INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

Master's thesis
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Intercultural Communication
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"I have serious reasons to believe that the planet the little prince came from is Asteroid B-612. This asteroid has been sighted only once by telescope, in 1909 by a Turkish astronomer, who had then made a formal demonstration of his discovery at an International Astronomical Congress. But no one believed him on account of the way he was dressed. Grown-ups are like that. So in 1920 the astronomer gave his demonstration all over again, dressed with impressive style and elegance. And this time everybody accepted his report."

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1943.

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Abstract This study explores the interpersonal relationships of immigrant students. This is a current topic because immigration to Finland has increased rapidly and student groups are more diverse than ever before. The aim is to study immigrant students' experiences and expectations of their interpersonal relationships and how they develop and maintain them, and also to understand how interpersonal relationships affect the immigrant students' adaptation to the new environment. This study is qualitative. The theoretical part of the study is based on the theories related to interpersonal relationships, uncertainty management, and identity. The Stress-adaptation-growth dynamic process model of Kim (2001) is employed. The approach to this study is intercultural; the focus is on interaction between culturally different persons. This study is conducted from the viewpoint of the immigrant students at a Finnish vocational upper secondary school. The case organization in this study is Jyväskylä College (JAO). The empirical data comprises seven theme interviews conducted to immigrant students aged between 18 and 28. The results show that the network of close relationships of immigrant students consists of family and friends that represent mainly other nationalities than Finns. Close relationships with Finns were rarely created. According to the interviewees' interpretation, this was mainly due to cultural differences and language barriers. The majority of the respondents made new friends in language courses and hobbies. As opposed to the earlier findings, immigrant students do not perceive the weak ties, such as teachers and classmates, to be very important.	
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Tiivistelmä

Tutkimus käsittelee maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoiden vuorovaikutussuhteita. Tämä on ajankohtainen aihe, koska maahanmuutto Suomeen on kasvanut nopeasti ja opiskelijaryhmät ovat heterogeenisempiä kuin koskaan ennen. Työn tavoitteena on kuvata ja ymmärtää maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoiden kokemuksia ja odotuksia vuorovaikutussuhteistaan ja siitä, miten ne kehittyvät ja miten niitä pidetään yllä. Samalla pyritään ymmärtämään miten vuorovaikutussuhteet vaikuttavat maahanmuuttajien sopeutumiseen uudessa ympäristössä.

Tutkimus perustuu teorioihin, jotka liittyvät vuorovaikutussuhteisiin, epävarmuuden hallintaan ja identiteettiin. Tutkimuksessa sovelletaan Kimin (2001) Stressi-sopeutumis-kasvu dynaamista prosessimallia (Stress-adaptation-growth dynamic process model). Tutkimus edustaa kulttuurienvälisen viestinnän alaa. Painopiste on eri kulttuuritaustoista lähtöisin olevien henkilöiden vuorovaikutuksessa. Tutkimus on tehty Jyväskylän ammattiopiston maahanmuuttajataustaisten opiskelijoiden näkökulmasta. Empiirinen aineisto koostuu seitsemän 18-28-vuotiaan maahanmuuttajaopiskelijan teemahaastattelusta.

Tulokset osoittavat, että maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoiden läheiset suhteet koostuvat perheestä ja ystävistä, jotka eivät yleensä ole suomalaisia. Läheisiä suhteita suomalaisiin luodaan harvoin. Haastateltujen mukaan tämä johtuu lähinnä kulttuurieroista ja kielimuurista. Maahanmuuttajaopiskelijoiden ystävyyssuhteet syntyvät erityisesti kielikursseilla ja harrastuksissa. Toisin kuin aiemmat tutkimukset osoittavat, niin sanotut heikot suhteet, kuten opettajat ja luokkatoverit, eivät ole maahanmuuttajien mielestä kovin tärkeitä.

Asiasanat
Maahanmuuttajat, koulutus, vuorovaikutussuhteet, sopeutuminen.

Säilytyspaikka
Jyväskylän Yliopisto, Viestintätieteiden laitos

Muita tietoja

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1 INTRODUCTION

Immigration classically defined, as the act of foreigners passing or coming into a country for the purpose of permanent residence, is a subject of crucial importance in nowaday's multicultural Europe. For the particular case of Finland the importance of immigration is also growing every day and everything from people's everyday lives to economy, culture and education is affected by it.

Immigration to Finland started relatively late and with a low volume. In comparison to other European Union state members Finland used to receive the least immigrants in the European Union. However, now the amount is growing rapidly. According to "Statistics Finland" at the end of the year 2010 there were approximately 224 000 immigrants living in Finland. (Statistics Finland 2011)

Immigrants that moved to Finland at young age and immigrants' offspring born in Finland possibly is one of the most focal themes of the current decade. Studies have been conducted generally about immigrants but having the focus especially on the immigrant generations is still sparse (Martikainen & Haikkola 2010).

When immigrants move to a new country they need to adapt to a new environment. Getting to know people, receiving education and finding a job helps integrating to a new country. Immigrants' adaptation and interpersonal relationships is a current topic because student groups are more diverse than before. Cultural diversity is a fundamental challenge for the education institutions in Finland.

The purpose of this research is to investigate immigrant students' expectations and experiences of their interpersonal relationships. I have chosen to carry out this study in the context of school environment, because as Kosonen (2001) states, school is seen as an important integrating institution for young immigrants, due to the fact that most often there the immigrant students create their first contacts to the new environment and form relationships. The school environment in my study is a vocational upper secondary school. According to a public document from the Ministry of Education (2009), the amount of immigrant students has increased in vocational upper secondary education by 23 per cent compared to the statistics from year 2005. Kilpi (2010) claims that children of immigrants are more likely to continue in vocational upper secondary school than in general upper secondary school in Finland due to their prior school achievement and parental resources.

Focus is on the interpersonal relationships, and in this research they are considered as the central part of the adaptation process. Here adaptation is studied from the point of view of interaction. I employ the Stress-Adaptation-Growth dynamic process model of Kim (2001) that illustrates an ongoing immigrant acculturation process, and explains how immigrants gradually become intercultural and experience personal growth. According to Berry (1997) interpersonal relationships are significant when adapting to a new cultural environment; it has a great impact on how the immigrants feel at home.

The sense of belonging and identity are closely linked to adaptation process. Young immigrants have come with their parents to Finland, disregarding whether they wanted to leave their home country or not. Ting-Toomey (1999) states that the cultural and ethnic background, the group where one assumes to belong, influences strongly the interaction between people. In order to understand immigrants' life situation it is important to study the development of the person's ethnic and cultural identity, and see how it is forming in the new cultural environment.

This research is qualitative and the topic is studied applying a case study methodology. The case here is the vocational upper secondary school Jyväskylä College (JAO). The target group of the research is young immigrant adults that are studying a profession in JAO and who are about to enter working life. A total of seven immigrant degree students were interviewed with a semi-structured theme interview and the data was analysed with a thematic analysis method.

Theories related to interpersonal relationships, uncertainty management, identity, and adaptation are introduced and used as a basis for the empirical study. The approach in this study is intercultural rather than cross-cultural. Intercultural approach focuses on the interpersonal interaction between culturally different persons, whereas cross-cultural studies concentrate on contrasting and comparing the cultural backgrounds. How people adapt to other cultures is a focal topic in the field of intercultural communication.

I start this thesis introducing multicultural Finland and describing essential terms and concepts to highlight the important role of education on immigrant's integration. I also explain precisely the Finnish education system especially for immigrants and their attempts to integrate students. In addition, I present the previous research on the field. Consequently, I continue presenting the theoretical background of the study exploring the theories and concepts of adaptation and identity. After, I continue with the theories of interpersonal relationships, uncertainty/anxiety management, and social support. In the empirical part I first present the methodology and then the findings of the study. After that I turn the attention into discussion and reflection of the literature on the findings. Finally, I present conclusions and implications for the future.

2 IMMIGRANTS AND EDUCATION IN FINLAND

In this chapter, I will start by shedding light on Finland as a multicultural society and defining terms like culture and multiculturalism. After, I will turn to Finnish education system and especially immigrants' education in Finland. Finally, I will take a look into the challenges of a multicultural education and I will briefly discuss the role of school as integrator.

2.1 Multicultural Finland

Immigration to Finland started relatively late and with a low volume. In comparison to the other EU state members Finland receives the least immigrants. According to an article of BBC (2007) the five states with the largest immigrant populations are the UK, Spain, Germany, Italy and France. A study led by the British Council and the Migration Policy Group in Brussels measured policies to integrate approximately 21 million migrants across 25 EU member states. The key factors affecting immigrants' lives measured by 140 indicators include immigrants' rights in the workplace, the opportunities for permanent settlement, permission for family to join them, and laws to combat racism and prejudice. The European Union-backed research found Sweden doing the most to help migrants settle - and Latvia the least. Overall, EU nations are only doing half as much as they could, said researchers.

According to a statistics study performed in 2007, it is estimated that by the year 2025 approximately 30 000 persons that moved at young age to Finland and 80 000 immigrants' children born in Finland will finish their basic education and choose their path from thereon. That would represent every 10th

young person of the total amount of people finishing their basic education in Finland.

In this research, the term "immigrant" refers to a person born outside of Finland, but who has moved to Finland permanently or at least for the time being. The term includes all non-native Finnish, Swedish or Saami speakers, refugees, migrants, returnees, and other foreigners.

According to Statistics Finland at the end of the year 2010 there were living 224 388 non-native Finnish or Swedish speakers in Finland. Especially when entering to 21st century the amount of immigrants has increased greatly (See the figure 1).

Thousand persons
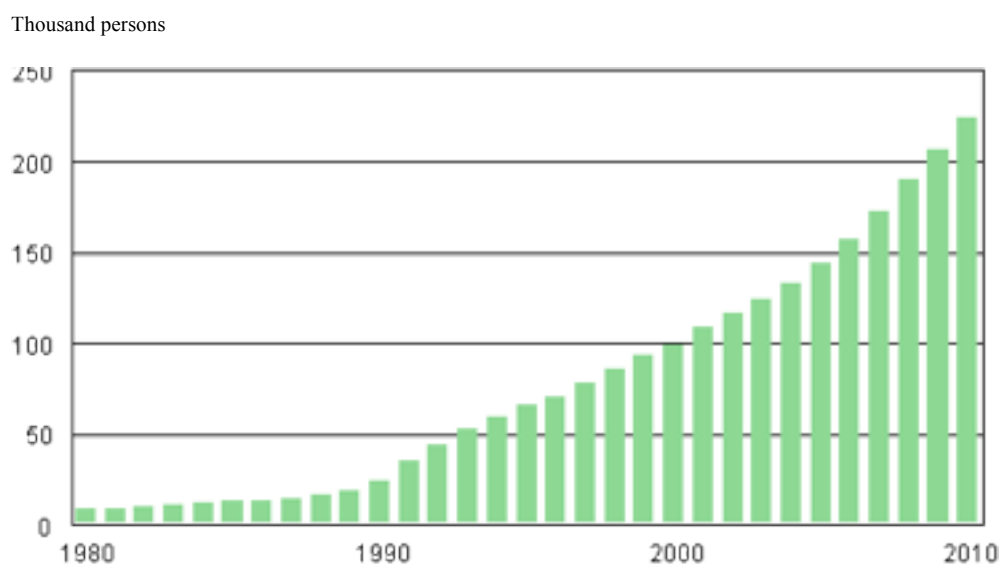
Figure 1. The number of foreign-language inhabitants in Finland 1980–2010 (Statistics Finland 2011)

The most accurate way to calculate the amount of foreign population is by the mother tongue, because immigrants that have moved to Finland might hold Finnish nationality or there are Finnish families that might have had children outside of Finland. The immigration has increased especially from Russia and Estonia, but also from Asia (Statistics Finland 2011). According to the United Nations there were 8 724 refugees and 2 097 asylum seekers residing in Finland as of January 2011. The majority, 85 per cent, of immigrants settle in

municipalities and cities in Southern and Western coast and close to the Russian border (Statistics Finland 2011).

Culture and Multiculturalism

Culture can be defined in numerous ways: meanings, beliefs, symbols and values prevalent among people in a society. Cultures have been classified from single concepts such as nonverbal communication or perception of time. Edward T. Hall (1959) states "Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants." Culture refers to many characteristics of a group of people, including attitudes, behaviours, customs and values that are transmitted from one generation to the next (Matsumoto 2000). Cultures throughout the world share many similarities, but are marked by considerable differences. For example, while people of all cultures experiences happiness, how this feeling is expressed varies from one culture to the next.

According to Launikari & Puukari (2005) the term multicultural signifies parallel existence of many, culturally different groups in a society, and relationships between different groups, at the same space and time. The term multiculturalism contains many social variables, such as gender, age, religion, ethnicity, and social class, and affects all actions and activity - life in its forms. In the course of time the term "multicultural" has became synonymous to "multiethnic" and replaced the word "multiracial". It often causes debate when defining the concept of multiculturalism. When a concept, such as sociocultural policy, is promoted by decision makers, the word multicultural is a key word for a person of a minority culture to claim a service, a benefit, a specific type of support, to negotiate a place to fit into society at large." (Ibid:48)

Multiculturalism or also called transcultural awareness is an on-going process that is not limited to any unique population or group. Multicultural awareness recognizes all varieties of cultural and individual identities. Valjus (2006) states that multiculturalism, as a concept is often limited only to language matters especially in organizations. She reveals other aspects that should be

important to notice, such as intercultural interaction processes, cultural behaviour, and developing inter- and multiculturalism.

If the cultures are similar to each other it is assumed that it makes the distance between immigrants and locals easier. In general it is thought that the further away the immigrants' culture is from, the more there are problems. Problems accumulate when immigrants fight for jobs or social services with the locals (Heikkilä & Pikkarainen 2008).

The Finns' attitudes towards immigrants have varied according to the number of immigrants currently living in Finland as well as the economical situation of the country (Juuti 2005). The attitudes have been more positive during economically stabile and growth periods as well as at times while the number of immigrants was low or growing. The immigrants' background also affected the attitudes that Finns have towards them. Juuti contemplates how the Finns' attitudes will develop as the number of immigrants continues to grow and the interaction between Finns and immigrants increases because of globalisation. The status of the immigrants in Finland is influenced by the attitudes of the major population. According to Juuti, the life of an immigrant in Finland is challenging. Based on immigrants' autobiographical descriptions, it seems that it is still hard for Finns to encounter otherness. Very often Finns experience otherness as a threat. In addition, racist thought and talk patterns can be found in the Finnish discourse on immigrants (Juuti 2005).

Racism and discrimination

Racism means valuing a person or a group of persons according to their skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, culture, mother tongue or religion less than other persons and group of persons. Racism can show as words, expressions, threatening, little gestures, excluding, discrimination, persecution, violence and in the most extreme, murder. (Shakir & Tapanainen 2004)

Ethnicity is defined most of all according to culture, language, religion and customs. In ethnicity the subjective own experienced ethnic identity is

highlighted. Foreigner means any person who is not a Finnish citizen. In official use foreigners that move to Finland for a year than longer are considered immigrants. In every day language the term immigrant has negative connotations, for example in Finland immigrants are often seen as a homogenous group exploiting the social security system (Shakir & Tapanainen 2004).

Discrimination differs from racism so that where racism might be only in the level of thoughts; discrimination is always action or leaving not to act. Discrimination is about segregating people according to their differences. Ethnic discrimination happens when worsened position is due to ethnic background, mother tongue or culture (Shakir & Tapanainen 2004). Immigrants that participated in the research of racism and discrimination in Finland in 2004, state that they were treated quite often racist or discriminating. The more the person distinguishes from the majority the more likely he or she will be a target of racism and ethnic discrimination. In Finland the biggest risk is with Somalis and Arabs. (Ibid:56)

2.2 Immigrants' education in Finland

According to the Finnish National Board of Education (2005) the aim of immigrants' education and training is to provide capabilities to function as equal members of Finnish society and offer the same educational opportunities as other Finns, to promote their employment potential, and to support their cultural identity and to provide them with as well-functioning bilingualism as possible so that, in addition to Finnish (or Swedish), they will also have a command of their own native language. Due to immigrants, Finnish culture diversifies and that has to be taken into account in the basic education.

The amount of non-native Finnish or Swedish or Saami speaking pupils has increased in basic education almost by 10 per cent (17 160 non-native speakers in basic education in 2008) and in vocational upper secondary education by 23 per cent compared to the statistics from year 2005. In

vocational upper secondary education there were approximately 11 600 non-native speakers in 2007 whereas in 2005 the amount was 9 400. In 2007 the total amount of non-native speakers was 4,4 per cent of the total amount of the students in the vocational institutions. In comparison in the general upper secondary schools there were 3 330 non-native speakers in 2007, which is significantly a lower amount. Immigrants tend to seek to study in vocational upper secondary schools. Alongside their vocational degree they have the opportunity to carry out a joint-degree with general upper secondary degree, matriculation examination. Often immigrant students intend to study a profession that enables them to be employed quickly after graduation (Finnish National Board of Education 2009).
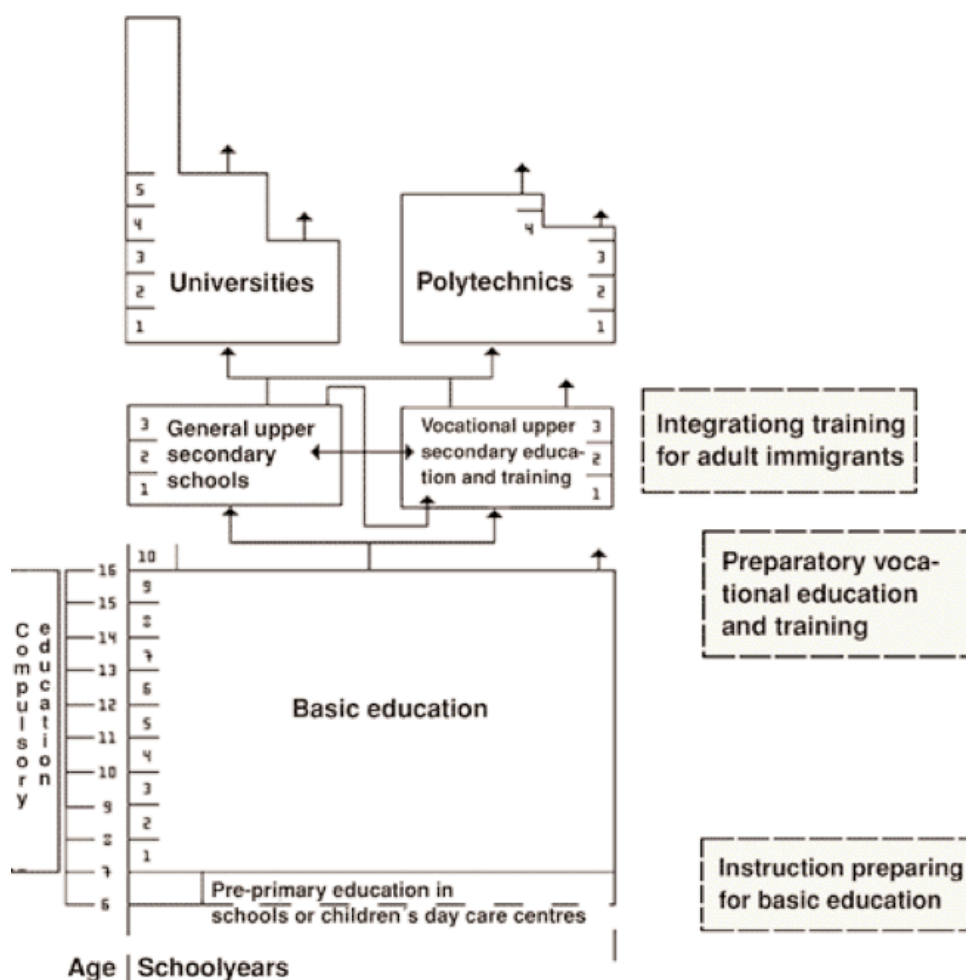

Figure 2. Finnish education system (Finnish National Board of Education 2009)

Finland has nine-year compulsory schooling starting at the age of seven (See figure 2 for a complete scheme of the Finnish education system). This basic education is provided by comprehensive schools in the same form for each age group as a whole and virtually the entire age group also completes it. After finishing their nine years in basic education, pupils still have the opportunity to participate in additional basic education for another year called preparatory education (10th grade).

The preparatory education is from 20 to 40 credits and the duration varies between 6 and 12 months. Students improve their language skills and other capabilities such as life management and skills needed for vocational studies during the preparatory education. The subjects include either Finnish or Swedish, mathematical subjects and social subjects. Language studies cover approximately the half of the preparatory education. Students are required a sufficient level of language skills in order to carry out their studies successfully. The objective for them is to become as bilingual as possible meaning that they master either Finnish or Swedish while maintaining their own native language skills up-to-date. In addition students also receive information about different occupations and vocational studies. Every student follows a personal study plan.

When students finish their basic education, they have two options for continuing the studies: general upper secondary education at upper secondary school or upper secondary vocational education and training (VET). After the basic education and the optional preparatory education (10th grade) students may continue studying in general upper secondary school (lukio), folk high school (kansanopisto) or vocational upper secondary education and training (ammatillinen oppilaitos). The scope of an upper secondary vocational qualification is 120 credits and can be completed in three years. During these three years approximately six months (20 credits) of the studies are conducted on-the-job. A vocational upper secondary qualification can be obtained through attending a vocational school, through apprenticeship training, or through a competence test (adult learning). Skills demonstrations were launched in 2006 as proof of having reached the goals given to vocational studies. Immigrants

may take part to different general studies in adult education centres (aikuisoppilaitos) as well. Upper secondary qualifications provide eligibility to apply for studies at universities and universities of applied sciences (Finnish National Board of Education 2005).

Vocational upper secondary education and training is provided in vocational schools and in the form of apprenticeship training in the following fields of education, comprising nearly all areas of working life: humanities and teaching; culture; social sciences, business and administration; natural sciences; technology and transportation; natural resources and environment; social and health care services and physical education; and tourism, catering and home economics. In addition to these, a vocational qualification can be obtained through a competence test administered by a qualification committee (CIMO 2010). According to the Ministry of Education (2009) the majority of immigrants in vocational education have study places in the fields of technology and logistics, social sciences, business and administration, social and health care, and physical education. The most attractive field was social and health care, when comparing the amount of applicants compared to the study places offered.

Finnish and Swedish are languages of instruction in educational institutions on all educational levels. There are upper secondary vocational institutions and universities, which are bilingual, but usually the institutions have either Finnish or Swedish as their language of instruction. On the Saami-speaking areas Saami is the language of instruction in some basic education, upper secondary general and vocational institutions. Some vocational institutions offer foreign-language education and training, normally the language of tuition is English. These programs lead to qualifications and are open to immigrants as well (Finnish National Board of Education 2005).

In vocational institutes there were 4100 foreigners who did not speak Finnish, Swedish, Sami or Roma as their mother tongue in 2003. Immigrants' teaching of their mother tongue is organized with a separate aid from government that is appointed for two hours per week to every group, if there at least four students

in the school. By law, municipalities do not have the responsibility to organize teaching of their mother tongue, but it has been taken as a standard practice according to resources. Municipalities may receive separate resources from the government for giving extra support in teaching in the immigrant's own mother tongue.

2.3 The role of school as integrator

When immigrants move to a new country they need to adapt to a new environment. Getting to know people, receiving education and finding a job helps integrating to a new country. Most likely young immigrants integrate to the new society easier than their parents and they might act as supporters for their own parents and also act as educators for their siblings. This might bring conflicts inside the family and the adolescent might stay without support. In that situation having support from other adults is very important. In addition to family, educational institutions and youth work are central factors in the integration of a young immigrant (Talib & Lipponen 2008).

For many young immigrants the geographical and cultural transition to Finland happens at the same time with their puberty and the delicate transition phase from childhood to adolescence and from adolescence to adulthood. Adolescence is challenging time, because many choices concerning future have to be taken. All the adolescents experience the transition phase from childhood to adulthood even if it is most probably distinct in different cultures. For the children of immigrants, education is the primary vehicle for integration.

Multicultural education refers to positive multicultural actions in education. UNESCO defines multicultural education as: "Education involving two or more ethnic groups and designed to help participants clarify their own ethnic identity and that of others, reduce prejudice and stereotyping, and promote cultural pluralism and equal participation" (UNESCO, IBE, Educational thesaurus 2010).

Valjus (2009) states that there are several challenges when operating in a multicultural school environment, such as cultural differences, language issues, racism and stress caused from the change in general. When guiding and teaching a multicultural group it takes more time than for instance guiding a Finnish group. The common intercultural challenges in class can be hidden racism, the concept of time, cheating, group working as in forming groups and the conflicts groups might face, the gender roles (machos as a problem with female teachers), giving feedback, the level of language skills, and understanding and respecting the rules (Valjus 2009).

School is an institution that intends to strengthen the national identity, language and life style and also to narrow down ethnic and linguistic differences. A multicultural ideology has been created in the education policies in order to meet the challenges of multiculturalism. Education and teachers have a significant role in creating collectivist and individual cultural meanings and building individual cultural identities (Matinheikki-Kokko 2002).

The Ministry of the Interior develops legislation on migration and is responsible for the integration of immigrants. For an adolescent immigrant integration means studying Finnish, maintaining own mother tongue and language, forming identity and finding own place. There have been seen some integration problems in the Finnish society. Schools do have support mechanisms, but more would be needed. Schools have gone under changes in the teaching methods due to the increasing amount of immigrant students and teachers develop immigrants' teaching methods to respond to the needs of the immigrants that come with different educational backgrounds (Kosonen 2001).

Teachers affect with their own attitude also to the attitudes of Finnish students towards the immigrants. Teachers may strive for valuing different cultures, but in the point of view of equality, they still treat all students with the norms of Finnish culture. That results in not taking into account different cultures enough, and the special needs of immigrant students are forgotten. This kind of treatment can even increase inequality between Finnish and foreign students (Kosonen 2001).

Attitudes also affect the integration. Positive atmosphere enables creating social networks and positive image of self (Liebkind *et al.* 2001). Mastering Finnish is a crucial part of surviving at school. Part of the students cannot follow the teaching, and when not having enough resources the teaching cannot be directed enough. Teaching Finnish should be increased and the group sizes should be smaller. This way learning the language would be faster and going to school would be easier. Young immigrants also need support from the student health care, psychologist, curator, nurse and teachers. This is an important support network for immigrants (Kosonen 2001).

According to the research of Liebkind *et al.* (2001) immigrant girls integrate easier than immigrant boys. Also teachers seem to believe in the success of girl students more than the boys. In the same research it was found out that racism and discrimination does affect the integration to school. In bigger countries with large amounts of immigrants in several generations, for example United States, they have taken into account the significance of school in the lives of immigrants.

Previous research on the field

Studies conducted over the phenomena related to the non-Finnish population have increased, same as the amount of immigrants in Finland has increased. Several studies focused on immigrants' adaptation, employment, identity and racism have been conducted from the point of view of working life and schooling system (i.e. Forsander *et al.* 2001; Talib 2002; Alitolppa-Niittamo 2003; Keskisalo 2003; Heikkilä & Pikkarainen 2008). Numerous studies have been carried out about multicultural adolescents and young adults (13-25 years old) in Finland, their every-day life, thoughts, free time and participation to the civic activities (Honkasalo *et al.* 2007; Harinen (ed.) *et al.* 2009). In general interpersonal relationships are normally covered in the adaptation studies as one factor among others, but not as the central theme.

Studies concentrating on immigrant students in vocational upper secondary discuss the available support for immigrant students' studies, different teaching methods and guidance systems, student admissions, organizational culture of the education institutions, language teaching, and learning difficulties (i.e. Kuisma 2001; Aunola 2004; Kuusela 2008; Arvonen *et al.,* 2010).

However, research over young immigrants in less populated regions and furthermore the interpersonal relationships of young immigrants have not been much covered in Finland. A recent doctoral thesis of Lotta Kokkonen (2010) explores extensively the interpersonal relationships of refugees that arrived to Jyväskylä during the years 1990-2003. The study reveals that interpersonal relationships are significant in a situation where a person moves from a country to another and adapts to the new cultural environment. Interaction and interpersonal relationships influence the adaptation to a new culture. The majority of the participants for the research were over 30 years old, but a few younger immigrants aged between 16 and 30 were also included. Nevertheless, young immigrants' interpersonal relationships in the context of school environment have not been yet studied and this is where my research intends to contribute.

3 ADAPTATION AND IDENTITY

In this chapter I will concentrate on the themes of adaptation and identity. In this study I consider interpersonal relationships as the central factor in the adaptation process. Identity is closely linked to the process of adaptation and interpersonal relationships. In this research I study adaptation from the point of view of interaction, where learning, interaction with the environment, and creating new relations, has a central role; and where the aim is to attain good functional fitness, psychological health and intercultural identity (Kim 2001).

This chapter consists of three parts; in the first part I take a look at to the basic concepts and terms concerning adaptation. In the second part I introduce Kim's (2001) Stress-Adaptation-Growth dynamic process model. Finally, in the third part I discuss matters related to identity.

3.1 Basic concepts and definitions

According to Berry (1997) and Kim (2001) the terminology concerning adaptation to new cultural environment varies greatly and the terms are being used as synonyms to each other. In the following I intend to explain a few common terms used for adaptation.

The concept of acculturation is widely used in cross-cultural psychology and has changed meaning by the time. Originally it referred to the change in the culture of the group, while nowadays the meaning is confused with psychological acculturation that refers to the change in the psychology of the individual. Berry (1997:7-8) defines the term acculturation as "…general processes and outcomes (both cultural and psychological) of intercultural contact." According to Kim (2001) acculturation is seen as the process where

individuals acquire some aspects of the host culture. According to Berry (1997) acculturation became synonymous with assimilation and further to interculturation, which refers to interaction of groups and individuals when they identify themselves as culturally distinct. "In most general sense, adaptation refers to changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands." (Berry 1997:13). Berry refers to adaptation as "psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur as a result of individuals experiencing acculturation" (Ibid:6).

Kim (2001) refers to assimilation as a process that emphasizes acceptance and internationalization of the host culture by the individual. "In a more limited sense coping and adjustment have been employed to refer to psychological responses to cross-cultural challenges, whereas integration has been defined as social participation in the host environment." (2001:31). Kim embraces all of these terms into a more generic concept of cross-cultural adaptation.

According to Valjus (2006) acculturation process or in other words assimilation and integration happen when the minor culture acculturates with the major culture. An individual assimilating in a culture gives up part of his culture's specific features, e.g. costumes, language, and acts in the way the dominant culture requires. Integrating individual takes part to the activities in the society and understands it, but maintains his own culture. Finland follows officially a pluralist, minority multicultural policy, when cultural and ethnical heterogeneity is acceptable in the society. The goal is integration, which intends to preserve the equality for the minorities. Societies with positive attitude towards multiculturalism highlight the right to preserve cultures. In practice cultures blend in with the other culture, which is inevitable in multicultural societies, unless individuals or communities exclude themselves from the main communities. (Valjus 2006)

The Finnish authorities aim at integrating the immigrants to the main culture by applying the principles of equality. Everyone is intended to treat equally having the same rights and obligations as the original population. Immigrants still have opportunity to maintain and develop their own culture and religion in accord

with Finnish law. Pitkänen (1997:24-25 cited in Talib & Lipponen 2008:46) states that integration to the new culture is a long process, the takes approximately three years. A complete integration of immigrants is said to take at least three generations. Integration happens through crises and it is failed if the immigrant isolates to his or her own circles or abandons his or her culture completely.

3.2 Kim's Stress-Adaptation-Growth model

In earlier writings adaptation process has been seen in a problem-based point of view where intercultural experience causes anxiety and frustration, i.e. the studies of culture shock. This is apparent especially in short-term adaptation studies. There are different models for the intercultural adaptation process, i.e. U-curve of cultural adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955) where a migrant moves from initial excitement about the new place into a crisis, and then to adjustment. There is further developed an expanded version of U-curve, called W-curve, where the re-entry shock and readjustment of a migrant who returns to her/his home country is taken into account. Kim (2001) finds the negative tone on the intercultural experiences disagreeable, as in her opinion, the problematic treatment of the topic can lead to the anticipation that moving to a new culture would be confusing and harmful. Kim sums up the complex approaches of cross-cultural adaptation, the problem-oriented and the learning/growth approach, by claiming that all individual experiences, both long and short-term are growth-producing. She calls this "a double-edged process, one that is simultaneously troublesome and enriching" (Ibid:21)

Kim (2001) defines adaptation as a dynamic process, where individuals that have moved to a new culture, form and reform and maintain relationships with their environments. Individuals are constantly in interaction with each other and exchange information. Interaction is a process that enables exchanging messages and creating meanings, learning new and adapting to an unfamiliar environment. Interaction happens constantly, verbally and non-verbally. Adaptation and facing new cultural values, attitudes and patterns are seen as a

process where individual or group reacts to the changes of the environment by changing their own condition, structure or composition.

Kim (2001) sees adaptation as an open-system that constitutes three main areas: deculturation and acculturation; the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic and intercultural transformation. Immigrants' willingness to accept at some level the values and behaviours of the host nationals affect adaptation. Deculturation and acculturation are based on the socialisation processes of individuals beginning with their childhood experiences. Behavioural modes and cultural norms, which have always been taken for granted are challenged by new codes of behaviour and values. Foreigners are then faced with the prospect of acquiring a new communication system if the language differs from their own, as well as a new set of symbols, habits, patterns and activities in order to function adequately. This involves unlearning or deculturation of some of the old habits and the learning of new ones (Kim 2001).

Kim (1995) argues sojourners, immigrants and their analogous counterparts generally experience significant internal changes culminating in identifiable transformations in their usual patterns of cognitive, affective and behavioural responses as they traverse the processes of deculturation and acculturation. This transitional adjustment to the foreign culture culminates in three key outcomes, interpreted as interrelated features of their intercultural transformation. That is, the sojourner experiences greater functional fitness, followed by increased psychological health and finally an emergent intercultural identity. The successfully adapted foreigner acquires increased proficiency in self-expression in the foreign language, and greater social competency.

Kim sees adaptation as a learning process, and different challenges faced during the adaptation process are seen as a positive driving force that initiates the change. Pain and suffering are inevitable parts of development that will lead to psychological balance and wellbeing. Problems are not disregarded but they are handled in a way that sees them as a resource to win challenges and learn new things. Adaptation can be seen as a life-long ongoing process, where

a migrant gradually adapts to the new environment. See below Kim's Stress-Adaptation-Growth dynamic model.

Adaptation

Growth Over Time
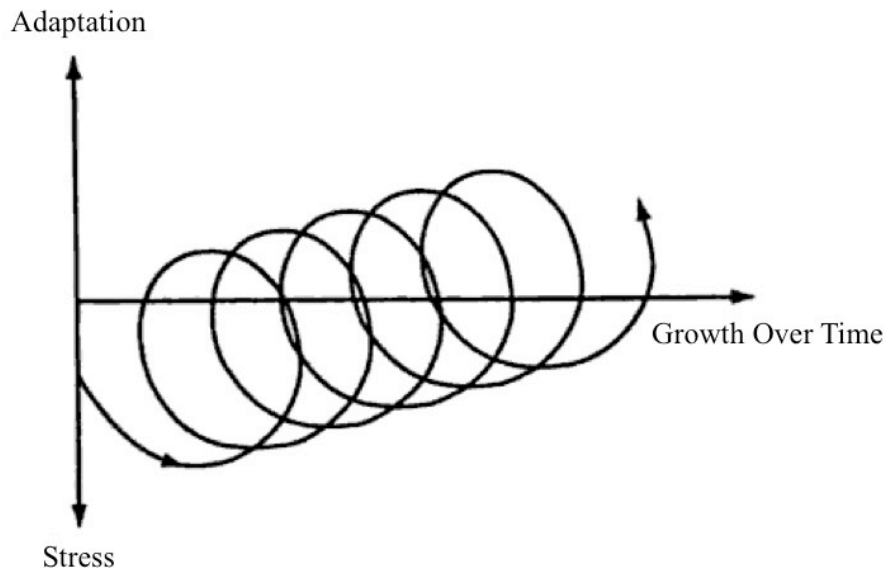
Stress

Figure 2. Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic process model (Kim 2001).

The stress-adaptation-growth dynamic model illustrates the continuous and cyclic movement of "draw-back-to-leap", considered as both progressive and regressive. Frustration, anxiety and suffering are caused by stress but they are all necessary for new learning and growth, which ultimately leads to the emergence of an intercultural identity. Gradually stress starts to diminish by time, and consequently, adaptation begins to get easier. (Kim 1998:4, 2001:57). The theoretical approach of the Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic proposed by Kim implies an intercultural transformation process where "the adaptive journey follows a pattern that juxtaposes novelty and confirmation, attachment and detachment, progression and regression, integration and disintegration, construction and destruction" (Kim, 2001:57).

3.3 Identity

Ting-Toomey (1999) claims that in intercultural context, the cultural and ethnic background, the group where one assumes to belong, influences strongly the interaction between people. In order to understand immigrants' life situation it is important to study the development of the person's ethnic and cultural identity, and see how it is forming in the new cultural environment. Young immigrants form their identity when they have to balance with collective and religious cultural values contrasted by secular and pluralistic culture.

Identity commonly refers to experiences of oneself and the belonging to a certain community or culture. Nevertheless, defining identity is problematic and risky. (Talib & Lipponen 2008:48). According to Liebkind (1988:66-67) identity can be given, achieved or adopted (absorbed). Given identity refers to nationality or profession. Adopted identity means that the individual has adopted different ways of interaction from others. Keltinkangas-Järvinen (1994 cited in Talib & Lipponen 2008:48) specifies that identity is the stability of self and a feeling of confidence and especially confidence who is or who is about to be. It is a certain kind of wholeness or entity of self that consists of vision of self and self-concept. In psychology the concept of identity is closely rooted to the terms of self and ego. Generally it is thought that self is very personal and that the individual knows him or herself the best.

Stuart Hall (1999) argues that we cannot talk about identity, inherited or adopted, anymore, but rather identifications, which is a continuing, open and endless process that we all participate into. Identification is flexible and adapts to different situations. Everyone has many possible identities, of which few of them arise socially significant. In this sense ethnicity is not an eternal feature but a phenomenon leaning on social relationships that appear together with other identifications. (Talib & Lipponen 2008)

According to Simpson and Weiner identity means "the sameness of a person or thing at all times in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else." (Simpson & Weiner, 1989:620). Combining the definitions and interpretations of identity and ethnicity it can be concluded that they mean, or at minimum imply, the sameness of a band or nation of people who share common customs, traditions, historical experiences, and in some instances geographical residence.

Cultural identity, ethnic identity, and national identity are often used as synonyms, although they do not mean the same thing. According to Hall (1999) Cultural identity can be understood in two different ways. First, it can be understood as one common culture to people who have common ancestors and history. Cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and create the experience of belonging in one nation. Another way of defining cultural identity is by recognizing that in addition to several similarities there are always deep and significant differences that lay the foundation to who we really are or who we have become. We cannot talk about one experience or one identity unless we recognize the other side of it: incontinuations and breakages in the experiences that shape the uniqueness of the identity. Cultural identity is as much as becoming something as being something, belonging at the same time to the past and to the future (Hall 1999).

Belonging to one cultural group is part of the social identity of the individual. Immigrants' social identity can behold identification to own ethnic group (ethnic identity) and at the same time belonging to a greater community (national identity). According to Phinney ethnic identity is "a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity, or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group." (2003:63). From her perspective one claims an identity within the context of a subgroup that claims a common ancestry and shares at least a similar culture, race, religion, language, kinship, or place of origin. She goes on to add that, "Ethnic identity is not a fixed categorization, but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic background. Ethnic identity is constructed and modified as individuals become aware of their ethnicity, with in the large (sociocultural) setting." (Phinney 2003:63).

In adolescence the development of identity can be challenging, especially if one has to negotiate between different communities. (Phinney 1990; Liebkind 2001 cited in Talib 2008:79) In order to young immigrants to develop their ethnic identity they have to critically view their ethnic attitudes, values and customs learned at home and compare those to the host culture.

The construction of the identity of immigrant children is challenging. Ethnic culture is learned already in the early childhood years and the emotions attached to the relationships are stronger than those that are developed later in life voluntarily. (Pitkänen 1997, Liebkind 1988:46-47 cited in Talib & Lipponen 2008:37) Family members adapt to a new culture in different phases, and it can create a so-called acculturation gap between the parents and their children. This is called dissonant acculturation by Alejandro Portes (1997 cited in Alitolppa-Niittamo 2010:50). Parents have great expectations of their children, but they do not wish them to adopt too much the Finnish culture that is often in contradiction to their own culture and religion. (Forsander 2001:151-152)

Immigration affects individual's identity. In the new environment own identity has to be constructed again, because the values of the new environment have to be acknowledged. Talib & Lipponen (2008:36) discuss the question how it is defined who is a Finn and who is not. Do immigrants that moved to Finland change eventually to Finns in the course of time, from generation to another, or do they stay as foreigners despite of how long they have lived in Finland even if attaining Finnish nationality. (Lepola 2000:371 cited in Talib&Lipponen 2008) Finnish language is a prevalent factor in defining Finnishness, it unifies the ethnic origin of Finns. Ethnicity can be transformed of shaped according to the situation. Even if a foreigner learns one feature of Finnishness, a Finn can always make a distinction by emphasizing other features or qualities that the foreigner does not have. Individualistic culture is predominant in Finland. Coping alone, selfdiscipline and composed (low-key) behaviour is typical in Finnish culture. Loneliness can be hard to face by immigrants from collectivistic cultures (Pikänen 1997 cited in Talib & Lipponen 2008:36).

In Finnish society work determines individuals' identity. The importance and appreciation of the individual is ascribed from the status in the labour market. Family and social class are not significant social determinants. Immigrants are evaluated at the same basis as Finns and their societal status is defined by employment. (Hietala 1992:17-18 cited in Talib & Lipponen 2008) Nevertheless, not alone having a job is enough, but social acceptance is the essential factor that can be ascribed by fulfilling the criteria of "normality" that consists of regular paid job, certain level of consuming and certain kind of social networks. (Helne 2002:82 cited in Talib & Lipponen 2008:38).

Immigrants' education, professionalism and nationality influence their employment. The education or work experience achieved in the home country or in Finland is not always made use of. According to Forsander & Alitolppa-Niittamo (2002) those immigrants that are employed have vocational upper secondary education. There have been studies about attitudes of Finns towards different ethnic groups and it can be stated that refugees, Africans and Russians are the least appreciated immigrant groups. Finns prefer having immigrants that moved to Finland because of work. (Forsander 2002:65 cited in Talib & Lipponen 2008:39). Because of the short history in immigration there are a few educated immigrants of second or third generation.

Language, culture and identity

Language is not only used as a means of communication, but also as a marker or indicator the speaker's cultural identity. The identity is communicated through a particular language use during interaction. Certain types of expressions are used to express belonging to a group, but likewise they are sometimes used to exclude, separate or discriminate. The influence and power of language is meaningful to cultural and ethnic group members. In each speech community, ethnic, racial, cultural or gender-related language use is of vital importance. Each speech community has its norms, forms and codes for communication. The interactions of a group of people vary in many respects: in frequency and value of speaking, interpretation of speaking performances and shared language forms. The speech community maintains the norms and rules

of communication, but it may gradually change them, because there is a degree of individual deviation from the norms in every speech community. Not all group members communicate in the same way. (Luoma, I. 2005*)*

Generally it is thought that immigrants want to preserve their own language and cultural identity. New situations, activities and contacts influence the building of the identity throughout whole life. Immigrants are a heterogenic group and even one national group does not represent one and same culture. Each individual experiences moving to a new country in different ways and give different significance to own background and life in the new environment. One might exclude him or herself from the host community and stick with the own group, another wants to learn the new language and culture as soon as possible and forget about his or her own, or third one might became a master of two cultures and languages. (Iskanius 2002:200)

Immigrants have to learn the new language and cultural habits when moving to a new country. At the same time they compare new to old, familiar and safe and build on their identity in interaction with the community. At the same time thinking what is the place in the new community immigrants also think what others think about them and where they see that they belong. Especially adolescents are in a challenging situation because they have possibly arrived without being asked their opinion if they want to move to a new country. Their education is still not finished and learning the new language and making friends with the locals does not happen overnight. If the young immigrant does not learn the language quickly enough and succeed in his or her studies the risk of exclusion increases. Language skills are often the factors, according to immigrant children and adolescents, that why they are bullied at school. (Iskanius 2002:201)

Language is the first tool that helps to get a grip of the culture and life of the new country. Immigrants have to adapt to the fact that all the familiar and safe disappears from around, the network of family and friends might not be there and in addition one has to survive with a new language. This way language is the means to be in contact with the community. Language is an inseparable part

of being a human being. The usage of language does not vary only according to who speaks but also to whom and in which situation the speaking is done. All the people have several linguistic identities. Sanna Iskanius (2002) carried out a study of young Russian immigrants' language identity. It revealed that young Russian immigrants might use their mother tongue only at home, but all the other interaction is in Finnish. Others might minimize the usage of Finnish language and operate mainly in Russian. Especially older immigrants might use Finnish only in obligatory situation when visiting offices or shops. For younger immigrants school is the natural environment to learn Finnish and also for tying Finnish contacts. Unfortunately developing skills in its own mother tongue and maintaining it might be hard because in many smaller cities, there are not the required minimum of four students of the same mother tongue so that teaching would be organized; and also because in many families, they start using only Finnish in order to fasten the process of integration (Iskanius 2002).

Immigrants and strangers gain information about the new environment through being in interaction and communicating with the local people. In order to integrate to a group or interact with the locals, strangers need to learn about the surrounding culture and its norms and habits and develop their host communication competence. Strangers can compare their own communication patterns and correct them in each social event they enter. Forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships facilitate gaining information about the ways of communicating in the new environment (Kim 2001).

4 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

In this chapter I present the essential concepts and theories related to interpersonal relationships that are relevant to this study. First, I define a few concepts about basic relationships, interpersonal relationships, and relationship types. Second, I turn into the relationship networks, which are family, romantic relationships, friends, and weak ties. Third, I take a look at relationship development and cover the theory of uncertainty anxiety management. Fourth, I investigate the relationship maintenance, and finally, I discuss social support.

4.1 Defining relationship types and goals

Before the existence of Homo sapiens, our primates had long before established their norms of social behaviour; tendency to be social, to form attachments, and helping others. Together with the role of sexual reproduction, they passed these to the future generations. These characteristics laid the foundation for our tendency to form and maintain personal relationships (Wright 1999).

Relationship refers generally to one-to-one social units, i.e. parent and child, teacher and student, employer and employee, or doctor and patient. Relationship can involve sexual or emotional intimacy. Friendships or intimate arrangements are commonly determined as relationships by anyone, but in the point of view of communication also passengers on an elevator or strangers on the street passing by are also considered as relationships (Ruben & Stewart 2006).

> "In the most basic sense, a *relationship* is formed whenever reciprocal message processing occurs: that is, when two or more individuals mutually take account of and adjust to one another's verbal or nonverbal behavior. This reciprocal message processing, which we can call *interpersonal communication*, is the means through which relationships of all types are initiated, develop, grow, and sometimes deteriorate." (Ruben & Stewart 2006:244).

Basic relationships are functional and/or casual, and are often temporary; also people in such relationships are usually interchangeable - they are not unique. To distinguish interpersonal relationships from the basic relationships (also known as role relationships), *interpersonal relationships* can be defined as "two people who share repeated interactions over time can influence one another, and have unique interaction patterns." (Guerrero et al. 2007:6).

Types of relationships

According to Guerrero et al. (2007:7) different intimate relationship type characteristics can be categorized as follows: 1) voluntary – involuntary, 2) romantic – platonic, 3) satisfying – dissatisfying, 4) long term – short term. First, people choose consciously with whom they want to be involved with, but sometimes they enter close relationships without choosing to do so. Friends can be chosen voluntarily, but for instance children cannot choose their parents or other family members. Sometimes a romantic partner cannot be chosen, but he or she is selected and arranged by someone else (Guerrero et al. 2007).

Second, friendships and family-related relationships are typically platonic. Romantic feelings and sexual activity are most commonly only in dating and marital relationships. There might be a few exceptions that fall in the middle, for instance "friends with benefits" where the partners are sexually active but do not consider themselves as a romantic couple; or there is an individual that has romantic feeling for someone who is supposed to be his or her friend. Both platonic and romantic relationships are intimate. Intimate is often confused with the term sexual, but intimate relationships refer to "enduring behavioural interdependence, repeated interaction, emotional attachment, and need fulfilment." (Ibid:8).

Third, any relationship can be characterized by some degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. People feel good about themselves in a satisfying relationship. Emotions are more positive than negative. In a dissatisfying relationship partners feel often disconnected and emotions are more negative than positive. All relationships go through stretches that are dissatisfying, but it may offer an opportunity to work it through and improve the relationship (Ibid:8).

Fourth, commitment levels help to determine whether the relationship is short-term or long-term relationship. For many people sibling relationships are probably the longest lasting relationships, but many other relationships are often short-term, by choice or due to circumstances. If the partner is highly committed to his or her partner the relationships is likely to be a long-term relationship rather than short-term (Ibid:8).

Goals in relationships

Goals in relationship according to Canary & Cody (1994, cited in Guerrero et al. 2007:10) are driven from three overriding and sometimes related sets of goals: self-presentational, relational and instrumental goals.

Self-presentational goals refer to goals with the image one conveys to others. An individual is as attractive, credible, competent, or honest as others think he or she is. From interpersonal point of view an individual is what people think what he or she is.

Relational goals refer to how feelings about others are communicated and what types of relationships are desired. Canary and Cody distinguish three groups of relational goals. First, there is activity-based goal that involves sharing an activity with someone, for example going skiing. Second group is based on the relationship whether one desires to initiate, escalate, maintain, or deescalate a relationship. Third one is based on giving advice to peers and parents.

Finally, instrumental goals mean accomplishing or obtaining something such as attaining good grades at school, earning a lot of money, buying a car, or finishing a homework assignment. Often these kinds of goals involve other people, for example asking for advice from a friend or permission from a parent (Guerrero et al. 2007:10).

Communication is the vehicle to attain the goals in relationships. Naturally, communication is not always strategic and goal oriented, but often mindless and routine. However, communication is the mechanism by which relationships are developed, maintained and often dissolved. Interpersonal communication and relational communication describe the process whereby people exchange messages within the context of different types of relationships. To distinguish between interpersonal and relational communication, the latter is a subset of interpersonal communication that has a focus on the expression and interpretation of messages within close relationships. Interpersonal communication is any nonverbal or verbal exchange between people, regardless of the relationships they share (Guerrero et al. 2007).

4.2 Relationship networks

Relationships are usually voluntarily established because of mutual interests and willingness of the individuals involved. Often, immigrants develop relationships in certain circumstances, for instance at work, or in the neighbourhood. In the literature of sociology, anthropology and communication personal networks have been studied extensively. Personal networks are also called interpersonal networks, social networks, communication networks, ego networks, egocentric networks, and personal communities. In general, interpersonal network refers to and is understood as a network that consists of different interpersonal relationships. The network is developed and maintained through interpersonal relationships (Kim 2001).

When immigrants move to another country, they might leave behind most of their family members, friends and colleagues. Immigrants have to begin the process of constructing new sets of relationships in the new environment, normally with the native population. Through the contacts in their relationship networks, immigrants learn how to communicate with the local people. Interpersonal networks determine the language that is used and the cultural values and social approval or disapproval are conveyed through messages (Kim 2001).

In this research relationship networks consist of close and weak ties, which will be explained more in precise in the following. Close relationship is defined as "two people in an interpersonal relationship that is characterized by enduring bonds, emotional attachment, personal need fulfilment, and irreplaceability" according to Guerrero et al. (2007:6). In a close relationship a person feels connected to the other emotionally, and the relationship fulfils critical interpersonal needs, i.e. the need to belong to a social group, to feel loved and appreciated, or to care for someone. That person is irreplaceable, meaning that he or she has a special place in the other's thoughts and emotions and also in the social network. Usually in times of crisis one reaches for a close person (Guerrero et al. 2007:6). However, in different parts of the world, the concept of being close to someone can be viewed in various ways and may be given different significance depending on the culture. In this research I study family ties, romantic relationships and friendships as close relationships.

4.1.1 Family

The ability of a family to take care of, support, raise and control their children has a great impact on the integration and educational success of the young immigrants. Acculturation stress can weaken the ability of a family to support and control their offspring. Balancing between the new and old culture causes acculturation stress, and it may be burdened with an old trauma, new family systems, conflicts between different generations and sexes, discrimination and the feeling of not belonging in the new host country. The function of a family

is to help the adaptation of the children to the new society. The ways of raising children, every day social interactions and institutions that support upbringing and socialization strengthen the values and way of living of each culture. In this process an individual learns the culture of his or her community and becomes a functional member of it (Talib & Lipponen 2008).

Family is the closest social network to its members and the most important source of resources, such as economic and social capabilities, but also parenting and cultural knowledge that can help the younger generation's wellbeing. Depending on their societal position, families have different amounts of resources. Materialistic resources, such as socio-economic status, income level and living conditions affect their living conditions, security and possibilities to have activities. Also social and emotional resources affect the wellbeing of the family members, such as the circle of friends and the quality of the relationships. Especially immigrant families struggling with their economical situation might emphasize their social and emotional resources. There has been conducted several studies about the family background's influence on the attitudes and achievements of the children and youngsters. Parents' educational level is considered to show the cultural capital the family has. The children of highly educated and higher social class possessing parents are assumed to succeed in their studies better and educate themselves more than the average (Peltola 2010).

Western, individualistic way of thinking assumes that a person is independent and self-directed having inner qualities that are the basis of the identity. In Finland and in many other Western countries the education is planned to direct for independence. Children are treated somewhat as equal and formal respect is shown seldom. In collectivistic cultures that are estimated to cover 70 per cent of the population of the world emphasize that a human being and the community are interdependent (Triandis 1995 as cited in Talib&Lipponen 2008). The individual alone is not important, but his or her qualities in respect to the other members of the community are. The emotional bonds to the community are strong and maintaining relationships is important. The fear of losing face publicly and staying outside of the community directs the behaviour

of the individual. In collectivistic cultures the children are raised with methods that express acceptance, but also dependence (Talib & Lipponen 2008).

Being part of a family is considered normally as a biological matter, but in many cultures being part of a family is a social concept that is based on cultural agreements how family ties are built. For example an uncle or a cousin can be counted as close family. Globalization; the mobility of international work force and reallocated business; and power relations, have influenced how families are spread around the world. The new chosen family can be a network or relationships that cross the national borders. Contact is kept by visiting, by phone, over the Internet or by correspondence (Talib & Lipponen 2008).

More studies about families should be conducted, as in most of the cases family is the principal vehicle for integration. The second generation forms relationships, gets married and have children, sometimes with persons outside of the own ethnic group. In many families part of the family members live abroad and having long distance relationships is part of the every day life. Many studies concentrate on the differences between the cultures, which may give to simplistic picture of the integration of the immigrants (Martikainen & Haikkola 2010).

4.1.2 Romantic relationships

The love that one feels in a romantic relationship is different from the love one feels for friends or family. Marriages are entered with the expectation that it is permanent, and that permanence distinguishes a romantic relationship from other kinds of relationships. According to Robert Stenberg the necessary elements of a love-based relationship are commitment, passion and intimacy. Reasons that lead to form a relationship can also be: caring, love, respect, duty, and guaranteeing continuity and survival of the family (Gamble & Gamble 1998).

However, people in an intercultural relationship may have different expectations for romantic relationship. Love relationships may develop according to cultural norms. In Western countries the choice of who to marry is usually made by the individuals themselves, but in countries like India and Algeria, marriages may be arranged and may require approval from the family itself. Depending on the culture, marriage can be seen as a union of two people or as a union of two families (Gamble & Gamble 1998).

Significant life changes, such as moving from a country to another, can change the expectations of a relationship. Different cultural environment can affect the traditional concepts of the roles of a woman and a man, duties and rights might be completely different in the new host country. Raising children in the new environment can create conflicts, for example whether the daughter of the family should be married according to the old traditions, or whether she has the right to choose her own spouse.

Immigrants that move to Finland do not always have their partner with them. The spouse might be far away, lost or dead. Therefore several immigrant or refugee parents are single parents. This may create a situation that a new relationship takes place with a person from different cultural background. Multicultural relationships meet same kind of challenges as any kind of relationships, but the prejudices and expectations can affect the relationships from outside differently than a traditional relationship between two persons from a similar culture (Kokkonen 2006).

Studies show that the children of immigrants that have either been born or moved at early age to the new host country seem to value the traditional cultural values and prefer to choose a spouse from the same ethnic group as they pertain to. Some researchers believe that multicultural relationships reveal how well the adaptation process has taken place. The more adapted the person is to the new host culture, more likely that person has tied a relationship with a person who is not from the same culture. However, immigrants that arrive with their spouse seem to have better psychological wellbeing compared to those who have arrived alone (Kokkonen 2006).

4.1.3 Friends

Friendship that is reciprocal is typically defined as a close relationship. Close friends convey a sense of caring, support, and ease of communication that makes them special (Hays, 1988, cited In Wright 1999). Close friends, especially those who have been friends for some time, enjoy each other's company and make a point of taking time for each other for no reason other than the relationship itself.

In this research I look at friendships at adolescence and young adult level, because the target group of this research either arrived in adolescence or as young adults to Finland. According to the Western view point, in adolescence, when the dependencies of childhood loosen, the progress toward independence starts, and relationships with family members become less dominant. Rapid physical, social and emotional changes take place at an uneven pace, depending on the variations between individuals and differences between the sexes. This may cause the feeling of being isolated and apart, and therefore adolescents tend to turn to their peers in order to gain a sense of shared perspective and the feeling that they are not alone (Wright 1999).

In order to make a distinction between adolescent and young adult, Erik Erikson (1959) defined young adult generally as a person between the ages of 20 and 24, whereas and adolescent is a person between the ages of 13 and 19. The end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood varies by country and by function, and furthermore even within a single nation-state or culture there can be different ages at which an individual is considered to be mature enough to be entrusted by society with certain tasks, for instance driving a vehicle, voting, marrying, drinking alcohol etc. (Erikson 1959 cited in Wikipedia 2011)

During adolescence friendships are often based on to the similarity to others, for instance, age, socioeconomic background, ethnic group, gender, intelligence, educational interests, attitude towards the use of alcohol, smoking, religion, preferences in music, hobbies and other activities (Wright 1999).

Adolescents, who have supportive friendships tend to succeed better at school, are more involved in school activities and have more positive feedback from their teachers. However, there are studies that do not apply to this assumption. A study of Ana Cauce and her colleagues (1982) showed that black adolescents had an opposite result in the relationship between perceived peer support and grades. Moreover, a study conducted over gifted students by Judy Dunn and colleagues (1987) showed no relationship between school performance and the support of friends (Wright 1999).

In general, friendships during early adolescence tend to be activity centered, whereas during middle adolescence the emphasis is more on loyalty and security. Friendships during late adolescence, 17 years old and beyond, tend to be considerably more relaxed and more on autonomous interdependence. (Selman & Selman 1979 cited in Wright 1999:124) "Friendships now emphasize such things as personality, talents, and skills-that is, what friends can bring to the relationship and how interesting, stimulating, and tolerant they are. Sharing confidences is still important, but do the most part, confidences no longer carry with them the earthshaking urgency they did earlier." (Conger 1991 cited in Wright 1999:124). In late adolescence, friendship seems to be less needed, and as a consequence there is less concern about being abandoned.

After late adolescence begins young adulthood (20 to 30 years old), that normally brings tasks to be confronted, such as finishing education, launching careers, pursuing romantic relationships, choosing a marriage partner, and starting a family. Research suggests that during this time the amount of interaction with friends is likely to depend very much on the state of one's other relationships (Hause 1995 cited in Wright 1999).

In regard to adaptation it is important that young immigrants have friendships in their own ethnic group, in the host culture and also from other cultures. According to an international study (Phinney et al. 2006) most of the immigrant youngsters have somewhat more friends in their own ethnic group; especially in Finland the immigrants have more friendships in their own ethnic group than with Finns (Talib & Lipponen 2008).

Gender differences in friendships

The way men and women relate to their friends differs notably. Women's friendships tend to involve more nurturing and emotional sharing and larger social support networks, whereas men's friendships tend to involve shared activities. According to Wright (1989) women see their friends as dependable companions who are open, affectionate, and helpful. They respect each other and exchange favours. This seems to be common within women of all ages and in many different cultures.

There are some inconsistencies about the number and types of friends, because what a friend means to a man and to a woman can vary greatly. Men tend to consider co-workers, neighbours or bowling buddies as friends while women are more selective about using the term friend. Men define a close relationship rather with a female than with another male whereas women can name either of them (Wright 1999).

4.1.4 Weak ties

Weak ties, or also called friendly relationships, tend to involve interactions that are based not so much on affection or caring for the individual, as on a role relationship, such as relationships between people who work in the same office, or who interact professionally or in business transactions (Kurth 1970 cited in Wright 1999). Weak ties are normally easily replaceable. When someone in such relationship moves away, for example, a new friendly relationship is likely to develop with the person who takes his or her place. Some relationships remain superficial, even over a long period of time (Babchuck & Bates 1963 cited in Wright 1999).

In the lives of young immigrants typical weak ties are teachers, neighbours, acquaintances, or other officials. Weak ties can give a feeling of belonging and unite the immigrant to the new community. Both close and weak ties are significant in situations, where social support is needed. Sometimes close

relationships may prevent from adapting to the new environment, for instance if the family members have negative attitudes to the new host community. Therefore in these situations weak ties can serve as better integrator. For example learning the new language can become difficult without the help of weak ties. For example immigrants' teachers are the people immigrants normally meet and it affects the opinion about Finns in general. These weak ties are very significant in considering adaptation and can affect greatly on how willing the immigrants are to tie relationships in general with the local people (Kokkonen 2006).

4.2 Relationship development

In this section the theories concerning uncertainty reduction and uncertainty/anxiety management are introduced in order to examine more profoundly how the interpersonal relationships are developed and maintained.

Berger and Calabrese's (1979) uncertainty reduction theory predicts and explains relational development between strangers; interaction is viewed as going through several stages, which are entry stage, personal stage and exit stage. "When we receive information that reduces uncertainty, we are more confident that we understand ourselves, other people, and the world around us. A lack of information, or information that violates expectations, often increases uncertainty." (Guerrero et al. 2007:67).

The foundation for Berger and Calabrese's theory is compiled from three general principles. The first principle is that people seek information to reduce uncertainty during initial encounters with others. In initial interaction basic questions are asked in order to establish commonalities and gain understanding. The more there is information about the other the more confident one feels in his or her ability to predict how others think and act; this gives a chance to feel more comfortable in the interaction. According to several studies it can be assumed that people gather information rather quickly during initial

interactions and they tend to stick with their initial impressions (Guerrero et al. 2007).

The second principle is that people can reduce uncertainty using passive, active, or inactive strategies. Passive strategy means observing people how they are dressed or how they behave. Active strategy means seeking information about a person by manipulating the social environment in a certain way and then observing how someone reacts to it, and also another way is obtaining information from third parties, for example friends or family about the person in question. Interactive strategy means being directly in contact with the target, asking questions, encouraging disclosure and relaxing the target. Also nonverbal cues are used, for instance smiling, or making an eye contact (Guerrero et al. 2007).

The third principle is that as uncertainty decreases, attraction usually increases. The more there is information about someone, the less there is uncertainty. This reduction in uncertainty generally leads to liking to a person more. People whose behaviour cannot be predicted and with whom there is a high uncertainty, there is less attraction. In most of the cases the attraction to people derives from the ability to predict people's behaviour (Guerrero et al. 2007).

In a cultural context, in the field of intercultural communication William Gudykunst has developed the Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory (AUM) that is based on the ideas of Berger and Calabrese, but it has significant differences that make the theory different. AUM theory presumes that effective communication is the result of mindfulness. The end goal of AUM theory is rather effective communication than closeness or relational satisfaction (Griffin 1997). Gudykunst & Nishida (1984) argue that anxiety and elevated uncertainty is one reason that many people feel less attracted to the members of other cultures and communication failures in intercultural situations. From this perspective, one feels more uncertain and anxious around people from other cultures simply because one is unsure of their cultural norms and customs. This uncertainty could prevent one from developing and attraction for these people.

However, when uncertainty is reduced, people from different cultures are often attracted to one another (Guerrero et al. 2007).

Gudykunst's intergroup uncertainty reduction theory describes several conditions that make it more likely that uncertainty will be reduced in intercultural interactions. There are two factors that create a communication climate that makes information exchange and uncertainty reduction easier. First, people who identify strongly with their own group identity feel more confident about interaction with someone from a different social or cultural group. Second, when people perceive members of another culture favourably, they are likely to look forward to interacting with them. For instance, if one is unsure about his or her role as a person in a foreign country and one dreads interacting with people who speak a different language, one is likely to avoid interaction and to remain uncertain and anxious. But in contrast if one is confident about his or her cultural identity and is looking forward to communicate with strangers, one will feel comfortable and open during interaction, which will likely lead to uncertainty reduction and increased liking (Gudykunst 1991, Guerrero et al. 2007).

The theory of uncertainty reduction and Gudykunst's theory of intergroup uncertainty is criticized, because there are also times when uncertainty reduction leads to less attraction and liking, for instance, when one finds out more about someone that leads one not to like that person anymore, or if someone makes a tasteless, offensive remark, one likely reduces uncertainty but also decreases attraction of that person (Griffin 2009).

4.3 Relationship maintenance

In many ways, forming a relational bond is much easier than sustaining it. Personal relationships require certain amount of maintenance or they can lapse into disrepair. The many aspects of maintaining personal relationships are captured to some extent within the framework of exchange theory and its several variations. According to the study of Stafford and Canary (1991) there

are five interpersonal actions that contribute to long-term relational satisfaction: positivity, openness, assurances, networking and sharing tasks. Positivity refers to making interactions pleasant and enjoyable, e.g. giving compliments or acting cheerful. Openness means talking and listening to one another, e.g. sharing secrets or asking how the day went. Assurances refer to e.g. assuring the other that you still care, talking about the future. Networking means spending time with each other's families, accepting each other's friends. Sharing tasks means performing routine tasks and chores together, e.g. household chores or planning finances together (Griffin 2009, Guerrero et al. 2007).

As relationships develop and mature, relationship maintenance is likely to be expressed more and more in terms of agreed-upon rules. Such rules, and the practices they generate, tend to have a distinctive quality about them. As relationships become more intimate, the evidence suggests that mutuality of relationship definition, control, and influence potential become increasingly significant in maintaining stability and satisfaction of personal relationships. One of the things that one expects of close others is to offer one good, honest feedback, even when it hurts. Relationships that have achieved some maturity tend to be more stable and satisfying, and generate attributions of trust and caring (Griffin 2009, Wright 1999).

There are several researches conducted over immigrants' lives in a new country and culture, but studies concentrated on the immigrants' maintenance of interpersonal relationships are scarce. There is very little information on what kind of challenges immigrants have in their relationship maintenance, for instance, how positivity is expressed, or how different tasks are shared in refugee families (Kokkonen 2006).

4.4 Social support

Social support refers to certain non-verbal and verbal communication or interaction that helps a person to control the situation, the person itself and the

others. Furthermore social support helps a person to manage the uncertainty in interaction. Support giving interaction can be seen as an indispensable element in a healthy and balanced life. Social support affects person's mental and physical wellbeing. Only the image of the available support, that the person is aware of it and thinks that he can get help when needed, is significant to a person's wellbeing. Creating trust in the available social support demands long-term interaction. So called every day conversations with friends or neighbours gives a person the feeling that support is there when needed (Virtanen 2009).

From a communication perspective, the study of social support is the study of supportive communication. Although supportive messages may exhibit a variety of help-intended goals, including dispensing information and advice, fostering a sense of belonging or inclusion, and enhancing the recipient's self-esteem, the most common goal pursued in supportive messages is the provision of emotional support. The effects of support messages differ as a function of several characteristics of the recipient, the helper, and the communication situation (Bodie & Burleson 2008). Close people are often the ones who are first approached in the hope of company, comfort, or advice (Barnes&Duck, 1994). Close relationships are important as they provide a context for supportive communication. The experience of becoming supported is always a result of interaction, but rather than being built on communication behaviour, support experiences can also stem from the relationship and conclusions drawn from simply having one (Virtanen 2009).

From the perspective of immigrants, interpersonal communication experiences with natives provide emotional support to strangers by helping to ease the loneliness, stress, and difficulty that strangers encounter. Strangers seek support in their efforts to find necessary information and to handle the difficulties they face; they also need help in finding additional contacts. The sense of security that strangers gain from supportive relationships with natives generally outweighs the difficulty and anguish that strangers may go through in establishing such relationships (Kim 2001).

5 RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative case study. The principle in qualitative research is to describe real life, and to reveal or discover facts rather than confirm already existing claims or truths. In qualitative research the reality is diversified. The target is studied as comprehensively as possible. Typically in qualitative research the data is collected from human beings. The researcher cannot resign from his/her basis of values because values shape how we aim to understand our phenomena, we can never escape our own assumptions and beliefs (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000:16).

The research forms part of an inductive method of research, processing from details into generalities. The interest lies in several simultaneously ongoing factors that influence the outcome. The settings are changing according to the classifications alongside the research develops. Qualitative research is tied to contexts; theories and patterns are developed in the hope of a greater understanding, and accuracy and reliability can be obtained by verifying (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000).

This research is descriptive and interpretative by nature. It is descriptive as it attempts to investigate immigrant students' interpersonal relationships and interpretative in its attempt to find cues on how the interpersonal relationships affect the immigrant students' adaptation.

Qualitative research is the norm in a research aiming to analyse a phenomenon in its own environment by exploring concrete materials, which are in this case interviews. A case study enables to research a phenomenon in its context; in

this research it is a vocational upper secondary school. The focus is on a particular group – young immigrant students.

According to Creswell (1998) a case study is a bounded system with limits in time and place. A setting can be identified as physical, social, historical or economical. The bounded system in this research is Jyväskylä College, which is a part of a larger consortium in Central Finland. In this case there is no natural starting and ending points but it was created with artificial boundaries. I concentrate on educational institute, in which the operation is never-ending. The purpose is not to study JAO since it was established, but rather create limits in order to narrow down the case. The starting point of the case is when the interviewed student started the studies in JAO that is August 2008. The ending point in time is the last interview in June 2011. These limitations are created because the students cannot reflect the situation any longer than they have been studying at JAO.

Identifying the setting, that is the environment in which the case is embedded, is important. Relevant setting for this study is social setting. Social setting encompasses all immigrants in Finland and it can be further narrowed down to immigrants having a study place and finally immigrants accepted to study by the case study institution.

The ontological assumptions of qualitative research are that it is subjective and the reality is socially constructed and there are as many truths as there are persons/individuals (Glesne& Peshkin1992, cited in Hirjärvi & Hurme 2000). The epistemological assumptions refer to the qualitative strategy as it assumes that the research material/target and the researcher are in interaction. According to Gummeson 1991 (cited in Hirjärvi & Hurme 2000) the researcher is creating the research material alongside the research. Therefore for example all the interviews, also standardized, are, in matter of fact, the result of the cooperation of the interviewer and the interviewee, because the interviewer might influence for example by encouraging the interviewee. The typical characteristics in qualitative research are individual involvement and trying to understand with empathy (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000).

According to Creswell qualitative research is tied to values and it is biased. The researchers of the hermeneutic paradigm differentiate between facts and values ambiguously. The methodological assumptions are that qualitative research does not present the results with numeric means but rather presenting with terms "more than", "the majority" or "almost everyone" etc. The precision can be presented without numbers; more important is the accuracy of the research. If the data is not accurate, the precision does not help either (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000).

5.1 Research questions

The purpose of this research is to investigate immigrant students' perceptions of their interpersonal relationships in the context of school environment. The focus is in the interpersonal relationships, and in this research they are considered as the central part of the adaptation process. Here adaptation is studied from the point of view of interaction. Furthermore I take a look to the sense of belonging and identity in regard to their cultural values and norms. Young immigrants have come with their parents to Finland, disregarding whether they wanted to leave their home country or not. Ting-Toomey (1999) states that in the intercultural context the cultural and ethnic background, the group where one assumes to belong, influences strongly the interaction between people. In order to understand immigrants' life situation it is important to study the development of the person's ethnic and cultural identity, and see how it is forming in the new cultural environment. I approach this topic with the following research questions:

1. How do immigrant students develop and maintain their interpersonal relationships?
2. What kind of expectations and experiences immigrant students have from their interpersonal relationships?
3. How immigrant students perceive their adaptation to Finland?

5.2 Data collection

Using interview as the data collection method for the empirical part in this research allows the interviewer to ask more precise questions and ask to clarify some answers. Conducting an interview can be the most convenient form of data collection because the target person can be motivated and involved better than in a questionnaire. Also it is more flexible and allows changing the order of the questions if the discussion leads to a direction that the interviewer did not expect. The interviewee is seen as a subject, he or she has to be given a chance to express him/herself as freely as possible. In the research a human being is creating meaning and is the active counterpart. Using interview as a method is justified when the topic in question is not much researched and it is difficult to anticipate the answers from the interviewees, but it can be predicted that the topic will produce answers that can direct to several directions and in several dimensions. Nevertheless, the downside of this is that the unstructured and semi-structured interviews produce also results that are not relevant and anonymity cannot be guaranteed as for example using questionnaires. Also the interviewer should be trained and have experience in interviewing (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000).

5.2.1 Jyväskylä College (JAO)

Vocational upper secondary school JAO is part of the Jyväskylä Educational Consortium that is among the largest institutions of vocational educational providers in Finland. Jyväskylä Educational Consortium consists of four vocational upper secondary schools and seven general upper secondary schools. They provide education for 8 000 youth and 13 000 adult students every year. As the majority, 85 per cent, of immigrants settle in municipalities and cities in Southern and Western coast and close to the Russian border (Statistics Finland, 2007), it is interesting to investigate a region that is less populated with immigrants.

Multiculturalism is a salient issue at JAO with numerous Leonardo mobility projects and cooperation with a wide network of partner institutions and

companies mainly in Europe. The amount of immigrant students has increased and during the academic year 2010-2011 there were 150 immigrant students.

5.2.2 The data collection procedure and sampling

The data was collected in May-June 2011 by conducting individual theme interviews to immigrant students at Jyväskylä College. The interviewees were gathered by sending an email to 152 immigrant students at Jyväskylä College. In total eight of the students responded to the email and agreed on coming for an interview. Also snowball method was intended to use. The interviewees were asked if they knew other immigrant students at Jyväskylä College that would like to participate.

In order to carry out the interviews a research permit was applied from the Rector of Jyväskylä College. Before interviewing the students they were informed briefly about the contents of the interview by email and later in the actual interview asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix 1). In the consent form the purpose and motivations of the study were explained, the interview procedure was described and the student was informed that the interview was taped, but only for the purposes of the researcher and it was told that the tapes will be destroyed after analysis.

In addition the students were told information would be treated anonymously and confidentially and the data gathered would not be published elsewhere than in the thesis. According to the rules of Jyväskylä College, if the student is under 18 he needs permission from his parent to take part to the interview. All of the students were 18 or above.

The interviews were carried out in different locations. Four of them were conducted in a negotiation room in the premises of Jyväskylä College and the rest were conducted in different cafeterias in the city centre of Jyväskylä. As a reward for participating to the interview the students were offered a free coffee and cake of their choice. When not conducting the study in a cafeteria the

students were given a chocolate bar. Mainly the idea of giving a little reward was to make the atmosphere more relaxed. Every interviewee agreed on that they could be contacted later on for further questions if needed.

5.2.3 The participants

A total of eight immigrant students participated in the study. However, it turned out that one interviewee did not meet the requirements. It appeared that this student was studying music at JAO and only as a hobby, and was not carrying out a degree at JAO. This participant's results are not presented in the study because this person never met any other students at JAO and only had private lessons once a week. In this study I present the data of seven interviewees.

All of the remaining seven immigrant students study in different groups with Finns at JAO, having tuition in Finnish, but their mother tongue is other than Finnish. Three of them study simultaneously in the general upper secondary school. Five of the immigrants were refugees. Two of the interviewees were men and five were women.

In the findings chapter the interviewees are coded according to the sex, age and country of origin. For instance, F21S stands for Female, 21 years old, Sudan. Two of the interviewees stated Afghanistan as their home countries although they have been born in Iran. Their parents have been born in Afghanistan, and therefore they refer to their ethnic background more than to the country they have been born in. Their code is M22I/A and F22I/A. A Burmese interviewee is coming from a part that used to be Burma, but today is part of Myanmar. This interviewee uses the name Burma for his home country and therefore the code for him is M28B, Male, 28 years old, Burma. The language they speak in today's Myanmar is called Burmese (See the table 1 for details).

Table 1. Demographics of the participants.

Sex	Age	Country of origin, parents home country	From which country moved to Finland	Age when arrived to Finland	Language skills	Starting year and study line at JAO
F	20	Turkey	Turkey	15	Turkish, Finnish	2010 practical nurse
M	22	Iran, Afganistan	Iran	15	Dari, Persian, Finnish, English	2008 electrician
F	21	Sudan (south)	Egypt	15	Arabic,Shilluk,Finnish,English	2008 practical nurse
F	23	Afganistan	Iran	16	Dari, Persian, Finnish, English	2010 merkonomi*
F	22	Iran, Afganistan	Iran	17	Dari, Persian, Finnish, English	2008 laborant
F	18	Russia	Russia	9	Russian, Finnish, English	2008 merkonomi*
M	28	Myanmar (before Burma)	Myanmar	24	Burmese, Finnish	2010 laborant

(*merkonomi = graduate from a business and administration unit)

5.2.4 Interview design

The interview design chosen for this study is theme interview or semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interview is focused on certain themes that are discussed. Therefore the semi-structured interview is called here as "theme interview". The interviewer has a framework of themes to be explored. Theme interviews intend to find information on people as unique individuals, attempt to reach closer to people's experiences, way of understanding, and thoughts (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000:16,47).

The themes were chosen according to the theories chosen for this study and the questions were designed so that the interviewees may tell their story as narrative stories, from their lives in the old home countries to the current home country, and beyond to their future plans. The themes were: demographics, experiences and thoughts about moving to Finland, starting studies and getting

know to people, close relationships, weak ties and lost relationships, identity and adaptation, future plans and expectations (See Appendix 2 for details).

5.3 Method of data analysis

This research aims to analyze the meanings of the phenomena in its environment and the interaction of the phenomenon and its contexts. Qualitative analysis methods suitable for this type of research are several, of which I chose thematic analysis. The aim of thematic analysis is to identify the essential topics or themes forming the data. Themes can be considered as topics, which recur in data in one form or another. Thematic analysis proceeds from identifying and categorizing the themes to enable one to carry out a closer and more detailed exploration (Lähdesmäki et al. 2010).

First I listed patterns of experiences from the transcribed interviews. For example the topic of starting studies in JAO, the first pattern of experience was listed as the feelings toward starting the studies, and the different explanations for it from the interviewees. The second pattern of experience was the attitudes that the interviewees had toward the process.

Second, I identified all data that related to the classified patterns. All of the talk that fits under the specific pattern was identified and placed with the corresponding pattern. The next step was that I combined related patterns into sub-themes. I defined the themes as units derived from patterns such as conversation topics, meanings, and feelings. The main themes that emerged from the interviewees' stories were pieced together. I chose the themes related to the literature I had chosen as the theoretical base for this study and developed a story line that explains the process (Aronson 1994).

The main themes that arose from the data are developing and maintaining relationships, close relationships, weak ties and lost relationships, adaptation to Finland and identity. The results are presented according to these main themes. Under every main theme are compiled the sub-themes. For example under the

main theme of close relationships fall the sub-themes of perceptions of being close to someone, and the persons that are considered close. The patterns that I identified to these sub-themes comprise of the importance of spending time with close persons, for instance friends, and the nationality of friends.

5.4 Evaluation of the methodology

Reliability and validity are based on the thought that a researcher can get a grip of objective reality and truth. Reliability means that when researching the same person twice the result is always the same. However, during the time between the two researches, it is natural that a human being changes, and this kind of definition cannot be used. The reliability of the research depends on the quality of it. If only part of the interviews or the transcription is done differently in the beginning than in the end, the reliability suffers (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008).

In this study the empirical data produced answers to my research questions by capturing real point of views on the research topic. This case study is not repeatable, as the sample was small, and it was bound to time. External validity cannot be expected from this study, because qualitative studies aim at providing an in-depth perspective on the studied topic. Despite these limitations, the qualitative research here presented, can provide interesting and important results that reveal the nature of interpersonal relationships in young immigrants. The study describes real life and helps to find meanings and interpret interpersonal relationships in the frame of immigration.

What comes to the research ethics, the interviewees could freely decide whether they wish to participate to the study, and they signed a written consent where the researcher assures that all the information will be handled anonymously.

6 FINDINGS

In this chapter I present the findings of the empirical part of the research. I have divided this chapter in five main sections according to the themes that arose from the interviews. First, I start with the interpersonal relationships the interviewees have developed, and how they maintain them. I also discuss racism and loneliness that the interviewees have experienced. Second, I turn to describing how the interviewees define a close person and the close relationships the interviewees have. Third, I present the weak ties and lost relationships. Fourth, I turn to how the interviewees perceive they have adapted to Finland. Fifth, I explore the sense of belonging and identity according to the interviewees' descriptions.

6.1 Development and maintaining of interpersonal relationships

When the immigrant students moved to Finland the majority were in their adolescence. Their first contacts were local authorities and schoolteachers and classmates. Most of the interviewees made their first friends in Finnish courses, getting known to other immigrants much more than to Finns.

Getting to know Finns in general was considered hard, because of the cultural differences. The interviewees felt that it was hard to interpret Finns in the sense what to say to them, and also taking initiative was seen a burden, because Finns do not approach or communicate easily. Language skills were also an issue especially in the beginning.

> "A little hard. Some people approach independently but some people need time, maybe it depends on the traditions of the Finns." F20T

> "I don't know, I feel like that I have a problem getting to know them, I should start the talking, because if you are Afghan or Iranian you know what you can talk about, but with Finns you have to think what to talk about." M22I/A

Language skills affect the interaction between people and even if the immigrants master Finnish, it still requires much understanding of the culture. It seems like immigrant students rather make contacts with other foreigners than Finns due to cultural differences.

The immigrant students have a chance to study double-degree when they enter upper secondary education, which means that they can carry out a degree in the vocational institute and in the general upper secondary school. In general in upper secondary school one studies Finnish as a foreign language with other immigrant students, whereas in the vocational institute the students follow normal classes with all their Finnish fellow students. Learning Finnish in the general upper secondary school was significant to immigrant students, because there the majority of the friendships were created. Six of the interviewees started studying double-degree, of which three gave up after one year because it was too demanding.

When asking the interviewees about communication with Finns the majority thinks that communicating is somewhat easy, although the Finnish language takes some time to learn. One of the interviewees, the oldest one, a Burmese boy, who arrived to Finland at the age of 24 said that he still has problems following the conversations. For others, that arrived between the ages of 9-17 stated that they did not have problems with using Finnish, although sometimes some words are missing. In general communicating with Finns is considered easy or somewhat manageable, but a few comments regarding to the contents and initiation and taking turns of the conversation was mentioned.

> "In the beginning I thought, that with Finns you have differences what you can talk about or you need to be careful what to say with them, but now that I have got known to them, and after I got friends I realized that you can talk about all kinds of things like with my own natives, Finns do talk too. People from my country speak behind the back – so do the Finns!

No difference, the difference is only in the language, it is the language form, but the topics are the same." F23A

"I think Finland is a closed society. [---] If you want to adapt to live in Finland, you should be the one to start (the conversation), but for example somewhere else it is like interaction, you start and they start, even if you don't start the others start, here it is very seldom that they start." F21S

Although the general opinion in getting to know Finns was quite negative, there was one interviewee who considered that getting to know Finns was easy.

"I felt that it was easy to have Finnish friends. I don't know why some people say that they are shy. They are a little careful in the beginning, but after that they are good friends."F23A

Besides school other possibilities to get know to people and make friends were hobbies. However, the hobbies that the immigrants have are normally sports groups or gatherings targeted only for immigrants. This weakens the chances to meet Finnish people.

"Normally I'm training. I go to the gym and I wrestle. The whole week I go to my hobbies. The friends I have now I have got known either at school or in wrestling training." M22I/A

"I get know to people easily in volley ball. My hobbies are volley, congregation's evenings for young people and then game nights."F21S

At JAO, getting to know people and making friends was not very successful in the beginning, but it got better by time for most of the interviewees, although in the end, none of them considered friends at JAO as close friends. For example an Afghan girl said that she started studies at JAO with her sister. There were also other Afghans so they spend time with them and she did not get know to people there. However, the second year when her sister left JAO and the other Afghan friends graduated she was left alone and she had to make effort and try to get know Finnish friends. After she was alone and had to encounter the situation she realized that it was easy to make friends with Finns.

A Sudanese girl said that she did get to know lot of people, but they were all left behind except for one foreign friend. A Turkish girl said that she started her studies two days later than the others and everyone had already got to know

each other, but they still wanted to get to know her. A Burmese boy said that it was hard because of his lack of language skills, but after he managed to make friends with two Finnish classmates. An Iranian boy thought that it is easy to get to know classmates and he thought that they came to talk him courageously. A Russian girl thought that getting know to people was much more easier in general upper secondary school, because there was lots of group work. At JAO it was more exams and individual work.

Keeping contact

Maintaining a relationship requires normally some degree of regular contact to the other person. After school time is spent mainly with family. Friends are seen less frequently. The results of the spending time with close persons will be explored more precisely in the following chapters dealing relationships with family and friends. Here I bring out the results of keeping contact to people via social media, email, phone or other means. All the interviewees use Facebook as means to keep contact to people. Facebook is the place where school friends and all kind of acquaintances are added as friends, although they would not be close friends. Facebook also allows finding and keeping contact to people who were left behind in the old home country.

Contact to close people like family and best friends were mainly kept by phone. For example an Iranian boy tells that mostly he keeps contact to his close people, wife, mother and friends by phone. In Facebook he adds friends from all over the world, even if he did not know them. Email he uses sometimes for school things and other matters. In general it seems like the interviewees prefer keeping contact by phone to those who are close and live in Finland. Facebook, Skype, email, and Messenger, come into play especially when keeping contact to people that live further away, but these means are used also with people that reside in Finland.

Loneliness

Nearly all interviewees felt lonely when just arrived to Finland, but it naturally decreased after getting to know Finnish language and getting to know more

people. Still the majority of the interviewees reported facing loneliness from time to time especially at school due to constantly changing fellow students.

An Iranian girl stated that she feels a little lonely when she thinks about her friends in Iran. She really misses them, but she knows that when she left something behind she will get something new in return. An Iranian boy told that at JAO he felt lonely in the beginning. It took about a year to find friends there, but every year he has more and more and now he does not feel lonely at all. A Sudanese girl said that she normally does not feel lonely except sometimes at JAO when she has courses in a place where she does not know anyone. Normally fellow students change all the time in every study period, so there is not always people around that she would know. Then she logs on Facebook and chats with her friends there to avoid the feeling of loneliness. Similarly the Russian girl also says that she feels lonely at JAO sometimes, because there are no friends that she would know. A Turkish girl faces loneliness, because she is shy and it is difficult for her to approach Finnish students. The sense of loneliness increases when doing group work and she does not know who to ask for her partner.

6.2 Close relationships

Here I present how the interviewees consider what kind of qualities or characteristics they expect from a close person. Almost all the interviewees think that being close to someone signifies being understood and being able to be who you are. In cultures like Iran or Afghanistan family members are automatically considered as the closest persons and understanding the question what defines a close person was difficult to answer for the interviewees from these countries. The expectations of a close person varied and several matters were mentioned: being on time, being able to tell secrets, ability to have empathy, not being judged or shouted at, being able to trust, being respected, being honest, being understood, and being helped in difficult situations.

"The closest persons, you can talk to them, and then understand others better and faster. I expect that I am understood and respected of course." M22I/A

Family

The close relationships are presented here according to the point of view of the interviewees. All of the interviewees state that their closest relationships are with family members. The concept of family varies from culture to another, and in the case of these interviewees coming from Burma (actual Myanmar), Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia and Sudan, the meaning of the family covers not only parents and siblings, but also grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins etc. All of the interviewees have either, both parents or at least their mother residing in Finland. Table 2 shows if the interviewees live with their parents and how it correlates to if they are married or have children. The closest persons are listed in the order the interviewees mentioned them.

Table 2. Interviewees' close relationships.

Interviewee	Living with parents	Married	Children	The closest person(s)
F20T	Yes	No	-	Parents, aunt
F21S	Yes	No	-	Parents, sister
F22I/A	With mother	No	-	Sister
F18R	With mother	No	-	Grandmother, mother, sister, aunt
M22I/A	No	Yes	-	Mother, wife, siblings
F23A	No	Yes	1	Husband, child, parents
M28B	No	Yes	1	Wife

For all of the interviewees spending time with the family was the most important matter. Friends were important, but the amount of time they spent with friends was extremely low compared to the time spent with family. In the school environment the interviewees do have many acquaintances, but they do not have any close friends there.

The interviewees trusted the most in one of their family members, either mother, sister, wife, aunt or father. In a difficult situation, if they needed help and support, they would turn to their family members. At school most of the

interviewees do not consider that they need to trust anyone or that they would have such kind of problems that they needed support. In case of study problem they would turn to their supervising teacher or study counsellor.

Romantic relationships

Three of the interviewees were married. One was married to a Finn, and the two others to a person from their own ethnic group. An Afghan girl had met her husband in Finland. A Burmese boy had gotten married already in Burma and his wife followed him after.

The Iranian boy married to a Finn said having some difficulties in regard to the different cultures of the families, especially religion that forbids the use of alcohol. He would not require his wife to turn to a Muslim, but expects his wife to respect his culture. This boy is the only one among his family and relatives who has a wife from a different culture. The reason to get married fast was to be able to live together. This couple had known each other for more than five years, and normally in Finnish standards they could live together without getting married. Because of this boy's cultural background, they got married. He says that they would have probably waited more if the situation had been different.

The rest of the interviewees who were not married did not have any kind of romantic relationship going on. A Russian girl said that it does matter where does the possible boyfriend come from. Cultural background matters and it is important that the other person understands where she is coming from. Probably she would have a Russian or European (meaning other than Finnish) boyfriend. Her family thinks that the possible future boyfriend should not be a Muslim, even though they have nothing against them, but the culture is so different and it is difficult to get along. An Iranian girl thinks in the same way, she thinks it would take a long time to explain her culture. Her family hopes that she gets married to a person who understands her and can communicate in her mother tongue. Using other language than her mother tongue makes communication difficult.

A Turkish girl said that she had dated someone, but not anymore. The boy was a foreigner. She does not approach to Finnish boys, because they are silent. Turkish boys do talk and they make the initiative. Her parents think that it is not possible to get along with a Finn, because everything is so different. Finns date and live together, and have children before marriage, but in the Turkish culture it is not possible, you have to get married first.

One of the interviewees had a different attitude. A Sudanese girl had dated Finns, but did not start any serious relationship. She says that it does not matter where the boy is from, for instance skin colour or cultural background does not matter to her.

Friends

Friends form an important part in the process of integration and adaptation especially if the friends represent national and foreign cultures in addition to own ethnic group. When asking the interviewees about their friendships, the majority stated that they have friends from various countries. Most common friends were other immigrants living in Finland, but the majority has Finnish friends, too. Two of the interviewees said that they do not have Finnish friends at all.

What interviewees understood as close friends was somewhat complicated. For example a Turkish girl first said that she does not have close friends at school, but when asking more precise if the schoolmates are more like friends or acquaintances, the girl said more like friends. When I asked how many friends she has at school she answered that the whole class. Nevertheless, she does not spend any time with friends after school. She states that it would be important to spend time with friends, but none of them is that close to her. She does not have a best friend at all in Finland.

An Iranian boy answered to my questions similarly. First he said that he has at least 10 friends at JAO, but when I asked if they are close to him, he said that

none of them are close. Therefore asking the interviewees how much time they spend with their friends seemed to be a better indicator for the importance of friendships than just asking whom they consider as their friends.

Table 3. Interviewees' friends.

Interviewee	Nationalities of the friends	Best friend in Finland	Nationality of the best friend	Close friends at JAO
F20T	Finns and others like Iran, Russia, Turkey, and Afghanistan.	No	-	No
F21S	Bulgaria, Afghanistan, Germany, Congo, Sudan, international circle of friends, Finns too.	Yes	-	No
F22I/A	Sudan, Russia, many different countries like Germany, Ukraine etc. No Finns.	Yes	-	Not many.
F18R	Different countries, more from Africa. No Finns.	Yes	African, Russian and Iranian	No
M22I/A	Finland, Afghanistan, Iran, every country.	Yes	Afghan	No
F23A	Finland, Afghanistan.	No	Afghan	Four or five, of which one Kurdistan, the rest Finns.
M28B	Myanmar, Afghanistan, Thailand, Finland.	Yes	-	Two Finnish classmates.

All of the interviewees consider spending time with family more important than spending time with friends. Many of the interviewees mentioned that in their old home countries they had much more friends and friends were more important than now.

> "With friends I don't spend much time, because I have only foreign friends. School friends and Finns I meet only at school, not more." F22I/A

> "I don't spend much time with friends, at work and at school yes, but I don't want to spend free time with them." F23A

The majority of the interviewees spend their free time with family after school. A Turkish girl helps out her parents in a pizzeria. An Afghan girl takes care of her own family that includes a husband and a child. An Iranian girl spends time with friends, but also spends time with friends that are met through family and she meets them together with the family. An Iranian boy is balancing between his wrestling hobby and spending time at home with his wife and mum.

Four of the interviewees said that they have a best friend in Finland. None of them has a Finnish best friend, but rather from their own ethnic group or other immigrants in the same situation as they are. In general the closest friends were mainly made in the language courses, either before entering JAO or when starting Finnish as a foreign language course in the general upper secondary school.

6.3 Weak ties and lost relationships

All of the interviewees stated that they have several acquaintances. Some interviewees referred the whole school as their acquaintances; others considered their classmates as ones. Mainly the interviewees considered people who they meet at school, students and teachers, and then people met at hobbies as their weak ties. Especially Finnish teachers seem to have important role as their weak ties, because that was normally the first longer relationship that they formed to a local person, and received information about the local culture and habits.

Perceptions about teachers varied according to the field the interviewees were studying in. In general, all of the immigrants think that in Finland teachers are more relaxed and easy to approach compared to their respective home countries or countries were they last studied before arriving to Finland. A general opinion seemed to be that in Finland students have to be reminded all the time how they should behave. Teachers expect certain maturity of the students. A Russian girl felt that it gives an impression that the teacher does not care for his/her students. This clearly affected her study motivation.

> "I think that teachers do not care much who does and what, they say immediately that if you don't like you can leave, nobody forces you to stay, but in Russia you are forced to stay, if you have come you stay. I think the hardest thing for me was that it is so much easier if the teacher is interested in explaining the things for you, because then at least you learn something, but if you have a teacher that is not so interested it is difficult. In general upper secondary school it was better, there the teachers are interested, but at JAO the teachers come sometimes late and sometimes forget to come. [---] I think it has been a bit difficult here, and I'm not so interested in studying if nobody cares." F18R

All the interviewees mentioned discipline as one factor that differs greatly from their home countries, and the importance of it was considered both negatively and positively. The lack of discipline was seen negatively in the sense that general behaviour is worse and there is no calm environment to study, and also the teachers will not be respected. However, it was also seen as a chance to think about your own actions and choose whether you want to behave well or not.

> "In Burma the teachers say that be quiet, you have to be quiet, can't say a word. If someone speaks the teacher will complain and will give detention. In Finland you can choose and can do whatever, but if I do something wrong I have to think what it means, I have to think about it." M28B

Having distance with teachers in the old home countries was common among the interviewees. Getting used to having closer relationships to teachers in Finland and having less discipline required adjusting for all of the interviewees. For example, the Iranian boy understands closer relationships with teachers as them having less discipline and less efficient education. However, an

Afghanistan girl thinks that closer relationships with the teachers do not necessarily mean lack of respect or worse education, but on the contrary - more efficient learning.

> "Here teachers are closer than in Iran. There the students do not know the first names of the teachers. [---] Here teachers are closer and take care of the students." F23A

Discipline and distance to teachers affects the behaviour in the classroom. After studying several years in a culture where the teacher is a distant figure and the studying is done quietly it takes some time to adjust to the Finnish way of interacting in the class.

> "Teachers, you always call with last names, never with the first name and you always have to stand up and be quiet when the teacher arrives. The first year was hard to get used to in Finland, I always stood up, think about it, after 10 years doing so, and then everyone laughs, but it's OK, they can laugh." F22I/A

Communication with teachers and receiving instructions was seen mainly positively. It also depends on the student's language skills and what he or she is studying. It is not necessarily tied to the person who teaches, but the materials that are available for the students.

Also the matter was seen from another point of view, how teachers understand the immigrants. An Iranian girl thinks that she does understand what the teachers say but doubts whether the teachers understand her.

> "I think that the teachers understand me differently. When I say something I always have to make sure if they understood what I wanted to say. Their messages have gone through, but mine not, they always think 10 things at the same time, when I say something, I say it different way and I doubt if they understand." F22I/A

When asking the interviewees who to they turn to when they have questions, the support is more likely searched from fellow students rather than from the teachers. Depending on the subject, one of the main ways of studying is in

groups so that gives a natural opportunity to ask for help from a classmate rather than from the teacher.

> "I have many friends who to ask. Teacher of course would answer if I asked, and sometimes teacher do come to see how the things are working out. Studying to be electrician you have more group work and it is really good, doesn't feel so hard." M22I/A

In general the opinion seemed to be that fellow students and teachers and study counsellors help when needed, but their importance was not that significant and they were not considered very close. The interviewees interact with their fellow students if they had an assignment together, but otherwise they would not keep contact, for instance, after school.

All the interviewees reported that many friends were left behind when moving to Finland. The youngest participant, the Russian 18 years old girl who arrived at the age of nine to Finland says that she hardly keeps contact to people in Russia, because she does not have many friends there and have not visited Russia that frequently. The other participants, who arrived at the age of 15 and beyond still remember their friends back in the old home countries, some have maintained contact with a friend or two, some do not have any contacts due to the situation in the country or just that their lives went to different directions.

For example Iranian girl says that lot of people were left behind and she does not keep contact to them, because it is hard; they went to school or got married. A Turkish girl says that she lost contact with her best friend in Turkey. When she visited Turkey last year she met her best friend, but she was treating her arrogantly and distantly, which was shocking for this girl, because they had been friends for 16 or 17 years. In practice she lost all her friends that were left behind in Turkey. A Sudanese girl told how she found one good friend in Skype after five years of not keeping contact. She was amazed how easy it was talk to her again after such a long time. All the other friends were left behind and she cannot remember their faces anymore.

There are several variables why some friends stay in the picture and some are left behind. Those interviewees who have Afghan parents and have lived in

Iran, they do not have any contact to Iran. This is due to the circumstances in Iran. Afghans are not allowed to the same rights as Iranian people, even if being born in Iran, but having Afghan parents. This shows also in the forming of relationships there. Seemingly Iranians might be Afghans children's friends, but in reality they are considered as second-class citizens. Ethnic background has a strong influence on the friendships. These Iranian Afghans rather might have contacts to other Afghans living in Iran or to those who have moved back to Afghanistan.

6.4 Adaptation to Finland and identity

People move from one country to another because of different reasons. Voluntarily they move because of having faith and expectations for better future whereas for obligatory moving there is always behind a serious reason. The reason can be poverty, hunger, pogrom, war, need to have education or hope for better life for oneself and for the family. (Talib & Lipponen 2008). In this research five of the interviewed immigrants arrived to Finland as refugees. Two of the interviewees could not state the reason why they came to Finland. The majority of the interviewees came to Finland, because their parents were in the hope of better future for their children.

> "My dad was here and I came with mum to be with dad. [---] When we came to Finland we didn't have a residence permit. We came with a visa. We tried to get a residence permit many times but again came that we have to go to Turkey. Our relatives said that we have to talk with the priest, he can help. We were two days in the cellar of the church. Then someone came to interview us from Keski-Suomalainen (local newspaper). [---] Then we went to the police and they helped." F20T

> "Some time mum and dad were young and just gotten married; they went from South-Sudan to North-Sudan. It wasn't nice to live there; it wasn't fair so we moved to Egypt. There you live like in your own home country, but you are like a second class citizen. With Red Cross we moved to Finland when I was 15." F21S

"When we were in Iran, Afghans weren't allowed to study. Mum and dad were educated and for them it was important that their children can study, that is why we moved here." F23A

When asking immigrant students about their adaptation to Finland and if they want to reside in Finland, the majority (five interviewees) was satisfied in their lives in Finland and felt like they were adapted and they did not want to live anywhere else. Some of the interviewees, mostly girls, dream of living in another country at some point. Only one would like to return to his home country. Considering the generational cohorts, the oldest interviewee, a 28 years old Burmese boy, had the most problems in adapting to Finland in regard to language skills and attaining Finnish friends. Nevertheless, he would never go back to his home country due to political reasons. An Iranian boy age of 22 considered that he is not adapted well, although he has a Finnish wife and has a large circle of friends that are Finns.

JO: Do you feel that you have adapted well to live in Finland? - "Hmm, I don't think so. - JO: Do you feel that there is some other place you would enjoy better? - Yes, Iran. - JO: You said earlier that you do not want to return to your home country? - " I can't return, because I'm married to a Finnish wife, I don't want that she leaves everything for me, can't just move because it is nice to live in Iran. - JO: If you could, would you move back? - Yes." M22I/A

The interviewed students were asked what they do not like about Finland, the most often stated matter was cold and dark winter. Other things than weather were hard to find a job, people's behaviour so that it is hard to approach them, and language in the sense that it is hard to learn.

On the other hand when asking what they do like about Finland, the attitude was very positive. Several interviewees mentioned especially summer, educational chances, equal rights and tranquillity as positive things about Finland. Also people, safety, work laws, free school food, nice to live, environment, and hobbies were mentioned.

When asking the interviewees about the future plans, the majority of them planned to stay in Finland, carry out a degree at a higher level, and have a job and earn money. Those interviewees who were married and had kids

emphasized the significance of having more education and a good job, and have more children. They believe that Finland offers great opportunities and life is good here. One Iranian (parents from Afghanistan) married boy, no children, might want to go to Afghanistan as a peacekeeper. He wants to have an opportunity to live in the country where his parents grew up. He has never lived there. He is hesitating between making a career in the military service or then studying to be an engineer. His Finnish wife is keeping him more likely in Finland. Only one of the interviewees, a Sudanese girl, did not want to stay in Finland. She prefers a warmer place to live in.

The sense of identity

In this section I present the answers I got from the interviewees about their sense of identity. I classified the interviewees' cultural identities using Phinney et al. (2006) classifications that have the following categories: integration profile, ethnic profile, national profile and unclear profile. Those representing integration profile are immigrant adolescents that have strong ethnic identity but also a weaker national identity. They are fluent in Finnish language and use it often more than their own ethnic language that they also master very well. Immigrants that express strong ethnicity and use constantly their own ethnic language represent ethnic profile. Social contacts are from the own ethnic circle. They separate from the main culture to some extent. National profile represents the ones who want to assimilate and use only one national language. They have only little contacts to their own ethnic group. Also there is a group consisting of those who do not represent any of these categories. Those are separated from the society and in danger to be excluded. (Phinney et al. 2006:71-116)

Table 4. Different acculturation profiles (Phinney et al. 2006)

Integration profile	Ethnic profile	National profile	Unclear profile
F18R, F21S, M22I/A, F23I/A	F20T, M28B, F22I	-	-

Four of the respondents said that they represent two cultures, or a third culture that is a new one, not a Finn, but not exactly representing own ethnic culture either.

A Sudanese girl stated that she cannot say which nationality she has, definitely not a Finn, but on the other hand not Sudanese either. Her contacts were quite international, but included also Finns. An Iranian boy who has never seen Afghanistan said that he cannot say to be a Finn, but rather Afghanistan, although he has never seen the country. He grew up in Iran, but his parents are Afghans. He says that it is hard to say what his nationality is. He is married to a Finn, so various cultures are present in his every day life. An Afghan girl stated that she is absolutely a Finn and added a joke after her statement. She clearly wants to be a Finn, but recognizes the differences between the cultures. At home she thinks in her mother tongue, at school she thinks in Finnish.

Three of the interviewees represented ethnic profile. Iranian girl stated that she cannot say that she is a Finn, but defines herself as Asian. She does not spend much time with friends; approximately 90 per cent of her time she spends with her family after school. All the friends she has are foreigners, meaning other nationalities than Finns. The same kind of profile can be seen with a Turkish girl. She cannot say to be a Finn, unless she would learn Finnish as well as the natives. The culture doesn't bother her, but on the other hand she spends all her free time helping her parents valuing her own ethnic background more. Meeting friends is not in her priorities. A Burmese boy stated that he is not a Finn, but he would like to be. He stated his nationality as Burmese. He spends his free time with foreigners and he has trouble communicating in Finnish.

Differences in culture and habits

I asked the immigrant students if they feel different from others due to their ethnic background or if the living differs greatly from their home countries. Everyone recognized differences. Only two of the interviewees said that they stand out because of their ethnic background, one due to hair colour, and other one because of skin colour. Some respondents referred in their answers to the living style, some in special occasions.

> "The living style is completely different. [---] There (Sudan) is all the time something to do, I don't have the feeling that there is nothing to do, just to lay in a bed. - JO: You get a feeling like that sometimes here? - "If you plan here, like my autumn was very full I just went home and fell

asleep immediately, but spring was so that I left more time to myself. But in Sudan not really." F21S

"Sudanese people are really hospitable, and in Finland it depends on education, for example if friends come to visit me I make some tea and make pastries and they ask why I do so. I say that it is totally normal. And if we go to some place we just sit, if someone happens to be hospitable we drink juice or something or we are just asked if we want something. In Sudan they don't ask anything, but bring everything and do not even give a chance not to take anything." F21S

Other differences that the interviewees mentioned were for example safeness, and the chance to study and have nice hobbies here, and it was highly appreciated. Also religion referring to alcohol use and fast, and general manners was mentioned. Religion seemed to be a strong issue to those having Islamic faith considering the adaptation to Finland. There religion defines the living style and what to wear and when coming to Finland the change is quite drastic and it affects the integration.

"Even if I have a Finnish wife my cultural background affects my every day life through religion. To me religion is so much more important than culture. [--] Some problems occur with alcohol, because in my religion it is forbidden. My wife doesn't drink, but I don't know if she drinks behind my back, but at least she respects me so that she doesn't drink in front of me." M22I/A

"I think I adapted well to Finland, because I don't wear a scarf. Finns have the courage to approach me and that sometimes prevent it if I had the scarf on. I have friends at school, who are with a scarf and a long dress, but they sit alone in the corridor and nobody greets them and they don't have friends. When dressing so that there is no scarf, you look like a Finn, and Finns come to talk to you." F23A

Racism

The interviewees were asked if they faced racism in their every day life. All of the interviewees said that they feel that they are treated equally and they do not have many experiences in regard to racism. A Sudanese girl told that she had faced racism at primary school, when she had a sports teacher that did not qualify her for running competition even if she was the best of the class. This happened soon after arriving to Finland. Ever since she has not had problems,

but she does not trust all the authorities and she might think if some administrative worker is a racist. A Turkish girl felt that she was received well by the Finns, although there were some who did not listen to her.

7 DISCUSSION

The aim of this research is to investigate immigrant students' perceptions of their interpersonal relationships especially in the context of school environment, and also study their adaptation process. In this chapter I critically reflect on how literature contributes to the findings of my research. The aim was studied through the following research questions: 1) How do immigrant students develop and maintain their interpersonal relationships? 2) What kind of expectations and experiences immigrant students have from their interpersonal relationships? And 3) How immigrant students perceive their adaptation to Finland?

7.1 Developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships

The discussion in the first research question focuses on reflecting the literature and the actual findings on developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

Immigrants have to learn the new language and cultural habits when moving to a new country. Forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships facilitate gaining information about the ways of communicating in the new environment. They compare old, familiar and safe things to new ones and build on their identity in interaction with the community. At the same time when thinking what is their place in the new community immigrants also think what others think about them. According to Juuti (2005) the attitudes towards immigrants varies according to the economical situation and the amount of immigrants. Today Finland's worsened economical situation, and increased amount of

immigrants have created a situation where hate towards foreigners has been shown more openly, for instance, in negative writings in the Internet. The rise of nationalism can be seen as well in politics, as in last spring elections a political party with strong conservative social values became the third largest party in the parliament. The popularity of this party seems to keep on increasing and promotes less favourable conditions for immigrants.

The participants of this study arrived to Finland when the economical situation was better. They report not having had hostile or unwelcoming experiences with Finns. In overall they felt welcomed to Finland. On one hand, when the participants arrived to Finland and started their studies, they were placed in groups with other immigrants. Studying with fellow students who are also foreigners is probably more comfortable, and they do not feel that different from others. On the other hand, adolescent's contacts are often limited to their own family and very little to experiencing the local culture. The downside of placing all the immigrant students together is that it makes the process of getting to know local people slow, as well as learning Finnish might take longer. This creates a "bubble" where many immigrants live in without having real contact to the host culture.

Part of this research concentrated especially on the developing relationships in the upper secondary school, Jyväskylä College (JAO). The participants had at least two years of studies in Finnish and other complementary courses before entering JAO so living in Finland and interacting with Finns was not completely strange when starting studies at JAO. According to the studies, and also shown in this research, it takes about a year to make friends. Every one of the participants studied in groups with Finns, and there were no other immigrants in the same class. Some of the participants faced difficulties in communicating and understanding in the beginning, but in overall the participants considered that starting studies at JAO was exciting and pleasant. They consider Finns shy and not talkative, but if you make the effort, eventually they can be your friends. Those students who already had studied full three years and were about to graduate stated that getting to know people was rather easy, although close relationships to Finns were hardly created.

According to Gudykunst's (1991) intergroup uncertainty reduction theory there are two factors that create a communication climate that makes information exchange and uncertainty reduction easier. First, people who identify strongly with their own group identity feel more confident about interaction with someone from a different social or cultural group. Second, when people perceive members of another culture favourably, they are likely to look forward to interacting with them.

In this research, the participants were mainly adolescents or young adults when entering JAO. Some of the participants showed uncertainty about their role as a person in the new environment and feared interacting with people who speak a different language. These participants represented ethnic profile. According to this theory it leads to avoiding interaction and to remain uncertain and anxious – and worsens the chances to make friends. Those who were confident about their cultural identity and were looking forward to communicate with strangers, felt comfortable and open during interaction, which would likely lead to uncertainty reduction and increased liking. Those participants represented more integration profile.

Nevertheless, some of the interviewees did not have any interest in getting to know Finns. It might be more convenient and rewarding to spend time with friends who have shared the same experiences as themselves. Moving from a country that is totally different than the new host environment can be frightening and looking for support from people that are facing the same struggles gives comfort. Therefore contacts were created more easily with other immigrants than Finns.

At JAO most of the classes were only with Finnish fellow students, and some of the participants faced occasional loneliness. Constantly changing study periods and new groups do not give an opportunity to stay longer time with the same people. In general once you have made your friends at school, it is challenging to constantly make new ones – especially if the fellow students are Finns who are not very easily approachable, as described by most of the interviewees. Trying to make contact to Finns who do not easily say hello on the street or come to talk to can be frustrating.

The role of school as integrator and creating opportunities to new relationships is vital. Nearly all of the participants had developed their most important relationships either in the language courses with other immigrants, or through other means, like hobbies. However, the role of JAO did not seem to be very significant in creating close relationships. This raises a question why the school environment does not encourage students to get to know each other. Is it because of the immigrants who rather turn to other immigrants, or is it the Finns who are reluctant to make friends with foreigners. It can be speculated what kind of role the teacher has in creating an atmosphere that would encourage students to cooperate and communicate to each other. Also the study structure in some cases is designed so that students study in different groups all the time. This leaves no chances to get familiar with other students and bond with them. When the students are still in their adolescence it would be important that they have certain continuity and familiarity.

Maintaining relationships

Studying how the interviewees maintain their relationships was challenging and as such there was no direct results of it. According to the study of Stafford and Canary (1991) there are five interpersonal actions that contribute to long-term relational satisfaction: positivity, openness, assurances, networking and sharing tasks. However, it can be assumed that the relationships maintained with close persons, in this case immigrants with their family members, might require different things. As Kokkonen (2006) states in her licentiate thesis, in general there is very little information on what kind of challenges immigrants have in their relationship maintenance, for instance, how positivity is expressed, or how different tasks are shared in refugee families. There are several researches conducted over immigrants' lives in a new country and culture, but studies concentrated on the immigrants' maintenance of interpersonal relationships are scarce.

One way to study relationship maintenance is how contact is kept. The immigrant students were asked in what manner they keep contact and how often to the people of their lives. With the close persons, in this case with

family, contact was kept by spending time together as much as possible, but also by phone if not being at home or the family member lived elsewhere. Other means of keeping contact were Facebook, Messenger, Skype and email. Especially those friends, who live far away, or who are not that close, for instance schoolmates, were more contacted via social media. Nowadays it is very common in Western countries that the faster living style, having a job, studying, going to hobbies, and taking care of home, does not necessarily leave time to meet friends, and therefore contact is kept by other means.

7.2 Experiences and expectations of the interpersonal relationships

In different parts of the world, the concept of being close to someone can be viewed in various ways and may be given different significance depending on the culture. Immigrants who participated in this study expect from a close person varied qualities: being on time, being able to tell secrets, ability to have empathy, not being judged or shouted at, being able to trust, being respected, being honest, being understood, and being helped in difficult situations. In cultures like Iran or Afghanistan family members are automatically considered as the closest persons and understanding the question what defines a close person was difficult to answer for the interviewees from these countries. In general almost all the interviewees think that being close to someone signifies being understood and being able to be who you are. Sometimes close relationships cannot be chosen, for instance children cannot choose in which family they are born in, or a future spouse is chosen by parents.

Family

Family is the closest social network to its members and the most important source of resources, such as economic and social capabilities, but also parenting and cultural knowledge that can help the younger generation's wellbeing. The results of this research show that family is the core of life in the new host environment and the importance of it was highlighted strongly by the

interviewees. Old friends were left behind and the only familiar people in the new environment were the close family members.

Being part of a family is considered normally as a biological matter, but in many cultures being part of a family is a social concept that is based on cultural agreements how family ties are built. For example an uncle or a cousin can be counted as close family. In this study most of the interviewees considered mother, sister, wife or child as the most important and closest persons.

Also cultural factors affect that family is appreciated and respected more than for instance in individualistic Finland. In Finland young people tend to move out from their parents in their late adolescence, form relationships, live together with a spouse, without getting married. For the interviewees coming from Iran, Sudan, Afghanistan and Turkey, this kind of behaviour was unimaginable.

Significant life changes, such as moving from a country to another, can change the expectations of a relationship. Different cultural environment can affect the traditional concepts of the roles of a woman and a man, duties and rights might be completely different in the new host country. Raising children in the new environment can create conflicts, for example whether the daughter of the family should be married according to the old traditions, or whether she has the right to choose her own spouse. None of the female interviewees told that their parents would influence their choice of future spouse, however the parents did give recommendations about the possible boyfriends. They should preferably be from the same ethnic group and speak the same language. Living in Finland and getting used to a different kind of life style may change the viewpoint to the original cultural values. This can create conflicts between family members. Especially parents might need support in accepting the change their children might undergo in the new environment.

The results of this research indicate that mostly the participants have strong traditional cultural values and most likely choose a partner from the same ethnic group, if not already chosen. One of the interviewees had chosen differently, having a Finnish wife, but his family was not supportive to this

marriage. Also another interviewee stated that she does not mind where from her possible boyfriend would be. According to some researchers, the more adapted the person is to the new host culture, more likely that person has tied a relationship with a person who is not from the same culture. This would indicate that two out of seven interviewees were better adapted than the others. However, neither of these two reported that they would like to stay living in Finland whereas all the rest definitely would.

Friends

In regard to adaptation it is important that young immigrants have friendships in their own ethnic group, in the host culture and also from other cultures. According to an international study (Phinney et al. 2006) most of the immigrant youngsters have somewhat more friends in their own ethnic group; especially in Finland immigrants have more friendships in their own ethnic group than with Finns (Talib & Lipponen 2008). The results of this research show the same tendency, most of the interviewees have friends from their own ethnic group or other foreigners that are not Finns. In many studies the importance of having contact to the host culture has been emphasized, nevertheless it looks like it does not happen in reality. An interesting question is how to make immigrants create contacts with Finns if the immigrants are happy with their international circle of friends; perhaps the attention should be turned to Finns, how they could make more effort to develop relationships with immigrants.

After late adolescence begins young adulthood (20 to 30 years old), that normally brings tasks to be confronted, such as finishing education, launching careers, pursuing romantic relationships, choosing a marriage partner, and starting a family – at least in Western cultures. Research suggests that, during this time, the amount of interaction with friends is likely to depend very much on the state of one's other relationships. Three of the interviewees were married, the rest were singles. Those who were singles pictured themselves having another degree from school, a job, a boyfriend or a husband, and possibly starting a family in the next five years. None of the interviewees

mentioned friends in their future plans. The tendencies of the interviewees were very much alike to the research conducted in Western cultures.

Defining the amount of friends the immigrant students have is challenging. There are some inconsistencies about the number and types of friends, because what a friend means to a man and to a woman can vary greatly. According to Wright (1999) men tend to consider co-workers or neighbours as friends whereas women are more selective about using the term friend. This ambiguity was shown in the answers of the male and female respondents, too. The two male interviewees stated all classmates or even whole school as their friends, but only close persons were wife and mother. The female respondents were more precise about their friends, and would not count so vaguely who is their friend. Nevertheless, having more male interviewees would have brought more insight to this matter.

Weak ties

In the lives of young immigrants typical weak ties are teachers, neighbours, acquaintances, or other officials. Weak ties can give a feeling of belonging and unite the immigrant to the new community. Both close and weak ties are significant in situations, where social support is needed. Sometimes close relationships may prevent from adapting to the new environment, for instance if the family members have negative attitudes to the new host community. Therefore in these situations weak ties can serve as better integrator. An important role of weak ties is learning the new language. This could be recognized from the answers of the interviewees. First contact to Finns, and the first bits of information about the culture were received from the language teachers in the most cases. This affects the opinion about Finns in general. These weak ties are very significant in considering adaptation and can affect greatly on how willing the immigrants are to tie relationships in general with the local people. Interviewees mentioned that the information they were told about Finns was quite stereotypical – silent and introvert.

Perceptions about teachers varied according to the field the interviewees were studying in. In general, all of the immigrants think that in Finland teachers are more relaxed and easy to approach compared to their respective home countries or countries were they last studied before arriving to Finland. A general opinion seemed to be that in Finland students have to be reminded all the time how they should behave. Teachers expect certain maturity of the students and does not tell them all the time how to behave. This created controversial opinions about the relationships to teachers; either they were considered as indifferent, or on the contrary, appreciated. For instance a female Russian interviewee felt that it gives an impression that the teacher does not care for his/her students and it affected her study motivation.

From the perspective of immigrants, interpersonal communication experiences with natives provide emotional support to strangers by helping to ease the loneliness, stress, and difficulty that strangers encounter. Strangers seek support in their efforts to find necessary information and to handle the difficulties they face; they also need help in finding additional contacts. The sense of security that strangers gain from supportive relationships with natives generally outweighs the difficulty and anguish that strangers may go through in establishing such relationships. (Kim 2001). At school most of the interviewees do not consider that they need to trust anyone or that they would have such kind of problems that they needed support. In case of study problem they would turn to their supervising teacher or study counsellor.

Lost relationships

The participants did not talk much about the relationships they had lost. Everyone reported that many friends were left behind. Perhaps contact had been maintained with a friend or two, but mostly it seemed not be very significant for the interviewees. Interviewees' lives had changed and there was no connection to old friends anymore. They arrived to Finland when they were so young, or they had already moved from country to another a couple of times so that friends left behind was not an issue for them, or they just did not feel comfortable talking about it. It may be interpreted so that the interviewees rather concentrate on looking forward to the future, than looking back.

7.3 Adaptation

In the current field of research, one of the most focal themes is the second generation of immigrants; children that are born in the new host country. Although this study is not about second-generation immigrants, it gives an idea of the immigrants' possible adaptation process. Most of the participants arrived to Finland during their adolescence and their adaptation to the new environment is most likely easier than the ones who arrived in their adulthood (Rumbaut 2007). Two of the participants have children of their own, being parents to their second-generation children. According to the studies, the children of immigrants will likely adapt to the new environment better than their parents, but they still represent more of their own ethnic culture than the new host culture.

Five participants expressed that they were well adapted to Finland. They appreciate especially educational chances, equal rights, tranquillity, safety, people, work laws, free school food, environment, and hobbies. The future plans for the majority was to stay in Finland, carry out a degree at a higher level, and have a job and earn money. In other words, the immigrant students have similar plans as any young adult would have. They believe in their chances to educate themselves, and they value the opportunities highly. Having education is not taken for granted if you come from a country where it is not provided for free to everyone.

All of the interviewees went through some behavioural changes. The different habits required some adjusting. For example religion seemed to be a strong issue to those having Islamic faith considering the adaptation to Finland. There religion defines the living style and what to wear and when coming to Finland the change is quite drastic and it affects the integration. The interviewees coming from Iran or Afghanistan changed their way of dressing when they arrived to Finland. They stopped using their scarves and long dresses in order to look more like the local people. Also their point of view to equality gained more perspective. Here in Finland women and men are more equal than in the

countries where the interviewees come from. The female interviewees emphasized that here they have better rights here and chances to make a career than in their respective home countries. Also some adjusting was required from the male interviewees. For instance, an Iranian male interviewee had to learn to tolerate that here in Finland alcohol is used, and having a Finnish wife, he had to make some compromises.

These changes affect the forming relationships, too. Especially in the adolescence appearances is important. The participants wanted to look more like the locals not to stand out too much and also to be more approachable. Nevertheless they would keep to their principals for instance in the use of alcohol. According to Kim's Stress-adaptation-growth dynamic process model the growth happens in cycles, new habits are learned and old ones left behind. This is an ongoing process, which will never end up in perfect adaptation, but will hopefully lead towards better integration and happier life. The participants are still young enough to evaluate their values and habits and adjust better to the new surroundings.

Close relationships, family and friends, are important in the integration to the new environment. Especially the family members are significant in the adaptation process. They are the only familiar people in the new environment and they are relied on more than ever before: their love and appreciation is important in the strange land. However spending a lot of time with family does not necessarily help in integrating to the new environment. Friends on the other hand introduce the local culture and enable to get integrated. The majority of the immigrant students in this study considered that they were well adapted to Finland although they spend a lot of time with their family members and rarely meet their friends.

Building identity in the new environment

New situations, activities and contacts influence the building of identity. How people perceive where they belong and which group they represent affects the interaction between people. According to the classifications of Phinney et al. (2006) the interviewees represented two groups: integration profile and ethnic

profile. Three participants represented ethnic profile and they had social contacts from their own ethnic group and they used mainly their mother tongue in their daily activities. Those of integration profile had a weaker national identity and they were interacting more with locals and using Finnish. The cultural and ethnic background, the group where one assumes to belong, influences strongly the interaction between people (Ting-Toomey 1999). That can be interpreted also from the results as well. It has to be kept in mind that immigrants are a heterogenic group. Even one national group does not represent one and same culture. Generally it is thought that immigrants want to preserve their own language and cultural identity. Each individual experiences moving to a new country in different ways and give different significance to own background and life in the new environment.

Especially adolescents are in a challenging situation because they have possibly arrived without being asked their opinion if they want to move to a new country. At the same time thinking what is their place in the new community, immigrants also think what others think about them and where they see that they belong. Their education is still not finished and learning the new language and making friends with the locals does not happen overnight. If the young immigrant does not learn the language quickly enough and succeed in his or her studies the risk of exclusion increases. The interviewees had some difficulties in their language skills, but nevertheless, they did not feel excluded. They hope to speak Finnish fluently, and this way they have more contacts to Finns and ensure better careers.

Studies show that the educational level of the parents influences the children's achievements in life. According to Peltola (2010) the children of highly educated parents are assumed to succeed in their studies better and educate themselves more than the average. The findings show that parents encouraged the interviewees for their studies, especially the female ones. Most of the participants' families had moved to Finland in hope for better education for their children. Nowadays a popular way to study is a double-degree, which means that you can carry out a degree in the vocational upper secondary school and in the general upper secondary school simultaneously. Six of the

interviewees started studying double-degree, of which three gave up after one year because it was too demanding. Interestingly, Kilpi (2010) claims that immigrant students prefer studying in the general upper secondary school rather than in the vocational secondary school, because they want to ensure better educational chances for future. However, statistically vocational upper secondary school is more popular nowadays than general upper secondary school. It ensures a possible work place earlier, and still you may continue to universities of applied sciences. The participants of this study show as well, that they know that finding a job and getting forward in their careers is more efficient through vocational upper secondary school.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The current study aimed at discovering how immigrant students develop and maintain their interpersonal relationships, and what kind of experiences and expectations they have of them. The results of the thematic interviews conducted to seven immigrant students show that their networks consist mainly of family ties and foreign friends. The weak ties of the immigrant students, such as classmates and teachers, does not seem to have such a significant role as is assumed by theory.

In addition, this research studied how the participants perceive their adaptation process to Finland. Previous researches have emphasized the importance of having contacts in the local culture and generally it is assumed that immigrants, who arrive at earlier age, before late adulthood, are most likely to be able to adapt easier. Five of the interviewees consider that they are adapted well to Finland and do not wish to move anywhere else. Nevertheless, they do not seem to have many Finnish friends. They report that contact with Finns is challenging, because of different culture and communication style. In some cases also the participants' lack of language skills affects approaching to Finns. Therefore approaching to other immigrant students is more convenient. Making contact to someone who has similar experiences helps to bond quicker. Furthermore, when immigrants arrive to Finland, they are placed in study groups with other immigrants that offer the opportunity to develop relationships with other foreigners rather than with Finns. Also, when the Finnish teachers introduce Finnish culture to the immigrants, they emphasize that Finns are silent and shy.

The close relationships of the immigrant students revealed to be strictly tied to family members. Most of participants of this study arrived to Finland with their families when they were adolescents. They could not choose whether they wanted to move to Finland or not. When friends and more distant relatives were left behind in the old home country the close family members became even more important in the new host environment. Those participants that are married have their spouses from their own ethnic group, except for one. The single participants of the study highlighted that a possible romantic relationship would most probably not be with a Finn, but rather with someone who speaks the same language and understands their cultural background.

In this study the weak ties concentrated to acquaintances, such as schoolmates, and teachers. Teachers in Finland are considered to be easier to approach and more informal compared to the teachers the students had in their home countries. Teacher's receptivity caused for some participants a credibility problem, as when a teacher is too friendly and less demanding it gives an impression that the teacher does not care. Also this matter was seen as positive; easily approachable teachers without too strict rules make you comfortable in class and make you realize that you are responsible for your own learning process and your own actions. Other environments from the school where immigrants could create contacts are hobbies or possible internship places; however, they did not seem to be very fruitful. Interviewees revealed that the most of the time after school is spend with family. Furthermore, the instances that provide free time activities, such as sports or religious gatherings, are often targeted especially to immigrants only. Normally these activities are attended with the immigrant friends the participants already have created.

8.1 Limitations of the study

The sample of this research is relatively small, finding more participants to carry out individual thematic interviews could bring more insight to the research. However, having more participants would require more time and more resources, and this would go out of the scope of this thesis. Even with

this limited sample size, the results are still very informative and current literature in the field also shows similar results as mine.

The study suffered from the fact that the interviews were conducted by asking the students about their experience in Finland from the moment of their arrival until the present time in a linear way. More precise questions about their daily routines or perhaps a combination of interviews and detailed questionnaires might reveal extra facts that this research could be overlooking.

Interviews performed face to face appear to have limitations in the sense that the interviewees might feel intimidated by the presence of the interviewer and not necessarily reveal all their thoughts. To solve this issue, once again a combination of interviews and questionnaires might be more successful.

Literature about interpersonal relationships of immigrants in Finland has increased during the last years, but is still scarce and therefore it is difficult to find support for the results here presented. Further investigation is required if a good knowledge of the interpersonal relationships of immigrants students in Finland is intended.

The coverage of this research is very vast on itself; a more limited research problem would likely provide more detailed information. I could have concentrated for example in trying to compare differences between male and female immigrants' interpersonal relationships. Or perhaps, I could have focused on comparing what Finnish fellow students or teachers think about their relationships with the immigrant students. Another option could have been to just focus on one theme, for instance the friendships that the students form.

8.2 Future implications

The previous research shows that little studies have been conducted especially on the young immigrant students' interpersonal relationships. Immigrants are flowing to Finland, but the required actions to meet the demands of the immigrants do not necessarily fulfil the needs. It would be important to study the development of the relationship networks, and how it differs from one age group to another.

An especially interesting topic to study would be to explore the perceptions of Finns, why they do not develop relationships with immigrant students, or if they do, what affects them. Furthermore, discovering why it seems that taking initiative in getting to know foreigners is challenging for Finns. The effort seems to be most often on the shoulders of the immigrants.

More studies about families should be conducted, as in most of the cases family is the principal vehicle for integration. In many families part of the family members live abroad and having long distance relationships is part of the every day life. Many studies concentrate on the differences between the cultures, which may give a simplistic picture of the integration of the immigrants.

8.3 Suggested actions

The results of this thesis, together with the information found in the literature allow me to speculate a bit about possible actions towards a better integration of the young immigrants in the Finnish society.

I would recommend more activities not only with the immigrants, but also with the Finns to gather more information from their perspective and to guide them into how to deal with the increasing number of immigrants. If Finnish people know more about the different cultures of the people moving here, acceptance would be easier.

As the study revealed, involvement of the teachers is critical and actions should also be taken with them, so that they would be better prepared and could serve as a link between the immigrants and the Finnish society.

Due to the strong effect that family has on each young immigrant, they could be treated within this context as a whole entity together with their family. As literature suggest, young immigrants usually lead the integration of the whole family, but if the family does not follow, they can't go further. Actions should be taken with families and not only with individuals.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Jyväskylän yliopisto   31.5.2011
Johanna Olkinuora

Opiskelen Jyväskylän yliopistossa kulttuurienvälistä viestintää ja teen tutkimusta maahanmuuttajataustaisten opiskelijoiden interpersonaalisista vuorovaikutussuhteista Jyväskylän ammattiopistossa ja miten kulttuuriset tekijät vaikuttavat suhteiden muodostumiseen. Lisäksi tutkin miten opiskelijat hakevat tukea.

Haastattelussa kysyn miten opiskelija on tutustunut muihin opiskelijoihin, opettajiin tai muuhun henkilökuntaan JAOssa, kuinka tärkeitä nämä ihmissuhteet ovat ja minkälaisia odotuksia niistä on. Lisäksi kysyn miten opiskelija on viihtynyt opintojensa parissa sekä kysyn omasta kulttuuristasi ja tavoista.

Haastattelu on kahdenkeskinen eikä muita ihmisiä ole paikalla. Haastattelu kestää korkeintaan tunnin verran. Nauhoitan haastattelun analysointia varten. Haastattelukieli on suomi (tarvittaessa englanti). Haastatteluista kerättyä aineistoa käsitellään täysin luottamuksellisesti ja nimettömänä. Vain minä näen aineiston ja analysoin sen. Nauhoitettu aineisto tuhotaan analysoinnin jälkeen. Haastatteluaineistoa julkaistaan vain tutkimuksessani. Jos haastateltava on alaikäinen, tulee haastateltavan pyytää huoltajan lupa osallistua haastatteluun.

Johanna Olkinuora

Huoltaja täyttää, jos haastateltava on alle 18-vuotias:

Annan suostumukseni haastattelua varten: kyllä ☐   ei ☐

_____
Haastateltavan opiskelijan nimi

_____   _____
Paikka ja päiväys   Allekirjoitus

Appendix 2

Demographics
- age
- sex
- mother tongue
- nationality / nationality of the parents
- from which country arrived
- how long been to Finland

Experiences and thoughts about moving to Finland
- why came to Finland
- how were received here
- would like to live in the old home country
- things that do not like about Finland
- things that like about Finland
- what makes feel at home in Finland
- how living in Finland differs from the previous home country

Starting studies and getting know to people
- studies in Finland (how long, what)
- studying in the same group with Finns
- studies in the previous home country
- how it felt to go to school in Finland
- differences in study methods
- language training
- getting known to schoolmates
- getting known and communicating with Finns
- what is the easiest way to get to know Finns
- who were the first persons to be in contact with at JAO
- guidance and counselling at JAO

Close relationships
- the closest persons
- what defines a close person
- the most trusted persons in life
- in case of a problem or something that bothers, who to turn to
- expectations of a close person
- spending time with family
- spending time with friends
- close friends at school
- the nationality of friends
- keeping contact via social media, email, phone
- spending time after school

Weak ties and lost relationships
- acquaintances
- teachers compared to old home country
- approaching teachers or other school staff
- friends that were left behind
- family that was left behind

Identity and adaptation
- adaptation to Finland
- could you say you are a Finn
- enjoying studies
- standing out because of ethnic background
- immigrant students' behaviour at school
- parents' influence on the choice of studies
- parents' influence on the choice of friends
- cultural background affecting every day life

Future plans and expectations
- expectations of studies
- staying in Finland or going somewhere else
- future plans in 5 years