perform sufficiently in the society. Nevertheless, Ikäläinen et al. (2003) stress out the need to take under serious consideration the multiculturalism arguments due to the fact they may appear as supportive but might hinder components of assimilation and nationalism. Many academics have discussed this very idea. Meyers (2007) additionally supports that from his research *“a highly homogeneous culture, such as may be found in an ethnically undiversified nation with a dominant religion, and which as a consequence of its insularity has experienced little migration in the past, may have a lower threshold of tolerance than a more heterogeneous one, whose identity may have come to be founded on political rather than ethnic criteria”* (ibid, p. 24).

Similarly, along with Finland’s turn from a homogenous society towards one with a multi – ethnic character, there is also a civic discourse concerning the rise of diversity something that leads to a challenging inclusion as Lepola (2000) mentions in the case a foreigner, for instance, wants to become Finnish. Speaking of diversity on a national level Martikainen et al. (2012) pinpoint the significance of the cultural diversity in policy by stating that even though the Finnish integration policy is constructed on three pillars – integration of individual into the host society and especially the workforce, the right of ethnic groups to maintain their cultural identity and the adjustment of the host society towards immigrants – there is a consensus among scholars that emphasis has given on the first pillar in the number of projects and financial cover while the other two have cherished less concern and financial resources. This has driven some researchers

to reach the conclusions that practical in Finland the integration policies “are more pragmatic than ideological and more assimilative than often presumed. The focus has mostly been on the integration of individuals, while support for communities has remained at a low level” (Martikainen et al. 2012, 140). Taking that notion in mind then the nature of multiculturalism instead of being participative would be what Clarke (1999) names managed multiculturalism. The above where some types of challenges that are created by the multicultural element in a space alongside with theory so that they will be more thoroughly be perceived.

It has been pinpointed that “immigrants” are simply the reflection of the societal ability to integrate any individual (Söderling 2001, p. 204). And when we refer to any individual we can also discuss about the personal experience and perception by the concept of ‘the other’ when it comes to the identity part of self. One identity aspect that is crucial for their composition is that identities always call for constitutive structures in order to come into existence. The formation of an identity indicates a “*difference*” structure, a delimitation of boundaries and outer limits of “*us*” in regard to “*them*” (Mouffe 2005, p. 15). When one attempts to comprehend ‘the other’, the perception of difference is of importance. Through each culture we receive descriptions and divisions of concepts such as good and bad, black and white and such. “*Through differentiation processes, order is created in the world. Differentiation and the ‘other’ that is inherent to this process are basic elements of human thought, with whose help we make sense of everything. Difference does not come into existence without the reality in which an individual is living, but, in construction of a difference, someone or something else – ‘the other’ – is necessary*” (Pöyhtäri 2014, p. 93-94).

The reason the concept of ‘the other’ was briefly placed here is due to the fact that societal challenges such as racism, stereotypes and such seem to start with the appearance of the different. The lack of ‘the other’ in a societal frame cannot help us understand differences or concepts such as multiculturalism. And as Staszak (2008) mentions “*opposing Us, the Self, and Them, the Other is to choose a criterion that allows humanity to be divided into two groups: one that embodies the norm and whose identity is valued and another that is defined by its faults, devalued and susceptible to discrimination*”

What follows is the last chapter of this thesis, which refers to the notion of hybridity or else the coexistence of cultures within the individual which creates a hybrid type of identity. I could have

placed this chapter next to the identity part of my thesis but I reckon that the reader will perceive it better after the theory of integration. To be more specific, hybridity appears after the individual encounters difference through integration processes. Since, in my structure I originally demonstrated the cultural identity followed by the integration process, it seems more appropriate to refer to hybridity as one of the outcome examples of integration process that alone is a process that has numerous impacts in the notion of self. Hence, the last and forthwith theory part of this thesis is an example of all these processes I have been referring to throughout these pages.

7. Hybridity

We live in a world that is characterized by change, and change creates movement. Movement population indicators can only show that the migration is a phenomenon which along with changes such as technologic advance is becoming more intense. Being more precise to the individual level, one will first investigate the cultural identity of the foreign individual that exists in a country. From the moment of the arrival, the foreigner will go through the acculturation process from which the part I have investigated is integration. Integration process appears to have numerous and constant impacts in the notion of self throughout the societal adaption and might hinder challenges for the person who goes through it. In this chapter I will refer to the coexisting balanced culture phenomenon characterized as hybridity.

The term hybridity has various meanings resting with the concept is used in. Generally, the word has a meaning which simply alludes to mixture, hence it can be used in numerous field of studies. When it comes to cultural criticism the term hybridity or hybrid cultural identity, is applied when mentioning the blending of cultures or the blending of some of culture's components such as race, ethnicity, and language (Kraidy, 2005). Initially, hybridity was introduced as a concept concerning to language and culture by Bhabha H.K. in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), which is a summary of his academic papers on culture from a postcolonial perspective. He demonstrates his extensive meaning of hybridity alluding to the in-between stage (p.5) where:

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of dominating through disavowal. Hybridity is the reevaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination (1994, p.159).

Yazdiha (2010) states that the theory was supporting the notion that both poles, colonizers and the colonized, are co-dependent in order to assemble a mutual culture and that the focus was to construct a new way of communication and means to define the identity of self and others. To be more specific, Yazdiha (2010) asserts that by analyzing the ways the hybrid can dismantle barriers inside race, nation and more, one can realize that hybridity can empower groups that feel marginalized and eliminate labels that are used for subjection. Hence, hybridity *“can be seen not as means of division or sorting out the various histories and diverse narratives to individualize identities, but rather a means of reimagining an interconnected collective”* (Yazdiha 2010, p. 36).

Bhabha (1994) has already stated that hybridity should not be considered to be a third theoretical term that will smooth the tensions among cultures. So, to conclude, the notion of hybridity emerges when there is concurrent appearance of various and non – essential identities. As an idea, hybridity alludes to the diverse character of each separate identity. As I have already mentioned in the identity chapter previously, there is no purity when one refers to identity since each is a mixture of components that derive from different roots. In this thesis, I used the notion of hybridity not only because I wanted to demonstrate through theory the mixture and the balance of cultural worlds within an individual but also because it has relevance to my research part. In the research part, I interview foreign individuals that have spent some time wandering around Finnish culture and it was interesting to me to seek for the use of hybridity in society. In other words, I want to investigate whether the individuals are using this ‘new’ gained through integration process self in order to contribute in the society that they live in. Hence, what follows is the research part of this paper that through my theories the reader can be in touch with the idea and the form of the interviews that have been conducted and the outcomes that come after it.

8. Methodology

8.1 Research preparation

My case study is represented by the societal perception of seven female immigrant individuals living in Jyväskylä, Finland. The initial contact with the research group was established through a Facebook page called ‘Foreigners in Jyväskylä’, where I posted that I was looking participants for my master thesis research interviews concerning their life in Jyväskylä. The interviews were anonymous, though the sample was selected with the respect of migrant status, gender, different ethnic background— except the two Iranian women whose choice was based on the fact that one of them wears the Islamic religious scarf and the other not-, age differences, different occupations and reasons for accommodating in this city. Concerning the migrant status, I chose to concentrate on immigrant women whose choice was to relocate in this part of Europe. More to say about the focus on the female gender is that it limits the research towards a more homogeneous group rather than a mixed one. Furthermore, making reason about the longevity in years of their accommodation in this city, I tried to wander around an overall of five years so that it sets a similar time basis background whilst the challenges are still common such as the small amount of winters that one has gone through and is not used to their concept yet. Also, the fact that I am a female immigrant in the same city as well plays important role on my choice on this type of research group concerning the fact that the idea of this paper came through personal observations of this society. When it comes for the reasons they live in this city, I tried to select different occupations, reasons for relocation and different cultural representatives so that the perception of the integration could be given more spherical, while at the same time for the age I chose to have the variance of a decade – 25-34 years old. Summing up, this thesis is an individual perception of the society of Jyväskylä, as witnessed through seven female immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds with their age ranking from twenty five up to thirty four years old, accommodating in the city overall five years, and for different reasons each. The seven participants were in depth interviewed individually with open ended questions. Hence, this is a qualitative research which will be demonstrated and analyzed forthwith.

8.2 Qualitative Research as a Framework of this study

As stated already this is a study that has employed qualitative research as a method of approach. Qualitative research has been described as something specific in social sciences that on its groundings is based on observing people in their spaces, while interacting with them on their own boundaries (Kirk & Miller 1986, 9). Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) underline that qualitative research includes interpretive approaches by saying that “*this also brings out fact that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them*” (p. 3). This approach was really helpful to me, since the purpose of this thesis is to spotlight information on experiences, feelings, perceptions and furthermore understanding on what foreign individuals go through when contemplating on issues such as their individual identity, cultural identity or their integration process in Jyväskylä. Hence, qualitative research assists in supplying knowledge on the ‘human’ aspect of a topic and demonstrates the way people undergo a research matter (Mack et al, 2005).

Moreover, and due to the fact that this thesis is about the perception of the foreign representative in Jyväskylä, it is suitable to follow the phenomenological approach and that is because according to Moustakas (1994), it focuses on how individuals perceive the world from their perspectives and experiences. It also, accentuates on the outcomes of the experience of the researcher during the one on one interviews. I reckon that this approach fits with my study because the phenomenological principle will allow me to understand my study as a whole which is felt and lived by foreign individuals in the space of a specific reality. The overall idea behind each person in the research is to delve into their narrations in detail and comprehend fully what they have on their minds whilst keeping in mind the importance of the framework and the complexity of each individual outcome (Punch, 2009).

8.3 Research Methods

8.3.1 Interviews

In this thesis the data were collected through individual interviews, since qualitative, interview-based research is to highlight and describe one’s perception of life through their feelings, experiences, comprehensions and more (Schultze & Avital, 2011). So to be more specific, the

style of the interviews I used in this paper are in-depth interviews with open ended questions due to their flexibility. On my viewpoint, it is more preferable the fact that in this style of interviews there is an arranged interview pattern with questions but the flow of the interview and its development is based on the individual responses and reactions towards them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Furthermore, one should bear in mind that this thesis is based on the perception of the individual on the research topic; so the 'in-depth' interview style is the most appropriate, since as a method it triggers the curiosity towards the individual perspective (Mack et al, 2005).

In particular, the method I used to extract information from the research participants was in-depth interviews with open ended questions. The interview construct was established within a wide topic which was in relation with the perceptions of the individuals generally and more specifically on their cultural identity, their integration process, the hybridity part of their identity and as well as the challenges they face in this society as foreigners. The aim of these themes on the construction of the interview was to smoothly guide the participants with a logical flow through its duration. The language used was in English

8.3.2 Interviewees

As stated it already, it is a research achieved through face to face and one on one anonymous interviews by seven female participants in total. The interviews, depending on the length of the interviewee's responses, lasted approximately twenty minutes and the location was always neutral in silent places such as Jyväskylä city library or Jyväskylä University library and mutual respect was expected during the processes. In the current study, the criteria of the individuals' choice were different accommodation lengths in this city but overall up to five years, different cultural groups – except the two Iranian women whose choice was based on the fact that one of them wears the Islamic religious scarf and the other not-, age differences and different occupations. All of the participants were unknown to me and got in touch through the Facebook page called 'Foreigners in Jyväskylä', where I explained on a post that I was conducting my master thesis research based on the individual experience of integration process in this city. Forthwith I will demonstrate briefly the research participants by their ethnic background, age, occupation and time period being in Jyväskylä.

Table of research participants
1. Sri- Lanka, 28 years old, freshly graduated looking for occupation, 2 years in Jyväskylä
2. Slovenia, 31 years old, master student, 2 years in Jyväskylä
3. India, 33 years old, dentist, 1 year in Jyväskylä
4. Iran, 34 years old, researcher in the University, 6 years in Jyväskylä
5. Iran, 31 years old, nurse, 4 years in Jyväskylä
6. Greece, 27 years old, volleyball coach, 2 years in Jyväskylä
7. Kazakhstan, 25 years old, 3 years in Jyväskylä

8.3.3 Data Analysis

After the conduction of interviews I transcribed the data and reread them plenty times along my theory writing and the corrections of my supervisor so that I keep maintaining the original sense of the interview and analysis structure that I had in mind. Thus, qualitative content analysis appeared to be a useful method of analysis. Krippendorff (2004) defines in his textbook content analysis as *“a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use”* (p. 18). Being more specific, he explains that through the help of analytical constructs, the researcher is able to bridge the theoretical part with the answers of their research questions, since both are independent spaces, and generate outcomes (ibid). These constructs can be acquired from *“existing theories, the experience or knowledge of experts and previous research”* (Krippendorff 2004, p. 173).

Moving further to the method of content analysis I will refer briefly to the coding frame. The purpose of the coding process is to assist in organizing the big amounts of texts into less content categories while classifying the data accordingly (Weber, 1990). In other words, coding is pretty helpful in sprucing up the data by singling out key features of the theoretical part and relating them to the research questions or other questions letting the research to investigate the aspects of their choice. Schreier (2012) states that in order for this to happen, one needs to construct a coding frame which is *“the heart of qualitative content analysis”* (p.58). Thus, the analysis of my findings will happen through four key themes that move in accordance with the theory and

have already being presented in the beginning of the paper as sub-questions under the main research question. These are also separated in four different coding frames which are cultural identity, integration, identity and hybridity. Lastly, it is important to note as well that each of the quotes that I will use as the analysis goes on, is followed a code that depicts the origins of the participant. To be more specific, if the quote is succeeded by the code [Kazakhstan], it means that the statement comes from the respondent who originates from Kazakhstan. The cultural backgrounds of the participants vary and they represent six different countries as I have already mentioned and depicted them above.

9. Ethics and Validity

This chapter is about the ethics and the validity of this thesis. The limitations have already being mentioned in the beginning of the thesis. To begin with the way I contacted my research group through the Facebook page called ‘Foreigners in Jyväskylä’, I posted that I was looking foreign individuals to participate to my master thesis research interviews concerning their integration process in this city. The respondents were informed about the content and the rationale concerning the interview and behind the study and they agreed on the way their identities will be described on this thesis as long as anonymity would be kept. Furthermore, they agreed that there is going to be exposure concerning their opinions and ideas that they were about to share in the interview and after they consented with that, they were the ones who established the places and the times where the interviews were conducted so that they could feel more comfortable along the way. Before each interview, I made sure to inform them about the interviewing process and to ensure them about the fact that they could avoid responding in any question that would make them feel either uncomfortable or intrusive towards their private life. Another issue that the participants got to be informed about was the recording of the interviews and that they will be able to read the whole study when it is complete.

The informal conversations, such as the above, were not recorded therefore not everything concerning in this study is documented. In respect to validity of the study, I ensure that the whole interview and most of the contact I had as an interviewer is recorded trying to avoid making my research unreliable. According to Silverman and Marvasti (2008), validity is a synonym of truth

so as to ensure validity of the data. To be more specific, the fact that I have already mentioned that I had the consent of the interviewees for recording and transcribing the records is one of validity. Noteworthy is that the terms validity and reliability are related but not same. Their difference is that when an agent is valid it is to be reliable but on the contrary when it is reliable it does not mean that it should be valid (Sarantakos, 1998). Even though myself I am an immigrant student I tried to follow *neutrality* (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 300) concerning the validity and the reliability of the research process. I was expecting to mention language as a barrier for conducting the interviews but it seemed that all my participants were pretty eloquent and we managed to communicate perfectly in English even with the Greek one that we both speak the same language.

10. Findings

Here I will demonstrate the findings of my research that answer to the research question: ‘in which ways seven immigrant women perceive their socio – cultural experiences of living in Jyväskylä’. To be more understandable and have a natural flow I have divided the analysis of the findings into four different thematic that move in accordance with the theory and the sub-questions. These four themes are cultural identity, identity, the integration and the hybridity which have already been investigated on the theoretical part of this study. As I have already mentioned there are seven interviews that represent six countries. In the case of the two Iranian cases, on the coding I will demonstrate the one who has religious differences in her attire with the code [Iran (i)], and the second will be traditionally depicted as [Iran (ii)]. Lastly, even though I have referred above to the manageable way of communicating with English language, I will have to stress out the fact that these interviews were conducted in a language which is not the mother language of most of the participants – including myself as a researcher- and there are mistakes in grammar and syntax without losing the meaning of the context, as well with some pauses which will be represented with ‘...’ when and if needed.

10.1 Cultural Identity

This chapter answers with the research results to the sub-question ‘how do the participants view their ‘self’ in Jyväskylä?’

I choose to start by depicting the perception of cultural identity, since it is the initial representative feature of a foreign representative. As I have referred to already in theory, culture is the invisible glue that connects us and defines how we react in the society and is as well as something that we carry along with our identity. Noteworthy that as a concept, it hinders the sense of belonging that can be sustained by cultural groups which in their turn can assist or not in various ways the foreigner when in a new society. Hence, the questions who were asked, are correlated with the notion of cultural identity and will help me to answer the sub-question above are:

- * Who do you think you are in this society as a foreigner?
- * Do you feel you belong here or you need your own cultural groups to support you to feel belonging to this society?
- * Do you feel home? Why?

In this section of the findings there were some interesting answers which seem to sometimes differ and other times to agree. First of all, when it comes to acceptance by the society of Jyväskylä all the participants declared that they feel accepted. To be more specific, they used words such ‘treated equally’, ‘safe’ feeling, ‘not uncomfortable’. For example, one of the participants wears a religious scarf and she stated that she has not felt uncomfortable because of that:

I was always surprised when people come and talk to me and say it (is) like a hat not a scarf but they see it as stylish and they really like it and sometimes they want me to teach them how they do it so I didn’t have any bad feelings about it. [Iran (i)]

Also, there were positive findings such as the feeling of not feeling discomfort at all either socially or professionally:

When I am in the court, I am the Greek assistant coach but in any other social event or any other action, I don't think I have a label. I am just a woman working in Jyväskylä. Nothing special.
[Greece]

At the same time, there were ambiguous reactions on that even though there has been equal treatment so far, simultaneously the individual feels as an outsider.

I think I have been treated equally. I don't think I have ever come across a situation where I was treated unfairly or differently, but as to my position in the society I think I am an outsider. [Sri Lanka]

...you feel it that you are not very much in, integrated or accepted, like fluid in. Just being connected. Kind of separated. These are natives and these are not. But here it is quite obvious – these are native and these are not. Even if I would speak very fluent Finnish, I think there would be something that you would feel that you are not from here. [Slovenia]

As I said already, cultural identity has to do with the sense of belonging as well and whether the individual can feel part of a place or not. In the this cultural identity part of my findings I have asked the participants whether they feel this city as a home and whether they feel that they belong or instead they need their cultural groups to support them. The interesting part of these findings is that, for different reasons, all of the participants consider Jyväskylä as their home

Yes, I do feel like home because if I talk about the countryside in India it's just the same, how it is here. Only difference is, I don't have my family here but it's still fine for me. I don't see any problem living here. I'm actually happy. [India]

Besides one that has mixed feelings due to the fact that she feels somewhere between two worlds.

What is a home? I don't know how you would define home. I feel like stuck between Kazakhstan and Finland. Like my one leg is there and the other is here. I am someone like a mix. I try to take the best from the both worlds but I think I am such a person that I need a change of scenery and now I consider both places home but not like my final home where I would want to create cozy atmosphere and really establish myself there. [Kazakhstan]

But even though every participant feels comfortable and when established in this environment, the reactions are different when the interview moves on to the actual belonging in the society. Not only the concept of home and the coziness that it offers. When we refer to interacting in the society or cultural groups, it seems that when they exist, cultural groups are of a lot help in this different environment and society not so welcome or at least approachable. So, some of them

feel that they do not and cannot belong in the society either because of the not so expressive dominant culture or because Jyväskylä as an urban environment does not offer the same opportunities in comparison with bigger cities.

so, I don't grow roots here because I need a bigger city. But, what would definitely made my experience nicer and more fulfilling is perhaps if I had a group of likeminded artists or filmmakers with whom I could collaborate and create projects [Kazakhstan]

Is not their culture's problem, is what they are that I cannot feel part of it. I don't feel I belong to this culture. I am looking for maybe more outgoing, more expressive culture. [Iran (ii)]

It seems that the participants are aware that their experiences are personal and they avoid generalizations to bigger groups for generating outcomes. They appear to understand the fact that the personality and the way a person perceives the reality is unique. Hence, there are comments that they have completely personal and opinions and even though I demonstrated two that they feel because of their personality or personal preferences towards an art, there are also the ones that again based on their personality they cannot give clear answer to whether society has accepted them because they are pretty confident and sure that they can thrive in any context:

I think I belong everywhere so I think I have a little bit of a different concept here. I have been here for a long time and I take what I like from this society. I take it and I really like it. Having my own peace, growing independently, proving myself that I can achieve things. [Slovenia]

We can just do the slightest moderations and just continue to live the way you are. Who is coming and stopping you? You are not supposed to do this...it's not that. It's that you have to be able to put up the things you want to do and it is just managed by you. It's not like someone orders you to do something it's never like that. I'm actually seeing many of my Indian friends who move abroad, who are not really comfortable living there, complaining about the weather, people and the system. I don't see any point in that. So, for me it's fine. If I like being a Finn, if I live here for couple of more years, if I am fine with the culture, I will adapt to the culture. If I am not fine, I will still be like myself or way we live in our countries. [India]

Besides the ways that people think and how confident they seem to be in this or in any given society, there are also some that have the opportunities to be parts of their cultural groups and as they described them, they feel them like umbrellas that they keep the rains of distance from the Finnish culture away. In these individuals appear to enjoy moments of nostalgia and sharing cultural traits and habits as well as the language. They also play the role of the family of which the distance that they have seems to be of value for them, hence they find ways to replace it with the emotional support of their friends.

I always think that having support from the Iranian groups in here, it really helps because we don't have our family here, so how we treat each other is like member of our family – not just a friend. So, I think that it's really the emotional support that we have from Iranian groups. [Iran(i)]

I have the feeling of belonging but sometimes I think that Finnish people are quite different from me, so I need some support from the Greeks here in Jyväskylä just to, you know, go out, have some fun in the Greek way and share experiences that are common and speak in my language [Greece]

Overall and to answer how they perceive their cultural identity, it seems that the participants feel in Jyväskylä happy, homely and comfortable. It seems that this society applies in what Baumeister & Leary (1995) demonstrated that an individual feels in social contexts and that is included, accepted and supported by others in various social contexts. In fact, they all cherish the freedoms of expression, existence and behavior but at the same time they find it difficult to feel belonging. They all mention the language as a drawback that alludes to the term of salience, which I will demonstrate on my findings. Of importance is that they seem to acknowledge the fact that it is as well personal the how much you feel connected to the society. For example, as it has been demonstrated already, if one feels confident about their personality, then is difficult to feel excluded or not belonging in a societal scheme. As well, in the findings there was the existence of cultural groups. Wherever there can be found a cultural group, the participant has declared that she takes part in and feels emotional cover and perfect communication.

10.2 Identity

This chapter answers with the research results to the sub-question 'How have the various challenges contributed in the sense of belonging?'

I continue my thematic with the title 'identity', which depicts out of three questions what type of personal challenges the participants have faced in Jyväskylä from their arrival up the moment of our meeting. The questions that I asked the participants were the following:

- What challenges have you faced since your arrival? Have they been solved or are there any still ongoing?

- Do you think you are being treated as equal concerning anything special from your background e.g. cultural background, skin color, nationality or anything specific?
- How do you deal with the stereotypes? If there are any.

In this section, the participants highlighted their personal challenges in this society throughout the process of their accommodation. I wanted to see if and how their answers were going to differ from one to another to only discover with a great surprise that there were parts that all of them agreed and had felt the same things. To be more specific, as main challenges were the weather of the country with its dark cold winters:

...the darkness...! I have problem with the darkness in the winter. I just feel like I have to be at home so I normally come home sooner than normal days and I don't like to be in society when it's dark outside. I think that these nights you have to come back home. So, this was my feeling at the first but after two three years I got used to it. [Iran (i)]

...and the weather. Now I don't expect any joy from this. It's something that you have change your attitude because you cannot affect the weather. Only you can affect how you feel about it. [Kazakhstan]

...and the language:

The most challenges I faced since I came here were mostly practical about the language and the weather... [Greece]

Where in most of the cases it seems that language plays important role concerning the well-being of the participants as well. Given the fact that they lack the skills of Finnish language, it seems for them really difficult to perform professionally, create networks or even mingle with the local society:

The first challenge when I arrived here was finding a job because I needed to work, to earn money. I did not have a big saving or anything and I was ready to do whatever job it is. I spoke English and then, there should be something I do, like cleaning and I focused on cleaning job. Not more than that. And I had already so many degrees like chef degrees or hair dressing degrees internationally translated and wherever I would go they would ask me: "do you speak Finnish?" And I was saying no, so (the answer was) "ok we cannot give you a job". And even about cleaning was the same and I was like: "what is wrong with cleaning? I don't want to talk to anyone. I just want to clean!". But this was also challenging, so it took me nearly six months from

the moment I started looking for a job, very actively, to get a job and that was very challenging. [Iran (ii)]

...professionally I begin to doubt because I have this feeling that employers prefer to hire someone local even if it means that I would have the same qualifications or something. Just, not that they are being racist or something. Is just more convenient and it saves them more trouble if they just hire someone local. And I have this feeling that's what happening and is because I am not from here. [Sri Lanka]

I was just looking for a part time job, I had to do along my studies and that is still a problem here, I think. (Because of) the language I think. And I got the feeling that the people here are used to have so many students in the town and they act very aggressively, against you not to employ you. You have to be specific. Specifically know the language, specific with the profession and so on. There is no such opportunities that they would just try to help you as a student to maybe have a job along your studies. [Slovenia]

As challenges there were findings for positive things that come up, they find the individual unexpected and they create some tension. In this situation there is the example of individual independency:

Well, I think that there were challenges I was conscious of and there were some that I wasn't. For example, maybe one the challenge of maybe independency. That here people are expected to be more independent than in Kazakhstan and more in own bubble. That was a challenge and I'm on my way on dealing it. [Kazakhstan]

Moving forward, concerning the feeling of equality they receive from society, all of them admit that they feel equally treated in general. The only inequalities that they mention repetitively is the not equal feeling on the professional side of life. They highlight and continue what they were mentioning before. That without the Finnish language skills, there is a professional barrier that gets created initially and that there is also one more with Finnish people and personal relationships.

...my knowledge of Finnish language is not very good. It's ok but not good to a point where I would go and socialize with Finnish people only. It's mostly international. I can't really engage to conversations on a level that I'd like to. So, mostly the people I communicate with and the language on is (with) mostly international folks here and English. [Kazakhstan]

...of course you have individual cases where you probably maybe were rejected in the office or you call somebody, an employer and you started speaking English, they would hang the phone on you. [Slovenia]

I feel equal in the society or in other places but the fact that I have this language problem, then you don't feel that you have been treated equally because there is this problem with me that I always compare. What would I do if somebody, if for example a foreigner would come to my country what would I do? And then the answers are so different with what I see here so it affects the way I judge maybe. [Iran (ii)]

Lastly, evaluating them as challenges I searched for the existence of stereotypes because my research group appears differences from the Finnish environment either they are attire based, natural characteristics or even nationalities that have been playing on the news a lot. What my findings depicted was that generally people in this society do not use stereotypes to stress out some different natural characteristics, except in one case where the participant looks Asian and people expect from her to behave accordingly, such as to be silent.

I think because of the way I look people think and see me as an Asian and there are certain stereotypes about Asians like quiet, obedient, maybe miniature. So, I'm everything (but) not that because I'm not miniature and I am not very quiet. [Kazakhstan]

What was interesting though was another level of stereotypes that appear. These are created by the misconceptions which are created by the lack of education or critical information of news on a national level. For example, both of the Iranian participants stressed out the fact that people constantly poke them with the wrong information or picture about the country they originate. This may create frustration, considering it as something that may appear constantly or at least on a quick pace.

...you sit around the table to eat and then they start talking: "oh which center are you from? Which place are you from?" and then I say (that) I'm from this center and I am from Iran. I have seen some people stop talking. But also, I have seen some people who come sit with me and start asking: "so are you Muslim? Is there war in your country? How are your people? Is it true that is like this and this and this?" And then you need to explain over and over again. "Do you have universities? Why did you come to Finland if you have universities in your country? Can you study in your country?" And I'm just like: "come on! As a nation you are Finnish. If you have any questions why don't you go and do a research? You are educated woman, you are a nurse and you don't have this information? Ok, go and search for it! They say: "oh but we follow the media and what we get from the media here is so different. So that's a problem for me. That's not acceptable for me really! A lot of misconception for me. [Iran (ii)]

And it seems that the national information makes institutions as well careful with their bureaucratic procedures. In the case of Greece and its financial crisis, it seems that the

procedures are more detailed when money is involved, no matter if it is a country that belongs to the European Union.

...once I had a problem with someone that I had to pay something in the bank and they were just asking me for a lot of papers to support the fact that they will be able to give the money and it was because of my nationality. [Greece]

When referring to the reason behind the notion that mainly misconceptions create stereotypes is because education offers the knowledge that destroys their existence while the lack of any previous knowledge on a subject cannot generate any as the participants stated, due to the fact of the lack of previous information.

Seriously, I haven't come across any because most people haven't heard of where I come from because is just a tiny island. The closest thing they can think of Sri-Lanka is India. So, I think that girls get away easy [Sri Lanka]

Well, because I am from Kazakhstan, people don't know much. That's the thing. Because they don't know much about Kazakhstan, so they don't have stereotypes. If I was from China, then yes because China is more known to the world. So, I think I'm in a unique position because, first of all, I am from Kazakhstan so people don't know much. So, they can't really use the information to create stereotypes. Because they haven't experienced many Kazak people. Quite often I hear that I am the first Kazak (they meet). [Kazakhstan]

Summing up, it seems that the challenges of the research participants overall find common grounds. All of them agree that they have had problems with the weather, the language in mainly professional but also interpersonal level. They all feel that they have been treated equally from the society but some are finding it hard to destroy the professional barriers. One more challenge that arose and created frustration to the foreign representatives are the misconceptions that create stereotypes and the social performance of Finns which seems to create distance and turn the individuals towards their cultural groups or other international friends making some of them feel marginalized. Speaking about stereotypes and the amount of information one acquires on a specific moment, I want to refer to Mager (2011) who mentions that ethnic stereotypes are generalized overstated beliefs concerning a group, received passively and mutable to change. Furthermore, it seems that in some situations, like the Iranian one, some stereotypes create frustration while in some others they produce acceptance feelings like in the Indian participant's

case. That seems that happen because as Șerbănescu (2007) stated, a stereotype can consider to be an alternative way of perception and it can regulate our social interactions by accepting and categorizing unknown people by generalized group characteristics. In a way, stereotypes can work either in a positive way or a negative one. The reasons I put so much attention into this idea is that it seems that when we speak about ‘otherness’ and difference, the generalized beliefs are to accompany any judgement.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) spoke, besides the sense of belonging to the social world, about the self – esteem and the feeling of pride that derive from social groups such as social class, family, hockey team and others. The constant struggle to empower the personal self – esteem along with the group’s status divides one’s world into ‘us’ (in-group) and ‘them’ (out-group). They continued also, by pinpointing that the in-group and out-group perceptions of reality can create discriminations or generally feelings of discomfort when it comes to the individuals who try to reinforce their self-image. Examples of such group ‘conflicts’ can be seen in gender (males and females), social class (middle and working classes), and in our case in some interviewees and the attitude they carry along the process of their integration. It is pretty common and global to face challenges, when in a new place, that can impact one’s identity in many levels during their first years in leaving in a host country. In other words, *“crossing between cultures and socio-geographical locations, entails venturing into a whole new field of action”* (Valtonen 2008, p. 15).

10.3 Integration

This chapter answers with the research results to the sub-question: ‘How do the participants experience the process of their integration?’

Similarly, I continue with the demonstration of my findings by depicting the perception of the integration process of the research participants. As I have already said in the theoretical part, each foreign individual has a three year personal integration plan. And I wanted to find how my participants used it in order to integrate in this society. Moving forward I have also questioned them how they feel the society acts towards them, following the ‘two-way process’ of integration that is applied in Finland. There is one question that is about citizenship and this is because I

have considered it in my theory as an example of social inclusion, especially when speaking about Finland, a country where a great many of foreigners can cherish same benefits as locals. The questions I asked them are the following:

- Do you feel that Finnish culture can or has accepted the characteristics of your culture or the characteristics that make you special? If not, why?
- Have you attended integrational programs? If yes, do you feel they have helped you in being a part of the society?
- Have you applied or got your citizenship? Yes-> how the procedure was? / No -> why not?
- What kind of activities have you done / took part in to contribute or connect with the new society?

On the first part of my findings, I will demonstrate the perception these individuals appear to have concerning what they receive from the society they live in. To be more specific, they mention that they feel that Finnish people are open minded and that they have accepted them and their cultural differences others fully others less.

Yes, for sure. I am not sure if it is a cultural thing but I feel like, personally, I am quite outgoing and really loud. Probably a very contrast to what general Finnish culture was supposed to be of Finnish people are supposed to be. I feel like I am a bit pole opposite but people have been quite positive and no one has ever tried and told me to turn it down or anything like that. Even when I go for these work programs or whatever, whatever compliments are I receive are on the few qualities that make me stand out, so yes. [Sri Lanka]

Sometimes even Finnish people seem to try, they do not do it fully so that creates the responsibility of the worker to educate them in matters of understanding the difference:

I think they have tried and maybe they haven't accepted it fully but comparing to the background of Finnish culture and the number of foreigners who have lived here, I think it's going on a right direction to accepting different cultures but I still feel it's not fully a multicultural society. For example, at work they have the immigrants from same countries as I come from, Afghanistan, Iran and other places, Iraq maybe and the challenges the youngsters have, (by) the efforts of my colleagues or the workers in the center (who) try to force or make the youngsters suddenly integrated and suddenly follow what they want them to do here. They don't consider sometimes their background. That they come from this background. And I as a worker there have this kind of responsibility as well to educate my colleague that this (for example) is their culture and because

of this he behaves like that. He doesn't want to disrespect you, but this is part of his culture. For example, if he eats on the floor, he doesn't want to disrespect you that you are sitting on the table, or if he eats with his hands is not disrespectful. Is part of his culture. And they try to educate youngsters like: 'oh you cannot do that. You cannot sit at the table like that.' And this comes very challenging for the youngsters. It creates confusion and conflict as well. Because they don't know. They really don't know what is going on in our countries. They don't have enough multicultural information.[Iran (ii)]

Another finding that can seem interesting is that the first Iranian interviewee stated that here the society accepts her more than in England where she used to live in the past. The interesting part of this finding is that England considers to be older in the case of multiculturalism and one could expect that there would not exist behaviors such as acceptance. But of course, this is just a thought of something that obviously requires further investigation.

I think yes because I have experienced living in England also and I didn't feel welcome there. I really felt welcome here and I saw the difference. In Finland people are really much different from where I experienced and they are like more open, they accept different kinds of cultures, they respect. So this was really important for me. [Iran (i)]

Moving forward to the involvement in integrational programs, I found out that only one participant was attending the official unemployment integration program and what she shared about this was:

I am still in the Finnish integration course. It's from the unemployment office. I think it's quite useful for me but I will first say the positive things about it. So, it's a very good experience for an immigrant where you get to meet with other different people who are also like you. I mean, who think that they don't belong in this culture and who have tough time sometimes getting along. So, it's a good thing to understand everyone and know how it is to live here. [India]

Some of my research participants have not attended any integrational program but from their own they are integrating in the society; one by volunteering while other in professional integration programs

...some extracurricular activity that by itself integrates you in the society but integration was not the goal. For example, I attended this 'my immigrant's life'. It was a project within I made a movie, a documentary which was viewed by couple hundreds of people and that gave me some contacts and some feedback so I felt like it made me part of the society. Then, I have another film club activity and that was really nice because people there are very friendly. Oh, the Finnish people from there have I think they have accepted me as well, I keep forgetting. Then I have participated in some volunteering form in Salmiranta refugee center. [Kazakhstan]

But, the professional ones (integration programs) at least, well they helped me understand maybe more about the labor market and how it is different and how you can navigate through it. Also, helped to make few networks. [Sri Lanka]

Others said that, for their reasons, they have not attended any integration program or something else that could have connected them to the society.

I don't think I have been in any integrational programs. The only thing I can say that were some local events, like the street food event festivals or some local events that are volunteer in the university [Greece]

I have not attended any. I got to Finland by starting with school. I have my two years of Finnish language there. When I was still studying, I already got a job in corporations and that was another form of integration. But when it comes to a program for integrating, I have not experienced that, so it is a bit different for me to say. I think it was ok. [Slovenia]

No, I haven't participated in any actually rather than like seminar, conferences in the university, workshops but not anything related to this. [Iran (i)]

Concerning the activities that these people have done to take part into the society, there were findings that they were stating that they have done nothing much besides actions that are connected either with school or because still in the beginning of the process.

They were all connected with the studies mostly on the topic of sustainability. There were voluntary activities that students, my classmates, maybe we came up with some projects. But otherwise, no I was not a tutor or anything like that. I haven't done anything else. And then those individual projects. [Slovenia]

The most activities that I took in to contribute in a social way were, while I was in the university, and it was mostly about when the conferences (were) taking place in Jyväskylä, where they welcome new people and share this view that the university have to include every different culture and people from all around the world. So, it was mostly the volunteering part of the situation. [Greece]

Honestly, I don't know why but I haven't done much because the first two months I was really feeling lonely because it took some time to make friends here and I have been going everywhere, holding the map and marking the places. Then, we started the school so I haven't had the chance to do much... [India]

of course there were answers of more context with professional contributes and volunteering participation

...the volunteering for the Salmiranta camp, I was one of the organizers for the one week summer camp for the kids there and we were going to play. I think that contributed. Then I also was picking up trash in the university area, then I helped organizing the Jyväskylä student Art Festival. And also actually I was assisting teaching film making for people with certain mental conditions and refugees. That's a project called 'Collective Light' where we do films. What else? I really don't remember but I think there is more. But what I really would want to do, I would really want to contribute. Actually in Finland I realized that I have the responsibility of a person as citizen because of the way Finns behave towards their own country. I think that in its best example it is very inspiring. [Kazakhstan]

I worked for this one project in the university, where they were searching about the immigrant refugee crisis. So, essentially my work was to interview people, citizens of Finland for this in English of course. Which I did. I got paid and I paid taxes so I guess that's a way of contributing. And then, I haven't really done much volunteering. I mean most of the things I have done have been ___ of university so I did a few 'adapting to Finland' volunteer training sessions for a few new students who came through Isaac. So, I have done that but I have been involved in a business project where we came up with staff training model for a local company in Jyvaskyla. So I have been involved in that sense but I haven't helped out on children or anything like that. [Sri Lanka]

Making a small stop to the example I mentioned earlier from citizenship, I have to say that none of my participants have applied and got their citizenship either because they wait to complete years needed or because they have not decided yet:

I can apply at the end of July because we are not from European region so we have to stay here I think for 5 years and we have to have A-visa time so you can work full time here. I think it should be 5 years or something like that. I have to apply from police in July then they will decide. [Iran(i)]

I haven't applied for a citizenship yet, because I don't know how long time I'm going to stay here. I just want to see how things work with the team and what career development is ahead [Greece]

I realized that you as a citizen you have to think not only about yourself but other people as a society. That you are a part and then you can contribute more. [Kazakhstan]

From the side of the participants and their personal effort to connect with this society my results imply the fact that the process towards the adjustment relies solely in the individual perspective and willingness. There were for example answers that were saying that they feel like trying to get connected and others that they think they should do more. Overall, they appear to have an active

action towards the introduction of their culture to the native one, volunteering in various institutions, participating in the University activities, and even integrating others to the society. On the theoretical part, I have demonstrated that Finland has a ‘two-way process’ integration policy since the Government Report of 2008, where both natives and foreigners are making equal effort to approach each other. From the Finns’ side, the results demonstrated that they have accepted the interviewees and their cultural characteristics, while at the same time they get characterized as open minded and tolerant towards cultural differences. As well here we can see that in these interviews the model is working both ways in most cases while all the individuals can “*participate fully in the economic, social, cultural and political life of a society while also being able to retain own identity* (Valtonen 2008, p. 62).

10.4 Hybrid identity

This chapter answers with the research results to the sub-question: ‘How do the participants perform socially in Jyväskylä?’

Hybrid identity of an individual, as I have demonstrated in the theory, refers to the fusion of two or more cultures in any given individual who has encountered them. This balance is something that is constantly under maintenance since we live in a world mutable to change and we as individual change as well with the reception of many information daily. What I tried to investigate with the hybridity part of my questions is in which ways the foreign representative feels, that their new acquired after a certain process self can perform with themselves and towards the society accordingly. Hence, the questions that came up after these thoughts were:

- Have you kept the aspects of your culture or do you think Finland’s culture has had any effects on yours? How?
- Do you feel that you use your new cultural identity (if there has been change) in a productive way to yourself and to society respectively?

The path towards adjustment and coexistence in a society is personal and even if as individuals we apply in many and share common identities with others, we still keep our uniqueness and based on our actions we are defined. Thus, on the way of searching how the research group feel

about themselves and whether they can or do use their hybridity, findings were again different and I will demonstrate them now. First of all, all the participants stated that they have kept aspects of their cultural background such as religion,

My religion – I have kept it, my personal life I have kept it [Iran (i)]

traditions,

I have kept also several things of my culture: all the traditions that we celebrate or the things we always do with our Iranian group that we have here... [Iran (ii)]

and food which also considers to be a component of culture:

My Finnish friends from here are used to me cooking for them Greek food and sharing food something that they were not familiar with and they really like it [Greece]

And I still like the Indian food and I have all the spices we use in India. Brought them with me or whoever visits India, we have a big list to get the spices from there. [India]

Furthermore, there were also answers of what these individuals have gained from or replaced with the Finnish culture and these are ranging from values such as sense of society, environmentalism, independency, logical thinking, respect the personal space of others and more up to practical issues such as different style of clothing.

If I talk about the traditional, ethnic dressing, I still love wearing the Indian dresses. But, is not comfortable here. I use a bike so I cannot wear a sari or (another type of clothing) the long flying things. I can't go on a bike. But, otherwise, if we have some kind of a gathering of course I would prefer to wear. [India]

So, the things like having a structure, logical thinking, having thoughtful speaking, not rushing with your words, being thoughtful of what you say, taking time in observing, analyzing...so all things that you think and you learn. I remember back home I was very impatient. I came here I started queuing in the line. I could never queue in the line back home. Here, I queue in the line for four hours. It is not a problem for me. These are the things that you learn here and if you take them you start to become the person you want to be. These ten years that I am here, I have done a lot. I became more patient. I am more quiet. I am more thoughtful. I do not rush doing things in effect because of the emotional state. I try to balance my emotions. [Slovenia]

But, coming here made me find the notions of things I felt before but I didn't know. For example, now I have a clear view about myself and how I changed. I have become more independent, I develop critical thinking here. I am not the best student and I didn't aim to be. That's was not my priority and I think even with that I am really grateful to my teachers that they made me review things that before I took as granted. For example, how people are represented in the movies,

advertised, things that I haven't seen before and now I see them. I have become more well defined feminist in the sense that I've always felt like this. I have always felt that a woman is strong and I always had to prove it back in Kazakhstan even during my university studies. And the people I get the best with, the girls are the type that aren't very feminine, but they are strong and they believe in the value of woman. So, once I came here I realized that there is the word for it. Because, the word 'feminist' back in Kazakhstan has bad connotation. It's usually someone who hates men and these. So, I realize that there is different connotation is the word feminist and I also have become more responsible. [Kazakhstan]

Moving on, the last part of my findings is about the use of their hybridity. In other words, investigating how do these individuals who have been into the Finnish culture, have adjusted some characteristics in their cultural identity and can appear a blend of cultures, perform in the city of Jyväskylä. Here, I will demonstrate all the six answers I received. I will exclude the Indian participant because as she mentioned, she is in the very beginning of her integration process and she has not felt major changes in herself yet. And even if she has maybe she cannot distinguish them yet so that she can start performing accordingly towards the society.

Culturally, I still belong to my country and I don't know if I should be saying this or not but I don't really know much about the Finnish culture because no one is so fixed or rigid or anything. They are not so particular about anything. They have a different style and it's just ok to live however you want so nothing has affected me in that way. I am still an Indian from my cultural aspect. [India]

To begin with the feeling of reject that one participant has. She feels that she wants to contribute but is not able because of the lack of opportunities in the city.

I would really like to see more opportunities to do that here. I feel like I don't have opportunities here. That's the only problem. But I would like to do things more. Maybe we don't stand out that much; my culture, my country, and so on. Other nations may stand out more. They are more known for what they do. Here, I don't think I have any opportunity for doing that. [Slovenia]

Another participant stated that she has made a blend of skills that assist her in her interactions with the society and her professional life and as well she is trying to promote the Iranian culture in places such as the multicultural center Gloria so that Finnish people and other cultures can educate themselves more into their traditions and customs.

So you have to make some changes good of course because if you have bad ones you cannot survive in this country. But I think that the change I have made to my life, made my life easier and more productive especially in the workplace because I do research so it helped me a lot.

Two years now I am planning our Persian New Year in Gloria so this is a really good example introducing our culture and I have a table like the table we have in New Year's in my country. So I design everything and people come and see and they ask questions like "what are the symbols?" and we have music and dance and we really introduce our culture to Finnish people and other cultures. [Iran (i)]

Moving forward, the second Iranian lady shared that the area where she is focusing and feeling it as a personal responsibility, is the integration of the refugee youth in the Finnish culture:

I have learned so many things since I have started living and I try to mix that. For example, when I work, in my workplace I have to teach the youngsters. So, what I have learned from this culture and my background culture, I put the altogether and then that's the way I work. If I would come here zero and I wanted to teach youngsters how to live here that would be totally different from what I do now with my four years of experience here and getting used to the culture and knowing the differences of the culture. [Iran (ii)]

From the part of the Greek participant, the findings appeared that she is concentrated in two areas. Initially, when arriving in the Finnish culture, she noticed the intensity of alcohol culture and she is trying to alarm and educate people that alcohol should be part of the fun and not the main goal. One more of what she is doing is exporting Finnish culture when going back to visit Greece by informing her surroundings about Finnish stance in life.

Personally, I use them when I go home for example or when I communicate with people from my culture, in a different way, in a more open minded way, more effective way as a member of the society.

The only thing that is away from me is the binge drinking that the Finnish people do. It's something that is so far away from me that I will never do it but I try to help my Finnish friends not to do it. To go out and drink for fun; not to get drunk. [Greece]

Besides the volunteer performance and the societal involvement that I mentioned in the integration part, the participant from Kazakhstan feels also that she needs to demonstrate and aware people in Kazakhstan about Finnish culture, thus whenever she visits, she tries to share some components to her environment.

So, my parents they cut more food than needed and then the rest goes bad. So, I cut a little bit more than needed, but not as much as them. So, for them they view it like: what are you being? Greedy? But I explain them: no, that's how the guest can eat and the rest will go bad. So, it's a waste of money. So, that way I think how Finland has affected me.

But yes, I do use my new identity. Like, when I am back to Kazakhstan, I try to be more considerate than I was before [Kazakhstan]

Lastly and more officially with the form of a blog, is the way the last participant feels that she contributes to this society by exposing Finnish values to the world and creating awareness.

I blog a lot. I am like a real passionate blogger, so it's not for me about blogging every day but sometimes I do and I think that my mindset has really changed, when it comes to the liberal views in Finland and the way of thinking of being more compassionate even when it comes to very strong issues of... I don't know. I can't pick an example of my head. But I feel like even when it comes to relationships and etc; like the way Finland does it, I think these things have changed a lot the way I think. I guess I actively try to create awareness for whomever reads my blog and especially my friends or family who have never been to such a culture. I guess now they know more because of me and maybe their way of thinking has changed a little bit too. So, maybe in that sense I contribute. [Sri Lanka]

Wrapping up the findings on the hybridity part, it seems that the research group acknowledged the necessity of changes and the individuals have introduced some cultural components into their notion of self. Hybridity, which is the balance of cultural worlds inside a person. As an idea, it alludes to the diverse character of each separate identity. As I have already mentioned in the identity chapter on theoretical part, there is no purity when one refers to identity since each is a mixture of components that derive from different roots. We are all components of cultures that are others more and others less hybrids. Cultures are totally detached or even have distinguished limits. They are interconnected and related because we live in a world of communication, hence cultural identities cannot be pure (Bhabha, 1994). Out of these blends, we could see that there is a need for releasing them to the society either by performing actively by promoting cultures, volunteer, integrate others or by exporting Finnish culture and stance towards life, to the countries they come from or generally to the rest of the world as we saw with the form of a blog.

11 Discussion

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the socio-cultural perceptions of seven immigrant women living in Jyväskylä, Finland. The concept was to detect their acculturation process and coping mechanisms in Finnish society, which is culturally different from their backgrounds and finally answer to the research question of 'which are the socio – cultural

perceptions of foreigner individuals in Jyväskylä'. Furthermore, not only can one navigate through various conduct patterns that the interviewees have endorsed so as to integrate themselves, but also perceive the role that the society has performed in their socio-cultural perception. One more objective of this thesis is to provide further knowledge to the academic community concerning the integration perceptions of immigrants in Finland, and more precisely in the city of Jyväskylä.

The findings of the interviews have already been demonstrated in the previous chapter, so what follows is the discussion of issues that have occurred and they may need to be addressed. Through the methods used to collect my data I have been able to gain considerable insight into the different perceptions of seven foreign individuals, with whom we share a great many of common characteristics such as gender, longevity in years accommodating in this city and migrant statuses. To answer my main research question, which is about the socio – cultural perspective that foreign individuals have about Jyväskylä, I have divided this study into four different sub-questions which demonstrate this thesis into four parts- the cultural identity part, the challenges, the integration and the hybridity part. I have already in the previous chapter demonstrated this way of thought as well as the sub-questions. Similarly, I will move forward to the 'discussion' part of the thesis.

(i) 'How do the participants view their 'self' in Jyväskylä?'

This part alludes to the cultural identity. As I have already stated on the theory, cultural identity ascribes to a person's sense of self extracted from formal or informal participation in groups that instills and passes on knowledge, values, attitudes, beliefs, traditions and ways of life (Kim, 2002). Hence, it was of importance to get introduced with the participants. And what made it more interesting according to my viewpoint is that the cultural identity part of the interview is the fact that I had- through the interviews- the opportunity to navigate through the sense of self each individual has, concerning their ethnic identities while existing in an environment which is different from their backgrounds. Simultaneously, one can also see that sharing the same urban environment is the connection that they have among them, and of course the gender. But I have

already stated the gender was useful for the delimitations of the study and to make the research group more homogeneous.

So, based on the findings it seems that when it comes to the societal performance, all the research participants have stated that in this context they feel accepted as individuals. Personally, I found really interesting the notion of acceptance that the participants have. I reckon that I maybe expected a more diverse answer, since one cannot please everyone. But, this alone made me realize that Finnish attitude towards the multicultural encounter is one of respect. While scratching a little more the surface, it seems that the participants are not completely satisfied, even when feeling acceptance. The overall idea was the one of feeling acceptance from the society as in professional life, academic society and such but when it comes up to the interpersonal relations the findings were ambiguous.

It has been highlighted throughout the interview that the participants feel like outsiders, due to the lack of Finnish language. The language seems to build significant barriers when we think of daily relationships like friendships or finding a job. In the findings overall notion of this challenge was that the individuals while feeling welcome on the surface, they feel excluded on a secondary level. So, their perception is that they would like to socially mingle with the society but the language barrier is working as an anchor. There were also statements from some interviewees that they feel discriminated when seeking for a job and they cannot compete the Finnish speakers or the natives. And in this moment I would like to demonstrate the meaning of the term 'discrimination' because I have not included it in my theory. According to its most simple meaning, discrimination refers to unequal treatment of persons or groups. More specifically and Pager and Shepherd (2008), state that "*disparate impact occurs when individuals are treated equally according to a given set of rules and procedures but when the latter are constructed in ways that favor members of one group over another*" (p. 182).

Moving back to the findings of language, I have to say that they found me almost unprepared due to the fact that I expected more complex matters that may create wrong perceptions. the reason I am discussing the language challenge in this part of the discussion and not on the 'challenge' part, is because I have used it respectively on the theoretical section referring to it as 'salience', and also lacking something that important as language which is the basic means of communication, can affect ones perception of cultural identity and can easily feel misplaced or

mistreated. As presented in the theory cultural identity is composed out of changeable and stable elements. The term salience denotes this difference (Sellers et al., 1998). As situations and contexts in our lives change day by day some elements of cultural identity turn into more or less salient. To be more specific, they become more or less important and relevant in a short time. For instance, when a foreign student in Finland has to negotiate the terms of a job that requires language skills and a specific level of integration then he/she will instantly feel that at this specific moment of time that nationality is more salient than any other characteristics of cultural identity. Even when the circumstances change day by day, other elements of cultural identity remain essential – significant and relevant to an individual’s core identity in the long term. For example, the foreign student from before may feel that their gender is always at the center of his/her identity.

Speaking of gender and having already mentioned that I use gender in this research for practical reasons, it is also worth mentioning that when the individuals make reason about feeling equal they mean it, because no one shared any gender based experiences. More to say, about cultural groups is that on the process of collecting the research participants, it occurred me that three out of seven participants are from ethnic backgrounds that are not so often heard. What I mean by that is that based on my observation skills I have never heard of cultural groups from Slovenia, Kazakhstan, or Sri Lanka. That gave me the opportunity to simultaneously investigate what Kim (2001) as well did on how people adjust themselves whenever they come across cultural boundaries, especially when they move somewhere for long period of time. Indeed, the participants informed me on the process of the interview that they lack cultural groups but it seemed that it is not something affecting their lives. On the contrary, the three representatives from Iran and Greece stated that their cultural groups are the ones who help them withstand the challenges of this society because with them they can share emotions that they cannot express openly in Jyväskylä or other cultural expressions such as traditions that they share among them. It seems that it finds grounds on the fact that they are “*groups of belonging, which are extensions of family structure and supply the group’s cultural identity*” (Rouchy 2002, p. 205).

Overall and summing up, I will highlight that Tajfel and Turner (1979) spoke about the sense of belonging to the social world along with the self – esteem and the feeling of pride that derive from social groups such as social class, family, hockey team and others. They continued also, by

pinpointing that the in-group and out-group perceptions of reality can create discriminations or generally feelings of discomfort when it comes to the individuals who try to reinforce their self-image. Examples of such group ‘conflicts’ can be seen in gender (males and females), social class (middle and working classes), and in our case in Jyväskylä, how these immigrants perceive their reality in this society and how they picture the perception of the society towards them. So, based on the findings it seems that the perception of the research group about the context of their cultural identities in Jyväskylä is that they live in a society in where they have felt acceptance and respect as human beings on the overall societal level, but only on the collective. When it comes to more specific situations such as friendships or applying for a job then there seem to be problems which are identity salient related with language. Furthermore, one more finding out of my research is when there is lack of a cultural group, the individual does not feel lonely or desperate but in the cases we show the existence of a group, then the individual again feels complete but in the same time seems grateful that there is a cultural group to avoid loneliness. So after all, I wonder whether we truly need the support and the sense of belonging. Moving on, I will demonstrate the challenges part of my discussion.

(ii) ‘How have the various challenges contributed in the sense of belonging?’

This part of the discussion has to do with the challenges that the research participants have gone or keep going through their accommodation in this society and whether these challenges have contributed to their sense of belonging. One major challenge that these individuals have is the lack of Finnish language that I have already demonstrated under the previous sub-question. Another challenge that they all have mentioned is the Finnish weather and mostly its long dark days.

One challenge that was mentioned and I reckon it as important is the way Finnish people perform socially. In the case of the Indian interviewee, the lack of social skills were translated as rudeness. Finns have been stereotypically recognized and labeled as ‘shy’ people and this is something that can create misconceptions and distance from the scope of the sub-culture towards the dominant one. To be more specific, in the interviews there were many times comments with this type of description. Sometimes Finnish people appear to be distant and translated as socially

rude, and other times that they do not put effort into relating with foreigners something that it seems to have led the participants into either their cultural groups or towards international groups of people. This challenge, for example, comes in contrast with my personal experience as a foreign female immigrant. From my perspective, Finnish culture as a result of many factors- out of which weather is of importance- is a culture that seems to focus to the individual. My experiences witness that the native culture needs to be approached more into its own groundings. Since it is a culture that is changing lately into a multicultural character, maybe people are not yet fully prepared for such intercultural intensity when for many years they were used to a more specific way of life. On the other hand, this aspect of the Finnish culture can be translated- and that is why it has a place here- as a challenge nowadays. And this is because it can or may create barriers on a societal level towards the 'two-way' process of integration that Finland has been applying.

Furthermore, referring to equality issues, the participants claimed that they feel that they are treated as equals but some of them made reason about the misconceptions that people appear to have concerning their ethnic backgrounds. In the case of the Iranians for example, the society has been mostly misinformed about the situation in their country. This seems to frustrate them because they need to explain constantly to people the same information. For some reason, the participants seem to stereotypically expect from the Finns to be educated and smart and acknowledge the social and political performance of every country in the world. On the contrary, I reckon that is also risky for Finns to seek for political knowledge like the Greek case, if they do not intend to make a further research to the subject and reach their own conclusions, since they do not know the political ideologies of the individual they encounter that moment. One last comment that I would like to add on my discussion is that from the three participants that come from Kazakhstan, Slovenia and Sri Lanka, people have zero information hence no stereotypes. Besides the appearance features that make them look either Chinese or Indian, the participants made clear that when having no information, one cannot generate them. Moreover, on my behalf and more after the conduction of the interviews the way I perceive stereotypes is that they are being created and recycled due to the misconceptions we have. But, living in the era of information and global interdependence, one simply cannot master many knowledges. Hence, is natural to have misinformation about lots of topics and issues that happen in our lives and lead us and stereotypically take small or big decisions.

Wrapping up the challenges part, besides the major one which is the language and seems to influence the reality of the participants- without though affecting the perception feeling Jyväskylä as their home- more seem to fill the findings. One of them, is the social performance of Finns which seems to create distance and turn the individuals towards their cultural groups or other international friends making some of them feel marginalized. And lastly one more that does not affect the sense of belonging but creates frustration is the misconceptions that Finns appear to have towards other countries.

(iii) ‘How do the participants experience the process of their integration?’

This part of the discussion, refers to the perception the research individuals have for their integration. As we have already seen in the theoretical part, Finland follows a ‘two-way process’ of integration. This means that it gives meaning to the integration of both parts of the society – the native and the foreign part- so that they can both adjust to one another and construct new, intercultural foundation for common identification and solidarity (Zapata – Barrero, 2012). Speaking about integration from the way of Finns, my findings demonstrated that they have accepted the interviewees and their cultural characteristics, while at the same time they get characterized as open minded and tolerant towards cultural differences.

From all the seven participants, only one attends the official integration program from the unemployment office. For the other six participants, it seems that they follow different paths of integration since they do not attend the unemployment office’s ones. They have mentioned the University area, the work, the family of the spouse or even other cultural groups that inform them and help them create a contact with the society. So, the information about the structure of the integration programs came only from one interview where they considered to be very well structured with some detailed flaws. The rest information that we have from other types of activities that can make an individual active in the society comes from the different levels on how active can a person be in order to adjust themselves in Jyväskylä. These can be volunteer activities, Jyväskylä University events and local festivals.

From the side of the participants and their personal effort to connect with this society my findings imply the fact that the process towards the adjustment relies solely in the individual

perspective and willingness. There were for example answers that were saying that they feel like trying to get connected and others that they think they should do more. Overall, they appear to have an active action towards the introduction of their culture to the native one, volunteering in various institutions, participating in the University activities, and even integrating others to the society. As I have mentioned already Martikainen et al. (2012) characterize the Finnish integration policy and projects as extensive *“since the comprehensive social security system with its social insurance, social services, and welfare arrangements is available to all immigrants settling on a permanent basis”*. They carry on elaborating that Finnish social policy *“has been developed within the frame of social citizenship”* and is comprehended as *“the operationalization of social rights that focus in a substantive way on programs and services in the areas of health, education, housing, the labor market, and social and welfare services”* (p. 134). This applies as a conclusion, on my findings where I came across attitudes of feeling the responsibility as a citizen of this country, even if they have not applied yet for their citizenship.

To conclude, the findings that I have apply according to the theoretical part of my thesis. The ‘two-way process’ findings go in accordance with the Finnish integration policies and what they are trying to achieve so that coexistence is better. More specifically, the research participants come to agree in total the fact that Finns accept them and their cultural attributes, characterizing the latter as open minded and tolerate to concept of ‘the other’. On their behalf, the individuals take part in societal activities that in their turn integrate them constantly. As for the notion of citizenship, it seems that stems up from the fact that people in this society feel ‘welcome’, ‘equal’, ‘accepted’ and they want in turn to respond as active and useful members of it.

(iv) ‘How do the participants perform socially in Jyväskylä?’

The last part of the discussion alludes to the hybridity, which is the blending of cultural worlds within a person. As an idea, hybridity alludes to the diverse character of each separate identity. As I have already mentioned in the identity chapter on theoretical part, there is no purity when one refers to identity since each is a mixture of components that derive from different roots. We are all components of cultures that are others more and others less hybrids. Cultures are totally detached or even have distinguished limits. They are interconnected and related because we live

in a world of communication, hence cultural identities cannot be pure (Bhabha, 1994). In this thesis, I used the notion of hybridity not only because I wanted to demonstrate through theory the mixture of cultural worlds within an individual but also because it has relevance to my research part. In other words, I wanted to investigate whether the individuals are using this ‘new’ gained through integration process self in order to contribute in the society that they live in. The research participants of this thesis are aware of the changes that have occurred while some of them changed aspects of them on purpose in order to adjust better in the society. They all feel that they are, as they said, mixes, blends and more of cultures. The unfortunate of this is that there were some voices that cannot use their new structured self, due to the lack of opportunities or personal obstacles. But the findings based on the actions of the rest towards the society were interesting.

Initially, referring to the cultural mixture, my findings appear to demonstrate that the participants have kept cultural aspects such as their traditions and religion or some stances towards life such as alcohol use and they have embraced a quite many from the Finnish culture such as logical thinking, respect for the other and the environment, sense of society, balancing of emotions and more. Furthermore, on their performance in Jyväskylä, there are actions such as promoting of culture in places like the multicultural center Gloria so that Finns and other cultures can educate themselves more into their traditions and customs, focusing on the integration of the refugee youth in the Finnish culture, trying to alarm and educate people that alcohol should be part of the fun and not the main goal and blogging so that Finnish values and way of life can be exported to the rest of the world as if they are parts of it. Moreover, and moving back to the notion of hybridity it is of interest the fact that there were answers mentioning that they ‘feel responsibility as a citizen’ when it comes to their societal performance. This performance can be in one hand be depicted with the ‘mimicry’ of Bhabha’s (1994) notion of hybridity, but on the other it can as well be an outcome of the notion of inclusive citizenship that I have already spoke about in the theoretical part. Receiving societal inclusion and traits such as equality and ultimate – as described- freedom of expression, one can appear this feeling of gratitude and return everything good they have taken. Closing with this idea and notion based on what the participants demonstrated I have found that they want to return in the society –each with their own attitude- the best aspects of themselves and that is why we view them performing with responsibility and care.

12 Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the socio-cultural perceptions of seven immigrant women living in Jyväskylä, Finland. The concept was to detect their acculturation process and coping mechanisms in Finnish society, which is culturally different from their backgrounds and finally answer to the research question of ‘which is the socio – cultural perspective that foreigner individuals have about Jyväskylä’. Furthermore, not only can one navigate through various conduct patterns that the interviewees have endorsed so as to integrate themselves, but also perceive the role that the society has performed in their socio-cultural perception. One more objective of this thesis was to provide further knowledge to the academic community concerning the integration perceptions of immigrants in Finland, and more precisely in the city of Jyväskylä.

Based on the findings it seems that the perception of the research group about the context of their cultural identities in Jyväskylä is that they live in a society in where they have felt acceptance and respect as human beings only on the overall societal level. When it comes to more specific affiliations such as friendships or applying for a job then there seem to be problems which are identity salient related with language. Furthermore, one more finding out of my research is when there is lack of a cultural group, the individual does not feel lonely or desperate but in the cases we show the existence of a group, then the individual again feels complete but in the same time seems grateful that there is a cultural group to avoid loneliness. So after all, I wonder whether we truly need the support and the sense of belonging. Moving on, to the challenges part, besides the major one which is the language and seems to influence the reality of the participants- without though affecting the perception feeling of Jyväskylä as their home- more seem to fill the findings. One of them, is the social performance of Finns which seems to create distance and turn the individuals towards their cultural groups or other international friends making some of them feel marginalized. And lastly one more that does not affect the sense of belonging but creates frustration is the misconceptions that Finns appear to have towards the performance of other countries.

Concerning the integration part, the findings that I have apply according to the theoretical part of my thesis. The ‘two-way process’ findings go in accordance with the Finnish integration policies and what they are trying to achieve so that coexistence is better. More specifically, the research

participants come to agree in total the fact that Finns accept them and their cultural attributes, characterizing the latter as open minded and tolerate to concept of 'the other'. On their behalf, the individuals take part in societal activities that in their turn integrate them constantly. As for the notion of citizenship, it seems that stems up from the fact that people in this society feel 'welcome', 'equal', 'accepted' and they want in turn to respond as active and useful members of it.

In conclusion and about their performance in Jyväskylä, there are actions such as promoting of culture in places like the multicultural center Gloria so that Finns and other cultures can educate themselves more into their traditions and customs, focusing on the integration of the refugee youth in the Finnish culture, trying to alarm and educate people that alcohol should be part of the fun and not the main goal and blogging so that Finnish values and way of life can be exported to the rest of the world as if they are parts of it. Moreover, and moving back to the notion of hybridity it is of interest the fact that there were answers mentioning that they 'feel responsibility as a citizen' when it comes to their societal performance. Receiving societal inclusion and traits such as equality and ultimate – as described- freedom of expression, one can appear this feeling of gratitude and return everything good they have taken. Closing with this idea and notion based on what the participants demonstrated I have found that they want to return in the society –each with their own attitude- the best aspects of themselves and that is why we view them performing with responsibility and care.

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